

Canada's Double Standard: How Hegemony, Fear and Post 9/11 Understandings of Security
Inform our Perceptions of Who is Deemed 'Terrorist'

By

Alison Sa

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Carleton University
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Alison Sa

Abstract

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 brought the reality of terrorism experienced throughout the Middle East to Western shores. The binaries of 'us' and 'them' were solidified through hegemonic narratives meant to stabilize the country, ensuring that only one type of terrorist, the 'brown' terrorist, is visible. These narratives presented the attacks as a new 'exceptional' threat, painting the world as a much riskier place which mobilized security in different ways. The emphasis on national security in the post 9/11 environment ensures that particular threats ('brown' terrorists) are prioritized, enabling more serious threats to persist while remaining hidden ('white' terrorists). This thesis analyses the differing responses and narratives from the government, media, and experts regarding right-wing extremists and the refugees aboard the *MV Sun Sea*. Theories of hegemony, fear, and security are drawn upon to explain why, and how, one group is redeemable while the other is condemned.

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Introduction

“September 11th did not, by itself, introduce anything into our culture – but it fed our worst natures, protected and accelerated our descent away from the rule of law and democratic protections, and created a generation that struggles to imagine we ever lived in any other way” (Francesca Laguardia, Montclair State University, 2021).

“The threat of war was no longer an attribute of that elsewhere, of the chaotic Third World, it was now fought in America’s backyard; war, history, and the Real had finally pervaded the sheltered Virtual Reality of the dominant power. The world that had been locked up inside the TV screen had burst free and had entrapped the Empire inside the confines of the screen. The dominant power had exchanged places with the desert of the Third World and moved on from watching the news to being the news” (Lapugean 2016, 119).

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 brought the reality of terrorism experienced throughout the Middle East to Western shores. We were no longer protected behind a screen, watching from afar, disassociated and sheltered from the reality that so many others were forced to face. The attacks created an environment of fear, anxiety, insecurity, distrust and uncertainty, producing a global effect that is still present to this day. There was an immediate emphasis on ethnicity and the motivations of the ‘ethnic’ terrorist (Lampert 2009, 27-28) bringing forth the sinister and the barbaric which presented the world as a much riskier place (*Ibid* at 25). The attacks were presented as a ‘new’, exceptional threat, “creating the sub narrative that was going to promote new ways of dealing with this new kind of enemy, arguing that the old rules and approaches used so far were no longer relevant when having to face the new threat of terrorism” (Lapugean 2016, 123). It

“gave rise to a new security environment, dominated by a new sense of threats, principally from transnational terrorism and so-called rogue states, and new challenges to the global order. Canada, like other nations, has been forced to consider afresh the language of domestic and international security and to worry about the extent to which new realities might profoundly alter the established norms of a democratic society” (Wark 2006, 1).

The focus turned to how we would balance security with civil liberties. Inevitably sacrifices would need to be made in order to secure the nation (*Ibid*). The logic is that more rights equal

less security and vice versa, therefore, to ensure the safety of the whole each would have to give up some freedoms.

In order to garner enough support (and therefore consent) to limit these liberties and effectively enforce new (and exceptional) security policies a strong narrative needed to be created to unite the people. Fear of and solidarity against a common enemy was the main narrative “that could help [the nation] rebuild the threads that kept it united” (Lapugean 2016, 123). Framing the enemy as an ‘enemy within’ (*Ibid* at 120) as opposed to an external enemy (something distant) was key, as it made the threat seem more imminent and dangerous. The enemy, therefore, could be disguised as our acquaintances, neighbors, friends etc., everyone (albeit everyone with darker skin) is suspect. Therefore, we were bound together by and drew solace from our national identity in order to feel more in control of these merging worlds and to try to put distance between what ‘we’ stand for (the ‘good’ West) and what ‘they’ stand for (the ‘bad’ Middle East) (Lampert 2009, 27-28). This cemented the binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’; “it is the new threat that unifies and coalesces the contemporary world, reinforcing the boundaries between us and them, between our world, and their world, between the civilized and the barbaric” (Lapugean 2016, 120). Therefore, the empty signifier of the terrorist was created; understanding terrorism as having rational, political, or historical motives was thrown to the side as the binary narratives of ‘us’ vs ‘them’ took center stage, further dividing the world by replacing these motives with a representation of the ‘others’ “barbaric character, prone to evil and destruction” (*Ibid* at 125). The new normal became an environment of fear where an attack could happen anywhere at any time, and it could even be done by someone you know. These rationales allow us to dismiss the evidence that there have been no attacks, on the same scale, committed since 9/11 and that terrorist attacks (by ‘brown’ skinned people) are far and few

between. The number of, and intensities of, the attacks does not correlate to the level of fear and anxiety felt on a collective level, nevertheless these high levels of fear have allowed terrorism to stay as a top priority for policy makers, enabling more serious threats to persist while remaining hidden.

Consequently, since 9/11, brown-skinned people from the Middle East and Asia have been caught up in the zealous efforts by Western governments to root out perceived alien threats. For example, through their connection to the Militant Tamil Tigers, the Sri Lankan Tamils generally were negatively impacted by the caricature of the terrorist and its label. The focus on the ethnic terrorist, anyone cast in the dragnet of the brown-skinned eastern 'other', has left a wide area open for other types of communities which pose a genuine terrorist threat to flourish. The primary interest in this regard is right-wing extremists (RWE), particularly neo-Nazis and white supremacists. These groups are believed to identify with their nation's identity and cultural practices, affording them a certain kind of protection that racialized communities are denied. Post 9/11 security narratives that are disseminated by actors in positions of power, (i.e., the state, the media, and security institutions), and reinforced by pre-existing beliefs on a societal level, have emphasized the danger that particular ethnic groups (the 'other') pose, while downplaying the danger that RWE groups pose to the safety and security of the nation.

This study examines how and why certain groups are labeled terrorists while others are not, highlighting our twisted priorities and the absurd double standard afforded to 'white' groups in the post 9/11 era. It looks at two case studies, RWEs (specifically neo-Nazis and white supremacists) and the MV *Sun Sea* case of 2010. The case studies draw upon media sources, parliamentary debates, and government reports to connect to the theory outlined in the first three chapters. The Sri Lankan Tamils on board the MV *Sun Sea* were chosen as a case study due to

the relentless campaign led by the Conservative government, security institutions, and particular 'experts' that condemned the passengers as terrorists in the months leading up to the ship's arrival (Quan 2015; Kaye 2017; Storseth, House of Commons, 2011). The RWE case study highlights how the similarities to the nation's dominant cultural and racial identity impact how others perceive them (Mastracci 2017; Perry and Scrivens 2019). The focus on neo-Nazis and white supremacists, in particular, has to do with their targets (minority communities, those on the fringes) as it plays a substantial role in the perception of these RWE groups (Perry and Scrivens 2019; West Coast Coalition for Human Dignity 2020). RWE have committed crimes that are just as terroristic as jihadi terrorists, yet the rhetoric used to describe them usually casts them as 'misfits' (Walkom 2015) or 'mentally ill' (Hume 2020), not terrorists. Therefore, the real dangers posed by RWE ideology are pushed to the side, while the focus is on the individual, their social marginality and mental health. These dominant narratives illustrate the differences between the two groups. They are portrayed and presented in different lights, with more innocent 'casualties' for the communities considered as 'other' than the white communities. Drawing upon exceptional politics, hegemonic projects, the politics of fear, formulations of identity, and security paradigms, this study aims to explain how and why the post 9/11 era has created an environment where one group is condemned, and the other is redeemable.

I would like to note that an overwhelming amount of literature surrounding terrorism has been cast through the lens of the Islamic 'other', with the main form of reference being the 'Muslim' terrorist. While essential for understanding the post 9/11 terrorist, the 'Muslim' terrorist, does not fully capture all that the terrorist signifies. The signifier of the Muslim terrorist can slide through the chain of equivalence to other groups, creating an empty signifier where any meaning can be imbued upon it. Therefore, I decided to use the terms 'brown' or 'ethnic'

terrorist instead of the Muslim terrorist because they encompass most groups that the signifier of the terrorist impacts. These terms encapsulate other areas in which the terrorist 'other' can be understood. The title is no longer held solely by the Muslim but by all who resemble them through the meaning we attach. Consequently, quotation marks are used around 'brown' and 'ethnic' to denote the shift that can happen between different groups, ethnicities and communities when drawing upon the terrorist 'other'.

Methodology

I employed a qualitative analysis that focused on prior academic literature to inform the core theories. These theories explain why and how we view certain group as a threat over others, acting as lenses through which I viewed the case study material and informed my reflections on them. The case studies draw upon political debates found through Hansard, political speeches, governmental reports, and news articles. When looking at each of the topics in Hansard the discussions primarily focused on the broader issues surrounding the topics I was interested in. The debates I found that mentioned RWE outright or discussed RWE attacks focused on the broader topics of extremism (with very few references to RWE specifically), hate crime/propaganda, religious discrimination, and the role of the internet. The debates that discussed MV Sun Sea were focused on the broader topics of foreign persons, human smuggling, mass arrivals, illegal migrants and refugee status. References to the ships were more frequent in these debates than references to RWE in the debates discussing hate crimes and extremism. Consequently, the main topics were more systemic issues surrounding the specific events which was important for contextualizing the topics and arguments but less so in providing much substance on the events themselves. To this extent, I did not go in-depth into the broader conversations of these topics which means that certain arguments, portrayals and logic as to why

these events were handled the way that they were may have been missed. Once I found a debate that specially discussed the event's I was interested in I searched the debates for an actual mention of the topic and looked at what was said leading up to it. (i.e., the specifics of what was mentioned, how it was articulated, the argument made). I wanted to know how it was being discussed, or not discussed, politically, and if the events were being taken seriously or brushed off.

When researching news articles, I grabbed anything related to the specific events (many articles had the same variation of information). I looked for language and tone (whether it was positive, negative or neutral), the types of arguments made, the holes that I perceived in those arguments, and if it had any relation to the core theories in the first three chapters. There was a lot that was said that supported other theories I intended to use but had to cut out as they sidetracked from the central thesis. I was interested in how these topics were referenced and described and how the government, perpetrators, and victims were defended. Lastly, there are a few limitations in how I approached the case study material. Firstly, there is a heavier portrayal of the conservative government than the Liberal or NDP governments, making my analysis seem one sided. Secondly, I did not approach the material in a particularly systematic or ordered way (there were no date ranges or specific newspapers referenced) meaning that some perspectives may have been missed, and I relied on direct quotes as opposed to using multiple sources to highlight one point which may have mitigated the impact. There will be greater detail on these limitations in the conclusion.

Chapter 1

Hegemony and ideology are tools utilized by politicians, experts, and the media to help inform the public of 'problematic reality' (Hall et al. 1978, 56) and interpret the events under the

hegemonic articulations of the time. The media itself operates within a range of “*distinct ideological limits*” (*Ibid* at 64), thereby streamlining their characterizations of events.

Hegemonic articulations illustrate who creates the narratives of the 'terrorist other,' how these narratives come to be, and how deeply ingrained ideologies play a part in aiding public consent of these hegemonic articulations. In addition, hegemony draws heavily on the realm of emotions and feelings (affect); this works from a bottom-up approach as it must draw upon "pre-existing affective structures" (Williams 2020 168).

Chapter 2

Fear is one of the more crucial emotions drawn upon by politicians, security experts and the media since 9/11; it feeds off a sense of threat or danger (it does not matter if the threat is real or perceived). Fear is based on suspicion and is inherently connected to what we do not know or understand; therefore, those who we perceive as the 'other' are automatically suspect, with fear, prejudice, and danger attached to our understanding of them. It also illustrates how institutional racism and deeply ingrained understandings of *who* to fear inform popular reactions to these groups. Post 9/11 security practices have reframed our understanding of the everyday, infusing security practices into the day-to-day. Terrorism (more specifically, terrorism as we have come to know it) defines our reality (Altheide 2007, 299). Our understanding of the terrorist threat (and the fear attached to it) dramatically impacts our knowledge of other threats. These understandings inform how we securitize and who we securitize against. The government and the media have a major role in educating and informing the reactions towards each group; however, the 'people' or society also have a say in how these groups are perceived. Although, the majority of the analysis is focused on how the media and government frame each group (ethnic vs. white).

To this extent, cultural identity has a role to play in informing our responses to each group. The 'other' is considered antithetical to Canadian culture and values (Kwak 2020, 1172) and is perceived as a threat to Canadian identity because of their differences. However, the 'us' has the advantage of being deeply rooted in the nation's identity. While their views (and actions) may be extreme, RWE grievances are rooted in "collective popular concerns" (Perry and Scrivens 2018, 174) that politicians, the media, and the public also voice. To this extent, systemic racism plays a significant role in the perception and framing of each group. RWEs are not only punished less severely for similar (or more extreme) crimes, but they also are provided space to commit violent acts (Bonilla-Silva 2019). Systemic racism also impacts policies and definitions since prejudices are deeply ingrained; it is hard to fix because it is seldom acknowledged (at any level).

Chapter 3

The portrayal of national security threats is more intense; designating an event as a national security threat heightens fear and justifies the need for "special, extraordinary, or exceptional societal and governmental responses" (Murphey 2007, 451). A national security threat is perceived as something ordinary laws cannot address; therefore, exceptions must be made (Falk 2007). The state of exception (Agamben 2005) and exceptionalist securitizing (Huysmans 2014) are used to inform this process. These exceptions are drawn up hastily, they do not fully consider human rights, and they are prone to overreactions. There is always a sacrifice, which comes at the expense of the 'other,' whose liberties are constrained as they are perceived to pose a significant threat and must be immediately neutralized. Therefore, post 9/11 security practices highlighted a switch to prevention strategies; these strategies rely heavily on suspicion

and profiling, which has a high potential for targeting innocent individuals (particularly the ethnic ‘other’).

Chapter 4

The RWE case study is integral to understanding this issue because it effectively highlights the double standard Western nations afford to white people. The fear of political backlash weighs heavily in the treatment of RWE groups (Byman, 2019); ultimately, they are categorized as a public order threat instead of a national security threat (Quan 2016). Jihadi terrorism (groups such as Daesh and Al-Qaeda) is characterized as a particular kind of threat; it is considered to be 'different' (Bell 2018) and more extreme than other mundane threats posed by other (non-terrorist groups). It is portrayed as the only threat that matters, ultimately brushing the threat posed by RWE aside. The RWE chapter explores why RWE is not considered terrorism while also outlining how it meets the criteria of terrorism. How governmental policies are affected, impacts who is perceived to be a more significant threat to the nation. RWEs are perceived as less of a threat because they embody the nation's culture; this has allowed them to absorb and then repurpose official security narratives to fit into their ideologies. It is also used to mirror popular discourse and rhetoric on issues of importance (Kundanini 2012; Perry and Scrivens 2019; Bahdi 2003).

The issue of systemic racism is key to explaining why RWEs are not seen as a threat. Their freedom of speech is heavily defended, especially in parliamentary debates (CHPC Committee Meeting, 2017) and the responses from social media companies regarding the monitoring and removal of the hateful and even violent comments from their platforms (Byman, 2019; Grady and Hussein 2019). Public figures are also known to associate with prominent RWEs openly, resulting in RWEs being legitimized and normalized when public figures do not

denounce them (Dimeteo, 2021; Silman, 2018). Governmental and security institutions not only underestimate RWE activity (Perry and Scrivens 2019) but are also reluctant to concede that RWEs may be among them (Boutilier 2018). In addition, RWEs are also not considered a significant threat because of their targets; the main targets of RWE (particularly neo-Nazis and white supremacists) and minority communities and therefore are not of importance. Lastly, the chapter compares the reactions to the 2014 Ottawa Parliament Hill shooting and the 2017 Quebec Mosque shooting, highlighting the difference in the descriptions used and how these descriptions are supported.

Chapter 5

The MV *Sun Sea* case illustrates how individuals who pose no terrorist threat can be affected by the terrorist label. The refugees on the MV *Sun Sea* had committed no acts of terrorism or violence and had negligible connections to terrorist groups. Yet, they were heavily affected by security paradigms, hegemonic articulations, and the spread of fear informed by the 9/11 security narrative. Almost seven months before the MV *Sun Sea* landed, terrorist allegations were made through the supposed connection to the LTTE (Schloenhardt 2013), which drew upon and reinforced security paradigms; the passengers were suspect from the very start. Political agendas heavily informed the responses to these events. The MV *Sun Sea* landed during the 2011 Canadian federal election, with the Conservative party using its arrival (exuberating popular hostility towards immigration in some quarters) to garner votes. How refugees come into a country also changes how they are perceived and impacts the public's response (Cader 2011; House of Commons September 26, 2012). There were no discussions on what the passengers had endured or what forced them to make such a dangerous journey in the first place. Instead, very familiar racial tropes were mobilized, focusing on how these 'migrants' are taking advantage of

Canadian generosity (Morrow 2010) and posing a very real and present danger to the safety of Canadians. Lastly, the chapter highlights how specific legislation was drawn upon to justify the security response used to detain the passengers after landing, highlighting how the legislation was more effective in punishing refugees than smugglers, the original intention of the legislation (House of Common October 28, 2010).

Chapter One - Hegemony: The Process of Gathering Consent to Expel the ‘Other’

Immediately following the events of 9/11, power was mobilized from all fronts in order to present the public with a distinct narrative that would unite them against the threat of the ‘brown’ terrorist. Hegemony was a crucial tool in garnering mass support for these narratives, in order to secure the nation, the dominant group had to be able to speak for everyone which means that consent had to be mobilized across all areas of the social. National interest and nationality in general played a huge role in binding these groups interests together as it ensures everyone shares the same or similar values, beliefs and assumptions. The news media, experts and the government all have significant roles to play in selecting, categorizing and educating their audiences on what (and who) is considered a threat. They each suggest ways to address the threat in a manner that unites the people without fully alienating anyone. Hegemony therefore ensures that the threats are common across the board and that the understanding of these threats (why and how they are threatening and why they must be dealt with in a strict manner) are universal (within set parameters). This is how post 9/11 narratives of the other are sustained even if those narratives, and the solutions they elicit, unfairly impact racialized groups. This hegemonic discourse ensures that the language of terrorism can only be understood through a chain of equivalence that articulates the ‘brown’ terrorist as a threat.

One of the many forms in which power is conceptualized is through the political discourse of hegemony (Williams 2020, 87). Hegemonic power is not located in one specific place; it is concentrated in numerous locations throughout the 'social', "where even state power requires the achievement of hegemony within civil society" (*Ibid* at 144). Therefore, the state can only acquire its power through social cohesion by organizing power from different areas within society to control all areas of the social and political sphere. Power mobilizes from all areas in

order to unite society on one common ground. In this sense, democracy does not disperse power into society. Instead, power is mobilized through a 'central value system', "a common system of values, goals and beliefs" (Hall et al. 1978, 215) and "through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world" (Gramsci, cited in Williams 2020, 97), which provides the cohesion that is necessary for modern states to function. To this extent, 9/11 was used to restructure and reemphasize our values, goals and beliefs as a nation, changing the common conception of the world into a riskier and dangerous place (Lampert 2009, 25).

The self-organization of political relations is central to Gramsci's understanding of the relation of forces. He identifies "three moments of differing intensities of political self-consciousness and organizational efficacy", the last of which is hegemony (Williams 2020, 93). This process transpires after a class concludes that to further their interests, they must speak on behalf of other groups, thereby articulating their interests as the interest of every group, this outcome is identified by Gramsci as "intellectual and moral leadership" (*Ibid* at 96). This process entails working with "existing beliefs, prejudices, and predilections" (*Ibid* at 97) through a process of negotiation and transformation that serves the interests of the dominant social group as it binds together 'diverse social forces' (*Ibid* at 98).

In this regard, ideology is a vital aspect of hegemony. While material factors (ex. military and economic power) make up half of its power, ideational factors, "widely accepted superior values" (Kinacıoğlu 2012, 70), make up the other half. Ideation, the formation of ideas and concepts, is also vital in attaining hegemony since "hegemony is characterized as a systemic condition where a set of ideas is accepted across a range of political actors with conflicting interests..." (Bajpai and Brown 2013, 257-258). In order to attain hegemony, ideas have to

“appeal to actors with distinct, often conflicting interests” (*Ibid* at 258); while several ideas are raised, only a few become widely held norms (*Ibid* at 261). To this extent, “dominant actors... are constrained to an extent by the content and configuration of ideas in the political field” (*Ibid* at 262). There has to be a broad range of understanding prior to the implementation of said ideas, “For example, the anxiety and panic associated with post-9/11 times had already become elements of Western identity even before 9/11. Much was written about the climate of panic that was producing a particular kind of fearful identity at the dawning of the twenty-first century, already suggesting that we live in a world of increased risk and uncertainty” (Beck, 1992; Wallace;1997 cited in Lampert 2009, 25). Not all ideas acquire hegemony, but without ideas or ideational frameworks, hegemony would not be possible. They are paramount in accomplishing the aim of “persuading the other classes of society to accept its own moral, political, and cultural values” (Joll cited in Williams 2020, 97). This mechanism of persuasion is vital to hegemonic domination in liberal democracies (Kinacıoğlu 2012, 69). It needs the majority to accept its processes and willingly uphold its ideas to ingrain and sustain its domination.

In this process, the dominant group (i.e., civil society, those who embody the dominant political and economic ideology) seeks to embody the national interest (Williams 2020, 93), where the “notion of the people were rearticulated to be ‘the nation’” (Yilmaz 2012, 369). In this sense, the national story is written through the ideological lens of the leading group, allowing other groups to find common ground through a modified nationalistic narrative as they identify with the same, if not similar, values (Williams 2020, 98). An example that illustrates one outcome of this process is the area of immigration, the narrative portrays nationals as not 'wanting' to exclude immigrants. However, their foreign culture is cast as incompatible with our own (Yilmaz 2012, 372). This narrative exemplifies the persuasive and ideational element of

hegemony, as it convinces its people by first assuring that they are not immoral for wanting to exclude the 'other'. They would like to include them, but due to incompatible cultural circumstances, it is impossible. Therefore, they have examined all their options and have landed on a decision that is in the common interest, eliminating the sense of guilt. This process of negotiation and persuasion requires a rewiring of the common sense of individuals, which reformulates how they understand the world; this is done in order to garner passive consent (Williams 2020, 98).

A consequence of this process is that "a direct link can be traced between the Conservative government's seemingly neutral discourses about the preservation of Canadian "heritage" and "common values" and the *re*-emergence of right-wing populism and the *re*-emboldening of white nationalism in Canada" (Kwak 2020, 1170). Therefore, reinforcing a national narrative strengthens right-wing populist thinking and white nationalist sentiments in the Canadian population, allowing those attitudes to circulate from the bottom to the top and then back down again. While the dominant hegemonic faction could respond to more conventional social forces from below, top-down approaches dominate. There is a cycle of fear that is propelled by drastic action. Each approach is feeding into one another; "partnerships and engagement between communities and state agencies is influenced by the concerns and experiences of those communities" (Spalek 2013, 147).¹ Therefore, the initial media reporting followed by the government response to an event can dictate the type of response and the

¹ While the primary focus of this chapter is on top-down approaches that influence the circulation of information, bottom-up approaches do play a role in influencing the hegemonic project as well. Both approaches have played a role post 9/11, "The 'War on Terror' is thus a politicised global strategy, helping to re-configure security issues at the level of the nation state and the locale..." (Spalek 2013, 145). Top-down and bottom-up approaches impact each other in different ways. They are constantly influencing each other, "both state and non-state actors can be part of global, national, top-down approaches as well as being part of bottom-up and reflective governance approaches" (Spalek 2013, 149). To this extent, bottom-up and localized approaches are essential in influencing and dismantling perceptions about terrorists as they start in the every day and challenge 'top-down' approaches (Spalek 2013, 163).

intensity of the response from below. These responses circle back around to influence the policy decisions from above.² However, when responding to a crisis today, we "tend to operate from top to bottom" (Hall et al. 1978, 222).

So, hegemonic power is ideational; it is born out of ideas and based on a dominant ideology. Therefore, the dominant norms central to a given hegemonic moment are ultimately internalized (Kinacioglu 2012, 69). Norms and common sense (social tendencies) are drawn upon to bring about these dynamics. Norms are utilized to regulate roles and behaviours within groups and individuals (Williams 2020, 142). They inform what is considered to be common sense. Common sense reinforces our behaviour on what is acceptable and what is not. Eventually, through the choices one makes and the adherence to the norms of that particular space, actions will either be accepted as common sense or forced out. This is why RWE sentiments are difficult to disable – they are woven into the fabric of our nationhood; they are essentially our beliefs just a more extreme version. Therefore, their views are drawn from what we know to be common sense and that makes it difficult to disengage and separate our beliefs, values and goals from theirs, thereby making it difficult to see them as a threat. Accordingly, through framing political issues, common sense can also be shifted to "permanently alter the balance of power between political forces" (*Ibid* at 147). Through the molding of common sense, it could be argued that "political practice constructs, rather than represents interests (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, cited in Williams 2020, 119). It constructs interests through the way political issues are framed, heightening an issue to gain more prominence so that something that may not have been a huge matter of importance to the public is now deemed so.

² However, "It should not be overlooked that this playing back of (assumed) public opinion to the powerful, which is the reverse of the earlier process described of translating dominant definitions into an (assumed) public idiom, takes the public as an important point of reference on both occasions (legitimation) while actually bypassing it" (Hall et al. 1978, 66).

Sometimes interests need to be constructed or brought to light to make necessary policy changes for the safety and security of society. However, sometimes these interests can be exploited to fulfill other governmental needs that have nothing to do with the initial issue.³ For example, leading up to and upon the arrival of the MV Sun Sea, the Conservative government ran an intense campaign characterized by powerful narratives and harsh responses toward the refugees on the boat. This campaign was implemented to gain votes for the upcoming federal election (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 17; CBC 2015). Therefore, amplifying the fear of the terrorist 'other' is not only a tool utilized by the government to legitimize security practices and exceptional laws but, is also used to gain and hold power while securing future political agendas. The state draws upon a moral panic⁴ to achieve their goals, they are created and sustained through these hegemonic moments.

When something or someone “become(s) defined as a threat to societal values and interests” and is “presented in a stylized and stereo-typical fashion by the mass media,” a moral panic is beginning, and the “moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people...” (Cohen found in Hall et al. 2013, 16). Moral panics are created when a

³ As Hall et al. illustrated in the context of mugging, "The nature of the reaction to mugging can only be understood in terms of the way that society – more especially the ruling class alliances, the state apparatuses, and the media – responded to a deepening economic, political and social crisis" (Hal et al., 1978, *Ibid*). The state uses a moral panic concerning terrorism, specifically during times of economic crisis, government debt, and public outrage surrounding the wage gap, as a means to gain back control of the authority it believes has been undermined (Smith 2018, 102). Essentially it is an illusion; the process entails presenting one reality to the audience (a misdirection) to distract from and conceal another reality (ex. economic crisis). All realities are harmful. The point is not the harm itself but whom it impacts. In this case, it is the state's opinion that matters and their undermined authority that has been wounded. Therefore, as Hall et al. states, creating a moral panic around terrorism allows for their situation to be put to the side by the public while they are focused on the supposedly more imminent and ominous danger of a terrorist attack as opposed to a collapsing economy. This deception restores citizens' faith in the powers of the state by exhibiting its capacity to protect the population against the 'enemy within' (Smith 2018, 102); the illusion of protection is more valuable than the capacity the state has to exercise these powers fully (*Ibid*).

⁴ Stan Cohen claims that a moral panic is beginning "...when the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is *out of all proportion* to the actual threat offered, when 'experts', in the form of police chiefs, judiciary, politicians and editors *perceive* the threat in all but identical terms, and appear to talk 'with one voice' of rates, diagnoses, prognoses and solutions, when the media representations universally stress 'sudden and dramatic' increases (in numbers involved or events) and 'novelty', above and beyond that which a sober, realistic appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to speak of the beginnings of a *moral panic*" (Hall et al. 1978, 20).

“deep-structure of anxiety and traditionalism connects with the public definition of crime by the media, and is mobilized” (Hall et al. 1978, 165). However, panic does not always center around a new event. It is often something that has existed for quite a while but has only just circulated back into the public light (Cohen found in Hall et al. 1978, 17). For example, the experience of ‘terrorism’ in the west post 9/11 is perceived to be wholly different from prior terrorism experienced in the Middle East. The term 'terrorism' took on a new meaning; it is now personal and involves an “ideological displacement” (*Ibid* at 32) that encompasses a reaction that is out of proportion to the actual threat, it is a reaction by “...the media to the *perceived or symbolic* threat to society – what the...label *represented*” (*Ibid*). The reaction's character, scale, and intensity had more of a consequence in the real world than the actual act of terrorism itself (*Ibid* at 21). The actual physical threat is less important than how that threat is perceived. Therefore, the social reaction is "...as problematic – if not more so..." than the act or event itself (*Ibid* at 32). The post 9/11 security narratives created by the media, government and experts produced an intense social reaction, a reaction that was grounded in how the threat was interpreted by these actors. This heightened reaction ensures that terrorism perpetrated by ‘brown’ terrorists persists as the highest threat to national security.

The Media, Experts, and Government Officials Roles in Reinforcing Hegemony

The events of 9/11 brought with it uncertainty, anxiety and fear, which were then infused into post 9/11 security narratives that informed the public on how to view the world; it was presented by the media, experts and government officials as a much riskier place. Each of these actors have a role to play in constructing dominant narratives, the news media defines important newsworthy events while experts are drawn upon by the media to help inform and provide credibility to these narratives. Government officials and policy makers have their own platform

for disseminating dominant ideologies and narratives, they are also active in instigating and amplifying fear, uncertainty and panic throughout the public sphere post 9/11. Each plays a crucial role in understanding the post 9/11 environment of fear and how threats are (or are not) constructed.

The news media have substantial influence over public perceptions, defining what events are important through a process of "systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories" (Hall et al. 1978, 53). At a general level, what constitutes news is that which is deemed out of the ordinary, a "breach of our 'normal' expectation about social life" (*Ibid*). News gets further divided and sorted through more specific categories

“Events that concern elite persons or nations; events which are dramatic; events which can be personalized so as to point up the essentially human characteristics of humour, sadness, sentimentality etc. events which have negative consequences; and events which are part of, or can be made part of, an existing newsworthy theme, are all possible news stories” (*Ibid*).

Those events that check off all of the categories listed are deemed exceptional, therefore 'newsworthy' (*Ibid* at 53-54), and are further exaggerated and dramatized to enhance their 'newsworthiness' (*Ibid* at 53). Filtering events through these categories helps its audience understand 'problematic reality' (*Ibid* at 56) by providing “powerful interpretations”⁵ (*Ibid* at 57), interpretations that are presented through what the audience presumably already knows. The media draws from emotion, exceptional moments, a continuance of old problems, avenues in which information can not only be understood but made relatable.⁶

⁵ The issue is that in order to filter news through these categories, the topic needs to be deemed 'problematic' to start. RWE is not usually deemed as such; people already tend to understand and relate to their arguments and points of view, there is little need for 'powerful interpretations'.

⁶ The views of RWE's are already understandable and relatable. However, the aim surrounding terrorism is not to relate to the terrorist but to make people understand the threshold of fear the terrorist signifies.

Experts

The news media relies on expert sources to inform their audience and dictate the direction of their work. Therefore, experts' personal ideological predispositions impact the content and form that the news piece takes. The sources that these interpretations are sought from are generally from those who form the dominant majority. These individuals are consulted as those with expert knowledge on an event and are what Hall et al. (1978) call a 'primary definer'. They are individuals of high status who are more likely than the majority to be viewed as credible due to their education, profession, and specializations. Therefore they are more likely to have their definition of controversial topics accepted due to greater access to specialized and accurate information (*Ibid* at 58). Their ideologies are the central source that informs the majority. However, the media is highly selective and "...impose their own criteria on the 'structured' raw materials' – and thus actively appropriate and transform them" (*Ibid* at 63). Therefore, the information is filtered through a secondary source and reported on in a way that aligns with the reporter's ideology and the media platform they work for. To this extent, the media operates within a range of "*distinct ideological limits*" (*Ibid* at 64) instead of a "vast pluralistic range of voices" (*Ibid*). This means that we are getting the same type of information within varying degrees.

Those who have access to this information and the expertise necessary to share it may have differing opinions and ideological predispositions. While hegemonic processes may shape thoughts about particular issues, they do not make "opposition unthinkable" (Patrick and Thrall 2007, 102), "real differences in opinion are still possible among elites and the general public" (*Ibid* at 116). To this end, they "operate under a 'strategic selectivity', a systemic bias which is more amenable to certain forms of politics than others" (Williams 2020, 174). It is also important

to note that bias plays a role in whose 'expertise' is used, this bias is "...born of class and socioeconomic heritage" (Snow and Taylor 2006, 404) as certain groups, i.e., the working class, are less likely to be afforded an interview than, as Snow and Taylor (2006) put it "Ivy League-educated pup journalist with upper-class sensibilities" (404). Therefore, certain expert opinions are given more coverage than others due to their conformity to and articulation of the dominant ideology. The public already understands fundamental parts of the narrative, thereby aiding the popularity of these ideological themes. Due to the salience of the expert opinion, it becomes the dominant mode in which individuals understand and discuss an event. While ideas that challenge dominant modes of thought may still circulate, the majority of the information generally accords with the elements of the prevailing hegemony. To this extent, rationality also has a role to play in sustaining hegemony; the dominant position "creates boundaries for rational thought, and supplies heuristics that work to reinforce a given ideological position" (Williams 2020, 165). Therefore, rational thought is accepted and encouraged, as long as it does not radically challenge the dominant ideology.

Government Officials

While the media is central to disseminating dominant ideologies, it is not the only platform for such work, "Events, casualties, and critics played a major role in setting the news agenda and in shaping the administration's rhetorical strategy" (Patrick and Thrall 2007, 114). The portrayal of the 'other' in the post 9/11 era has been instigated by both the media and policymakers. In the case of the United Kingdom, "While the media has played an important role in constructing an image of Muslims as uncivilized and threatening, British policymakers have helped perpetuate this view" (Perra 2018, 86). For example, the government draws upon ethnocentric arguments by making a point to highlight the importance of their own culture over

others which "...contributes to the creation of a climate in which diversity...might in fact be perceived as an indicator of un-Britishness and therefore extremism" (*Ibid*). This process is recreated over and over again, drawing inspiration from different minority groups. When the government asserts their own country's individuality, they are simultaneously excluding others; difference is correlated with danger. Through speeches, reports, debates, and interviews, politicians take hold of and mold citizen fear and uncertainty surrounding a terrorist attack, even if in another country. While the news media and its affiliates (talk shows, radio programs, broadcasts, etc.) lean towards propagandist techniques, politicians also use similar strategies. Consequently, "conjectures can easily appear like statements of fact; after all, they stem from government officials who (one would like to believe) have access to expert knowledge and intelligence resources" (Frank 2015, 91). However, experts are not immune to these techniques and also make inferences based on incomplete information. Still, the public believes them due to their credentials. The hegemonic perspective suggests that presidents (or prime ministers) have much more success and freedom in manipulating the public opinion than they actually do; communication strategies have to be "crafted...to sell what the public wants to buy and that not all citizens want the same things" (Patrick and Thrall 2007, 96). Therefore, classical propaganda theory claims that a leader's ability to maintain support will depend critically on his ability to sell *what the public wants to buy* (*Ibid* at 115). The public must already want the result and support the methods used to achieve it in order for the government to secure their support. The post 9/11 environment was perfect for this as the public wanted someone to pay for the harm caused, they just needed a visible enemy to focus their attention, which was quickly provided by the government and the media. The government, therefore, is not as successful in influencing public perception as we are led to believe. However, all of the actors discussed above are

“...active in defining situations, in selecting targets, in initiating 'campaigns, in structuring these campaigns, in selectively signifying their actions to the public at large, in legitimating their actions through the accounts of situations which they produce. They don't simply respond to 'moral panics'. They form part of the circle out of which moral panics' develop. It is part of the paradox that they also, advertently and inadvertently, amplify the deviancy they seem so absolutely committed to controlling” (Hall et al. 1978, 52).

While they are active in instigating and amplifying moral panics, there is an aspect that these top-down actors have no control over. To an extent, the 'moral panic' takes on a mind of its own. Therefore, “These agencies must be understood as actively and continuously part of the whole process to which, also, they are 'reacting” (*Ibid*).

Hegemony: The Relationship Between Signification spirals, Coercion, and Acquiring Consent

The media is an institution that operates based on a 'national consensus' (*Ibid* at 55), "So that, when events are 'mapped' by the media into frameworks of meaning and interpretation, it is assumed that we all equally possess and know how to use these frameworks" (*Ibid*). Amongst these main assumptions are other basic supporting assumptions; that everyone in society has generally the same interests (ex. safety over individual freedoms), that everyone has an equal share of power in society, that there are no economic or cultural differences, and that there are no conflicts between classes and groups within society (*Ibid*). In this context, hegemony operates at a universal level with one specific type of person and discounts the rest. Those who are discounted are relatively powerless in society, their voices are buried and given little credibility, the character of their marginalization is captured by Susan George: "The great new central question of politics is, in my view 'who has the right to live and who does not'. Radical exclusion is now the order of the day, I mean this deadly seriously" (1999). This is precisely what we have been seeing in the government's and media's overly dramatized 'war on terror' and complete victimization of those who are categorized as the terrorist 'other'. The 'other' is left to 'die',

while those who are deemed to 'belong' are allowed to 'live'. Subjects' anxieties are taken advantage of in order to sustain this dichotomy, "the anxieties of the many are orchestrated with the need for control of the few" (Smith 2018, 96). It makes the ruling class objective (to secure power, to justify specific policies and actions, and to 'keep the nation safe') significantly easier if the majority of the world is complicit in the act of 'othering', 'demonizing', rejecting, and deterring specific groups from participating in everyday life, for the sole reason of being suspected of participating in terrorist acts. Essentially this is fear for fear's sake, there is very little to be afraid of, but a lack of fear does not help those in power. Therefore, for this objective to be effectively met, the state implements a process (which is later picked up by the media) that Hall et al. (1978) define as 'signification spirals', which entails "a way of signifying events which also intrinsically escalates their threat" (223). This process sustains a moral panic. Signification spirals have two key elements - convergence and thresholds - which will be further examined below.

A key tactic is the influencing of, and in many ways, actively shaping public opinion through the crudest stereotypes and simplifications (Fekete 2004, 8) conveyed through the media's platform. This is a process of convergence, which is a practice of "signifying a political issue through its most extreme and violent form" (Hall et al. 1978, 224). This process makes it increasingly challenging to evaluate and understand the fundamental (unadvertised) issue. These labels "...are important...They not only place and identify those events; they assign events to a context. Thereafter the use of the label is likely to mobilise *this whole referential context*, with all its associated meanings and connotations" (*Ibid* at 23). As Liz Fekete (2004) illustrates, "We are told that we face a complex, overwhelming threat, yet we are given the crudest means of deciphering our predicament: caricatures of Saddam, of bin Laden, of suicide bombers and evil

imams" (8). In actuality, it reinforces one particular narrative that is damaging to whole groups of people and leaves all other essential information vague. People accept this information without showing much skepticism because the process of convergence "occurs when two or more activities are linked in the process of signification so as to implicitly draw parallels between them" (Hall et al.1978, 223). This provides a platform for new problems to be explained through the context of an old problem that is already familiar to the public, thereby making it easily understood, digestible, and even logical.

Acquiring Consent

The securing of hegemony is reliant on two main functions; the ultimate aim is to acquire consent. Nevertheless, where consent is not freely given, coercion may be necessary to achieve compliance. In capitalist and democratic societies, governments are not in complete control of social and economic activity. Therefore, the higher the cooperation, or at a minimum, the consent of government policies by individuals, groups, and agencies, the more effective the implementation of those policies will be (Hindess 1987, 66). Modes of consent and coercion are used to establish dominance over civil life and society, with consent being vital for legitimacy (Hall et al. 1978, 209). In order for the state to respond effectively to threats, it needs the "legitimacy of popular representation" (*Ibid* at 220) to "shape and structure 'consent'" (*Ibid*). Post 9/11 priorities centres around national security and acquiring (or shaping) consent to ensure the support of exceptional policies to defend the nation that would not be supported in normal times. Therefore, constant exposure to news that draws upon these themes turns individuals into docile subjects by implicitly and explicitly telling its audience what to do and what to think (Jiwani 2011, 24). Allowing for current themes and issues to become part of the everyday. One of the ways in which this is done is through the 'immigration complex', which transforms every

social problem ex., drug smuggling, increase in crime, terrorism, etc., into a problem created or aggravated by the presence of immigrants (De Genova 2010, 409). The new hegemony is proposed and sustained through the constant attacks directed by political discourse at Muslims and at Islam as a whole (Yilmaz 2012, 369), which then slides through the chain of equivalences (Hall 2017) to other persons of colour. Therefore, recognizing ‘brown’ people as terrorists is rational as the belief is cemented into the everyday through saturation; it becomes common sense.

Thresholds

These examples further illustrate how the concept of thresholds come into play, as it plays on the limits of social tolerance; “the higher an event can be placed in the hierarchy of thresholds” (Hall et al. 2013 222)⁸, the greater the threat to social order and the more swift and severe the coercive response (Hall et al. 1978, 225). Therefore, the more that fear is promulgated onto the public, the less tolerant individuals will be of those who 'don't belong', and the more suspicious and hardened they will be to almost everyone around them. For example, in the current environment of fear, strong religious and ideological identities that do not conform to the culture's dominant religion are perceived as threats (Perra 2018, 89). Even though many Western societies identify as secular, the religion they were founded on still plays a crucial role in the level of acceptance and trust offered to those who differ. In this regard, the rights of those who embody difference are rejected even as a system of democracy rooted in difference is defended (Fasenfest 381, 2011). The fixation of the ‘other’ as the enemy is supported and sustained through this process, leaving little room to view threats that exist outside these parameters (those

⁸ The lowest event in the hierarchy of thresholds in permissiveness (moral norms), followed by the legal threshold, and then lastly violence, which is the highest limit of social tolerance as it is seen as “constituting the threat to the future existence to the whole state itself” (Hall 2013, 225).

who embody the dominant ideology, national narrative and core beliefs of the west) as a security issue. These other threats do not have the potential to be on the same scale as the ‘brown’ terrorist because they conflict with the post 9/11 understanding of not only what a terrorist is but what constitutes a threat. The ongoing ‘war on terror’ (Jiwani 2011, 24) provides “us with the syntax of threat levels, security concerns, and representations of others who need to be cast out and kept out at all costs” (*Ibid*). Therefore, signification spirals play an essential role in explaining how the threat of terrorism is being sold to the public and why this narrative continues to have such a strong hold twenty-one years after 9/11, even though terrorist attacks are sporadic (and nothing on the scale of 9/11 has happened since), and terrorists themselves are very few. The concepts of convergence and thresholds, when applied together, result in an escalation that is considerably more important and relevant than when applied separately. If a threat can be connected to another similar event (old/new problems), together they make a threat seem both greater and more ominous, particularly if the danger is manipulated to seem more “widespread and diffuse” (Hall et al. 1978, 226). This is crucial for the state to gather consent for radical security policies that infringe on individual liberty.

Coercion

While the spread and hold of dominant ideas are contingent on and more effective when arrived at by consent rather than coercion (*Ibid* at 60), coercion is rendered more palatable in times of crisis. Coercion is generally defined as a process by which “agents with considerable power can constrain the wills, actions, opportunities, bodies, and lives of others” (Leiser 2008, 17). This is done by delivering force/pressure from an authoritative source to compel someone to do something they are reluctant to do willingly (*Ibid* at 31). During these times, the law, specifically statutory power, combined with methods of constraint, are called upon and

implemented as the only possible way of "defending hegemony in conditions of severe crisis" (Hall et al. 1978, 278). Hegemony is armoured by coercion; therefore, the state is prepared to use "force and violence, threats, positional authority, and social pressure" (Anderson 2008, 17) in these moments of exception, which significantly deviates from their usual tactics of appealing to reason or rhetoric (Leiser 2008, 33). These responses are usually found to be 'oppressive and undemocratic', but more often than not, "we bow to the prevailing mood and withdraw to our own crowded corners" (Robson 1999, 43).

Coercion is an extreme form of social control; it is a tool used by the state, in which civil society moderates and reacts to the behavior of those it finds "threatening, incompatible, undesirable" (*Ibid*). Only in exceptional moments is the process of state coercion visible; there is immense pressure, anxiety, and a sense of urgency to do something to protect the population and prevent any immediate or possible future attacks. This is the environment that exceptional laws are created. In exceptional moments, a process of unmasking occurs where the state's mask of consensus slides away to reveal the face of coercion (Hall et al. 1978, 217); popular perceptions justify and legitimate this perception of the threat. Legitimacy, therefore, was established through the long process of gathering consent by planting the seeds of fear.

In the post 9/11 era, hegemony is essential for the effective implementation of national security policies. Ultimately, hegemonic theory helps explain why and how certain threats (the 'brown' terrorist) are universally understood as threatening and trigger deep-seated fear throughout the world. While other threats, that are (or should be) of equal or greater concern (the 'white' terrorist presented through RWEs) are perceived as less threatening with fear only experienced by their targets (marginalized groups). It also illustrates the processes used by the media and government in times of crisis to dictate the narratives surrounding exceptional events.

These processes harness and amplify the fear and hatred that the event generates so that new security protocols can be implemented, even if those protocols are extreme, undemocratic, and infringe on individual freedoms. These narratives are deliberately used to strike fear in the heart of the people, so as to not only secure power but implement policies and practices that would not be customary and accepted in normal times. The use of signification spirals to shape public opinion through stereotypes and binaries make it difficult to question the logic of the policies proposed because the arguments are articulated in very persuading and logical ways. This is why consistent exposure to news and speeches that have the same underlining message about national security and the 'war' on terror are so important. They ingrain into society a consistent message that ultimately persuades their audience to think a certain way (that all 'brown' people are the enemy) and eventually these narratives become common sense to the point where even if the evidence does not support the narrative (terrorist attacks are very sporadic yet fear is still significantly heightened, brown groups are still persecuted for being terrorists or that there is a more significant threat to the nation posed by RWE groups) it is still treated as understandable, accurate and acceptable.

Chapter Two: Fear and Identity; Cultivating the Terrorist ‘Other’

Affect: A Tool of Hegemony

Fear has taken center stage in the post 9/11 era, and while the event itself triggered more than enough fear throughout the West, the way that the event was articulated and given context by the government and the media has heightened and sustained that fear to this day. A symbolic enemy was created, making the populations fearful of all brown skinned individuals. The context regarding why the terrorists had done what they did and who the terrorists are (or look like like), was presented in a very singular and binary way, feeding into the empty signifier of the terrorist. Therefore, the domain of feeling or emotion is one of the avenues in which new formulations of 'common sense' are evoked. Invoking feeling is a crucial tool utilized throughout the creation of a hegemony (Williams 2020, 166) and, in some instances, can feed a 'moral panic'. Because hegemony cannot be implemented through a top-down approach, it must "work upon pre-existing affective structures, mobilising some dimensions, while restricting others" (*Ibid* at 168). In combination with the other processes of hegemony outlined in the previous chapter, the ruling class alliance "naturalizes itself, so that everything appears 'naturally' to favour its continuing domination" (Hall et al. 1978, 215). One realm of emotion that is consistently and successfully invoked is fear. Fear typically draws off of moments or events that prompt a sense of danger or threat (ex. 9/11), but sometimes the spread of fear does not require an actual event to occur in order to be potent. For example, Suvi Keskinen (2017) states that the spread of racialized fear required no 'actual' events to occur but merely suspicion (160). Brian Massumi (2005) states something very similar "The development of the emotion is now bound entirely to potential action. It can regenerate itself without the detour through actual movement: it can be enacted through in-action" (39). The basis for suspicion is born out of the constant linking between a

particular group (terrorist, immigrant, brown skinned) to a negative outcome (dangerous, immoral, animalistic, etc.), this is how the fear of the brown skinned terrorist has been sustained 21 years after the attacks on 9/11. For example, the linking of asylum seekers to criminal acts (i.e., sexual assault) led to a moral panic and an "atmosphere of 'crisis' that was out of hands" (Keskinen 2017, 160). This creates the perfect environment for overreactions that threaten democratic rights, the effects of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Leaders and experts use threat inflation to heighten fear and exaggerate threats posed to the state (Holden 2017). Potential threats are perceived to be everywhere, they are inescapable, and in terms of immigration, the threat keeps being 'let in'. For example, immediately post 9/11, public fear had become uncontrollable, mainly due to the vague warnings issued by the government of a possible imminent attack (Massumi 2005, 32). Even if no actual event occurs, it *could* occur, and that futuristic potentiality is what draws on fear. The threat alert system introduced after 9/11 was implemented with the intention of 'modulating' public fear, as the dramatic and vague warnings of another imminent attack had the effect of heightening fear to a point where it was hard to control (*Ibid*). Therefore, colours of Yellow/Orange/Red were used to heighten fears and then quickly lower them before "habituation dampened response" (*Ibid*). They were empty signifiers to be filled with multiple social anxieties that the government could control. To this extent, threat alerts "presented no form, ideological or ideational and, remaining vague as to the nature, and location of the threat...they were signals without signification. All they distinctly offered was an "activation contour": a variation in intensity of feeling over time" (*Ibid*). In addition, the way in which the ideologies of terrorist militant groups are described also plays a considerable role in generating fear. Terrorist ideologies and terrorists themselves are illustrated as "alien and demonic" (Holden 2017), which not only leads people to dwell on the

worst possible scenario but also to start seeing individuals who merely 'look like a terrorist' as severe threats. Which further ignites their fears and intensifies the process of othering. Tools of fear modulation (ex. alert systems regarding terrorism threat levels) decrease threat levels (and thereby fear levels) at just the right moment so that it does not become a process of habituation (Massumi 2005, 32). This is done so that individuals do not adapt to a higher level of fear, thereby lowering the effect, the response is able to remain authentic and heightened.

Playing to people's fears, significantly exaggerating fears (Holden 2017), i.e., fearmongering, is what induces and sustains this uncontrollable atmosphere of crisis. It is also how the dominant group gains power and the freedom to implement its more radical policies with little pushback as it “creates space where it is acceptable to hate” (Perry and Scrivens 2018, 178). The government tries to keep those heightened emotions in place long enough to gain the support for new policies to address events that normal times did not account for; due to circumstance, these policies are often drastic.⁹ Hegemonic structures are not always viewed in explicit forms (like the alert systems), everything that individuals regularly consume, such as television, books, podcasts, news, videogames, etc. may not have a clear ideological formulation that extols the central tenants of the dominant ideology, but it will have 'looser affective dimensions' of a structure where the realm of feeling is emphasized. Throughout this process, the structure is "normalized, without ever being explicitly proposed" (Williams 2020, 167). The news media, and by extension, the mass media, influences how public messages and events are portrayed by playing with its form and content (Altheide, 2004, 292). They are the primary

⁹ While governments do have good intentions when creating and implementing security policies under pressure, that is no guarantee that they will not overreact to the fear, insecurity, and uncertainty created by the terrorist act. One response to guarding against this risk was a suggestion of "good process," i.e., parliamentary debates, which is not always effective as "parliamentary debates in fearful times can be overestimated. Democratic institutions can and do overreact" (Forcese and Roach 2014, 3). Democratic institutions are made up of people. While the institution itself cannot feel or express emotion, the people who make it up can, and that human response can cause overreaction, not the institution itself.

institution responsible for widespread fear and consistently create and implement new vocabulary that organizes the everyday. The "mass media accounts about the 'war on terror' were grounded in a discourse of fear, which may be defined as the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness, and expectation that danger and risk are a central feature of everyday life" (Altheide 2007, 288).¹⁰ In this regard, common sense informs and molds the practices that eventually are incorporated within the everyday. The post 9/11 security paradigm has reframed everyday events into security issues through the mediatization¹¹ of terrorism, the perception of the 'everyday' was reconceptualized to encompass fear, anxiety, and concern in day-to-day life; terrorism began to "define reality" (*Ibid* at 299), it was in every imaginable aspect of society (*Ibid*).¹²

Therefore, the events of 9/11 activated deep-seated fears among the Western states. With the subsequent terrorist attacks around the globe in the following years, the fear did not have a chance, or in another respect, was not given a chance (by terrorist groups, the state, or civil society) to abate. This leads to a persistent feeling of fear without any actual danger "We have now entered the wonderland world where the startle can come without the scare: body activation without the feeling..." (Massumi 2005, 44). Threat is the harbinger of fear; fear made worse by the media constantly drawing attention to a threat that could possibly happen again, where attention goes, thought goes, and then a process of overthinking sets in (*Ibid* at 43-44). The issue

¹⁰ The 'everyday' consists of "Formal rites, ceremonies, ceremonial behaviors, and a host of ritualistic practices perpetuate these structures and cement their meanings into ordinary, everyday ways of life as reality—something we can depend on, something reliable, and ordinary, something we do not have to think about" (Cui and Rothenbuhler 2017, 156-7).

¹¹ Cui and Rothenbuhler define mediatization as "the strategic coercion of imperative media coverage of the attacks" (terrorist attacks), which encompasses the dependency on the media and their logic i.e., institutional rules, style, grammar, and frames (2018, 155 & 157).

¹² The body and mind cannot function for long periods in a state of constant fear and vigilance against a perpetual threat, therefore "To restore order and structure, vigilance and anxiety may settle into formal behaviors, becoming a new normal, protected by new rituals. Some reactions turn into new structures of everyday life..." (Cui and Rothenbuhler 2017, 158). When frequent terrorist attacks occur, the atmosphere of crisis does not abate but persists to a point where "...our very existence...has come to be constructed and perceived through the vocabulary of crisis" (Carastathis, Spathopoulou, Tsilimpounidi, 2018, 35).

lies in believing that a threat can and will happen again, with the possibility that it could happen to *you*. This leads to a heightened sense of fear and anxiety, which exacerbates negative thoughts. The media's interpretation of an event aids this process by outlining a particular way to understand the event based on what they perceive their audience to think already and know, these interpretations and understandings of an event also carry with them particular outlooks about the groups involved (Hall et al. 1978, 56). The knowledge of terrorism already has fear ingrained within it, so consequently, the perspectives tend to justify "racism and xenophobia" (Naber 2006, 257) and "promote stereotypes and extreme ethnocentrism" (Altheide 2007, 292).

Fear and Insecurity: Everyday Security Experiences

Post 9/11 security practices drastically changed how individuals experience fear and insecurity. Emotions play a significant role in constructing and implementing security practices. Being aware of these emotions (or lack thereof) is essential since claims of its objectivity cloak the emotional aspects that push the security practices into motion. Emotions have an important role to play in how "security problems are identified, articulated, and responded to at the level of political authorities but also in terms of how people experience security and how they carry out their own security practices" (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015, 1198). Everyday security experiences are acted through "violence, extensive prohibitions and extended surveillance" (Huysmans 2014, 60) among many other outlets. These experiences invoke feelings of insecurity and are one of the biggest influences of the public's perception of security in their everyday life as it accompanies them relentlessly and is then amplified when exceptional events interfere with and impact their ordinary routines and their perception of the future;

"...This enveloping of security practice in the everyday (Huysmans, 2009) is most visible when exceptionalist securitizing displaces insecurities from the battlefield to social milieus, when the enemy is understood within everyday practices of crossing

borders, working for a labour union, and eating with friends and family” (Huysmans 2014, 60)

Individual perception of security issues, responses, and experiences in the everyday is largely influenced by individual consumption of security issues on the Internet and televised news (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015, 1196). Therefore, if the enemy is generally broadcasted as someone they could very well know or pass by at any given moment, it makes the threat seem more heightened as it insinuates closer contact. When the enemy is not just a concept but a neighbor, co-worker, or someone you sit next to on a plane, the threat can seem more real even though reality has not changed, but the individual's perception of reality has, and that is all that is important. Making everyday connections to the 'enemy other' further heightens people's insecurity and feeds their fear to the point where that particular insecurity is all-encompassing. At this point, routines change and what is considered ordinary shifts. By pushing the focus onto the racial 'other', all other similar threats get pushed into the shadows. Focusing on one particular group or threat over all others changes the perception of not only the highly visible group but also the less visible groups. All groups may be a threat in differing or even equal respects. However, the public's perception of the threat dictates the energy directed at securitizing against it. This is why immigrants are considered a threat (consistently reported on in a negative light and highly visible), whereas Right Wing Extremists (RWE) are not (defended when reported on, not considered extreme/extraordinary, and given limited visibility). Immigrants are categorized as the 'other' and are thereby closely connected to our post 9/11 understanding of a terrorist. In contrast, RWEs are considered to be one of 'us' and are thereby significantly less threatening, they do not fit into our limited understanding of a terrorist.

There are numerous types of insecurity that individuals deal with daily, from the mundane, i.e., not being able to put food on the table or the possibility of getting into a car

accident, to the extraordinary, e.g., terrorist attacks. However, the difference between these more 'mundane' insecurities and the extraordinary insecurities is that the 'mundane' ex. a car crash,

“are tragic background noise in the pattern of human mortality. Their risks can be relegated and are generally understood. In comparison, terrorist attacks are overt acts of political violence whose scope and lethality are limited only by the capacity and imagination of their perpetrators... They are a conscious assault on freedom in a way that is dramatically different from the accidental perils of living” (Forcese and Roach 2015, 24).

Therefore, the insecurity that terrorism draws from is different; it does not matter that an individual has a greater chance of dying from a car crash than a terrorist attack. The majority of the time, the perpetrator of a car crash does not start his day with a plan or even a thought to get into a fatal car crash; it is usually accidental, either by chance or recklessness. The intention is usually not malicious. It is different for the perception of the terrorist (more specifically the brown terrorist),¹³ their actions are recognized as intentional, their character is perceived as vile, and they are thought to have no inhibitions, morals, or laws that constrain their actions.

Therefore, they are *perceived* to be bound by nothing that is considered legitimate by a governing body. While the assumption that terrorists have no inhibition and morals and abide by no laws or rules is not necessarily true, it is an important factor that drives individuals' insecurity in their everyday lives. They have no common ground with the terrorist and thereby no way of understanding why they do what they do. It is the inability to understand that is important; by remaining ignorant, the perception of the terrorist as otherworldly and inhuman is kept intact; the cycle of fear persists.

When groups are analyzed through an "us" vs. "them" mentality, their everyday experiences differ. The 'us' are free to do, be and act as they want, while the 'them' are merely tolerated. Their lives are contained and constrained by the 'us'. Throughout this process, the

¹³ I am not necessarily referring to what terrorist organizations want us to think of them, but what governments and the media portray them as since they directly impact our perceptions due to increased saturation.

identity of the 'other' is interpellated through "racialized notions of the 'Arab–Middle Eastern–Muslim'" (*Ibid*, 254) assemblage. It is an interpellation that aims to produce disciplinary effects. However, even if deviant, the identity of the 'us' is allowed a considerable amount of freedom since the disciplinary effects are not as heavily targeted towards them. They are not as heavily monitored, allowing them to get away with acts that the 'other' cannot. This disciplinary effect is also used as a tool of containment by affecting the 'others' mental state which consequently affects their physical actions, "By turning natural life rhythms into unnatural ones, and subconsciousness into vigilance, fear and anxiety become a constant state of mind, rather than an ephemeral experience" (Cui and Rothenbuhler 2017, 158). In this regard, every aspect of reality is constituted by fear. This has very little to do with the actual act of terrorism (killing and distribution of terror) but is more aligned with the cultural meaning that is bestowed upon the act itself (i.e., perception) (*Ibid* at 160). This cultural meaning is created by the media, the government, and what we as a society already always know about the terrorist. Therefore, fear is the primary tool that is used to constrain the other.

In contrast, those who are a part of the 'us', but are less accepted, the 'deviants' (RWE) have their grievances understood, they are rooted in the cultural identity and values of the nation, "The message of hate disseminated by RWE groups speaks to existing popular concerns—this is at the heart of the legitimacy of their rhetoric" (Perry and Scrivens 2018, 174). They look like 'us'; they are people you see, talk to, and joke around with every day. Therefore, there is a greater effort to sympathize with them, you may not agree with their argument or their methods to inspire and create change (or keep things the way they are), but you can see where they are coming from. They are relatable and understandable, if not misguided. They are becoming more organized and have started to adapt to fit into 'acceptable' society, their efforts to blend in have

allowed them to emerge from the margins of society into the higher political realm, giving them a legitimacy that they had previously not been able to attain, “While the electoral success of these extremists was limited, they nonetheless made their mark at the level of political discourse. They injected a note of intolerance into political debate” (*Ibid* at 178). This has allowed them to gain more influence than ever before, just like the state “...in order to have an impact on the actions of others, hate groups must strike a chord in the broader community; their messages must resonate with their audiences and potential recruits” (*Ibid* at 174). They have been given a voice, and because their ideologies have been crafted in a way that mirrors the majority’s they have not been shut down. This is due to both the power imbalance that the 'us' vs. 'them' divide has constructed in addition to the “‘climate of hate’ conditioned by state practices, policy and rhetoric...Practices within the state, at an individual and institutional level, which stigmatize, demonize or marginalize traditionally oppressed groups legitimate parallel sentiments elsewhere including among RWE groups” (*Ibid* at 176). These practices have provided an enabling environment that has allowed hate to thrive (*Ibid* at 172).

Creating the Terrorist ‘Other’: Folk ‘Demons’, Folk ‘Devils’ and the ‘Rogue’

All of these actors draw upon the concepts of a folk 'demon', folk 'devil', and the 'rogue' to construct and legitimize a climate of fear surrounding the 'other'. They are also paramount in understanding the influence that singular identities have on the racial 'other' that is the scapegoat of the terrorist label. A folk 'demon' and 'devil' are similar in many ways; a folk demon is "backward, uncivilised, irrational, violent, criminally inclined, misogynistic, and a terrorist threat..." (Smith 2018, 102). A 'folk devil' encompasses a group or person “whom all our most intense feelings about things going wrong, and all our fears about what might undermine our fragile securities are projected...when things start to disintegrate, the folk devil not only becomes

the bearer of all our social anxieties, but we turn against him in the full wrath of our indignation” (Forcese and Roach 2014, 5). Blame and retribution are potent motivators that allow people to carry on when a situation seems hopeless. Therefore, the folk demon/devil is created to fill the lack of control and hopelessness left in its wake. All of the anger, fear, confusion, and resentment are thrust upon them, and they are easily recognizable because of the oversimplification of their identity. The treatment of this group is justified because of the undesirable characteristics attached to their image. Similarly, presenting these individuals and groups as 'rogue' supports a singular identity as it affords no redeeming qualities; they are those who violate the customary practices of their community, they are

“Born different, a creature apart, of savage character, untrustworthy because prone to irrational, intemperate, and unpredictable violence. Monstrous, even deformed, in Armand Marie Leroi’s provocative characterization *mutant*. Bacon’s aberrants of nature, nature’s mistakes. The anomaly, beyond reason because beyond human speech, uncomprehending and incomprehensible. Beast, pariah, terrorist” (Goldberg 2009, 347).

Rogues are the nightmare in your dreams; they are beyond saving. The evil status of the 'other' is "validated by the vast repertoire of the negative images she has acquired in Northern discourses over the last 14 centuries" (Karim 2003, 65). The lengthy discourse of their villainous character, which permeates levels of cultural entertainment, means that this characterization is entirely probable. Their dangerousness and inability to change their character are taken as irrevocable. These folk 'demons', 'devils' and 'rogues' are symbolized as the Muslim 'other' which is then placed on the scale of the sliding signifier, "the fixing of difference...slides along the chain of equivalences, to metaphorically anchor all the other binaries of difference correspondingly" (Hall 2017, 64). Therefore, while the universal understanding of the terrorist is captured through the Muslim, the terrorist label can transfer from the Muslim to the Sikh to the refugee and so on. All of these signifiers are re-signified into the terrorist identity, although they are recognized in

different ways, one is just as bad as the other. Their essence boils down to the folk 'demon/devil' and the 'rogue'.

Singular Identity: The Binary Terms of Good and Evil

Identity is often presented through binary terms (good or evil, civilized or savage). It is a simplistic lens to view a person or a group. This simplicity allows the 'other' to be portrayed negatively and viewed as the enemy. Their complexity is dismissed; "...a person is not one thing – Muslim or Jew only, or an Arab or an American only, but many things: a parent, a mathematician, a Bangladeshi, a man, a feminist, a Muslim, all of these things at once, and thus a multiple and overlapping complex being whom the politics of singular identity reduces to a mere cipher and crams into a pigeonhole" (Grayling 2010, 39). The way the narrative is presented and the perspectives that the narrative draws upon encompasses the most basic universal definition of 'bad' or 'evil', which most people can agree on. It is easier to think in terms of singular identities when you are creating an enemy as it limits the need to dive deeper into that person's character, solidifying the binary of good and evil. When people think of the enemy in absolutes, it leaves no room for questions; people know without a doubt who it is they are fighting and protecting themselves against (*Ibid*). After all, it would be far more difficult to bomb, torture, or hold in prison camps 'enemy combatants who were seen as simply misguided or ordinary people with legitimate political grievances" (Jackson 2005, 75). However, this logic has trickled down to those who merely fit our misguided understanding of who a terrorist is and what they look like (ex. the caricature of the 'brown' terrorist), which allows them to be viewed as one who has the potential to become a terrorist. It compromises the lives of innocents, ordinary people who are impacted by these characterizations, and the unflinching cruelty that it has produced. The friend-enemy dichotomy becomes blurred to the point where prevention does not exclude in binary

terms but "fabricates the 'foe' within the social order as potentially dangerous" (Munster 2004, 151). Therefore, those suspected of terrorism are only semi-excluded; they are not separated from the social order but encompassed within it. Their dangerousness has not been proven, but the potential is there allowing them to go about their lives in a restrained capacity.¹⁴

Containing the 'Other'

In this regard, it is important to take into account what terms like 'terrorist/terrorism' "*invisibilise* and what they *produce*; which social forces stand to benefit, and which are constrained and contained?" (Smith 2018, 96). The terrorist label 'visibilises' and 'produces' a particular type of terrorist (the racial 'other') and 'invisibilise' others (the white terrorist). The terrorist is often constructed as 'alien', someone that is born outside of the nation, this representation aims to cement the boundaries between the inside and the outside, a citizen vs non-citizen, while simultaneously dehumanizing the terrorist through their difference so that they are not "entitled to the same rights and treatment by law enforcement officials" (Jackson 2005, 70). This construction assures that a terrorist cannot be a citizen, someone who is a part of the national identity. They can only be one or the other, citizen or terrorist, good or evil. Because RWE are viewed as citizens (they adhere to and promote the national identity), it is very difficult to view them as a terrorist. Our understanding of what and who a terrorist is, is based on the conceptualizations of 'us' and 'them'. This understanding constrains our perceptions of the terrorist, only allowing us to see terrorists as the 'other', and the 'other' is predominantly brown.

¹⁴ In this regard, risk management techniques have produced the *homo sacer* on a mass scale. People are not unique; they are only "a modulation that can be managed and tamed through continuous monitoring... risk management reduces life to the naked life of biographic profiles on the basis of which new collective identities or risk classes are created" (Munster 2004, 150). Everyone is a potential threat who can be monitored and punished according to these risk categorizations. However, the subject is not reduced to *homo sacer* as was typical in the past, "the figure of *homo sacer* dwells in everybody in the sense that all life is bare life until class credentials prove otherwise." (Munster 2004 152).

Current multicultural practices cause segregation and fragmentation by creating and sorting people through categories of difference.¹⁵ “Mainstream political thought and the news media in Canada all rely comfortably on the notion of a nation and its state both called Canada, with legitimate subjects called Canadians, in order to construct us as categorical forms of difference” (Bannerji 2000, 104). Therefore, second and third-generation Canadians, and by extension immigrants who are marked by difference, are not entirely accepted into the fabric of Canadian society (Roy 1995, 203). Since they are considered antithetical to Canada, “racialized immigrants are firmly cast as non-Canadian even as they integrate” (Kwak 2020 1172). To this extent, it has been argued that “the dominant culture had to be the encompassing culture and the law of the other the encompassed culture” (Hage 2011, 159). This formulation constrains the 'other' and ensures that when those boundaries are breached, it leads to a "crossing of a line beyond what can be tolerated, and... arrogant disregard of and disrespect towards...[national] values” (*Ibid* at 165). The ‘other’ is always expected to submit to the dominant culture, but because the dominant culture cannot always sustain control, the 'other' is perceived as a threat to Canadian identity because it could change the dominant identity.¹⁶ This change is always envisioned as negative, "The threat to (a) culture is that it could become something different, lose its (current) identity, cease to be by seeing what it takes as its core convictions, values, or commitments eroded" (Goldberg 2009, 377). Those seeking acceptance must conform to the ideals, values, and identity that the country upholds. The white terrorist is already ingrained into society and therefore can never be the ‘other’. They are not perceived as a severe threat because they represent the dominant identity, albeit a very extreme and narrow version of it. Because of this their actions are afforded legitimate explanations and motivations and are written off as the

¹⁵ This is because we have a flawed multicultural system, not because the concept of multiculturalism itself is the problem.

¹⁶ RWEs are not considered a threat because they represent the dominant identity, albeit a very extreme and narrow version of it.

unfortunate effects of mental illness (as was the case for Alexandre Bissonnette, the 2017 Quebec City Mosque shooter)¹⁷. Having the interest of Canadian citizens in mind, even if it is a skewed notion, allows people to sympathize with or at the very least understand their reasoning. Essentially, one group is deemed to be disposable while the other is believed savable.

Why We Don't Fear RWE

Over the past 50 years, Canada has built its foundation under the state policy of multiculturalism (Brosseau & Dewing 2009, n.p.). Multiculturalism ensures that all Canadian citizens, regardless of racial or ethnic origins, language, or religion, are equal, valued, respected, and treated with dignity (Hogarth & Fletcher 2018, 70-71). However, “rather than disrupt the white settler construct, symbolic recognition and multiculturalism policy become part of a flexible racial governmentality that enables white settler societies to cast out those that risk destabilizing its dominance” (Kwak 2020, 1172).¹⁸ To this end, in the post 9/11 world, multiculturalism policies input discourses of racelessness and colourblindness into everyday life by embedding them into political, social and technological platforms. Each separately invokes systems of repression regarding past racial inequalities and refuses to acknowledge the existence of racism in the present. They have contributed to the disappearance of European colonialism from public reference, restructuring the narrative of both history and memory (Goldberg 2002, 217). This restructuring impacts the public knowledge of the colonial past by reinterpreting past and present acts of racial oppression; it erases colonial/settler history and at times makes critical

¹⁷ Bissonnette was charged with six counts of mass murder and six counts of attempted murder. Psychiatrists for both the defence and the crown provided "detailed reports, revealing numerous previously undisclosed facts about the shooter's childhood, medical and psychiatric history and his plans of suicide and murder" (Fletcher 2018). All this highlighted his mental instability and provided a way for the audience to connect with Bissonnette and possibly empathize with him.

¹⁸ “Indeed, notions of tolerance and diversity may be extensively topicalized as ways to introduce more racist approaches” (Kwak 2020, 1169).

discussion regarding contemporary racism impossible (Genova 2010, 624). Essentially, racelessness encompasses

“... the neoliberal attempt to go beyond – without (fully) coming to terms with – racial histories and their accompanying racist inequities and iniquities; to mediate the racially classed and gendered distinctions to which those histories have given rise without reference to the racial terms of those distinctions; to transform, via the negating dialectic of denial and ignoring, racially marked social orders into racially erased ones” (Goldberg 2002, 221).

Racelessness, therefore, is the denial of the past and its hold on the present and future to the point where “...all racial reference is rendered “unspeakable”” (Kwak 2020, 1171). It distorts facts to suit the national narrative and, therefore, considerably contributes to forming national myths and narratives.

One narrative that is founded on Canada being a ‘raceless’ state (Kwak 2020, 1170), and feeds into the post 9/11 security narrative, is the “popular story that unlike in the United States and other parts of the globe, there is little worry about the rise of rightist, nationalist, racist, anti-immigrant, and neo-Nazi politics in Canada” (Kwak 2002, 1169). This narrative is not true, yet the lens of racelessness distorts facts right in front of the viewer. For example, ‘cordial racism’ allows for this as it “explicates exclusion or devaluation though in terms carefully and self-consciously race-neutral. It is, as raceless, a mannered racism, even exaggeratedly mannerist, civil to a fault, behavior by the book, racism knowingly in denial” (Goldberg 2009, 342). Racism ‘knowingly in denial’ leads to a tolerance in Canadian society of a specific ‘softer’ version of racism which is “accepted and legitimated as *not* racist” (Kwak 2020, 1172). To this extent, racism has drastically changed, “...racism *conceptually* becomes stigmatized so that only the obviously bigoted – extreme individuals – get to qualify...” (Goldberg 2009, 360). If only the obvious racist remarks are acknowledged, then racist ideologies are left unchallenged.

Colourblindness, especially severe forms, is defined as race being “implicitly relegated to the

status of something incidental which, frankly, no longer matters and is, in general, simply unspeakable" (Genova, 626). Colourblindness, therefore, enables a film to be placed on those who are coloured, so that they can be ignored and seen past (Goldberg 2002, 223). Colour does not exist; it is dismissed as no longer important or worth discussing. Yet colour is the main signifier used to mark a threat; it's part in the process is just left unacknowledged. These discourses shut down vital discussions regarding how past racial histories affect the present and how current racial issues are treated and handled. Even when racial pasts are discussed, they are assured as being firmly in the past with no bearing on life in the present. Invoking the racial past aims to delegitimize "race in the public sphere and expelling it from proper purview of the state" (Genova 2010, 624).¹⁹

Consequences

The consequences of these discourses stem from denying the existence of systemic racism, "persistent racial violence was and continues to be framed as anomalous, isolated incidents unrepresentative of Canadian character, rather than as embedded in the social and political fabric of the nation (Kwak 2020, 1172). Therefore, any racial violence committed by those deemed to be 'Canadian' is considered less of a threat since they are considered rare events that have no bearing on Canada's character. Bonilla-Silva (2019) suggests that the concept of the 'racists', who are viewed as a few 'rotten apples', "prevents us from analytically and politically targeting the collective practices, mechanisms, institutions, and behaviors that reproduce racial domination"

¹⁹ Contemporary multiculturalism has taken on the practice of apologies and forms of redress (McElhinny 2016, 52). These apologies are reactions to anti-racist and anti-colonial critiques, which tend to illustrate a split self that leads to contradictions where the current government is proud and gratified to be apologizing, yet at the same time remorseful for the actions of the previous government (McElhinny 2016, 56). The racial wrongs of the past are invoked with the single purpose of erasing and removing it from the present (Genova, 624). They deflect responsibility from themselves and accept it on behalf of another while simultaneously projecting the message that there is no such racism in the present. Apologies invoke the 'racial past' which "blames and disavows a past self... This works to suggest there are not similar harms in the more enlightened present, but also to distance the government from any significant legal/financial culpability, beyond the terms it sets" (McElhinny 2016, 57).

(1177). Focusing on the individual takes the focus away from the effects of systemic racism, which involves the practices and mechanisms that structure racial inequalities within our institutions. This is the real “race problem” as it reproduces “racial inequality and systemic white privilege” (*Ibid* at 1177-1178). These systems cultivate individual racism by leaving this unacknowledged; space is created for extremists to commit acts of violence and not to be charged (or punished) as severely as racialized individuals (*Ibid* at 1182).

These systems play out within the policies that regulate social media platforms (platforms which have allowed for the expedited growth of RWE groups). Systemic racism impacts how these platforms “reframe and redefine racist contents that are deemed worthy of removal, and, conversely, contents deemed acceptable and retained” (Siapera and Viejo-Otero 2021, 115). For example, the definitions of white supremacy drawn upon by these platforms “...are shaped by the limitations on the understanding of racism that characterize discourse and policy in liberal democracies today” (Ganesh 2021). If the definitions are flawed, then the policy is compromised. Multiculturalism and systemic racism also play out through the policy belief that “all races are seen as equivalent and equally protected. While of course this is right in principle, in practice it fails to recognize the history of systematic oppression of racialized people” (Siapera and Viejo-Otero 2021, 122). This allows for different actions to be responded to in similar manners, which does not translate to equal protection for the victims or penalization for the offending members. Lastly, these policies are merely reactive²⁰ which enables RWE ideologies by privileging the members instead of challenging them (Ganesh 2021), “...despite all this evidence that race is coded into these platforms, the ideology of color-blindness in technology—both in the industry

²⁰ For example, online social platforms have “... the minimal goal of only taking down content associated with a specific attack rather than propaganda, glorification of racist violence, or radicalizing content (which it appears to do for jihadist content that fits in those categories)” (Ganesh 2021). They argue that they do not want to take away from people right to free speech, yet extremism online from brown groups is immediately censored.

and in popular understandings of technology— serves a key mechanism enabling White nationalists to exploit technological innovations” (Daniels 2018, 63).

To this extent, raceless states silently apply the past "structure of social arrangements historically fashioned through race" (Goldberg 2002, 233). New problems are filtered through the same racist structures as past problems. However, they are done in a way that can be easily ignored, "The situation is one where racism in all its cultural and institutional variants has become so naturalized, so pervasive that it has become invisible or transparent to those who are not adversely impacted by them” (Bannerji 2000, 114). This impact is clearly seen in the parliamentary sessions examined in the case studies. It is a huge problem as it denies racial injustices founded on ways of thinking born from systemic racism. It applies a band-aid while ignoring the root cause. Everything is constantly changing; processes and structures need to evolve with these changes, but racelessness and colourblindness have made this nearly impossible. Most importantly, by believing that everyone is treated equally (because colour and race do not exist) the harm committed against persons of colour goes unnoticed and unacknowledged by the majority of the population allowing RWE groups to thrive. This process increases the threat that these groups pose while facilitating their ability to remain under the radar.

Chapter Three - Securitizing Against Terrorism; The Impact of Exceptional Politics

The events of 9/11 brought to the forefront a new type of security, national security. Individual and human security were put to the side as national security was perceived to be imperative to the survival of these other securities and the rights they ensured. This shift in focus emphasized only one type of terrorist threat, the 'brown' terrorist, discarding the possibility for another type of terrorist threat, the 'white' terrorist. This logic ensured that the 'white' terrorist is not seen as a national security threat, but a community threat (Bell 2020); more of a nuisance than anything else, thereby rendering it invisible. Responding to threats through a national security lens ensures strict responses without a significant loss of state legitimacy and enables the use of emergency powers and exceptional politics where the liberties of the 'other' are sacrificed more readily than any other group. This leads to an absurd double standard where one group is viewed as a significant threat and thereby produces an overreaction, while the other group is underreacted to even though they are an equal or greater threat to the nation.

New vs. Old Terrorism

The concept of a 'new' kind of terrorism and, therefore, a new type of threat has been circulating since the terrorist events of the 1990s. The supposed shift from a political/nationalist ideology of terrorist groups to that of religious fanaticism has been one of the main distinctions between the old and the new terrorism (Gofas 2012, 22). Events must be identified (i.e., named, defined, related to other events known to the audience) and assigned to a social context (i.e., placed within a frame of meaning familiar to the audience) (Hall et al. 1979, 54). Therefore, 'new' terrorism (religious terrorism, racialized) is being explained through the 'old' problem of terrorism (political/nationalist terrorism, predominantly by white groups), but it is depicted as being worse, much worse. The religious aspect of terrorism makes terrorist acts "uniquely

destructive and uniquely dangerous" because they follow their perceptions of a god's commands (Sedgwick 2004, 798). This is closely followed by the implementation of suicide bombings targeted at civilians in addition to the possible threat of terrorist groups being able to obtain nuclear, chemical, biological, or radiological weapons (Crenshaw 2008, 119). By linking weapons of mass destruction to the "new" terrorism, the perception of danger is increased considerably (*Ibid* at 134). This successfully magnifies the fear and solidifies the difference between religious terrorism as lethal, uncontrolled, immoral, and the 'old' terrorists as restrained, controlled, and pragmatic.²¹ However, "Many of the most alarming characteristics of religious terrorism identified by counter-terrorism experts are in fact characteristic of terrorism and radical politics as a whole, not just of religious terrorism" (Sedgwick 2004, 808). Therefore, the radical politics that signify RWE are the same characteristics of religious terrorism, yet it does not spark the same concern.

This is because the history surrounding terrorism is rarely consulted as it is deemed to be different from the current terrorist threats and therefore not beneficial. The lack of research regarding the history of terrorism highlights a willful amnesiac dispute (Gofas 2010, 19), where policy leaders deliberately ignore the history of terrorism and, therefore, the multiple similarities between the 'old' and 'new' terrorisms.²² The differences are more of "degree rather than kind" (Crenshaw 2008, 120). The problem lies with radicalism more specifically (Sedgwick 2004,

²¹ While it has been argued that "...lethality varies significantly across time and not across an "old" vs "new" divide." (Gofas 2012, 27), these distinctions have nonetheless increased the impression that terrorism has profoundly changed (Crenshaw 2008, 119-120). Older examples include Thugs, Assassins, and Zealots (Sedgwick 2004, 798). Religious motivation is a return to earlier motivations for terrorism. It is a much older phenomenon (Gofas 2012, 24; Sedgwick 2004, 795), and there are not as many purely religious groups as we are made to believe (Crenshaw 2008, 131). Al-Qaeda is only the most well-known *recent* example (Sedgwick 2004, 795). While many religious aspects define al-Qaeda, its "immediate objectives...are most certainly political rather than religious (Sedgwick 2004, 795-796). This generates a distinction between ultimate aims and immediate objectives. While ultimate aims tend to be expressed through religion or ideology, immediate objectives are more concrete, objective, and political (Sedgwick 2004, 797).

²² Terrorism comes in waves and usually takes on different forms depending on events taking place around the world. There have been four waves since the 1870s that have each been driven by something different: anarchism, anti-colonialism, the new left, and now religion (Rapoport, 2008). Each wave has its own "special characterises, dominating purposes...peculiar tactics and unique geographies" (Rapoport, 2008, 2091).

808), not just religion or politics or nationalism. As Crenshaw concludes “If we settle on religion as the answer, we are likely to misunderstand both religion and terrorism” (2008, 136). This conclusion should be kept in mind when religion is being targeted as an extraordinary source of ‘evil’. “At the policy level, it needs to be stressed that labels, words, frames, and the ideas that inform them, matter a great deal by means of having both a constitutive and causal effect on political phenomena and choices” (Gofas 2012, 19). Framing religious terrorism as a radically new variant of an old practice "...mobilizes both public and elite support for costly responses that have long term and uncertain payoff" (Crenshaw 2008, 133) while failing to attend to other, perhaps more severe threats adequately.

Law and Security

“National security is not a societal interest like any other, such as the cost of drugs or investment in the health-care system, it is an absolute necessity. Without it, all the other rights become theoretical. Without it, we wouldn't be here to discuss these questions today. I don't want to be alarmist, but without it, there is nothing else” (Crown counsel Bernard Laprade, Makin 2006).

Everything is framed in terms of security, from individual or personal security to human security to cybersecurity and so on. "The security paradigm of the twenty-first century has expanded to nearly every facet of human life" and is all-encompassing (Ball 2019). The language of 'security' arises in a wide range of matters and topics ranging from the everyday (i.e., how we regulate ourselves regarding what is considered 'safe') to more global concerns, such as actions that affect our health and the environment (Crawford and Hutchinson 2016, 1050). However, 9/11 brought national security to the forefront; its operations differ from traditional understandings of security and mobilizes legality in different ways. A national security threat is portrayed as and responded to in more severe and intense ways than individual or human security. It is "portrayed as serious, pervasive, and existential, which require special,

extraordinary, or exceptional societal and governmental responses” (Murphey 2007, 451).²³ A national security lens transforms the environment into one that is “securitized”, therefore making “it more governable and compatible with unquestionable security logic and values” (*Ibid*).²⁴ This makes it easier for the “governments to rationalize, suspend, challenge, and change long-established orders, conventions, rules, norms, and laws” (*Ibid*). It is argued that a national security threat cannot be combatted through normal politics as it does not have the necessary tools. Therefore, exceptions to the law must be made to address it adequately. This logic results in the liberties of certain groups being reduced over others, and as an extension, the erosion of human rights, equality, and democracy (Bowcott 2013; Forcese and Roach 2014, 25).²⁵

Exceptional Politics

Labeling something as a security issue paves the way for extraordinary politics. The primary rationale permits the government to do whatever it takes to make the country and its citizens safe (Falk 2007, 19). Therefore, risk management is paramount; this warranted the shift from reactive to pre-emptive responses, justifying almost anything in the name of security (*Ibid* at 21). This allows

“things that might ordinarily be politically untenable become not only thinkable but acceptable, including the introduction of extraordinary or exceptional new legislative powers or special measures. Security, thus viewed, is the result of a move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames some particular issue as above ‘normal politics’... is then moved out of the sphere of normal politics into the realm of emergency politics, where it can be dealt with swiftly and without the normal (democratic) rules and regulations of policymaking” (Crawford and Hutchinson 2016, 1053).

²³ The logic that “Al Qaeda and its allies cannot be deterred by conventional punishment” (Maras 2010, 23) helps support these responses.

²⁴ The policy changes brought about by 9/11 weaved discourses of insecurity into public rhetoric, the aim was to “educate and persuade Canadians to support a more aggressive national security agenda”, which highlights the “fragility and vulnerability of the Canadian state to both external and internal security threats” (Murphey 2007, 451).

²⁵ These rights and safeguards are compromised partly by implementing “Dragnets, identity cards, collection and centralised storage by the authorities of citizens personalized data” (Grayling 2009, 20).

Therefore, extraordinary politics allow for specific issues to be moved through the system much faster than ordinary circumstances would allow. While these processes can produce the originally intended outcome, they also can produce many adverse consequences where "the doctrine of unintended consequences are making the new security laws a catch-all for control and suppression unimaginable even a decade ago" (Grayling 2009, 20). Exceptional politics paved the way for the mitigation of civil rights and freedoms as a vast debate engulfed the globe regarding the balance between security and liberty. Therefore, individual rights and due process protections were put to the side while security protections sat front and center, with the rights and protections of certain groups being sacrificed more than others.

Even though over the past 100 years, emergency powers have become "so fundamental to the political administration of capitalist modernity that they have, to all intents and purposes, become a permanent feature of liberal democratic polities" (Neocleous 2007, 143), 9/11 only served to intensify these powers. This is because it prompted officials to address terrorism through war instead of "massive crimes to be addressed by law and order mechanisms appropriate for a counterterrorist response" (Falk 2007, 15). The 'war on terror' approach complicated emergency powers "as it has no clear end and no clear target, making it harder to define the parameters of... emergency powers" (American University 2016). This obscurity justifies indefinite emergency powers and allows extraordinary politics to become a habit, one that permits the administration and many other sectors to benefit from emergencies in a way that was not possible before. This phenomenon of extraordinary or exceptional laws is made possible through the state of exception, which suspends the law and can only be enacted once a state of emergency is declared (Agamben 2005, 1). It appears through an "essential fracture between the position of the norm and its application which, in extreme situations, can be filled only by means

of the state of exception, that is, by creating a zone in which application is suspended, but the law [*la legge*], as such, remains in force" (*Ibid* at 31). The law, regarding that norm, is technically suspended, but the law as a whole is not. The application has changed to fit the extraordinary circumstance, and therefore, the law has accommodated this change. Paramount to this understanding is that Agamben's conceptualization of the state of exception relies heavily on the legal concept of necessity. Necessity, in this regard, "is not a source of law nor does it properly suspend the law; it merely releases a particular case from the literal application of the norm" (*Ibid* at 25). Therefore, while the law is still in place, its definition and scope of application have been altered, either by way of expansion or complete redefinition. This allows for the law to still be used but in a more useful way, to securitize against the current (extraordinary) threat. The law becomes malleable, allowing for weaknesses in the normal political practices to be rewritten.

This coincides with what Jeff Huysmans defines as exceptionalist securitizing, which is when "...a political technique...thus enacts – both in the sense of acting out and bringing into being – conceptions of distinctions between normal and exceptional politics, limits of infringing normal politics and demands to transgress these limits" (Huysmans 2014, 68). Therefore, one of the aspects of exceptionalist securitizing is to find a middle ground between normal political practices in contrast to the exceptional in order to find ways of surpassing the boundaries of normal politics. These weaknesses allow the extraordinary to completely derail normal processes, "...exceptionalist securitising challenges democratic politics – its inherent weakness to deal with extraordinary, existential situations" (*Ibid* at 184).²⁶ In this sense, "...exceptionalist

²⁶ The weaknesses within democratic processes include compromising due process, the rule of law, and legitimacy, but they also allow for fear to instigate fast-track decision-making, leading to multiple unintended consequences. This is due, in part, because it is not always taken into account that "security *does* different things at different times and different places' (Crawford and Hutchinson 2016, 1053). It is not possible to be sure that a decision made in exceptional times will do what it was intended for in the areas it was intended. There is a ricochet effect that is not taken into consideration.

securitising works on the basis of intensifying the political stakes; giving them an importance that does not derive from the nature of the event itself but from the degree to which one relates the significance of the event to the political order or unit” (*Ibid* at 37). This illustrates again that one’s perception of the scale of the threat or danger is often much more important than the actual scale of danger. It is the perception that causes the increased sense of insecurity as the event is blown out of proportion causing the severe reaction, “...in the anxious and patriotic atmosphere that prevailed after 9/11 there was an atmosphere of uncritical receptivity to all official pronouncements across the...political spectrum. Such a broad undertaking was without precedent in the history of counter-terrorism” (Falk 2007, 22). These reactions pave the way for the argument of ‘necessity’ which suspends the normal application of the law as the process targets the weaknesses inherent in normal politics, justifying the need for extraordinary politics. Extraordinary or exceptional politics allows for severe reactions to be acceptable, where in normal times it would be unthinkable. Making it justifiable to treat ‘brown’ skinned groups as the enemy when in many ways it is contradictory to the objective of security practices; keeping the nation safe.

Overreaction

Reactions to terrorism are prone to both under-reactions and over-reactions. Both of these extremes come with their own sets of consequences, “Either we fail to respond meaningfully to risks or, in the process of responding, we threaten fundamental democratic principles” (Schneiderman, 2001, 69). Exceptional politics paves the way for overreaction which is the primary response to terrorist events since 9/11, allowing other threats to flourish. An overreaction can be defined as “...some actions excessive to their purpose” (Friedman 2011, 78).

This is because the environment that is left in the wake of a terrorist attack lays a foundation where fear is significantly inflated, and “Inflated fear creates a permissive environment for overreaction to terrorism” (*Ibid* at 83). The fear that 9/11 evoked caused extreme overreactions which incurred expensive (monetary and social) costs; the overreaction was said to be justified because the threat was unknown (*Ibid* at 85-86). One of the biggest consequences of overreaction is that it is quick to enact new laws that tend to cause more harm to those it is trying to protect, inevitably resulting in less safety (Forcese and Roach 2014, 25). It tends to “alienate communities, chill expression, threaten privacy and lead to false positives – blacklisting, disruptions, and preventative arrests of those who are not terrorists” (*Ibid*).

Current terrorism security legislation, such as Bill C-51, was created in times of fear through exceptional politics. It invokes dramatic regulations and draws upon very vague language, for example, “‘unlawful means’...activities ‘unduly influencing’ a government – whatever that means” (*Ibid* at 29). Recently, the scope of anti-terrorism laws has expanded due, in part, to the implementation of mass surveillance, in addition to broad and blurred definitions of different security threats (terrorism, extremism, radicalism, civil disobedience, etc.). With the definition significantly broadened, authorities can now keep track of people for acts of civil disobedience, impacting more people (*Ibid* at 30). This allows the legal application to spill over and onto innocent parties. However, until very recently,²⁷ the broadened definition had only extended to certain groups outside of its initial meaning (which is not restricted to one's religion or culture or how terrorism was perceived to be when the legislation was enacted). While it has been argued that this legislation can be measured by an “expression chill” (*Ibid* at 32), where speech is limited, halted and regulated, it only applies to specific groups. The groups that have

²⁷ The past year has seen an increase in terrorism charges laid for RWE acts.

been most affected have been those protesting²⁸ certain actions that the government has a direct stake in (ex. the Trans Mountain Pipelines)²⁹, while RWE has been left comparatively untouched.³⁰ This is because most of their targets are minority communities who are seen to be “... suspect in their very nature, and inimical to the fabric of civil liberties” (Grayling 2009, 25). Therefore, for the most part, their suffering is disregarded and goes unnoticed.

The Rule of Law and Discretion

Counter-terrorism approaches and political decisions in democratic societies are bound by the rule of law, which “...demands both state accountability and the protection of individual civil liberties...” (Austin 2001, 258). This significantly constrains their attempts at implementing counter-terrorism policies run by coercion, violence, and fear (Skoczylis 2017, 123; Huysman 2014,42). However, many counter-terrorism policies have operated in violation of the core tenets of the rule of law employing precisely such tactics and abandoning core principles. Many of the 'proactive' counter-terrorism responses infringed upon “...the rights and liberties of aliens and noncitizens in particular...” (Dragu and Polborn 2013, 512). This is because “The dominant paradigm that shapes how we think about anti-terrorism policies posits a fundamental trade-off between civil liberties and security from terrorism” (*Ibid* at 520).³¹ This mindset ensures that liberty, especially the liberty of the ‘other’, is always the first to be sacrificed as they are

²⁸ “...the examined conduct was previously treated as legitimate protest activity protected by the freedom of speech, as civil disobedience where legitimate grievances are at stake, or as ordinary crimes like public disorder and arson.” There is no need for bill C-51 to have language that could further convict these individuals under more severe legislation in addition to giving police more power to address the situation in a militarized response or to allow the bill to go so far as criminalize peaceful protesters (Terwindt 2014, 208).

²⁹ The RCMP and CSIS “view activist activities such as blocking access to roads or buildings as “forms of attack” and depict those involved as national security threats...” (Linnitt 2015).

³⁰ The legislation was intended for terrorists (to an extent violent extremist’s, who were mainly racialized due to the fact that this wave originated in the Middle East), an “extraordinary” act that requires an extraordinary response. Civil disobedience (that is mundane, tied to the fabric of democracy) does not require an extraordinary response, yet it is being treated as extraordinary.

³¹ There are a couple strong arguments to justify the restrictions imposed on liberty. The first centers around “The crude but powerful security logic of “better safe than sorry”” which balances the risk of liberties against security, ultimately concluding that fewer freedoms were an acceptable sacrifice (Murphey 2007, 456). The second is that an absence of subsequent attacks was due to a “tightening of control over people and activities...” (Falk 2007, 24), thereby making the sacrifice necessary (even worthwhile) to ensure security.

perceived as the biggest threats to security. Limiting their rights is seen as the most effective approach for guaranteeing security. This rationale is derived from the belief that “constitutional rules hamper” the executive’s ability to ensure security, which builds the foundation for citizens to “view a rigid adherence to legal limits as problematic” (*Ibid* at 511). Any policy that puts “principles before safety...[is] viewed as at best unrealistic and at worst dangerously irresponsible or deluded” (Lewis 2010, 218). This contradicts the argument that the rule of law is more important for obtaining legitimacy than the overall outcome or performance in managing threats. Although the rule of law acknowledges individuals' fundamental rights and dignity while simultaneously being neutral and objective when making decisions (Sunshine and Tyler 2003, 536), during times of crisis, citizens tend to value extreme action over adhering to legal limits. In this regard, under 'normal' circumstances sacrificing individual rights to secure against mundane threats would lead to a loss of state legitimacy. However, the type of threat will dictate the level of legitimacy lost, and "...not all breaches of beliefs, legality or consent are equally as damaging" (Harkin 2015, 602). This is one reason why legitimacy is kept intact when the rights of the ‘other’ are restricted, the post 9/11 narrative assured that the threat that the terrorist ‘other’ posed was significant enough to keep state legitimacy intact even if ‘beliefs, legality or consent’ was breached. If the rights of the ‘white’ population, even those on the margins like RWE, had their liberties restrained to the same capacity as racialized communities there would be a much greater loss of legitimacy. This loss of legitimacy is why social media sites, and the government, are reluctant to sacrifice individual rights (ex. free speech) to combat RWE rhetoric, they are ultimately silencing ‘white’ voices which does not go unnoticed. To this extent, unfairness can still be accepted and seen as legitimate in the eyes of "wider audiences" (*Ibid* at 601) which

highlights the embedded issues of structural racism, class discrimination, and inequality in general. In these new times,

“...the rule of law – arguably the most powerful ideal bequeathed by liberalism, is readily cast to the wind. Law – both domestic constitutional law and international law – appear so pliable and indeterminate as to make a mockery of contentions that law ‘rules’ at all, other than as a thinly veiled midwife to raw power” (Purvis 2016, 16).

Because fear of terrorism is heightened, what used to be considered illegal is now legalized.

Counter-terrorism law appears as “‘counter laws’ because... they are ‘laws against law’ that ‘erode or eliminate traditional principles, standards and procedures of criminal law that get in the way of pre-empting imagined sources of harm’” (Ericson 2008: 57 cited in McCulloch and Pickering 2009, 633). Suppose a principle, standard or procedure interferes with securitizing against future harm in any way. In that case, it can now be effectively eliminated in the name of security through exceptional processes that are becoming the norm.³² To this extent, discretion plays a significant role in what principles, standards, or procedures are deemed to be causing the interference.

Discretion can be effective to an extent. For example, the range of discretion is extended if authorities and institutions (ex., police, CSIS, government, etc.) are viewed as legitimate and effective. They can do more and utilize their expertise without being constantly challenged (Sunshine and Tyler 2003, 514 & 524). However, while limited discretion can be effective, full discretion can be counterproductive. Discretion on the part of the executive fails the rule of law if used to propose “significant intrusions on liberties protected by the Constitution, or when they are proposing to risk American lives for a particular cause” (Wood 2003, 466). Trust is only

³² Yet, in the past, responses that were guided by the rule of law were effective and have the potential to be again.

extended so far, and discretion is only effective to certain extents. The security rationale for executive discretion goes as follows, "If the executive cares about security from terrorism, and also about being in office and if the citizens are more likely to re-elect the executive if it is successful in preventing terrorism, then allowing executive officials legal flexibility of action should translate into more security from terrorism" (Dragu and Polborn 2013, 512). However, "when the executive faces increased electoral incentives to provide security, and the executive has legal flexibility to choose any policy it finds optimal, security from terrorism can actually decrease" (*Ibid*).

Although repressive policies have been proven counterproductive, executive officials are motivated to implement them regardless (Dragu and Polborn 2013, 520; Walker 2021, 343). This is because, in times of crisis, electoral votes are given to those seen to be taking strong and decisive action, yet strictly flowing legal limits do not allow for such action to be taken. Therefore, they forego the rule of law to allow for its implementation.³³ Consequently, unlimited discretion exercised by the executive branch has not only led to more violations of individual rights but also leads to less security, since repressive actions can actively facilitate pathways towards violent extremism (Frank 2017, 3). To this extent, in times of crisis and uncertainty, resources such as heavy-handed approaches, tend to be deemed more important than others, which disperses the focus to undermine effective resources. By broadening the focus, resources are "diverted...in a manner that undermined security" (Forcese and Roach 2014, 28). Therefore, if there were known limits to the executive's power, security increases (Dragu and Polborn 2013, 512). In order to effectively secure against terrorism, the executive needs structure and known

³³ Following citizenry values (i.e., democratic governance) is important but not at the cost of the rule of law.

limits, not flexibility. However, the post 9/11 world is fueled by fear and uncertainty, it is an environment that encourages heavy handed approaches which provide the executive the power to do whatever it takes to make the nation 'secure'. Therefore, what appears to be more important from the public's standpoint is the *feeling* of safety and security. So, we vote for those who *seem* to implement the practices and policies that we believe will keep us the most safe (strong and decisive action), which usually translates into repressive policies that not only restricts individual liberties but diminishes equal or greater threats, ultimately providing a false sense of security.

Surveillance: False Positives and Profiling

Pre-crime, mass surveillance, and profiling became central to national security post 9/11 due to the uncertainty and 'incalculability' that terrorism invoked. This shifted policy from a focus on risk assessment to precautionary measures (Maras 2010, 22).³⁴ Therefore, security practices shifted from a reactionary model to a pre-emptive model, whereas beforehand, "...mass registration and surveillance of the population and their movements were considered indefensible", 9/11 sparked a sharp increase in the approval rating for these practices (*Ibid* at 20). The pre-emptive model operates through suspicion by drawing upon methods of pre-crime, surveillance, and profiling, "The term 'pre-crime' captures the key problematic of the counter-terrorism legal regime. Pre-crime suggests that no crime has been committed, while *simultaneously* evoking the crime that hasn't happened" (McCulloch and Pickering 2009, 641). Surveillance and profiling are then implemented to monitor these non-crimes. While surveillance assumes that everyone is suspect, profiling assumes that only certain groups are suspect.

Surveillance "is the practice of making suspicion the default position from which to render and evaluate transactions, bodies and mobilities; they are suspicious until cleared"

³⁴ Based off of the precautionary principle which states that complete certainty is not a reason for 'inaction' (Maras 2010, 22).

(Huysmans 2014, 104). In order for bodies to be molded, punished, or controlled, they must first be known, and to do so, it must be broken down into parts to be observed (Haggerty and Ericson 2000, 612-613). The accuracy of portrayal and original context is irrelevant; all that matters are if the portrayals will provide the necessary means of "allowing institutions to make discriminations among populations" (*Ibid* at 614). This information is connected back to "particular bodies... and sites..." (Huysmans 2014, 104). The process is a mechanism of control enforced on the human body, where suspicion is its operational principle (*Ibid*). Most immediately visible in everyday practice is that not everyone is equally suspicious (*Ibid*), "The lives of the white mainstream are still comparatively untouched" (Haggerty and Ericson 2000, 617).

Law enforcement uses surveillance practices to profile specific individuals, '9/11 profiling' "...refers to practices that involve subjecting people who look Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim to discretionary law enforcement attention as a way to prevent terrorist activity" (Schildkraut 2009, 64). Those who fit this profile, whether or not they have radical thoughts (voiced online or in person), can automatically trigger a red flag. By simply fitting the profile they will always be closely linked with radicalization and violence, and therefore deemed a potential terrorist threat. The risk of members of suspect populations becoming violent is argued to be too great a cost; national security has to account for it. The focus is on specific 'suspicious' groups where some people are deemed more suspicious than others, this is because "...security is necessarily a negative concept with an exclusionary and violent logic, as it is predicated on the production of categories of enemy 'others' in that it implies a friend/enemy dichotomy and delineates bodies of 'us' and 'them'" (Crawford and Hutchinson 2016, 1053). This creates two groups, those who are disregarded and those who are targeted for intervention: "These

interventions are not only legitimized by the latter group but deemed necessary to protect ‘our way of life’” (Skoczylis 2017, 123). One of the biggest consequences of operating security practices through methods of prevention that rely heavily on suspicion is the potential for false positives; “In the national security world, a false positive is a state action based on a belief that a person is a terrorist or would-be terrorist – when in fact that person is not” (Forcese and Roach 2014, 30). This is because there is an unequal trade off of liberties, where “...many...are indeed willing to curtail the civil liberties of Arab Americans and Middle Eastern immigrants” (Schildkraut 2009, 62). They believe that these groups (‘brown’ groups) should give up more of their liberties than the rest of the population.³⁵

Underreaction

While overreaction tends to be the principal response for the majority of terrorist attacks, underreaction has been more common for attacks perpetrated by RWE.³⁶ This is because the two groups are perceived differently, even though many of the actions taken by RWE are similar to the action taken by ‘conventional’ terrorists. Underreaction differs from overreaction by not addressing the issue to the point where the threat is neutralized, “counter-terrorism must always strive to achieve two crosscutting goals. The first is to neutralize existing terrorists. And the second is to do it in a way that doesn’t generate new ones in the process. Whereas underreaction fails at the former, overreaction tends to fail at the latter” (Abrahms 2019). Underreaction fails to effectively neutralize threats by lulling us into a sense of false security, where we know and understand the threat, which somehow makes its risk minimal. However, underreacting to RWE threats can be translated into encouragement (Heitmeyer 2005, 148) and tolerance, “Failure to

³⁵ The feeling that whites have been mistreated leads to a higher willingness to trade more of Arab Americans and Middle Eastern immigrants' liberties (Schildkraut 2009, 71).

³⁶ “Media reports of particular right-wing events, especially of ‘successes’, also always serve to disseminate the positions of the elite and confirm the status of the groups as a factor to be taken seriously, which in turn may be propitious for escalation” (Heitmeyer 2005, 147).

attend to a RWE presence sends a dangerous message of tolerance. It empowers and emboldens groups and individuals who begin to think that they are under the radar and thus untouchable. Whether this is the reality or the perception is immaterial” (Perry and Scrivens 2018, 64). Therefore, a response that underreacts to RWE activity emboldens these groups as they believe they can get away with more,³⁷ once again, leading to less safety but keeping the illusion of security intact.

³⁷ It should be noted that intelligence and policing institutions do not have complete control over regulating harmful or false information posted online. The CEO’s of major social media platforms, who have this responsibility, “have previously been reluctant to police the content shared on their platforms” (Vinopal and Stabley 2021)

Chapter Four - Right Wing Extremists – Canada’s Double Standard

“CSIS viewed jihadists as a national security threat and right-wing extremists (RWEs) as ‘less of a threat, a community threat at best’” (Bell 2020).

Right Wing Extremism (RWE) is not considered a national security threat despite the fact that over the past thirty years, they have committed a hundred and twenty more deadly attacks than the twelve committed by Islamic jihadists (Mastracci, 2017). Between December 2001 (with the introduction of terrorism offences in the *Criminal Code* via the *Anti-Terrorism Act*) and December 2019, 56 individuals were charged with terrorism, none of which had any connection to RWE (Nesbitt 2021, 39). Within a two-year period, RWE groups have doubled, if not tripled (Davey, Hart, Guerin 2020, 8), with a recent study identifying “6,660 right-wing extremist channels, pages, groups and accounts” (Davey, Hart, Guerin 2020, 5). While the 2018 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada³⁸ states that extremist individuals and groups in Canada have the “intent AND capability to carry out an act of terrorism” (Public Safety of Canada 2019, 6) RWE remains a low priority under the shadow of the Islamic terrorist threat posed by Daesh and Al Qaeda (Public Safety of Canada 2019, 5), “The threat from Daesh and Al Qaeda is not the same as the threat from RWE/LWE” (Bell 2018). This insinuates that the most serious threats that we face, or those arising from certain types of ‘terrorists’, specifically the ‘brown’ terrorist. There is more conversation given to, and security resources allocated to, the threat that Daesh poses to Canadian security than the threat posed by RWE’s, even though Daesh hasn’t been a substantial threat to the country. This is one of the reasons why RWE have been able to ‘fly

³⁸ This is a report done by the Public Safety of Canada that outlines “the dangers to Canada posed by terrorism, and lays out how our professional security agencies use a full array of tools and powers to keep us safe and respect our rights” (Public Safety of Canada 2017, 1)

under the radar', the fixation on Safadi-Jihadists has heavily pulled resources to one area leaving other threats under-attended (Mastracci 2017).

There are multiple definitions of RWE; however, the definition proposed by Perry and Scrivens (2016) is the most in-depth. They state that

“RWE is a loose movement, animated by a racially, ethnically, and sexually defined nationalism. This nationalism is typically framed in terms of White power, and is grounded in xenophobic and exclusionary understandings of the perceived threats posed by such groups as non-Whites, Jews, immigrants, homosexuals, and feminists. As a pawn of the Jews, the state is perceived to be an illegitimate power serving the interests of all but the White man. To this end, extremists are willing to assume both an offensive and defensive stance in the interests of “preserving” their heritage and their “homeland”” (Perry and Scrivens 2016, 821).

RWE is protected by a history of oppression that privileges “the place of straight, white, Christian males” (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 91).³⁹ Extremism includes a range of both legal and illegal activity which “represents the advocacy of a system of belief that claims the superiority and dominance of one identity-based ‘in-group’ over all ‘out-groups’, and propagates a dehumanising ‘othering’ mind-set” (Davey, Hart, Guerin 2020, 10), the activity is not restricted to violent and explicit means, the legal and subtle activity is just as important as the illegal and violent activities since that is where the process of radicalization begins; “RWE exists on a continuum...only focusing on illegal activity would mean that a large corpus of xenophobic and exclusionary behaviour would be excluded...wide range of activity which is very helpful for understanding violent threats” (*Ibid*).

However, RWE violence is not considered terrorism for several reasons, the depths of which will be discussed further in the chapter. Even though they are not considered a threat, they do

³⁹ “By far the most commonly noted category of RWE is that associated with neo-Nazism or White supremacy. The anti-Semitism and racism that characterize so many hate groups can be traced to the theocratic principle of Christian Identity” (Perry and Scrivens 2016, 825-826). Christian identity (and its many versions) is what many western countries were founded on and have very strong roots today even though many of these countries are now secular.

meet all of the elements that typically fall under the label terrorism: "Terrorism involves at root criminal events: murder, bombing, hostage taking, and so on...terrorists are often animated by structurally grounded grievances, derived from an interpretation of a social order as itself illegitimate" (Perry and Scrivens 2016, 822). Terrorism is a basic crime that is perceived as ideologically motivated. However, the purpose behind the crime is more significant than the crime itself, "The intent of terrorists, regardless of their focus, is to manage or respond to a "grievance with aggression" meant to intimidate and instill fear" (*Ibid*). RWE intends to intimidate and instill fear in minority communities, mainly communities of colour. The fear that RWE generates in marginalized communities can destabilize the Canadian population, thus creating a security threat (West Coast Coalition for Human Dignity 2020). Further, RWEs view the government as illegitimate since it serves everyone's interests but the 'White Man' (Perry and Scrivens 2016), thereby meeting another criterion of terrorism stated above. Parent and Ellis further outline a number of similarities between the two groups,

"Nor does 'radical Islamist' terrorism warrant any special consideration because of its international dimension; the far right also thrives through multiple international connections across Europe, the United States and elsewhere. Ultimately, the decisive difference between the far right and 'radical Islamist' threats is not the harm they are each capable of inflicting on the people of Europe, or the geographical spread of their activities, but the fact that terrorists associated with 'radical Islamism' are using violence to oppose the foreign policies of European governments, whereas far-right groups are using violence to pressure for demographic and cultural changes to European societies. It is for this reason that the former is considered a 'strategic' threat whereas the latter is considered a 'public order' threat. Yet the distinction between 'strategic' and 'public order' threats is only valid if one holds foreign policies to be more sacrosanct than the rights of minority ethnic citizens" (Kundnani, 2012, 144).

There are many more similarities between RWE and terrorism which will be outlined further in this chapter, but essentially, what the state considers to be a critical threat to the nation is greatly influenced by how governmental policies are impacted and interfered with (especially foreign and international policy), and less influenced by the impact on security and human rights.

Post 9/11 counter-terrorism narratives have ensured that RWE activity has remained a 'blind spot' "with respect to how law enforcement and intelligence agencies focus their attention" (Perry and Scivens 2019, 103).⁴⁰ This is because RWE "...had begun to absorb significant elements from official security narratives themselves" (Kundanini 2012, 130). By morphing security narratives to fit their ideologies, they could stay out of sight and be perceived as less of a threat since they shared common ground with law enforcement regarding who was considered a threat. By (figuratively) brushing this problem 'under the rug', it permits RWE growth and allows an incubation period which creates a greater number of people radicalized. Under these circumstances, it is remarkable that the government, security agencies, and law enforcement do not consider these groups a security threat. RWEs are capable of violence that is just as 'terroristic' as any act committed by jihadis. They have committed more politically and ideologically motivated crimes than any 'brown' person has in recent years, therefore posing an equal, if not greater threat, to security.

Dominant Hegemonic Characterizations: How the Response to RWE is Shaped and Informed

Many deeply embedded dominant hegemonic elements inform the responses to both terrorists and RWEs and help to explain why the two groups, while similar, are treated differently. Firstly, it is difficult to expect change from citizens regarding racism/racial injustices when the government itself is partaking in racist and discriminatory behavior. As Murray suggests, "They should not be saying everybody stop discriminating. It's bad but don't look over here because we are doing it. That can't be the message" (2020). We must lead by example; there cannot be a huge disconnect between the government, the media, and society in this matter,

⁴⁰ Law enforcement has had a tendency of ignoring community activists and experts in the field even though they know what is happening on the ground better than law enforcement officials (Mastracci 2017); overall, their attitude remains lax (Murray 2020).

as it does not provide an incentive for change. Canada has a culture of discrimination, a culture that is deeply embedded within our identity and foundation as a whole, and it continues to be legitimized; as Gallant claims, "It's really hard to ask your citizens to not be racist, when your own laws still differentiate and keep a group of people under your thumb" (*Ibid*).⁴¹ Even if some of these laws were not created to be discriminatory, the language used and how that language is interpreted is. This has consequences for how other laws are interpreted, for example, "If you look at law as the living tree doctrine – everything is connected so if one element of the law is contaminated with racism, then it effects our system and is racist as a whole" (*Ibid*). While xenophobic and exclusionary behaviours are not illegal, turning a blind eye and allowing hate to fester increases the chance of drastic and illegal measures to be pursued in the future.

These ideologies are either left untouched or propelled forward due to embedded "racism, and long-held assumptions about which populations are intrinsically dangerous and safe" (Mastracci 2017). These embedded assumptions ultimately result in a lack of awareness of these groups. RWE groups are "part of the fabric of Canadian and American society...People have no way of othering them, so they think they are just fringe groups that don't really need to be paid attention to—until it's too late" (*Ibid*).⁴²The foundation of racism that our culture is built on informs how we see and perceive dangerous white groups such as RWEs. For example, it is argued that "while racism, bigotry, and misogyny may undermine the fabric of Canadian society, ultimately, they do not usually result in criminal behavior or threats to national security (Public Safety of Canada 2019, 8). Therefore, the process of 'othering' is integral to stoking societal fear and causing a moral panic (as it propels fear to an extent where the event is out of proportion to

⁴¹ This comment was made in connection to the treatment of indigenous people by the Canadian government.

⁴² Amarnath Amarasingam, a senior research fellow at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a global counter-extremism organization.

the actual threat (Hall et al. 1978, 20)). There is little outcry to RWE activity because the targets are not white and there is no othering the attackers. Since the target is a minority, the fear is concentrated within these particular groups and does not spread outward.

A major argument for the defence of RWE rhetoric, both in the media and Parliament, is the right of free speech; more specifically, finding ways to strike a balance between freedom of speech and hate speech/propaganda. As Conservative MP Michael Cooper stated, “It's important that we tackle this issue and while we do so, we of course have to be cognizant—as I think all of the witnesses have indicated—of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech, and how we can strike that balance” (CHPC Committee Meeting, 2017). Freedom of speech must be limited “When it begins to encroach on the safety and security and well-being of others, that really constitutes a red line” (Fogel 2019).⁴³ However, the definitions of what constitutes the safety, security and well-being of others, in addition to determining when those lines are crossed, are heavily debated. Furthermore, the law itself creates a double standard (Simon and Sidner 2019),⁴⁴ there is a lack of consistency in how the law (and thereby punishment) is applied; similar attacks are handled differently. The tools needed to stop RWE threats infringe on free speech, yet when the situation is reversed and the terrorist threat of suspect populations is the subject, their rights are not defended. “Even if someone is politically motivated to cause violence due to their right – or - left-wing extremist views, that's not enough to get them off the street” (*Ibid*).⁴⁵ There is a lot more pushback on what methods are acceptable to combat RWE threats and how much freedom people are willing to sacrifice in order to do so. Most of the conversation

⁴³ Shimon Koffler Fogel, the Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, said in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

⁴⁴ RWE has been described again and again as ‘loosely connected’, ‘confused’ (Brown 2019), ‘less cohesive’ (Silman 2018; Ling 2020), and ‘unorganized’ (Ling 2020) than known terrorist groups, therefore, making it difficult to connect a clear ideological basis and motivation.

⁴⁵ Josh Campbell, CNN law enforcement analyst and former FBI special agent.

regarding freedom of speech has to do with the regulation of online platforms (Grady and Hussein 2019), “Most social media companies are aggressive in trying to get jihadis off their platforms. They are far more cautious, however, when it comes to white supremacists, fearing political backlash” (Byman, 2019). There is more legitimacy given to RWE during this conversation than there ever was to ‘brown’ communities, mainly because RWE culture reflects our culture.

Secondly, we have cultivated a climate that gives people “‘permission to hate’, through such mechanisms as rhetoric, legislation, policy, the arbitrary use of “legitimate violence” and secondary victimization” (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 96). RWE isn't based solely on individual causes; it is born from cultural, political, and institutional causes that have fostered racism, heterosexualism, ableism, etc. (*Ibid* at 90) throughout the centuries. Its achievement is due to the fact ““Communities have histories of hate”. It is these histories, and their contemporary remnants, that lay the foundations for the emergence and growth of a racist RWE movement” (Welliver 2004, 251 found in Perry and Scrivens 2019, 90). This is the “hegemonic bloc” that the state supports (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 96), and it has mechanisms that allow hate to work its way into the mainstream. This is because the state not only tolerates hate but creates environments for it to thrive. For example, how high-ranking members of Parliament support or justify exclusionary and/or racist policies permits the public to do the same. For example, “Harper’s thwarted efforts to ban face coverings during citizenship ceremonies were also taken as evidence by RWE adherents that he was in their corner....” (*Ibid* at 98). This confirms what was argued in chapter two, that “the politics of fear mongering creates spaces where it is acceptable to hate” (*Ibid* at 99).

The issue of not publicly calling out RWE, instead referring to domestic terrorism as a whole (Simon and Sidner 2019), allows for this climate of hate to thrive. By not naming RWE, the threat remains vague, generalized, and hidden from view; the "...Lack of specificity was troubling..." (*Ibid*). By keeping the issue vague, the unique challenges that accompany it are not being identified and worked through, "...for the most part the RCMP was denying that there was any threat from them – they would talk about anti-statists, anti-authority movements rather than white supremacist groups" (Murray 2020). This is a stark contrast to how other terrorist attacks and supposed threats are reported. Immediately surrounding a terrorist attack, the government and media strive to link a negative action with a face, a name, or organization; it is very specific and visible. This is not the case for RWE attacks; by not putting a face to the name or even a name to the event, they refrain from linking a movement to the threat. Decision makers brush the threat posed by RWEs aside because they do not see this threat as equal to others. Compared to the 'brown' terrorist the threat posed by RWEs is small and insignificant. This belief is incredibly problematic, while it lowers the fear spread throughout society, it also reduces the need for education on racism and diminishes the consequences of white extremism.⁴⁶

When high-ranking politicians and media personalities refuse to (not only) denounce this behaviour but change the way they talk about it, they carelessly show their support for them while simultaneously legitimizing the movement and normalizing their behaviour. A prominent example of this is Ontario Premier Doug Ford and his association with Faith Goldy. Faith Goldy is a far-right, white nationalist commentator/supporter who ran in the Toronto mayoral elections in 2018. She is openly associated with neo-Nazis and white supremacists through participating in

⁴⁶ In addition, the event is more deliberately attached to us as a nation. The violence does not conform to our sense of self, so to not alter the carefully crafted image that is 'Canada', we do not give it credence, we do not make it a big issue and thereby refrain from advertising it as much as possible.

rallies and being a speaker on their podcasts (Silman, 2018). Ford posed for a picture with Faith Goldy in 2018 at Ford Fest “and declined to denounce her”. This was then “...used by Goldy’s campaign to legitimize her message” (Holt 2018). This legitimation allows RWE to be pulled further into the mainstream, justifying their actions, normalizing their behaviors, and making it that much harder to treat it as a serious threat. Normalization creates an air of insignificance and a lack of awareness of these groups and their dangers. By integrating RWE beliefs into the everyday they are accepted and/or go unnoticed. “Their values and worries, while extreme, are not so different from normative Canadian values, grounded in white supremacy. This makes it easier for alt-right groups to draw in average white Canadians, gaining both sympathy and the ability to operate without flagging attention from law enforcement” (Mastracci 2017). If their values are perceived as our values, then it is difficult to see the need for change.

Thirdly, government discourse overlaps with security policy so that “the government has been able to entrench a values and identity narrative as the prevalent way in which terrorism is understood in society; this narrative — amplified by popular newspapers — has been ripe for appropriation by the far right” (Kundanini 2012, 139). Public and institutional racism is embedded in all levels and has given rise to these RWE organizations (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 91). This is because processes of racial profiling make “people feel comfortable with their prejudices and grants those who hold pre-existing racist attitudes permission to express those attitudes and expect them to be taken seriously. It empowers individual prejudices and fuels popular fears” (Bahdi 2003, 315). Therefore, RWE movements are empowered by these underlying beliefs and utilize them to “strike a chord in the broader community; their messages

must resonate with their audiences and potential recruits” (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 93) in order for the message to be received and not rejected.⁴⁷⁴⁸

When discussing the issue of extremism in Parliamentary debates, there seems to be a misalignment with what the Parliamentarians and experts are verbalizing and what their actions are realistically able to achieve. Being in agreement to collectively denounce white supremacy doesn't have the effect they seem to think it does. Change remains stagnant if the agreement is only verbalized, for example, in a meeting on the Standing Committee for Human Rights in April of 2019 the discussion centered around a study on the issue of online hate, one parliamentary member stated that “It's important as we move forward in the study that everyone agree that we clearly denounce white supremacy and racism and intolerance directed to any group and denounce any hateful ideologies. I think in being aligned in that way we would have a very good basis to move forward” (Barrett 2019).⁴⁹ While the committee is discussing a number of ways to take action on the issue of online hate, specifically online hate concerning white supremacy, most online platforms only go so far as denouncing RWE ideologies as a way of acknowledging responsibility (the government is also guilty of this), without actually taking responsibility for their part in fostering environments of hate. While it is necessary to publicly

⁴⁷ RWEs also play upon elements of the dominant hegemony; Faith Goldy “knows how to speak to her audience, how to morph her ideology to fit whoever she needs to convince” (Silman 2018). By appealing to common rhetoric and the concerns of its audience, they slowly start to build trust from one group to the next. The power of this tactic is that you have loosely connected ideologies and groups that are not cohesive, which are then translated as a minimal security threat which is quite different than how terrorist groups are framed and perceived. The group's cohesiveness is important when determining which groups could meet the criteria for the terrorist list or even a national security threat. However, with RWE groups, “they're so loosely connected. These individual's kind of aggregate online and they may share loose ideologies. But it's really confused and not necessarily specifically directed or on behalf of a group” (Brown 2019).

⁴⁸ While these processes have legitimized RWE grievances and methods, RWEs themselves have helped their cause move into the mainstream. They have run in a number of elections in Canadian provinces, most notable Ontario, and have injected a “note of intolerance into political debate”, they have legitimized their presence in both political discourse and the mainstream” (Perry and Scrivens 2016, 826).⁴⁸ They have been recognized and taken seriously in political circles by “toning down the rhetoric, and doing away with the white robes and brown shirts. But...also...by forging links with the ultimate authority: the state” (*Ibid*). These political endeavors do not necessarily have to be successful in order for their ideology to take hold,⁴⁸ “As part of the official political apparatus, such extremists have the appearance of legitimate actors with valid interpretations of the state of economic and cultural relations throughout the country” (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 99). Therefore, even if they don't win, their interpretations are given authority which draws in more of the population, furthering their cause.

⁴⁹ Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Michael Barrett CPC.

declare that white supremacy, racism, intolerance, and hateful ideologies will not be tolerated, taking effective action or even altering controversial actions by the government would be a much more effective step. Words mean nothing if there is no follow-through; this particular environment is not conducive to change.

Lastly, there is an overemphasis on deterrence through punishment. André Schutten, the legal counsel and Director of Law and Policy for the Association for Reformed Political Action Canada states “that the government does have a role in enacting swift justice to punish a wrongdoer seeking violence against another person or group of people” (Schutten 2019),⁵⁰ the issue, however, doesn’t necessarily come from a lack of punishment but from an environment that allows for this hatred to grow and then manifest into violence. Punishment and extraordinary politics are not the only ways to reduce a threat, yet they always seem to be the main solutions implemented. The government's part in creating this toxic environment is rarely discussed. Their responsibility to do the work and cultivate a less toxic environment so that these ideologies find it harder to thrive is not seen as an immediate solution and is therefore always perceived as less of a priority.

This same logic can be applied to the argument made by critics that the government should support "initiatives and projects that create understanding between Canadians of all walks of life. Education, in addition to our existing hate laws, is our best defence, and offence, in dealing with hatred and racism” (Elbakri, 2017).⁵¹ Again, this is correct, however, it is targeted at the public and does not seem to include the education of government officials. The government cannot effectively help create these initiatives and projects because many of its members share the same animosities, resentments, and beliefs that are the focus of these projects. These actions

⁵⁰ Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

⁵¹ Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Idris Elbakri, Manitoba Islamic Association.

have a ricocheted effect, impacting all other government and security branches. For example, the military shirks responsibility for having RWE in their ranks by claiming that they cannot definitively know who is a RWE (in a practical sense). General Jonathan Vance claim's that "It is entirely possible that we are not sufficiently aware of the indicators or the insidious, corrosive effect of having extremism in our ranks. I think we're academically aware, like technically aware. But from a practical basis, how do you know for sure?" (Boutilier 2018). This statement highlights the double standard afforded to 'white' groups and the excuses made because of it. Significant research has been done on these behaviours that can easily be applied from a 'practical bases'. The military knows that there is an issue of extremism within their rank's, but they are hesitant to address it because there is a possibility that they will impact members who are, in fact, innocent. This hesitancy is not afforded to 'ethnic' groups in the post 9/11 era, and once again highlights the lack of concern the government, and their institutions, have for the threat posed by RWEs. This lack of concern stems from the issue of systemic racism that permeates our governmental institutions. It feeds into and impacts everything, making it much easier to cast the 'other' as the villain than to condemn one of 'us'.

How Security Narratives Inform our Understanding and Reactions to RWE

While the government has shown little interest in controlling RWE the public, media, and law enforcement have also refrained from putting pressure on the government to deal with this issue, "The tendency to deny or ignore the threat has had big consequences: unchecked growth, bolder tactics, and increased organization—almost all entirely unimpeded" (Mastracci 2017). The fact that all decision makers are largely silent on this topic and that both top-down and bottom-up approaches are non-existent is a cause for concern. This is due in part because terrorism as we know it, in our post 9/11 world, has formed ways of thinking that have framed

our understanding of national security issues. RWE, while using similar methods and causing similar pain as the terrorism we know, drastically differs from that understanding. Fear, racism, xenophobia, etc. have been used to inform post 9/11 security practices and have been central to the constitution of hegemony. The narratives that inform these practices "have provided discursive opportunities for new far-right actors whose ideologies significantly overlap with government discourse, and which are therefore harder to counter" (Kundanini 2012, 139). The rhetoric used to inform the public of terrorist attacks and potential suspects heightens the fear response, which legitimizes RWE hate-filled actions,

"Some of our political leaders need to tone that rhetoric down and actually calm people down...and tell people this is not the right way to go, instead of stoking the fears of xenophobia by talking about the war on terror and (that) we're in this sort of apocalyptic conflict with the Islamic State" (Boutlier 2015).

These narratives have led to a disproportionate focus on Muslim populations that has extended to all 'brown' populations "who are conceived as harbouring a generational problem of identitarian violence, while the issue of far-right violence is neglected or seen as involving only individual 'lone wolves'" (Kundanini 2012, 129). This has allowed Islamic and other religious extremists to be presented as drastically different, as more intense, as more dangerous, as less reasonable than RWE. While RWE was presented as isolated incidents by a few 'lone wolves', Islamic extremism was presented as more embedded and sinister. It "was seen as symptomatic of a generational conflict over values, multiculturalism and identity" (*Ibid* at 139). There is a belief that the Canadian right-wing movement is "...in a permanent state of disarray or impotence"; this belief is "short sighted" (Barret 1989, 237 found in Parent and Ellis 2016, 23).⁵² To this extent, the

⁵² "At best, RWE groups were deemed "three man wrecking crews" or "losers without a cause", thereby minimizing the relative threat posed by the latter (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 105-106).

security narrative has allowed officials to categorize RWE as a 'public order threat', not a national security threat, because of the movement's fragmentation (Quan 2016).

The security narrative “constructs subject positions of who ‘we’ are (those who share liberal values) and who ‘they’ are (the ‘brown’ communities) who are presumed to reject those values) and attempts to unite a diverse range of groups against ‘Islamic extremism’” (Kundanini 2012, 138). This logic legitimizes RWE grievances; they are for 'the people' and against 'Islamic extremism'. In addition, it creates a blind spot, where RWE is not singled out as a threat.

Therefore, they remain invisible to that extent, however, they are visible in the sense that they are on the 'right' side of the conflict; they are with 'us', they are us. By not acknowledging the targets as innately human and by not viewing them as one of ‘us’, their suffering is not viewed as important. Therefore, there is not enough of an incentive to protect their welfare. By forcing investigative and security responses to remain fully on Islamic extremists and not allowing for the resources to spread to other threats (Parent and Ellis 2016, 23), RWE is categorized as a low priority with slow responses that ensure worse attacks will come in the future. However, for some reason, the concern is not that RWEs will become (or even are) terrorist threats, it's that "Run-of-the mill murderous misfits might, at some unknown point in the future, be attracted to [organizations like] the Islamic State" (Walkom 2015). The chances of them joining the terrorist 'other' on an international basis are more of a threat than their domestic actions as a criminal entity.

In addition, the training surrounding terrorism and extremism is very narrow, only encompassing specific beliefs and aspects around it (Perry and Scivens 2019). In this regard, Islamic extremism is perceived as being at war with 'our' cultural values and identity and therefore is established as more of a threat than RWEs, who, while misguided, share our values

and identity, even if a more extreme version. This belief impacts the perceptions and decisions of several security environments, namely law enforcement and intelligence agencies. These institutions have been shown to underestimate RWE (Perry and Scivens 2019), “They trivialized their potential for growth and violence. Even in cities where officers admitted to RWE membership numbering in the hundreds, the threat was downplayed. Rather, they were much more interested in left-wing extremism, or more likely, Islamist-inspired extremism” (Perry and Scivens 2019, 105). This is because the victims of RWEs are populations who *are* deemed suspect due to the national security narrative. Police officers encourage RWE through their treatment of minority victims, they “set the stage for bias-motivated violence by acts of omission, or failure to act...Such violence is explicitly condoned when police fail to investigate or lay charges when victims report assaults motivated by bias (*Ibid* at 103). In addition, while the media do report significantly less RWE activity this is impacted, to an extent, by how much police departments are willing to share. Since they believe that RWE is not a severe threat (as they are viewed as more of a nuisance/misfits) they do not notify the media of relevant activity. Therefore, charges are either not laid or it goes through the courts but does not result in criminal charges, consequently there are no public records of it (Parent and Ellis 2016, 4). These particular victims are deemed to be less important than others; Leftists and Islamists, he argues, are thought to represent a threat to highly symbolic targets such as the state and state (or other) elites. RWEs, in contrast, largely target those ““at the fringes” (Lehr 2013: 201). However, some RWE groups have taken the state and police as a target. The 2018 public report singled out law enforcement as a main target but did not mention the threat to minority communities at all “Uniformed personnel face a specific ongoing threat. They have been singled out as a particularly desirable target”” (Public Safety of Canada 2019, 6). This is because the police are a

symbolic target representative of the state. Curbing the danger to law enforcement is a priority, therefore, the actions taken against this group are deemed more threatening than actions taken against minority groups.

The RWE section of the Public Report on Terrorism is sparse, RWE activity is relatively absent, when it is discussed, the report contradicts itself on the threat level that domestic extremist groups pose.⁵³ In the 2017 and 2018 Public Reports on Terrorism, it was claimed that

“while racism, bigotry, and misogyny may undermine the fabric of Canadian society, ultimately they do not usually result in criminal behavior or threats to national security...In Canada, individuals who hold extreme right-wing views are active online, leveraging chat forums and online networks to exchange ideas, as opposed to openly promoting violence” (Public Safety of Canada 2019, 8).

“It is the evolution from online hate to serious acts of politically-motivated violence with the intention of intimidating the public, or a segment of the public in regard to its sense of security, that could be considered a terrorism offence” (*Ibid* at 1).

They state that RWE in the past has rarely resulted in criminal behavior or threats to national security, implying that the violent threat posed by these groups is low. They are simultaneously raising its threat level by conceding that the spread of "fear, hatred, and mistrust" can develop into "serious acts of politically-motivated violence" thereby accelerating to the threat of terrorism. They acknowledge that it can become a terrorist threat and thereby a national security threat but underestimate its ability to do so effectively. The report states that it implements a “flexible and versatile whole-of-government approach, which [is] tailored for each specific individual and situation” (Public Safety of Canada 2019, 3). However, this process is ripe for discrimination if its foundation (or ‘central value system’ (Hall et al. 1978)) is built on racism,

⁵³ When drafting the 2017 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada, a senior officer also questioned why it was listed as a ‘principle threat’, stating that it was better suited to the ‘ideological violence section’ as there are no listed terrorist groups in Canada suggesting that “despite the lack of listing there are far right terrorist groups” (Bell 2018). Just because they aren't listed doesn't mean that none exist, for example, Blood and Honour, a Neo-Nazi group that has been around since 1987, has just recently been added as a listed terrorist entity, they committed acts and follow an ideology that fell under this category before the listing.

fear, and white power. Hegemonic ideology has a vital role in the security response chosen in the face of each threat.

One of the reasons for the contrast in reactions is that the public response to these events is very low. The 2018 public report illustrates the central role that public interest plays in forming a response to a terrorist threat; it states that “Above all, the Government of Canada continues to counter terrorism in a manner consistent with the expectations of Canadians – to protect its people and its allies in a manner that reflects our shared values, rights and freedoms” (Public Safety of Canada 2019, 31). To this extent, the government and security departments are following our expectations. If they do not see a cause for concern and ‘us’ (as a society) are not raising our concerns, it does not technically pose a national security threat (yet). To this end, the dominant hegemonic ideologies that informed the post 9/11 security narrative plays a significant role is how we as a society view the threat. We are not concerned because we know this particular ‘threat’, we can see them as complex human beings and therefore sympathize with their grievances even if we do not support their methods. So, while we may not view them as a national security threat, they can still pose a significant threat to our "national values such as inclusion and respect" (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 06).

Case Analysis

The *Criminal Code* defines terrorism as something that is committed

“(A) in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause, and (B) in whole or in part with the intention of intimidating the public, or a segment of the public, with regard to its security, including its economic security, or compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act, whether the public or the person, government or organization is inside or outside Canada...” (Criminal Code 83.01(1)(b)(i)(a-b)).

It includes the intentional cause of death, serious bodily harm, life endangerment, and anything that poses a “serious risk to the health and safety of the public or any segment of the

public” (Criminal Code 83.01(1)(ii)(a-c)). While much of RWE activity falls under this definition, RWE violence is mostly referred to in terms of hate crimes and discrimination, not terrorism or security. The most common forms of violence within the Canadian RWE movements, which are referred to as 'criminal violence', include "brutal beatings, with fists, boots, baseball bats and other similar weapons. Knives are occasionally wielded while guns are rare" (Perry and Scrivens 2015, 35). This violence is described as mainly 'reactive' (*Ibid* at 34), "random brutality, apparently for its own sake," with no connection to the group's ideological positions (*Ibid* at 36). However, there has been an increase in cases of arson, bombings (*Ibid* at 35), and mass shootings. What makes the ideological violence increasingly disturbing is that the groups hold extreme views towards (and target) "racialized, religious and gender minorities" (*Ibid* at 36). In many cases, they are 'campaigned' against,⁵⁴ for example, Chinese students in St. John, NB were followed, harassed, and attacked several times in 2007; “victims are targeted due to identity, and because of the nature of the violence, it has a dramatic impact on individuals and their communities of reference” (*Ibid* at 39). The (deliberate) acts of violence create a “broad physiological impact” throughout these communities, which is one aspect of domestic terrorism (and terrorism in general) (Jones et al. 2020, 2).⁵⁵ According to CSIS, terrorism “is the deliberate use—or threat—of violence by non-state actors in order to achieve political goals and create a broad psychological impact” (*Ibid*). Most of these groups have political or ideological aims; they are trying to change the system in some way so that their grievances will be addressed; they attempt to achieve this by physically attacking and psychologically tormenting minority communities.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ There have also campaigns of hate in Brampton, ON, through the use of pamphlets and flyers (Perry and Scrivens 2019, 49).

⁵⁵ One of the categories that the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) includes in their definition of domestic terrorism (Jones et al. 2020, 2).

⁵⁶ Psychological impacts can be made even if no death results from these acts.

There are many more similarities between RWE and other terrorist organizations that we typically associate with the 'other'. The impact on targeted communities, as discussed above, is one of these similarities, their unpredictability is another; "the very unpredictability of violence here may make it all the more disturbing. It is difficult to assess precisely when an attack might occur, or what might motivate it" (Perry and Scrivens 2015, 35). Therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint when an individual goes from spreading hate online to inciting violence in the 'real world' (Barrett and Sullivan 2009).⁵⁷ This is also one of the issues presented by so-called jihadi terrorism, especially with the introduction of lone-wolf attacks; terrorist legislation affords the police exceptional powers, allowing them to act much faster in these cases. Therefore, this logic is not extended to 'brown' people who are viewed as terrorists; the police and intelligence agencies don't wait until they incite violence; they act beforehand. Another argument is the intricate globalization of jihadi terrorism. It has been argued that RWE does not have an extensive reach and therefore is presented as less dangerous than Jihadi terrorism.⁵⁸ This is not the case, RWE movements have globalized, especially white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements. Deadly attacks from these movements have spread throughout most of the western world. For example, in 2011, seventy-seven people were killed in New Zealand by Anders Behring Breivik. In his manifesto, he highlighted the threat posed by Muslims and liberals. In addition, in 2019, fifty-one people were killed in a mosque in New Zealand by Brenton Tarrant, who live-streamed the massacre. "[B]oth killers drew on 'thinkers' and grievances from other

⁵⁷ The internet has been described by high-ranking officials as being separate from the real world many times. For example, Justin Trudeau stated, "Terrorist and extremist content online continues to spill out into the real world with deadly consequences" (Trudeau 2019). Ralph Goodale, a member of parliament, stated something similar "The impacts of terrorist and extremist content online are increasingly reaching the real world" (Public Safety of Canada June 26, 2019). Framing what happens on the internet as not being a part of the 'real world' is ignorant. The online world is a part of the real world, technology is ingrained into our lives on every level and affects people's lives in many ways. What is posted can and does cause damage; just because something is posted online instead of being said in person or written on paper does not make it any less real, nor does it have no repercussions. The online world is not a fantasy world and should be treated with as much caution as the so-called 'real world'.

⁵⁸ Defence Minister Jason Kenny stated that "The threat of terrorism has never been greater. Combating them becomes more difficult as they merge, morph and migrate" (Chase 2015).

countries and causes, presenting themselves as defenders of global European white civilization” (Byman 2019). In addition, the group Blood and Honour is an international neo-Nazi network founded in England. The group (including its armed branch Combat 18) has committed violent acts all over the globe, including several bombings (Public Safety of Canada, 2019). It has only recently been designated a terrorist group by the Canadian government,⁵⁹ however, it has been around since 1987. Therefore, while their acts have not changed, how those acts (i.e., arson, bombings, stabbing, racial harassment, etc.) are perceived has. Consequently, while there are many similarities between the two groups (RWE and Jihadi terrorists), the narratives surrounding them heavily dictate how each group is perceived, presented, and understood.

Labelling RWEs as ‘misfits’ is one of the most common explanations/excuses for the violent behaviour perpetrated by RWEs. Former Justice Minister Peter MacKay argued that ‘cultural motivation’ needs to be present in acts of violence for terrorism charges against RWEs. In response to an event where three individuals were plotting to open fire in a Halifax shopping center, Justice Minister Peter MacKay told reporters that since there was no cultural motivation, the plot was not an act of terrorism (Walkom 2015). While the Canadian state criminalizes intent and not “actions that might cause terror”, cultural motivation is not a category included in the definition of terrorism, “religious, ideological or political” motivations are (Department of Justice, 2015). Intent adds an intricate layer during the process of criminalization, as certain intents are perceived to heighten the violence of the act itself. There is also a double standard relating to the type of interest and propaganda connected to these plots/acts of violence. The individuals charged in this particular case had an interest in and propaganda related to violence and Nazism. Had it been propaganda and/or an interest in ISIS or Al Qaeda, terrorism allegations

⁵⁹ Three US based RWE groups and one individual have since been added to the list: the Proud Boys, the Three Percenters, Aryan Strikeforce and James Mason (Public Safety of Canada 2019; Public Safety of Canada 2021).

and charges would very well have been laid (Walkom 2015). Instead, MacKay categorized the perpetrators as “murderous misfits, apprehended through normal police methods” (*Ibid*).⁶⁰

The Quebec Mosque Shooting vs. The Parliament Hill Shooting

In 2017 Alexander Bissonnette shot and killed six people and seriously injured five others after attacking the Quebec Islamic Cultural Center, a mosque in Quebec City (BBC 2020).

Bissonnette took up anti-foreigner and anti-feminist positions; he had only shown an interest in extremist politics the previous year when French Nationalist leader Marine Le Pen visited Quebec City (Lum 2017). While Prime Minister Trudeau and Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard condemned the shooting as an act of terrorism (CBC 2017),⁶¹ others categorized it as a “hate crime” (CBC 2017), and the RCMP characterized it as a criminal ‘extremist’ attack (Leblanc 2017).⁶² The police did consider adding ‘terrorism-related’ charges but “the law is written in such a way that a person acting entirely alone is unlikely to face terror charges” (CBC 2017).⁶³ Even if terrorism charges were laid, legal professionals contend that it would likely not add to the severity of the sentencing, as Bissonnette already faced the maximum legal penalty. However, terrorism charges do add a “symbolic weight” (CBC 2017) to how a perpetrator is viewed and by extension how their communities are viewed. Consequently, the social reaction that follows is just as significant, if not more significant, than the legal consequences of a terrorism-related charge. The symbolic weight of the terrorism accusations made against

⁶⁰ In addition, childhood trauma was used as a defence for the violence inflicted by the White Boy Posse, a white supremacist drug gang, “The families that these guys grow up in are incredibly violent; not just physical violence, but sexual violence as well...They’ve endured unimaginable suffering. Now that doesn’t let them off the hook, but it does help us understand how they come to be involved” (Wittmeier 2012). Bob Paulson made a similar argument in the wake of the Quebec Mosque shooting, “We need to understand this offender...What was driving him to act in the way that he did? Sometimes there is a political backdrop to that” (Leblanc 2017). There was more effort to understand the actions of the White Boy Posse and the Quebec City shooter than was ever afforded to jihadi terrorists. How they came to be the way they are was not a priority, all that mattered was that they were a threat to security.

⁶¹ Couillard also described the shooting as a “murderous act directed at a specific community” (Kassam 2017)

⁶² Bissonnette made a statement claiming that “In spite of everything that was said, I am not a terrorist, nor Islamophobic ... [I am] more a person who was carried away by fear and a horrible form of despair” (Dalton, Page, McKinnon 2018).

⁶³ Kent Roach, a University of Toronto law professor, stated that “Inspiration alone is not enough — you would need some form of active participation or direct instruction or incitement to commit a terrorist act” (CBC 2017).

Bissonnette did not take hold and the attack, overall, was viewed as an unfortunate mass shooting committed by someone with a mental illness, which allowed the RWE viewpoints to take root. Bissonnette's initial two consecutive life sentences were successfully appealed, making him eligible for parole in twenty-five years instead of forty. The argument for this reduction was that the sentence was "cruel and unusual" and also "absurd" (BBC 2020).

You can see a stark contrast in rhetoric between the Quebec Mosque shooting and the Parliament Hill attack. On October 22, 2014, Ottawa's Parliament Hill was attacked by Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, a lone gunman who put the city into lockdown for nine hours, killing Cpl. Nathan Cirillo, a sentry on duty at the National War Memorial, and sparking a shootout with the police (Laucius, 2019). Zehaf-Bibeau was described as a home-grown terrorist and a "self-described jihadist...who descended into mental illness and addiction" (*Ibid*). However, his mental illness and addiction did not mitigate the aggressive responses from parliament. The differences in rhetoric are influenced by the group affiliation/ideology (ISIS/Jihadi extremism vs. RWE (White supremacy, neo-Nazi etc.)), the skin colour of the attacker, and also their nationality/religious affiliations. The focus for the Parliament Hill shooting centered around the "fact that the perpetrators were Muslim converts who sympathized with ISIS and extremist ideas of jihad" (Stastna 2015).⁶⁵ The overall response to the Parliament Hill shooting was aggressive; RCMP commissioner Bob Paulson told the commons committee that

"Anyone who aided him, abetted him, counselled him, facilitated his crimes or conspired with him is also, in our view, a terrorist and where the evidence exists we will charge them with terrorist offences" (Bronskill 2015).

⁶⁵ It states 'perpetrators' not 'perpetrator' because the article was comparing another attack against Canadian soldiers, just two days before the Parliament Hill attack, by Martin Couture-Rouleau (Stastna 2015).

Prime Minister Steven Harper utilized the attack to further emphasize the differences between 'us' and 'them' and the importance of national security measures to garner votes for the upcoming election. In a speech, Harper stated that,

*“We are also reminded that **attacks on our security personnel and on our institutions of governance** are by their very nature, attacks on our country, on our values, on our society, on us Canadians as a free and democratic people who embrace human dignity for all”* (Harper CBC, 2014).

Harper also stated, very dramatically, that “Canada is not immune to jihadist terrorism...Two [tap] brave soldiers [tap] dead [tap] on our own [tap] soil [tap]” (Cudmore 2015), and that the attack "will lead us to strengthen our resolve and redouble our efforts to work with our allies around the world and fight against the terrorist organizations who brutalize those in other countries with the hope of bringing their savagery to our shores” (Stastna 2015). Essentially, he was stoking the fear and hostility of the ‘other’, while drawing on the importance of Canadian values and our responsibility as a nation to come together and fight the enemy.

While some questioned whether the attack should even be seen as an “ISIS threat, but rather as the isolated, violent actions of mentally ill individuals in crisis”, the response by Thomas Juneau, a security analyst with the Department of National Defence, was that "Even if they had some form of mental fragility or vulnerability or illness, that doesn't change that they did it under inspiration from the Islamic State. They were not guided or directed by the Islamic State, but inspired by the ideology, by the online activity" (*Ibid*). Yet this logic did not extend to the events of the Quebec Mosque Shooting, the ideology that inspired him was not seen as the main issue; his mental illness was. Labeling RWE as born of mental illness restricts their culpability,⁶⁶ if they have a mental illness, that does not mean that they are not a RWE or a

⁶⁶ It was argued that the “far-right was seizing on the attacker’s mental illness as an attempt to shield itself from scrutiny in the wake of the attacks” (Hume 2020). Labeling a RWE as mentally ill limits the connection to the movement.

terrorist, nor does it render them blameworthy. Robert Lüdecke, a spokesman for the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, a German organization that works to combat the far-right, said, “You can be mentally ill and extreme right-wing at the same time” being mentally ill does not “disqualify him a right-wing extremist” (Lüdecke cited in Hume, 2020) and therefore does not erase his culpability.⁶⁷ While the Parliament Hill Attack was vehemently condemned as a terrorist attack, the Quebec City Mosque Shooter was described by Bob Paulson as a ““criminal extremist”, he defined this category to include people such as Justin Bourque, who killed three Mounties in Moncton in 2014, and the Freeman-on-the-Land movement that challenges government's authority across the country” (Leblanc 2017). One conservative MP, Scott Reid, even tried to argue that it was difficult to see that the Quebec Mosque attack was a hate crime because all the victims were men, “I think that with an actual hate crime, it's sometimes easy to tell. In the case of the man who went into the mosque in Quebec City, his victims were all men, but had they been all women, it would have been obvious that he was attacking them because they were Muslims, not because they were women” (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2017). This is a very flawed logic that diminishes the experiences of the victims and the severity of the crime committed.

Unfortunately, this logic seems to be the norm, as it has been historically difficult to get the police to enforce anti-hate laws that are already in effect (DiMatteo 2021). The language used to compare mosque attacks (in general) is comparatively neutral. In a tweet, Conservative MP Andrew Sheer described "the massacre of 50 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, as an attack on “freedom” – failing to acknowledge that Muslims had been murdered because of their faith” (DiMatteo, 2021). While the grounds for terrorist charges were discussed

⁶⁷ Robert Lüdecke, a spokesman for the Amadeu Antonio Foundation.

in the Quebec City Mosque attack, how it was done was much slower and more methodical than the Parliament Hill attack. There had to be a "compelling public interest dimension, and the evidence is sufficiently developed to make the sensible argument that a terrorist prosecution is in order..." (Leblanc 2017). No one leaped to terrorist charges; the charges were well thought out. The media and political portrayals focused on the mental illness, thereby lessening the spread and level of fear.

The post 9/11 era has created an environment that has emphasized national security. However, due to the heightened levels of fear surrounding the 'brown' terrorist, RWE groups that pose a significant threat to national security have been dismissed as small and insignificant by state institutions and the public as a whole. This has created a twisted reality where society is more concerned about the illusion of security than security itself and the protection of certain groups over others, drawing the focus to particular 'enemies'. The narratives that were used to bind the nation together after 9/11 instilled an underlying narrative that is based on a collective national identity which made it acceptable to excuse the hateful ideologies of RWE. In addition, enforcing the binaries of 'us' and 'them' created a culture of intolerance that fed the worst ideologies. This not only provided the necessary justifications for extremists in our society to commit abhorrent crimes, but these ideologies and actions are also considered to be less 'evil' than those of the 'brown' terrorist and anyone caught in that dragnet. While most RWE groups may not be considered a designated terrorist threat, that does not mean that they are not, or cannot, be a principal threat to the country. As Selim⁶⁸ states "too often, there seems to be a reluctance to name white men as possibly dangerous. And that itself is dangerous because white supremacists and nationalists are a 'real and persistent threat'" (Simon and Sidner 2019). For

⁶⁸ Head of the Countering Violent Extremism Task Force at DHS.

terrorism charges to be laid, the movements will have to get bigger and therefore more organized; however, calls for harsher sentences via terrorism legislation are not the appropriate avenue to tackle RWE. In this regard, it could be argued that the effects of the terrorist charge are not legal but used to change societal perception on an issue and change how similar cases are managed. With that being said, linking RWE to terrorism increases the fear spectrum, taking away individuals' ability to think objectively and combat it in a level-headed manner. Although it is argued that this is the most effective way of stopping it from being normalized, it is also the most extreme option. It will lead to the same issues of blame and persecution that ethnic communities targeted as terrorist have faced (*Ibid*).

Chapter Five - Terrorists as Refugees: The Case of MV *Sun Sea*

May 2009 marked the end of the (almost) 30-year Sri Lankan Civil War, marking the arrivals of two illegal migrant ships to land on Canadian shores; the MV *Ocean Lady* in October of 2009 and the MV *Sun Sea* in August of 2010. The Civil War had severe implications for Sri Lanka's Tamil population resulting in mass casualties in the island's northern region (Krishnamurti 2013). While the civil war may have ended, the "fears of ongoing violence, detentions and government reprisals led many to flee throughout 2009 and 2010" (*Ibid* at 141). The mid-2000s introduced some new provisions that hindered migrants from making refugee claims. Firstly, the Third Safe Country Agreement between Canada and the US stipulates that one must make a refugee claim in the first country in which they land so that migrants would no longer be able to make a claim in Canada if they land in the US (*Ibid* at 142). Secondly, visas were a requirement in order to be accepted into the host country. However, to receive one, they must have the intent to return to their country of origin, which, when leaving a hostile environment, is not ideal (Krishnamurti 2009, 142). These two requirements forced many migrants into a dangerous voyage because they had no other viable option.

The MV *Sun Sea*, a cargo ship carrying 492 Sri Lankan refugees, landed on western Canadian shores in 2010 (Quan 2015). The "Canadian Government was warned as early as January 12, 2010, that the end of the 30-year-old Civil War and the release of displaced Tamils from containment camps may create a significant challenge for Canada and its immigration system" (Schloenhardt 2013). A heavy emphasis was placed on security during this time, allowing the Canadian government to implement several coercive powers. The Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) had instructed its staff to "take maximum advantage" of detention as a tool and to build cases against migrants that would show human smuggling poses a significant

threat to the health and safety of Canadians” (Quan 2015). In addition, the possibility that the ship carried members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, otherwise known as the Tamil Tigers or the LTTE, was a considerable argument for increased security as well. The LTTE was the main Tamil nationalist party organization in opposition to the Sri Lankan Government. There was a clear ethnic basis to the Civil War, with the Tamils opposed to Sri Lanka’s Sinhalese-dominated government and state violence perpetrated against them (Krishnamurti 2009, 154). The overemphasis on “national security and enforcement-based responses” (Kaye 2017, 182) fanned “the flames of fear and racism about the individuals on the boat by insisting that many of them may have had links to the Tamil Tigers” (House of Commons 2011), thereby solidifying the passengers’ connection to terrorism in the public’s mind. The reaction to the ship’s arrival was out of proportion to the level of threat present, sparking mass anxiety and, therefore, a moral panic.

When the focus is on state security, there tends to be little regard for humanitarian practices; their stories, for the most part, are unknown to the Canadian public” (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 17). Upon arrival, the passengers were given identification numbers and stripped of their name, identity, and stories (Anandasangaree 2020), ultimately removing their humanity. The Prime Minister of Canada reaffirmed “that the federal government would ‘not hesitate to strengthen the laws if we have to’” (Kaye 2017, 180). However, before the ship’s arrival, the government was too caught up with spreading hatred, fear, and mistrust of the passengers. Instead of investigating "who was on the ship and what they had endured" (House of Commons 2011, No. 19), they actively placed barriers on their refugee claims with this 'knowledge' in mind. Once the boat arrived, the whole operation was kept under wraps for months, "Canadians learned little about what happened on the ship and, more important, who the

passengers were” (National Post Staff 2011). The Conservative government spun a one-sided narrative where they claimed that Canadians were outraged that “human smuggling syndicates are exploiting Canada's fair and generous immigration system to make a quick profit. They share our government's grave concerns that Canada will continue to be a magnet for these irregular arrivals unless we do something now” (House of Commons September 20, 2011).⁶⁹ Public sentiment was influenced by the Conservative government's claim that the majority of the passengers on board had terrorist connections, thereby drawing upon the seeds of fear, hate, and mistrust that were planted after 9/11.

While it can be agreed that a ship carrying a significant number of irregular migrants does pose substantial challenges to border services regarding identity, risk, and admissibility (House of Commons October 28, 2010), how the Conservative government portrayed the passengers and the way that they were treated following their arrival was unnecessary and unacceptable. Conservative MP Rick Dykstra, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, argued that “Often, they arrive without proper documentation and we do not know whether they are criminals or terrorists who pose a threat to our safety and our security” (*Ibid*). This immediately puts the passengers into an either/or category where the only outcome is negative. The possibility that the majority could have been legitimate refugees was not an option. As another Conservative MP, Rob Clark, states, “We do not want refugees' criminal ties are (*sic.*). Do we have anything to discriminate (*sic.*)? No. We just want safer homes in Canada” (*Ibid*).⁷⁰ However, this language suggests that they discriminate based on the assumption that most refugees who travel illegally have criminal ties, therefore insinuating that allowing any

⁶⁹ Brian Storseth (Westlock – St. Paul, CPC)

⁷⁰ Pretty sure he meant to say that we do not know what refugees' criminal ties are, but this is a direct quote from the parliamentary debates.

refugee who comes via sea (smuggling) puts our communities at risk. Just because they believe they have nothing to discriminate against does not mean that they are not discriminating.

Throughout the parliamentary debates on immigration that surrounded MV *Sun Sea*, much of the discussion tip-toed around discrimination, while the NDP and Liberals alluded to the discrimination of the provisions put into place by the Conservative government. It was only named outright a couple of times. Liberal MP, Nathalie De Rosiers, said, “As well, you don’t want discrimination, because that’s the wrong message”, in response to that comment, Conservative MP, Costas Menegakis, rebutted with “Nobody is talking about discrimination” (House of Commons September 26, 2012). However, in order to safeguard against it, they should be talking about discrimination; there needs to be a discussion surrounding due process, how laws can discriminate against certain groups more than others, procedural safeguards that should be put into place to mitigate this possibility, and how to balance the privacy interests of the passengers with the security interests of the nation (*Ibid*). However, by not acknowledging that discrimination plays a factor in immigration and security practices, they are unconsciously discriminating against a group while claiming their security practices are humane and protect the greater good when in fact they are not (House of Commons September 23, 2011). This process leads to inequality before the law by designating refugees as threats based on their perceived ‘otherness’ and heightening fear and insecurity by drawing on the empty signifier of the ‘brown’ terrorist. This leads to several issues surrounding the legislation and policy; if key actors are not consciously aware of the risk of discrimination, then they cannot foster good judgment surrounding the well-being of the passengers in addition to upholding their global image (which seems to be a huge topic of discussion in these debates). The response to MV *Sun Sea* was not based on compassion and humanitarian aid but framed in terms of economic and security impacts

(Lawlor and Tolley 2017, 979), thereby casting a sinister lens on the passengers where they cannot be viewed as anything but dangerous.

The Smuggler Terrorist Connection

In the weeks that led up to the ship's arrival, there were multiple allegations from academics and federal officials that the ship was harbouring terrorists with links to the Tamil Tigers,⁷¹ (Schloenhardt 2013; Bell 2011; The Record 2010; Youssef 2010; Woodward 2013). One of the main allegations that spurred this narrative came from the Director of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore, Professor Rohan Gunaratna,⁷² who claimed that people smuggling was one of the ways that the LTTE would survive and alleged that those smuggled would not just be the lower members of the organization but leaders and officials too (Schloenhardt 2013). Another academic at the University of British Columbia, Benjamin Perrin, alleged that the MV *Sun Sea* trip was "not some humanitarian mission" (*Ibid*). Both of these claims were seized upon by federal officials and newspapers, which heightened the panic surrounding the arrival of the MV *Sun Sea* because it increased the belief that those LTTE officials would set up a local chapter "in order to renew resistance to the government of Sri Lanka" (The Record 2010). The Public Safety Minister at the time, Vic Toews, even claimed that it was a "test ship ... part of a broader organised criminal enterprise" (Campbell 2010). This heightened the fears that smuggling would be used to illicitly bring terrorist organizations across borders (Schloenhardt 2013) and implies that all Tamils are terrorists (The Record 2010; Cader 2011), which is inherently dehumanizing. Toews labeled the passengers as "human smugglers and terrorists" (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 2)

⁷¹ "...a terrorist organisation from Sri Lanka, that fought for separatism in the island's north but was brutally defeated by the Sinhalese Government" (Schloenhardt 2013).

⁷² He has been criticized for having close ties to the Sri Lankan Government (The Record 2010).

without providing details and sources (The Record 2010), further heightening the media attention. The Conservative government was also accused of approaching “...this issue on the basis that everyone is evil” (House of Commons September 23, 2011). The narrative that the migrants were dangerous, undesirable, unwanted, and unwelcome was quickly solidified (Anandasangaree 2020; McArther 2020).⁷³ “The vilification of the *Sun Sea* migrants was so unchecked that the day after their arrival, infamous neo-Nazi Paul Fromm was able to arrange a rally of “concerned citizens of Victoria” (Cader 2011).⁷⁴ With chants of “Send the illegals back!” their goal was to vilify them.

These allegations are dangerous for many reasons; first and foremost, they put the safety of the ship’s occupants at risk. They could have presented the concern through a neutral tone, emphasizing that these allegations were merely speculation, thereby informing the public of the possible risk without heightening the fear effect and still securing the safety of all Canadians. Even though these allegations were contradicted and reported as 'fanciful'⁷⁵ (Schloenhardt 2013) and the federal government’s evidence was “trivial, unreliable and riddled with mistakes and speculation” (Cader 2011)⁷⁶ the damage had already been done with blatant anti-refugee sentiments.

“The anti-immigrant rhetoric employed by Jason Kenney and others about “illegals” and “terrorists” is to create and cultivate a climate of fear and xenophobia that justifies the recruitment and treatment of migrants as sub-human. By shutting the door to refugees, family sponsorships, and skilled workers, Canada is ensuring that migrants are increasingly worthy only in as much as they meet the labour needs of big business” (Toronto Sun 2011).

⁷³ Contrary to popular belief, Canada has always had a mean streak regarding immigration; during World War II, 900 Jews asked for entry into Canada, but the Justice Minister at the time refused them entry. An anonymous immigration officer claimed that “None is too many,” thereby essentially sentencing them to death as many of them died in concentration camps upon their arrival back in Germany (Cader 2011).

⁷⁴ Media outlets did not reveal his connection to the Ku Klux Klan, “thereby assisting in the spread of his hate and racism” (Cader 2011).

⁷⁵ UN spokesperson Mr. Gordon Weiss.

⁷⁶ It took six months for the federal government to concede to this (Cader 2011).

A few of the allegations that branded the passengers as Tamil Tigers “appeared to be coming directly or indirectly from the Sri Lankan government, which has a long history of labelling Tamil civilians as Tigers” (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 2). The CBSA claimed in a report that they had completed an investigation which has “established reasonable grounds to believe that one-third of the passengers were active members of the LTTE” (The Record 2010). Alykhan Velshi, the spokesperson for the Minister of Citizenship, Jason Kenny, went on record asserting that “We won’t allow Canada to become a place of refuge for terrorists, thugs, snakeheads and other violent foreign criminals” (Cader 2011). The last part of that statement is very significant as it affirms that all ‘terrorists, thugs, and snakeheads’ are foreigners and therefore not ‘one of us’, which is the quality that makes them the most dangerous. This one sentence sums up public sentiment towards the ‘other’; it is not an individual’s criminality that matters so much as their ‘otherness’,⁷⁷ it is their difference (which is usually correlated with criminality) that truly makes them dangerous in our eyes. In addition, while racism does play a huge part in the hysteria that ensued prior to and after the MV *Sun Sea* entered Canadian territory, classism also plays a significant role as politicians are more accepting of asylum seekers who are hand-picked and come by plane (or even foot) than they are of those who come by boat (Cader 2011). Similarly, Canadians are more accepting of immigrants than refugees, as immigrants are seen as contributors and, therefore, legitimate (Lawlor and Tolley 2017, 971).

The connection that was drawn between smugglers and terrorists is important, as it allows the government and the media to heighten public fear, “Now, some of these networks are connected, and *we believe* that they are connected with certain terrorist organizations. The whole purpose of terrorist organizations is to move their individuals around the globe if they need to,

⁷⁷ Although if they are the ‘other’, then they are considered criminals regardless and vice versa.

and a smuggling network is a prime way to move them around”⁷⁸ (House of Commons April 26, 2012; emphasis added). This illustrates two things; first, the government did not have any concrete proof of the ship's connection to terrorism as they use the words 'we believe' not 'we know' or 'we have substantial evidence that'. Secondly, it clearly asserts that the main goal of terrorist organizations is to move their people around the world. Naturally, smuggling operations are the main method of movement, solidifying the link between terrorists and smugglers and heightening fear because many Canadians now believe that every unauthorized 'migrant' ship⁷⁹ is likely to be carrying terrorists.

In addition, the reporting by Daryll Dyck for the Globe and Mail was consistently negative,

“Canada's Navy and Coast Guard will be *obligated* to assist the passengers and crew, who will be *entitled* to make asylum claims, and to appeal every government decision in a laborious, potentially years-long process, during which they can stay in Canada...they *must eventually be released*, unless they are deemed a flight risk, a danger to the public or are considered inadmissible on security grounds... Not one was declared ineligible to make a claim, despite expert testimony from Ronan Gunaratna... is it any wonder Tamil Tiger smugglers see Canada as the preferred destination?” (Dyck 2010, emphasis added).

The paragraph highlights the impact that expert testimony has in fostering and enforcing hegemonic narratives surrounding particular issues. The language used illustrates the types of narratives circulating before and during the ship's arrival. It suggests that the navy and coast guard are compelled to assist the passengers out of a sense of legal duty. If it were not their duty, they would not choose to aid the passengers because they are undeserving of our aid. In addition, the use of 'entitled' suggests that the asylum seekers are not worthy of the benefits that they are claiming, which fits with the political climate surrounding the passengers as they are not seen as asylum seekers in the eyes of the government or public, they are seen as migrants which change

⁷⁸ Micheal McDonald (CPC)

⁷⁹ I say 'migrant' instead of asylum or refugees because it was referred to in almost every news article.

the viewer's perception of them. This mirrors the Conservative party's view on the MV *Sun Sea*; in a Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, Conservative MP Chungsen Leung claimed that only those with ill intent migrate by sea (which they term illegal migration) (House of Commons September 26, 2012), thereby justifying a firmer attitude for determining identity and intent. In addition, by stating that 'they must eventually be released,' it insinuates that they should not be released even if they are not deemed a security threat because they are undeserving. Also, the reporter is using Ronan Gunaratna as a legitimate source even though many of his claims were untrue or embellished,⁸⁰ thereby providing viewers with false information (Schloenhardt 2013). Lastly, insinuating that Canada's generosity and lax rules are the reason why Canada is the Tamil Tigers' preferred destination puts further pressure on the government to implement stricter laws and also fuels a moral panic by heightening the negative response to a point where it is dramatically out of proportion to the actual threat posed. Coverage that emphasises potential threats to the nation plays a main role in dehumanizing refugees (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson, 2013, found in Lawlor and Tolley 2017, 971).

In a parliamentary debate, Conservative MP Harold Albrecht claimed that “there is an implication that somehow Canada is losing its spot in the world as compassionate country” (House of Commons September 23, 2011). Canada's compassion and generosity regarding immigration and refugee policies is one of the country's main narratives and is believed to differentiate it from other nations.⁸¹ However, following the arrival of the MV *Sun Sea*, there was a new narrative that was circulated which insinuated that Canada's compassion and generosity has resulted in individuals taking advantage of the immigration system (Morrow

⁸⁰ Gunaratna was sued for defamation by the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) for claiming that the CTC was a major LTTE front in Canada (Westhead 2014).

⁸¹ In these parliamentary debates, the generosity of the Canadian people, government, and legislation compared to other countries get thrown around a lot; it is like they set the bar for a generous immigration system, so people should have nothing to complain about.

2010)⁸², and “exposes a gap in our countries ability to deter terrorists and people-smugglers from exploiting the refugee system as an easy mode of entry” (Dyck 2010), thereby threatening Canadian sovereignty. Their coming here was characterized as an abuse of Canadian generosity rather than exercising their basic right to seek asylum from persecution. The post 9/11 security environment changed the way that we regard security, making it so that compassion and generosity are of little importance in the face of a national security threat.⁸³

How Narrative Impacts Public Perception and Law: Security Narratives

The labels attributed to the MV *Sun Sea* passengers facilitated the narratives used to portray them. As illustrated above, one of the most harmful labels they were given was ‘terrorist’. However, another harmful label was ‘migrant’ (Morrow 2010), not ‘asylum seeker’ or ‘refugee’, which inherently changes how they are perceived. The passengers of the MV *Sun Sea* did not simply choose to leave their homes; they were forced to leave due to a civil war in Sri Lanka and the government's persecution of the Tamil people (Bell 2011; Youssef 2010). They were escaping a miserable and violent life. However, Sri Lanka’s High Commissioner in Ottawa claimed that “There is no war now in Sri Lanka, and this is definitely not a humanitarian exercise” (Youssef 2010) dismissing the painful reality of the Tamil people. They have also been labeled “queue-jumpers, scam artists, back-door home invaders, plus a terrorist or two... Truth is, none is even a bona fide refugee” (Vancouver Sun 2011). These statements and labels are “not

⁸² Celeste Power, press secretary of Immigration Minister Jason Kenny.

⁸³ This mentality, in addition to the attempts to pass bill C-4 and bill C-49, titled Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada’s Immigration System has led to the creation of two classes of refugees, “...one class that is designated by the minister based on their mode of arrival, who would have different treatment compared to other refugees who land on our shores in Canada, who arrive in Canada by some other means”⁸³ (House of Commons October 28, 2010). Those who arrive through unconventional means, i.e., via ship, are not viewed as legitimate and therefore not deserving of aid. Celeste Power, the press secretary to the immigration minister at the time (Jason Kenny), stated that “Our government is committed to cracking down on bogus refugees while providing protection to those that truly need our help” (Morrow 2010). These beliefs and practices are discriminatory, separating supposedly ‘good refugees’ from ‘bad refugees’, “...as if their lives were not equally threatened” (House of Commons October 28, 2010). These arguments effectively punish refugees; they do not deter smugglers or terrorists.

only misleading, they are deliberately irresponsible in facilitating and feeding off a growing anti-migrant sentiment” (Vancouver Sun 2011).

The main narratives centered around national security and appealed to the viewers 'common sense' and beliefs surrounding the safety of themselves and their families. Instead of being framed in terms of humanitarian and human rights issues, national security is at the forefront of everyone's mind, “So, not only have many Canadians come to consider helping people in need ‘a question of national security,’...the refugees themselves are increasingly suspected of being what the government calls “bogus”” (Bhandari and Amarnath 2014). In addition, national security and public security have been framed, by the Conservative party, in terms of control, “if we cannot control who shows up, who wanders our streets or who has access to our health care and benefits, then we have a serious problem” (Menegakis September 23, 2011). In addition, it was an attempt to be able to stop the boat before it entered Canadian territory. The navy can only board a ship that is in international waters if it is an issue of national security (Youssef 2010). Dr. Gunaratna already assumed that the ship was a danger because it was smuggling a particular ethnic group into Canada, because of this he believed the ship was carrying high ranking Tamil Tigers. He argued; “What is the point of having a Canadian military? The Canadian military is designed to thwart threats to Canada” (*Ibid*). This comment heightens the government's need to frame this as a national security issue to not appear weak.⁸⁴ In addition, by creating a narrative that draws on the passengers' otherness, it supports their portrayal as 'dangerous' allowing the government to utilize more coercive powers to deal with the influx of refugees. Article titles themselves can portray a narrative, evoke emotion and be very misleading. For example, one article by the *Globe and Mail* is titled "Tamil migrant ship

⁸⁴ This highlights the role that Canada's ego plays in their decision-making; it is synonymous with a 'bruised ego'.

passenger involved in suicide bombing can stay, ruling says" (Cox 2011). At first glance, one might be incredulous, confused, and maybe a bit angry; after all, if this individual was involved in a suicide bombing, how is he permitted to stay in this country. In addition, it leads one to assume that the individual was complacent, consenting, and aware of his part in the bombing and therefore had intent to murder; however, this is the viewer's perception and interpretation that facilitates their understanding of the information provided in the title. It paints the passenger in a negative light before you even read the article; however, once you do read the article, it clarifies that he sold one of his possessions without knowing that it was to be used for a suicide bombing. Titles like this are created to elicit such reactions; they already want you to be thinking the worst.

In several political debates, the Angus Reid poll was consistently referred to by conservatives as a primary source that measured public sentiment about the arrival of MV *Sun Sea*. "The reaction of most Canadians was swift. In an Angus Reid poll shortly after the MV Sun Sea arrived, almost half of the Canadians surveyed said they believed that all passengers and crew should be deported, even if they were found to have no links to terrorism. That is a telling number and, quite frankly, one we cannot ignore" (Brian Storseth, September 20, 2011). This response was influenced by the narratives that were spun prior to the ship's arrival. Therefore, this argument makes it seem as if this was the response without the help of the government and the media, lowering public confidence in their safety and security. Since the most influential information was released and facilitated by these two platforms, their sway on public perception was extensive. Liberal MP Joyce Murray concisely stated that the narrative the government and the media spun was used to stoke "the fears, the anger and the resentment that were then reflected in the polls.... To stoke those fears, then poll the public, and then use the results to

justify this bill to punish refugees is just the highest political cynicism that one can imagine” (House of Commons, September 20, 2011).

Governmental Approaches, Responses, and Excuses

Bill C-4 and Bill C-49 were abandoned and later re-shaped into bill C-31 (Moffett and Aksin 2018, 26-27). Bill C-31, Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act, was the main legislation drawn upon, it categorized the passengers as "designated foreign nationals," i.e., irregular arrivals, thereby giving the state the power to detain anyone 16 and older who is designated as such (*Ibid*). Bill C-31 seems to be a direct reflection of the arrivals of MV *Ocean Lady* and MV *Sun Sea* (*Ibid*). It essentially reduces the protections afforded to refugees in favor of the safety and security of the nation (*Ibid*). “It included new provisions that were intended to expedite the processing of refugee protection claims by reducing protection, and expand the scope of the offence of human smuggling in the name of public safety and security” (Hari 2014; Silverman 2014; Huot et al. 2016 cited in Moffett and Aksin 2018, 26-27).

Prior to the boats’ arrival, the CBSA pulled out every legal stop they could to detain the passengers; they directed officers to "use all legal means to detain the passengers as long as possible, to try to have them declared inadmissible on the grounds of criminality or security, and to argue against them being recognized as refugees" (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 3).⁸⁵ There were concerns expressed by The Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International Canada, and the Canadian Tamil Congress regarding the respect given to the *Sun Sea* passengers’ rights due to the terrorist allegations (*Ibid* at 2). After investigating the passengers, the CBSA did not attempt to argue that the vast majority were members of the Tamil Tigers. Where they did argue membership, the claims were in some cases based only on indirect contact.

⁸⁵ The memo was titled “Marine Migrants: Program Strategy for the Next Arrival” (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 3)

Even when their identities were confirmed, they were not released due to a clause in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* which “leaves it up to the Minister (or his delegate) to decide when identity is satisfactorily established” (*Ibid* at 4). This resulted in investing “...significant energy and resources in a search for adverse information about the passengers, advancing weak arguments for inadmissibility based on tenuous alleged connections with the LTTE, vigorously opposing release by the Immigration and Refugee Board, and contesting orders of release in the Federal Court, even in cases involving children” (Tackaberry 2011). In order to understand why an individual took this trip or why they have connections to the Tamil Tigers takes an extensive amount of time, it is also expensive and “requires highly educated individuals” (Kaye 2017, 181). In addition, it also means that they have to “...navigat[e] that tricky line between the threat to society and the victims...” (Kaye 2017, 181). Therefore, certain passengers had to remain in prison for a longer period, in which the government could subject them to “review hearings – which could be appealed by the government ad infinitum. Justice Blanchard is correct to observe that this cycle could potentially be unending. The rule of law means that process cannot be subverted to such ends” (BC Civil Liberties Association, 2011). So even if identity is established, the minister could still request more information resulting in a perpetual cycle of hearings and detentions. Furthermore, there has been inconsistencies with many of the cases that have gone through the court system since the MV *Sun Sea* docked. Robert Blanshay, an immigration lawyer based in Toronto stated that “the refugee system has been inconsistent, with some *Sun Sea* passengers getting rejected while others are accepted despite very similar cases” (Platt 2018). Additionally, many of the charges regarding security that were initially laid were baseless, Janet Dench, the executive director of the Canadian Council for

Refugees claims that “The charges of criminality and security risks have been shown to be without foundation” (Quan 2017), with many of them being dropped.

The arrival of these illegal migrant ships following the end of the Sri Lankan War instilled a greater sense of awareness and paranoia concerning the types of threats that these ‘migrants’ pose and highlights how we understand and enforce security after the events of 9/11. The way the narrative was established and dictated from the very beginning allowed the government to evade blame for their actions, even though “...it later became clear that in many cases the CBSA had little or no evidence of possible inadmissibility” (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 5) and thereby no grounds to hold the passengers.⁸⁶

“The passengers were subjected by the government to prolonged detention, intensive interrogation and energetic efforts to exclude them from the refugee process, to contest their claim if they succeeded in entering the refugee process. Canada’s immigration legislation was amended to give the government extraordinary new powers, many apparently unconstitutional, to detain people and deny them a wide range of rights... There was loud and strident public messaging about the alleged dangers presented by the arrival of the passengers. Yet few have been found to represent any kind of security concern and almost two-thirds of the passengers whose claims have been heard have been found to be refugees in need of Canada’s protection.” (*Ibid* at 1).

Therefore, in most instances, these methods were used as a ploy to keep the passengers in detention for as long as possible.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the new legislation (bill C-4 and later bill C-31) that was created and implemented to deal with migrant smuggling in response to the MV *Sun Sea* was more harmful to those fleeing persecution than it was to human smugglers (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 12; Laframboise, October 28, 2010).⁸⁸ Canada already had legislation in place to deal with human smuggling (House of Commons September 23, 2011);

⁸⁶ One passenger was deemed a security risk because she was said to have possessed items that identified her as an ‘associate’ of the LTTE (Schloenhardt 2013).

⁸⁷ The government has accused another passenger of being a former member of the LTTE but later found this to be incorrect (Bell 2011).

⁸⁸ Mario Laframboise (Bloc)

therefore while we may need "stricter application of the laws," these laws do already exist (Ibid). Therefore, these provisions mainly impacted refugees and asylum seekers; they were more concerned about going after legitimate refugees than actual smugglers. Liberal MP Paul Szabo claimed that "...virtually every member of the Conservatives who have spoken to the bill have talked about refugees as being the smugglers and somehow they are the ones who put public safety at risk"⁸⁹ (House of Common October 28, 2010). To this extent, there was no distinction made between the human smugglers and their victims (Bell 2011).⁹⁰

One of the main motivations for these particular narratives and the harsh responses towards refugees was to gain votes, they "promoted myths and fear-mongering about refugees as a way of tapping into racist and xenophobic popular sentiments, in order to win votes. This is a short-term strategy that is destructive to society" (Canadian Council for Refugees 2015, 17). The Conservative government "has made tremendous political gain portraying the Tamils as law-breakers and queue jumpers" (Dhillon 2012). Throughout the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (from 2010 – 2012), the fact that the Conservatives were playing at the expense of the refugees was brought up several times:

"The truth is that the Conservative government is playing politics at the expense of the human beings who need help and support to find a better life for themselves and for their families" (Irene Mathyssen (NDP) September 23, 2011).

"The Conservative government is using Bill C-4 as a marketing tool, while on the other hand saying it will protect Canada from human smuggling. What the government really wants is to discourage immigration. It also wants to satisfy its base" (Hoang Mai (NDP) September 23, 2011).

On a fundamental level, the Conservative government did not care about the plight of the asylum seekers; they cared about what their arrival could do for their party. The Conservatives even

⁸⁹ No one in these debates is discussing the issue of labeling all asylum seekers as terrorists.

⁹⁰ Kitty McKinsey, the Asian spokeswoman for the UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency.

created a TV commercial that called out the Liberal and Bloc parties for being “weak on national security” because they did not support Bill C-49 (Bell 2011). This indicates to the public that only the Conservatives take public safety seriously, and they are the only ones who have 'your' best interests at heart. The narratives claiming that the passengers are terrorists, human smugglers, and criminals were constructed not only to provide a concrete reason for the public to be frightened and angry, but it gives them a compelling reason to support the Conservative party's mandate as they were the only party who strongly showed that they had national security and public safety as a top priority.

The immigration minister claimed that an aggressive approach was needed to be taken to prevent other illegal smuggling boats from coming into Canadian borders and "clogging the resources of our immigration, border, police and health agencies" (Quan 2015).⁹¹ Another excuse used was the safety of the individuals on these smuggling ships as opposed to the safety of the Canadian public. It was argued that “Marine smuggling kills people. ... We did not want Canada's inaction and passivity to be responsible for the unintended deaths of potentially hundreds of migrants crossing the Pacific Ocean” (Quan 2015). This justification was used as a means of deterrence; however, deterrent mechanisms are not effective for desperate people. The government deliberately misunderstands why migrants make these trips, and they are making these justifications based on those misunderstandings. For example, Conservative MP, Rick Dykstra, tried to justify Bill C-49 by arguing that migrants are better off in detention without an appeal here in Canada than they are back in Sri Lanka; essentially, they should be grateful even if the conditions are less than ideal (House of Commons May 1, 2012). Another Conservative MP, Rick Norlock, went on to point out that “those who are detained have access to legal

⁹¹ Immigration Minister, Jason Kenny.

counsel throughout the process, something that does not occur in every country in the world” (House of Commons September 23, 2011). However, not only are these not appropriate justifications for bill C-49 but using other countries as a baseline sets the minimum requirement needed to fulfill a person's basic human rights too low. If the government wants to effectively limit the number of individuals who utilize human smuggling as a means of transport, they will have to eradicate the reasons that force people to make such a desperate trip (Dhillon 2012).⁹² This causes a Whack-A-Mole effect⁹³ where if there is demand, there is also supply (*Ibid*), and the only ones getting punished are the victims.

For example, the debt that passengers owed the smugglers impacted their freedom as it became a factor in detention hearings, as the CBSA believed they would flee in an attempt to evade the debt they still owed the smugglers (Woodward 2011). In order to be released, they would need to assure the committee that they would not flee and would show up for their next hearing; the only way they could do this was by paying the smugglers the remainder of what they owed. Thus "becoming this weird perversion of the law" that puts the passengers in a position where they have to break the law in order to raise money to pay off the smugglers so they can convince the court that they are not under the smugglers' control (Dillon 2011). In one instance, a passenger was ordered to be detained, the following month after he provided proof that his family had paid off the debts, he was then released (Woodward 2011). The immigration minister justified this by claiming that "It is quite legitimate for our lawyers to take that position, we make no apology for ensuring that the law is enforced" (*Ibid*). While the law does say that debt to smugglers is a legitimate factor in deciding detention (regulation 245-F) (*Ibid*), it is also against the law to encourage the payoff of smugglers, which is what happened in this situation.

⁹² Douglas Cannon states, a lawyer who represented a few of the MV Sun Sea Passengers.

⁹³ Robert Gordon, Simon Fraser University (Director of the School for Criminology).

All of the evidence discussed above illustrates that the responses towards the MV *Sun Sea* were mainly focused on policing and conviction rather than dealing with the refugee claims in a collaborative manner (Bains 2015). This led to concerns about restrictive policies as they tend to lead to ‘wide-ranging criminalization’ (Kaye 2017, 181). The broadness of the legislation was also a concern as Canada’s human smuggling laws had the possibility of punishing refugees’ families and potentially harming humanitarian workers (Bains, 2015), thereby inadvertently harming victims and aids.

The narratives that framed the arrival of the MV *Sun Sea* sparked fear and distrust among the public. The terrorist connection drawn between the Tamil Tigers and the ‘migrants’ aboard the MV *Sun Sea* produced an intense national security response that massively impacted the perception and treatment of the passengers. This heightened security response is indicative to the post 9/11 security environment and highlights the absurd reality where legitimate terrorist threats from our own people, in our own backyard, are dismissed in favor of a tenuous connection to a terrorist organization abroad. The binary narratives of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ that took root in the wake of 9/11 have concealed the privilege afforded to white groups while highlighting the prejudice and intolerance presented to those groups deemed ‘other’. Ten years after the ship docked in Vancouver, some passengers are still waiting for permanent residency and even refugee hearings; many have been separated from their spouses and children for years (McArthur 2020).

Conclusion

The attacks of 9/11 created an environment of fear that fed into our worst characteristics. It planted the seeds of distrust, uncertainty and insecurity which inherently changed not only how we viewed the world, but how we viewed each other. By reinforcing the binaries of 'us' and 'them' the world was divided into two groups; those who were allowed to 'live' and those who would be left to 'die'. This trapped all brown-skinned people within the empty signifier of the terrorist 'other', drawing the focus of security institutions to these particular alien threats. The over emphasis on national security produced by this 'new' type of threat changed how we viewed and approached security, with emergency powers becoming the norm. The fixation on the terrorist 'other' in the post 9/11 era has ignored those who pose a more immediate, and even significant threat to slip through our grasp. By fixating on one specific type of threat the Western world became more concerned with the illusion of security than security itself. It has created an inherent double standard where one threat is labelled as sinister and barbaric impacting all those caught within the sliding signifier of the terrorist (even though they are not, in fact, terrorists) while labelling the other group as misguided and mentally ill. Both groups commit similar crimes yet our understanding and perception of them drastically differ.

Accordingly, this study examined two groups that do not fit within the typical understanding of terrorism informed by post 9/11 narratives. The refugees aboard the MV *Sun Sea* were designated a national security threat when there was insubstantial proof of a terrorist connection, while RWE groups are categorized as a public order threat even though their actions are just as terroristic as those committed by the terrorist 'other'. The 'other' is considered to be a significant threat because it is perceived to destabilize the dominant culture, yet, when radical groups that represent the dominant culture pose a threat towards minority groups (destabilizing

these communities and thereby society) they are not perceived as a threat. This study looked into how exceptional politics and struggles over hegemony, (fueled by) the politics of fear, formulations of identity and security paradigms are used to categorize one group as condemned (thereby taking away their rights) and the other as misguided, yet redeemable (actively defending their rights). Deeply ingrained understandings of *who* to fear informs both the government, media and individuals within society, equally impacting the reactions to similar events. This is why RWE do not have the same fear attached to them as refugees migrating from a civil war and how the caricature of the terrorist label is only extended to those who constitute the 'other' while rarely impacting those who are white.

Common values, goals and beliefs (central value system and common sense) are based on particular (often skewed) notions of how the world works, which is then used by the government, media and experts to create interest in certain events. News media today has turned to a business model where tantalizing titles and fear sells best. These narratives presented by the government and the media are highly visible, playing a major role in how individuals understand important events and influence the level of fear felt as a society. They are drawing upon popular fears and understandings of the 'other' that are already solidified within people's minds through deeply ingrained ideologies. The way that a threat is articulated and presented by these key decision makers impacts how it is perceived, however, the perception does not have to be accurate. Whether or not the threat is real or perceived is inconsequential, the fear (and other emotions) it sparks is authentic.

Instigating fear creates spaces where it is acceptable to hate and thereby allows policies to be implemented that would only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, fear draws out deep seated beliefs and stereotypes that justify racism and xenophobia. Therefore, post 9/11 security

narratives are influenced by institutional racism and deeply ingrained understandings of *who* to fear which impacts the contradictory reactions to similar events. These climates are grounded within both individual and institutional levels that have allowed for RWE to thrive. Systemic racism and narratives informed by racelessness and colourblindness allow the nation, institutions and those who make up the ‘us’ in society to continue to expel any responsibility for the continuous harm caused to the ‘other’. Thereby sustaining racial domination by making these actions inconsequential to the general public.⁹⁴ The narratives of the ‘other’ through folk demons, devils and the rogue are fed through emotion, not logic and fact. This diminishes their complexity of character and hides how similar they are to ‘us’. Preventative practices are beneficial but the way they are applied ensures that racial groups pay a higher cost while certain groups are left untouched creating an unbalanced standard of security.

The primary response to national security threats has been to respond to the threat through the use of exceptional politics, thereby suspending ordinary laws. This has allowed for those characterized as the ‘other’ to be targeted as a threat by the government, media and thereby society. It has also allowed for a number of human rights violations to be justified. To an extent, counter laws, which are used to combat terrorism, not only utilize exceptional politics but draw upon prevention so that those who are merely suspect can be dealt with as if they are criminal. It is the perception assigned to these groups via the national security threat designation that triggers this extreme response. If we remove the perception, then we limit the fear thereby limiting the harsh (and illogical) response to these groups. The threats that they pose are serious, but how the

⁹⁴ This was illustrated within the MV Sun Sea case study where discrimination and racism was rarely discussed by members of parliament and even disregarded outright.

effects of the responses reverberate onto the attached communities needs to be taken into account as well, it cannot be pushed aside by the fear and discrimination that creates these exceptions.

Before I conclude, I would like to briefly address a few limitations within the approach to my methodology. Firstly, the portrayal of the conservative government may be biased, this is in part due to the rhetoric found in not only the media but also the parliamentary debates from all political parties, either from what the Liberal or NDP MPs said or how the conservative MPs responded to certain remarks or questions in the debates. Additionally, since the conservatives were the political party in power at the time of the ships' arrival and during the parliament shooting referenced in the RWE case study, they played a substantial part in the conversation. Secondly, I did not approach the case study material in a particularly systematic way, I didn't look at everything published within a strict date range or from set newspapers. Some articles were found through references in academic journals, others were found by searching key terms in databases, and others were found through the 'related stories' section on newspaper websites. Therefore, the research may have been limited in this way as some perspectives may have been missed. Lastly, instead of showing multiple sources to highlight one point within the case studies I highlighted certain quotes which may have mitigated the delivery of the point I was trying to make, however I believe that referencing direct quotes was most impactful for what I was trying to achieve.

As illustrated above, the meaning assigned to each threat greatly impacts how each group is viewed (terrorism, national security threat, refugee etc.). To an extent we create our own problems by assigning so much meaning to events and groups cast as a national security threat. There is so much history, and narrative, that informs our decisions which are tainted by hate. To this end, post 9/11 security narratives, perceptions of the 'other', and our understandings of

cultural identity impact our reactions to similar events, but they do so in inconsistent, often absurd, ways. This has created a world where our priorities have become twisted; security is only afforded to a particular group (the white population), and we only acknowledge the enemy in a specific form (as the 'brown' terrorist). To this end the world prioritizes the illusion of security over security itself. This illusion has come at a great cost, creating an environment that is both sinister and absurd.

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