2007

Canadian Muslims: Political Discourses in Tension

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This article reports on certain studies conducted as part of a broader exploration of Muslim diasporic experiences of political integration and citizenship in contemporary Canada. Both within the Muslim community and between that community and other Canadians, social relations and social representations have recently been undergoing profound reconfigurations, reflective of the ebbs and flows of global forces. Through in-depth interviewing of Canadian Muslims and a discourse analysis of the transcripts of parliamentary *Hansard*, this article explores the dialectics of two discourses in Canada: a dominant discourse of concern regarding anti-Muslim words and actions in Canada and beyond, and a secondary anti-terrorist discourse that centrally implicates Muslims and Islam. Relations between these two discourses are explored both within the debates of the House of Commons and within the responses of the Muslim interviewees.

T HIS ARTICLE has been generated by an ongoing investigation into the nature of Muslim political identities in Canada, notably since the events of 9/11, as reported through the voices of Canadian Muslims, political leaders and opinion leaders. The empirical basis of the larger project consists of four principal waves of research: an ongoing series of in-depth interviews with Canadian Muslims; a discourse analysis of parliamentary speeches and statements in the month following 11 September 2001; a content analysis of five major English-language newspapers over two sample weeks in October 2004 and October 2005; and a discourse analysis of submissions to a public inquiry into Ontario family law and the matter of dispute resolution mechanisms incorporating aspects of Muslim religious principles. The focus of this article is a preliminary and necessarily tentative analysis of the findings of two of these waves of empirical research: the first round of in-depth interviews, and the discourse analysis of parliamentary speeches and statements.

The project has arisen from a concern and a curiosity. The concern is that in the current North American theatre of aggressive anti-terrorism, there has been a deterioration in the quality of civic and public life for Muslims in Canada. Rushed anti-terrorist legislation in Canada undermined the civil liberties of Canadian Muslims from the time of its

hasty passage through Parliament in December 2001, and the Canadian security apparatus has covered itself in a blanket of secrecy. Racist attacks against Muslims have occurred in parts of Canada, and there is a perception that Islamic cultures have in general been less willingly accepted. Community relations between Muslims and others have been affected, sometimes for the better, but also occasionally negatively. My curiosity centres on Canada's reputation as one of the most tolerant and inclusive polyethnic and multinational polities in the world, with a highly sensitive apparatus of multiculturalism. To the extent that this reputation is sound, Canadians in a world under stress should nonetheless continue to exhibit tolerance, acceptance and the politics of inclusiveness.

The social psychological questions and concerns raised in my current research project are not mine alone; they are powerfully resonant among the Canadian intelligentsia today. A recent edition of the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's English-language newspaper of record, carried two articles and a survey on matters related to the quality of life of Muslims in Canada. What is remarkable is that these stories appeared in the newspaper on Canada's national birthday, 1 July, in 2004. On that day, Edward Greenspon, the Jewish editor-in-chief of the paper, chose to profile a report on anti-Muslim sentiment and a story about Muslims and Jews working together to save a boy who needed heart surgery. The paper also published the results of an online poll concerning Canadian attitudes toward restrictions on the display of religious symbols in schools.[1]

In the context of these considerations, my research addresses two interrelated discourses. The first is the now-familiar anti-terrorist discourse that has come to be associated, sometimes inextricably, with Islam and Muslims. The second is an anti-hate discourse related to anti-Muslim stereotypes, prejudices, misunderstandings and action. As we shall see, both these discourses are currently in ideological play and tension. They are invoked in a struggle to frame the debate over the Muslim diaspora in Canada, and they come together in the expressed thoughts of Muslim Canadians.

Methodological Considerations

In the context of an analysis of the two principal discourses, anti-terrorist and anti-hate, this article employs two principal methodologies. The first is a discourse analysis of the verbatim proceedings of the Canadian House of Commons from 17 September 2001 to 16 October 2001 (Canada

2004). Each of the nineteen daily volumes of proceedings, consisting of 1,135 pages of transcribed debate, was searched for any Muslim reference (see appendix for coding details). Pertinent statements were identified, recorded and analysed. They form the basis of the analysis of contrasting discourses presented below. The methodological approach to discourse analysis is adapted from the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987), and focuses on the importance of meaning in context. Analysis incorporates semantic interpretation, but also the impact of pragmatics (what speakers mean in their expressive utterances, and what they are attempting to achieve with words) and deixis (interpretation relative to the extra-linguistic context, such as the circumstances of time and place and the characteristics of speakers).

The research project is also based upon a series of in-depth interviews, lasting from thirty minutes to over an hour, conducted among Canadian Muslims in 2004 and 2005. So far, thirteen interviews have been completed and the 199 pages of transcripts of those interviews form a rich and extensive source of data and insight for this article. London, Ontario, where I conducted the field research, is a city of approximately 330,000 people, situated in south-western Ontario, approximately half way between Toronto and Detroit. London is an excellent site for research into community, racial and ethnic relations, as it is regarded as a bellwether of English Canada.[2] While the city's origins are definitely British and the culture is grounded in Eurocentrism, the past two to three decades have witnessed a profound shift in the ethnic, religious and racial composition of the city. Among other distinctions, London has become a very Muslim city. About 30,000 to 35,000 Muslims live in London, over 10 per cent of the city's population. This makes London the most Muslim of Canadian cities.[3] It is an ideal site in which to conduct research into the quality of life of Muslims and community relations between Muslims and others.

The interviewees fall into three categories. Four of them are community leaders, with prominent public profiles. Two are ordinary citizens in the community. The remaining seven are well-educated young Muslims who either are, or have recently been, students. Four of these students have taken courses with me, while the remaining three were introduced to me by mutual acquaintances. The method of selection of interviewees combined the convenience method with a snowball technique, as well as identification through media and personal contacts of notable Muslims living in London. The interview style and structure follows the protocols of in-depth interviewing (Marshall and Rossman 1989; Silverman 1985). Research participants are identified as follows:

L1: A high-profile male lawyer and national Muslim leader in Canada.
L2: A male elected official in London, Ontario, who is also a lawyer and human rights expert.
L3: A senior male professor, political candidate, public intellectual and journalist.
L4: A male elected official in London, Ontario, who is also a small businessman.
C1: A female junior academic administrator.
C2: A male part-time doctoral student and taxi driver.
SW1: A female student of social sciences and a part-time businesswoman.
SW2: A female student currently in medical school.
SW3: A female student of media and information studies.
SW4: A female student of arts and social sciences.
SW5: A female student of sociology.
SM1: A male student of social sciences.
SM2: A male student of social sciences and a part-time businessman.

Data from both the interviews and the discourse analysis are employed in an exploration of the two principal discourses of anti-terrorism and anti-hate.

As a non-Muslim writing about Muslims in Canada, there is an obvious challenge inherent in presenting Muslim voices. Like most of the MPs whose voices I have analysed, I cannot in any simple way claim to 'speak for them' or to act as a mere amplifier or vehicle for their voices. Among the more than 600,000 Muslim voices in Canada is a diversity that no-one can claim to capture once and for all. In a project such as this, I can do little more than to gesture at the complexities of race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, region, biography and personality that necessarily render complex any late-modern religious identity. My ethical aspiration and my operational assumption is that I can listen and reflect sympathetically as a non-Muslim who is concerned and curious, if not uncritical. Such a position, I hope, will not be misconstrued as an attempt to appropriate the voice of the 'other'. In fact, my own intellectual and ethical orientation, like that of Benhabib (2002) radically questions the very politics of inclusion and exclusion on which the grounds of 'otherness' must stand. In an advanced, mobile and open polyethnic society, I concur with Benhabib in arguing that 'the negotiation of complex cultural dialogues … is now our lot' (2002, 186), and that a corollary of this is the flowering of polyvalent identities and multivocal possibilities. This holds true even as ethnic and religious groups continue to be structurally relevant conditioners of the life chances of those who come to be inserted into those social categories.

The Background

Whether in public policy or in the intellectual mainstream, multiculturalism is a defining trait of the contemporary Canadian polity. The Canadian commitment to multiculturalism is a synthesis of two principles. The first of these is multinationalism, grounded in the existence in Canada of two founding European nations, along with a substantial number of aboriginal nations (around fifty). The second element of multiculturalism, dating from the 1960s, is an evolving commitment to a polyethnic Canada that respects the rights of a growing diversity of ethnic groups that have settled in Canada through recent patterns of immigration. Multiculturalism is a defining characteristic in the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Both the major political parties (the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party) have, over the past forty years, actively supported multicultural legislation and programmes designed to celebrate diversity within Canada. Party leaders have self-consciously promoted the policy as a central facet of the Canadian polity. Canada's leading intellectuals, notably Will Kymlicka (1995, 1998), Charles Taylor (1994), Michael Ignatieff (1994) and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (2002), have articulated a progressive and activist liberalism that recognises 'deep diversity' and validates the respect, recognition and accommodation of ethno-linguistic and racial communities. The population of Canada is supportive in principle of the major tenets of multiculturalism and, comparatively speaking, Canada's large cities, and their institutions and public and private spaces, work to promote full and generous equality. Notwithstanding this portrayal, it needs to be acknowledged that Canadian multiculturalism has not been universally endorsed among Canadians, and that it has not so far been entirely successful as a set of policies designed to build tolerance and respect among communities.

The Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) is a major research organisation that generates public opinion data in the Canadian context. A recent poll (Valpy 2004) finds Canadians strongly supportive of their children growing up in a multiethnic, multicultural society, and powerfully opposed to bans on religious symbols and dress in schools. Young Canadians in particular are overwhelmingly inclusive and accepting of diversity, and yet 45 per cent of the young Canadians surveyed report growing anti-Muslim sentiment among people they know. Senior researcher Dr Andrew Parkin notes a certain 'cautiousness about the unknown' (Valpy 2004: A9), and says 'It's more about different values than different ethnicity' (Valpy 2004: A9). While there is a distinct and definable

atmosphere of cautiousness and reticence about Muslims and Islam, overtly anti-Islamic acts and opinions are rare. Riad Saloojie, executive director of the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations, says: 'Canada is seen to be a very free and open space for religious expression by Muslims', and some respondents report that if there is an increased public awareness and curiosity about Islam, it is because Canadian non-Muslims are conscious of growing anti-Muslim sentiments in the global context and want to do more to understand and support their fellow citizens. This finding is echoed in the responses of my own research participants and the voices of many parliamentarians.

While the CRIC survey is regarded as disinterested on the issues, other surveys have been conducted by groups with a more vested interest. In a 2003 poll of Canadian university students (Canadian Islamic Congress, 2004b), only 5 per cent expressed negative opinions about Muslims, while 80 per cent expressed neutral feelings. Of the 1,441 students interviewed in early 2003, only 4 per cent were Muslim, and so the views expressed can be taken as a reliable indicator of non-Muslim opinion. While there was some ignorance of the nature of Islam and Muslims in Canada, there was little overt negativity. Only 29 per cent of respondents stated that they would not marry a Muslim person, and 56 per cent reported having Muslim friends. Even the ignorance was not absolute, however. A surprisingly high 41 per cent knew that Arabs constitute only about 20 per cent of Muslims worldwide.

The most recent survey of anti-Muslim sentiment and other forms of racism in Canada was released by Ipsos-Reid and the Dominion Institute (Dominion Institute 2005). The shocking headline read: 'One in six Canadians victims of racism'. Indeed, 17 per cent of respondents reported having been the target of racism. Of all groups, Canadians most frequently (38 per cent) named 'Muslims/Arabs' as targets of racism, and the numbers were particularly high in Ontario and Quebec. These data reveal a pervasive sensitivity among Canadians to the potential for anti-Muslim hatred. They also reveal a generalised acceptance of other races. Only 13 per cent of respondents stated that they would never marry a person of another race, and a scant 7 per cent said that they would not welcome people of another race as neighbours.

Despite the best efforts of educators, community leaders and the generalised goodwill of Canadians, common understandings of Muslims and Islam are faulty, and stereotypes and prejudices abound. The facts of Muslim life in Canada are not widely appreciated. There are estimated to be over 650,000 Muslims in Canada, making Islam the second-largest

religious affiliation in Canada. Over half of the Muslims in Canada are Canadian-born. Few Canadians understand the core principles of Islam, such as the five pillars and the constitutive role of peace and tolerance. As we shall see from the interview data reported below and from the comments of certain parliamentarians, there is a wide range of misunderstandings, prejudices and stereotypes. Included in these misconceptions are egregiously incorrect assumptions about race and ethnicity, the practice of telling individuals born in Canada to 'go home' or 'get back to where you came from', and fundamental errors concerning the nature of Islam as a religion.

One recent stereotype that has been challenged in the public glare is that of the submissive and passive Muslim woman in the hijab. In the panic that followed the incidents of 9/11, a Canadian Muslim man, Maher Arar, who had the misfortune to be in the USA in September 2002, was forcibly and wrongfully deported to Syria, the country of his birth, where he was confined and tortured for a year. His wife, Dr Monia Mazigh – a hijab-wearing Muslim – conducted a sustained and very public campaign to have her husband released. Resolutely insisting on the application of the principles of Canadian justice, notably the Rule of Law and Responsible Government, Monia Mazigh relentlessly pressed the authorities. Eventually, she succeeded and her husband was released. She has since successfully pushed the government to hold a full public inquiry into the events leading up to her husband's maltreatment. Through her friendship with the former leader of the New Democratic Party, Alexa McDonough, she also ran for parliament in the federal election of June 2004. While she did not win her seat, she nonetheless enhanced her public persona across Canada. A diminutive and soft-spoken woman with a Ph.D. in economics, Monia Mazigh's insistence on the principles of due process as well as the fundamental legitimacy of representative democracy have redefined the realm of possibility for Muslim women in Canada.

In a speech to students on 7 March 2004 in London, Monia Mazigh expressed her admiration for professional journalists in Canada, who took up her struggle. She told the students that her experiences of mounting peaceful vigils outside the House of Commons had been grounded in the firm belief that 'every human being has a right to due process', and that her husband had a right to be returned to Canada, where he would be under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Constitution. 'I truly believed in the rule of law and democracy', she said, reminding the audience of her full entitlement as a Canadian to political nationality and citizenship rights. While not all Canadian Muslims share Mazigh's faith in the justice

system, there are few indeed who would argue that there is a fundamental incompatibility between Muslim identities and the liberal-individualistic underpinnings of western democracy. This fact alone serves as the basis of hope in assessing relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Canada.

In the immediate aftermath of 11 September 2001, there was a series of attacks on Muslims in Canada. Politician L2 reported that he heard of more than 100 Muslims in London who claimed to have been harassed, followed and taunted. Muslims, notably those rendered visible through indicators such as clothes or skin pigmentation and physiognomy, reported an increase in vulnerability and hostile treatment. At work, in the community, in schools and colleges, in social settings and on the street, Muslims were victimised in a series of unprovoked attacks. The Hate Crimes Unit of the Toronto Police Service reported an overall increase in cases throughout 2001, to 338 from a total of 204 for the year 2000. The unit's annual report estimated that approximately 90 per cent of the increase was related to 9/11, and Muslims were the group most often targeted (O'Brien 2002; O'Brien and Sher 2002). The walls of the major London mosque were vandalised with words of hate, including 'kill', on 13 September 2001. Dozens of Canadian Muslims were detained and interrogated by government agents on the basis of a poorly-drafted piece of anti-terrorism legislation, referred to as Bill C-36, passed in December 2001.

Anti-terrorist and Anti-hate Discourses in the Canadian House of Commons

The immediate reaction of the majority of Canada's MPs was outrage at the injustices committed against Canadian Muslims, and a call for tolerance and support for Muslims and those Sikhs, Hindus and others who had been mistaken for Muslims, combined with intolerance of any ethnic or religious hate crimes. On the first sitting day after 11 September, Prime Minister Jean Chretien said: 'I am therefore calling upon the public to reach out to our Arab and Muslim friends here in Canada and to reject all forms of discrimination toward innocent individuals' (Canada 1984: 137.79: 5,118). New Democratic Party leader Alexa McDonough referred to a number of incidents in which 'visible minorities have been targeted by people looking for scapegoats' (Canada 1984: 137.79: 5,123). In an impassioned speech, Canada's only Muslim MP at that time, Rahim

Jaffir, a member of the conservative Canadian Alliance, reported that 'school children have been threatened; mosques have been fire bombed and businesses vandalized. Many Canadians are in fear of their own lives in Canada' (Canada 1984: 137.79: 5,143). Other Canadian Alliance MPs spoke out against anti-Muslim attacks. Myron Thompson said 'the reports of Muslim Canadians being harassed and made the targets of hate makes me sick' (Canada 1984: 137. 80: 5,265). Reports of a mosque being vandalised, a Sikh temple being fire-bombed in Hamilton, and a Muslim teenager being brutally beaten in Ottawa prompted certain MPs to call for action and demand that the government take a more forthright stance against hate crimes. McDonough moved the following:

> That this House: (a) Issue an urgent and immediate plea to political, community and faith leaders to speak out against violence, intolerance, and hatred of any kind, directed at Muslims, Arabs and other visible minorities and (b) In the name of the Canadian people, reassert our country's fundamental adherence to the rule of law, and to preserving and promoting our human rights as outlined in the Charter (Canada 1984: 137. 82: 5,427).

The motion passed easily. However, Canadian parliamentarians were only prepared to go so far with their support, and Ms McDonough's subsequent motion, while not defeated, was talked out. In order to appreciate why, it is important to bear in mind that along with the progressive liberal discourse of individual rights and freedoms that underpinned sympathy for the Muslim minority and a respect for their deep communitarian claims, there was also a sustained and vocal anti-terrorist discourse, coming mostly from the minority Canadian Alliance, that began to come into conflict with the anti-hate discourse of the Liberal and NDP majority.

The entire month-long debate in the House of Commons was framed in the broad context of how best to cooperate with Washington, and defend North America against terrorism, while not compromising the rights of those of Middle Eastern descent. Alongside concern about minorities in Canada being attacked was rhetoric against terrorism. In the case of Rahim Jaffir, both discourses emanated from the same individual. As a conservative Muslim, he framed one of his principal contributions in this manner:

> I feel a responsibility to clarify to the Canadian people what the religion of Islam is about … The term Islam means peace … The terrorists who attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Center have violated the Holy Qur'an and Islamic values … The word *jihad* simply means that each individual must strive to be the best he or she can

be … Muslim groups across Canada such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada and Muslims Against Terrorism have condemned the attack. (Canada 2004: 137.79: 5,179)

Analysing the debates in terms of what went unsaid, there was a discernible attempt to avoid use of the terms 'Muslim' and 'Islam' in relation to terrorism. This, one can only suppose, was conditioned by a broader concern, articulated elsewhere, to discourage a backlash against Muslims.

The conservative anti-terrorist discourse began with the invocation of a phrase that was repeated numerous times in the House throughout the debates. A former Canadian security agency chief of strategic planning had referred to Canada as a 'big *jihad* aircraft carrier for launching strikes against the United States'. This evocative phrase was first invoked by Brian Pallister (Canada 2004: 137.79: 5,130) and was repeated by many of his colleagues in the Canadian Alliance, despite the enlightening explanation offered by Rahim Jaffir. A number of MPs, Jason Kenney prominent among them, expressed frustration that too great a sensitivity (towards Muslims one assumes) might stand in the way of frankness of expression. At one point he said: 'The enemy is radical, extreme Islamism. It is not Islam or Muslims, but a radical political movement among a small minority of Muslims in some parts of the world. Let us call it by its name. We know what it is. Let us not be coy about it.' (Canada 2004: 137.79: 5,177) Later in a series of echoes of the Bush administration's perspective, he referred to 'a radical Islamism which is predicated on anti-Semitism and a hatred for Liberal democracy' (Canada 2004: 137.79: 5,197), and said 'it is freedom and democracy that they fear and seek to destroy' (Canada 2004: 137. 80: 5,236). Keith Martin later said: 'They hate us and the west for what the west portrays … fundamental Islam is anathema to our western culture and vice versa' (Canada 2004: 137. 90: 5,857).

A constant leitmotif of the Canadian Alliance was that Canada had been soft on terrorists, too slow to freeze the assets of known terrorist groups, too careless in border security, and naive about terrorists entering Canada and forming sleeper cells. Typical of this kind of rhetoric was an observation by Stockwell Day: 'We also have a reputation for being a haven to people of evil intent who are opposed to freedom and democracy' (Canada 2004: 137. 86: 5,605). Canada, according to the Canadian Alliance, presented an inadequate and embarrassing response vis-à-vis the robust and determined actions of Bush and Blair.

The two discourses collided over a second motion (Canada 2004: 137. 90: 5,833) brought to the House by Alexa McDonough. Calling for the House to condemn the attacks on the USA and to support UN Resolution

1373 (calling thereby for Canada to specify anti-terrorism measures), it added this clause to:

> (c) direct the government to table in the House, within 90 days, a report setting out steps Canada will take to implement an action plan, including detailed budgets and timetables, to fight the rising tides of intolerance and racism, directed against Arab and Muslim Canadians, in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

McDonough won some strong support for her motion from NDP members, Liberals and members of the Bloc Québécois. However a few Liberals and members of the Canadian Alliance stated that the motion was not needed because Canada's Criminal Code already contained sufficient remedies. Moreover, certain MPs, notably Brian Pallister, began to express frustration that the motion was exaggerating the magnitude of the problem, and thereby doing a disservice to the majority of Canadians. Mr Pallister described the resolution as having 'exaggerated language' and of being 'overdramatic' (Canada 2004: 137. 90: 5,843). MP Svend Robinson responded on behalf of the NDP, accusing Brian Pallister of trying to weaken and downplay the growing consensus to condemn racist attacks. Upping the stakes a little more in the debate, Ken Epp asserted: 'Passing laws to reduce feelings of racism and hatred are totally non-productive and not effective' (Canada 2004: 137. 90: 5,858). In the end, the motion was talked out.

The liberal-pluralist vision of democracy in Canada operates on the assumption that full political participation is open to all, up to the highest levels of public office, and that there should be no systematic barriers to Muslim participation. Not a great deal is known about the facts of Muslim participation in Canadian political life, other than the fact that participation and success at the highest levels is open to Muslims. London recently elected its first Muslim MP. In a recent article, Monia Mazigh (2004) argued that the Canadian Parliament needs to include a broader diversity of ethnic communities, as well as more women. The Canadian Islamic Congress, notably under the leadership of national president Mohamed Elmasry, has been encouraging greater Muslim participation in political life in Canada. Citing verses 2:140 and 2:283 from the Qur'an, the Congress regards informed voting as a religious as well as a civic duty, and laments the lower turnout of Muslim citizens to vote in federal elections (Canadian Islamic Congress 2004). The report includes the following important discourse on the Canadian polity:

> [W]e believe that this great, unique and distinct nation of ours has a mission for the world: to be a model for all nations, promoting social

justice and civil liberties at home and peace with justice around the
world, and fighting hunger, poverty, desperation, injustice, inequality
and human misery at home and abroad … we believe it is the religious,
moral, ethical, political and patriotic responsibility for every eligible
voting Canadian to exercise his or her democratic right to vote for
the best Member of Parliament to serve this great country of ours.
(Canadian Islamic Congress 2004: 4)

The report grades each sitting MP on their orientation towards the
core issues of domestic socio-economic justice, and explores their foreign
policy perspectives on matters such as Canada–US relations, the Israeli
occupation and Canada's relation with Muslim countries. Given the
prioritisation set out, it is not surprising that most Liberal Party, Bloc
Québécois and New Democratic Party members receive 'A' or 'B' ratings,
while most Conservative MPs receive 'F' ratings. (A substantial minority
of pro-Israeli or socially conservative rural Liberal MPs receive 'F's, while
the very few Progressive Conservative MPs receive 'A's or 'B's.) Altogether,
of the 301 sitting MPs in 2004, fifty of 172 Liberal MPs, one of thirty-
three Bloc Québécois MPs and none of the fourteen NDP MPs receive
'F' grades. Conversely, a full sixty-nine of the seventy-five Conservative
MPs receive the failing grade. A detailed and comprehensive discourse
analysis of Hansard in the aftermath of 11 September allows me to assess
a broader range of attitudes toward Muslims and Islam than was possible
in the Canadian Islamic Congress's 'vote tally' methodology. It certainly
is the case that a majority of parliamentarians on the Liberal, NDP and
Bloc Québécois benches are broadly sympathetic towards Muslim
Canadians, and focus primarily on anti-racist discourses. Canadian
Alliance MPs share the broad general acceptance of Muslim civil and legal
rights in Canada, but are anxious to focus attention on the anti-terrorist
'war against evil' discourse. On occasions, these discourses clash, as in
the interchanges over Alexa McDonough's second motion, or in the
following exchange (Canada 2004: 137.90: 5,882):

Brian Fitzpatrick (Canadian Alliance): 'I will put on record that
militant Islamic fundamentalism is a dangerous force in our world
today.'

John Bryden (Liberal): 'He deplored fanatical Muslim fundamentalism.
Would he not agree that any kind of religious fundamentalism that
leads to fanaticism, whether it is Christian, Hindu or any of the other
great religions … is something to be deplored?'

While it is only a crude empirical observation, there is an echo of my
discourse analysis and the vote-tally-based Canadian Islamic Congress

preferences in the federal election results of June 2004. While the Conservative Party (formerly two separate parties, the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party) nationally won 32 per cent (ninety-nine) of the 308 seats, they won a mere 11 per cent of seats in the sixty-four 'most Muslim' ridings – those with a Muslim population in excess of 3 per cent. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the Canadian Islamic Congress's warning to Canadians not to vote for the Conservative Party, arguing that it exhibited an 'aggressive militant foreign policy' that was too close to the USA. The Congress also argued that the Conservative Party was likely to divert funds from health and social programmes, to undermine the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to be tough on immigration, and to deny civil liberties. Interestingly, the Conservative Party's tough stance on 'family values' did little to attract the support of the Canadian Islamic Congress (Scrivener 2004).

Anti-terrorist and Anti-hate Discourses Among Canadian Muslims

The 199 pages of interview transcript generated a rich database with which to explore the discourses of parliamentarians presented earlier. In this first section of analysis, I look at the participants' words on stereotypes, prejudices and misunderstandings. The most striking communality among the thirteen interviewees is that eight of them (L1, L2, L4, C1, SW1, SW2, SW4 and SW5) make explicit reference to the desire of non-Muslim Canadians to know more about Islam and to better understand Muslims and Islam in Canada. L1 says: '9/11 has forced us to get to want to [sic] know each other better, understand each other. We won't always agree, but certainly work together to have an understanding and a trust that wasn't there before'. Despite noting the groundswell of anti-Muslim prejudice following 9/11, L2 says: 'Canadians are very fair, open-minded people and they do want to learn. They do want to understand'. SW1, who works part-time in a cosmetics store, says: 'If my customers come in and we cry together and they hug me and you know said that: "you know it's not your fault" [about 9/11] and things like that and I mean, for some things, tragedy puts people together, I mean, that really shows that something beautiful can come out of something so horrible.'

Echoing the anti-terrorist discourse, L3 expresses a strong degree of concern with the anti-democratic nature of Muslim regimes. He is keen to draw a distinction between Islam the religion and Muslim society. C2 is articulate in his distinction between Islamic fundamentalism, which

he regards as a force for good in the world, and political terrorism, about which he is scathing. He says: 'It's very unfortunate that a lot of Muslim organisations have overstated their loyalties to these individuals [terrorists] to the extent that it might have coloured their loyalty to the overall system'. Six of the respondents (L1, L4, C1, C2, SW3 and SW5) speak of a generalised ignorance regarding Islam and Muslims in Canada. However, strikingly, the two Muslim male students (SM1 and SM2) deny any knowledge or experience of stereotypes, prejudices or misunderstandings among non-Muslim Canadians. Their reluctance to open up on this matter and related matters is palpable, and is reflected in the fact that the average number of transcript pages for the male students was thirteen-and-a-half, while for the women students it was in excess of seventeen. Given the gendered and age-related stereotyping of terrorists as 'young Muslim men', one might conjecture that the two male students were understandably more reticent than the women or the older male interviewees.

L2, C1 and each of the women students make reference in the context of stereotypes to the role of women in Islam. L2 perhaps unwittingly falls into the classic patriarchal trap of referring to the elevated place of women in Islam. He says: 'the religion Islam itself holds women in very high esteem, very high rank'. The women are more credible in their claims about their sense of status. SW1 says: 'many people see me and think I'm oppressed right off the bat, or think that I'm from another country, that I've moved here just because I wear – I do wear – the head scarf. Um, that someone forced me to put it on, whether it be my father or my brother'. SW3 adds:

> As a Muslim woman who wears a hijab, I guess the um – the major one that comes to mind is this idea of the Muslim woman being, um, submissive. Um repressed – a repressed creature, type of thing, and someone who could not possibly have chosen for herself, um, a head cover or certain way of dressing, or a certain lifestyle. And, um, as an educated and I think strong and independent woman, I find that difficult to deal with, because there are often prejudgments and presuppositions made about being a woman, and I find that constraining.

SW4 offers an interesting exception to the other Muslim women in certain regards. As an Ismaili Muslim who has chosen not to wear the hijab, her orientation is somewhat distinct. While she too is concerned at stereotypical portrayals of Muslims, she focuses on the importance of inner-directed religious belief, and criticises both non-Muslims and sometimes more orthodox Muslims for complaining about her decision not to wear the hijab. SW4's perspective illustrates the broader reality that

there is considerable diversity among Canadian Muslims, both individuals and associations, and that any generalisations regarding the Muslim perspective have to be assessed in this light.

Linking thematically to the next section of the paper, L1 declares:

> I'm not – I'm not worried about the people that hate – I'm worried about the people that are ignorant, that don't know the difference, that don't know any Muslims, that don't know how we lead our lives, they're only fed what they're shown on TV. And that causes not only Islamophobia, but it actually causes hate for our community.

L2, on the other hand, does regard outright hatred as worse. In fact, along with SW4, who talks of how knowledge 'fosters understanding and acceptance', he places great emphasis on the need to address ignorance and overcome it.

One of the most common complaints of media coverage in the post-9/11 era is that Muslims are routinely referred to as terrorists, fanatics or fundamentalists. On a personal level, five of the interviewees – L1, C1, C2, SW3 and SM2 – had been so labelled. Eight of the respondents reported that they personally knew of others who had been referred to in this way. L1 made a telling comment: 'they [Canada's anti-terrorist police forces] would never dream of asking a Jew or a Christian whether they're a fundamentalist'. C1 notes: 'They said it [terrorist] jokingly. But it was I think a sign of the fact that they didn't know anything about the religion'.

Overall, the Muslims are unequivocal in their condemnation of political violence, and are also anxious to distance religious Islam from the concept and practice of terrorism. They are insistent that their religion should be respected as a fundamentally peaceful system. They are very anxious to reach out to the broader Canadian community, offering reassurance and making common cause on the basis of solidarity around the principles of liberal democracy and the rule of law.

The condemnation of political violence is loud and clear among the interviewees, notably the community leaders. L2 states that 'there is nothing more sacred than human life'. L1, L2 and L4 each declare that Muslims should support legitimate authorities in their anti-terrorism work. According to L2, 'the authorities are here to protect us, they're not here to destroy us', while L4 states that 'it's a duty of a citizen to cooperate'. SW1 argues from the premise of political citizenship that 'we live in Canada; there are certain laws we must abide by'. However, the interviewees are equally concerned to insist that religious fundamentalism and terrorism do not necessarily go together. C1 says simply: 'it happens to be about

terrorism, but it shouldn't be related to Muslims, it should be related to terrorists'. C2 says that terrorism 'has nothing to do with Islam'. SW2 is troubled by the exaggerated stereotypes of the Muslim terrorist and references the widespread notion that Muslim men who die in holy wars are greeted by many virgins on their ascension to heaven. She refers to such notions as 'ridiculous, ridiculous, you know, silly ideas about Muslims'. SW5 raises the important point that Muslims involved in international charitable concerns have been victimised on the unwarranted grounds that they are 'fronts' for terrorist organisations. She goes on to note that not only does this lead to a retreat from legitimate activism, but it also motivates gang behaviour among young people who feel that they lack legitimate avenues for political and cultural expression.

Interviewees are consistent in their demands that Islam be respected as a peaceful religion, and that assisting the authorities in their legitimate search for terrorists should not compromise the sacredness of Islam and the dignity of Muslims in Canada. Asked how far Muslims should go to cooperate with the police and other authorities, SM2 says: 'I don't think they should necessarily have to go above and beyond going out of their way to help people, just because the average person doesn't have to do that'. SW3 adds that any reluctance to take part probably originates in a sense that Muslims have already been singled out and targetted, and that active collaboration is therefore unwise. C1 adds that while Muslims should definitely cooperate, they should do so with a sense of caution and 'not to the extent that they should be seen as almost like doormats'. The matter is perhaps put most eloquently by SW5, who says:

> I will cooperate and I think that the Muslim community should cooperate fully, but if we have to compromise our Islamic ideals, I would say no … I am entitled to the Charter of Rights and I shouldn't have to limit myself or compromise my belief system just so that I can ease their paranoia or their response … I think it is necessary but to draw the line is where we would have to be giving up some of our fundamental rights. I wouldn't.

There is an almost complete agreement among the interviewees that Canadian Muslims should be encouraged to become more involved in the political process and engage as voters, activists and leaders. Only SM2 expresses any reservations, and he says: 'It would be nice. But I mean, you can look at a black person, women – they've been around for so long and haven't gotten extremely far. I mean, they've definitely made progress, but I don't know if Muslims today can just all of a sudden just say "we want to get into politics."'

In their own way, the responses of the other twelve interviewees express a sense of possibility, empowerment and optimism, mixed with a certain degree of defensive cautiousness, which is an appropriate way to summarise the more general orientations of the participants.

> When you say to my son 'go back to your own country', he just sort of looks at them like 'what the hell are you talking about? This is my country.' (L2)

> It [the democratic tradition] is a process of learning, it is a process of coming out, and hopefully in time we'll see more of it. (L3)

> If we open those issues [such as the situation in Lebanon] we're not going to agree, so let's leave it behind. We have some issues we have yet to experience, we have a future. So if you're going to be part of the future you have to be part of the process. (L4)

> You are a citizen. You happen to be Muslim but you are also a citizen of Canada. (C1)

> To be able to have an impact on the system, and to get some benefits of the system, you have to organise. Muslims are not organised politically. (C2)

> One of the problems is that Muslims aren't involved in politics. So how can we say – how can we expect people to care about us, when we're not involved? I think we need to take, you know, a firm step towards being really involved. (SW1)

> Those people that do get the seats and do get the power … it's almost as if you're there so you know through *you* we can speak, through *you* we can speak, and through *you* people can hear our voices, and that's the way I think it should be done. (SW2)

> Yes, we're Canadians and we should involve ourselves in the process just as any other Canadian should. (SW3)

> And there's many educated, you know, minority women who would do, you know, wonders in the – in those positions and yet they seem to be restricted from them or just not – not um – you don't know whether they want to participate or not, but there are less opportunities for them to participate. (SW4)

> More than ever, I think we need to integrate ourselves. I always say not integrate completely, because we do have our values and we do have our cultural norms that we hold very dear … a middle ground of integration, kind of give-and-take. (SW5)

> I think they should [get involved more in electoral politics]. It would be good to see a few more members in Parliament and stuff. (SM1)

L1 gives an account of the backroom politics of a local party organisation that underwent a hotly contested nomination contest that was ultimately won by a Muslim candidate. L1's account refers to a kind of arrogance of power that is often associated with political parties and local constituency organisations that have become accustomed to winning. There was going to be no nomination contest, and the non-Muslim candidate was simply going to assume the nomination through acclamation. L1 reports that when the Muslim candidate declared himself, there was a substantial degree of dirty campaigning, and comments were circulating that members of the party should vote for someone who was 'a visible Canadian'. L1 argues that despite this – or perhaps because of it – large numbers of party supporters actually came over to the Muslim candidate, who eventually won the contest. L1 said: 'It's funny how fair Canadians are … Canadian people are more intelligent and, uh, more compassionate than that.'

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of attitudes toward Muslims in Canada has surveyed in-depth the responses of thirteen Muslims, and has examined the discourse of Canada's political elite in the post-9/11 aftermath. As stated at the beginning of the article, the project began with a concern and a curiosity. With regard to the concern, having evaluated the data, my initial response is cautiously positive. While there have been acts of anti-Muslim discrimination, and ignorance of Muslims and stereotypes abound, it is apparent that for these Muslims and those known to them, integration into Canadian political society has been successful for the most part. Their view is sustained and encouraged by the predominantly progressive, anti-racist and anti-hate discourse among Canada's political class. Their efforts have evidently achieved enough to ensure that the Muslims I talked to feel fundamentally safe, respected, and full members of the polity.

   This leads to my curiosity. Canadian multinational and polyethnic pluralism does indeed appear to have facilitated deep diversity and respect for the group rights of Muslim culture and Islamic religion within the context of the civic citizenship of universal rights and freedoms. The clashing discourses in the post-9/11 Parliament – those of the anti-hate majority and the anti-terrorism minority – resulted in a public policy agenda that was prepared to adjust somewhat to the new global realities, with legislation, spending and regulations. However, MPs for the most part

were not prepared to support the imposition of policies that might fuel the politics of fear and panic. At every stage throughout the parliamentary debates, a majority of MPs were concerned to educate, to bring communities together, to build bridges and to resist black-and-white thinking. The efforts of the political class are echoed in the judgements of most Muslims. While there are clearly problems of popular stereotypes, poor policing and inadequate legislation, most of the interviewees affirm the Canadian political society as one in which Muslims are genuinely free to develop individual and social identities. Manifesting a highly sophisticated and developed sense of deep diversity in a liberal democracy, the Muslim voices articulated in this article express a will to reconcile the fundamental need for peace and order in society with the fullest expression of their religious communities, and with fundamental individual rights, liberal-democratic legal guarantees and civil freedoms.

Nothing in this conclusion should detract from the reality that the Muslim experience in Canada has been diffuse and nuanced, and cannot be entirely apprehended in terms of the framework developed in this article. The politics of Islam in Canada is complexly interwoven with the politics of race, ethnicity, class, age and region. Moreover, the conclusion regarding dominant discourses cannot be taken to indicate any complacency regarding Canadian anti-terrorism legislation, or the related abuses of detention without trial or the arbitrary deportation of innocent Muslims. Faced with overwhelming pressure from the Bush regime, Canadian governments have modified national security, the work of spy agencies, immigration and refugee regulations, and the Criminal Code in a manner that makes it more than ever essential that anti-hate discourse continues to be the predominant sensitiser in Canadian society. Deeply troubling to many Muslims and non-Muslims in Canada were the deportations of Canadian Muslims, among them Abdullah Almaki, Maher Arar and Ahmed El-Maaki, to Syria, where they were tortured. Adil Charkaoui, Mohammed Harkat and Mohammed Mahjoub are three of five Muslims to have been detained without charge under Canadian Federal Security Certificates. A teenage Canadian, Omar Khadr, is currently a prisoner of the USA in Guantanamo Bay. While these cases are not substantial in number, they have exerted a powerful impact, and rendered the task of sustaining intercommunity communication, trust and respect more challenging than it otherwise would have been.

In the end, the voices of Canada's Muslims find sensitive reflection in Marion Boyd's review, *Dispute Resolution in Family Law: Protecting Choice, Promoting Inclusion* (2004). Former provincial Attorney-General Boyd

offers a nuanced and balanced assertion of universal rights in the context of a polyethnic and multicultural society:

> [I]n a liberal-democratic, multicultural society such as Canada … it is citizenship that allows membership in the minority community to take shape. As a result, the foremost political commitment of all citizens, particularly those who wish to identify at a cultural or religious level with a minority outside the mainstream, must be to respect the rights accorded to each one of us as individual Canadians … It is illogical and untenable to claim minority rights in order then to entrench religious or cultural orthodoxies that seek to trample the individual rights of select others. Accommodation of cultural difference and respect for minorities should not extend this far. Rather, tolerance and accommodation must be balanced against a firm commitment to individual agency and autonomy. (Boyd 2004: 92)

To the extent that the multicultural balance of universal rights and group rights remains in creative and positive tension, it does so through the constant practices of articulation and re-articulation. Many individuals and institutions are engaged in the sheer daily hard work of reaffirming and adapting the Canadian identity of pluralistic inclusiveness and integrity, of Canada as 'a community of communities'. This is no small feat. There is an ever-present danger that one term in the multicultural equation will dominate the other, and thereby crowd out the mutual respect, trust and open communication necessary to facilitate both community development and individual freedoms. This is why Canadians have been wise to downplay the excesses of anti-terrorist discourses – 'us versus them' thinking – and to reject the focus on fear and enmity. There are, of course, ongoing challenges, and more will arise in the future. Canada has not yet experienced a major act of terrorism or political crisis associated with Islam or Muslims. Only if and when such an eventuality occurs will Canada really be put to the test. Until then, the hard daily work of communication, dialogue, education, political compromise and mutual support should sustain our Canadian polity.

An earlier version of this article was presented at the British Association of Canadian Studies conference at the University of Kent at Canterbury, 11 April 2005.

Appendix
Coding criteria for the analysis of the proceedings of the House of Commons. In general, each instance of a mention of Islam, Muslims or some reference that

connotes these references is identified and recorded. Specifically, references to the following are identified and recorded with sufficient contextual material to allow for semantic, pragmatic and deixical interpretation.

Islam; Muslim(s).

Race and ethnicity as it relates to Muslims: mentions of Arabs or ethnic groups from any predominantly Muslim country, such as Indonesia, Pakistan. Bangladesh or Turkey.

Islam as a faith or religion.

Immigration of Muslims to Canada and Muslim refugees and refugee claimants in Canada.

Citizenship rights and Muslims.

Middle East conflicts, notably the Palestine–Israel conflict and Iraq, regarding Islam and Muslims.

Civil liberties and Muslims in Canada.

The Canadian Muslim Community.

Canadian Muslim organisations, such as the Canadian Islamic Congress.

National defence and security and matters related to Muslims.

Human rights and Muslims in Canada.

The International Transfer of Offenders Act and Muslims.

Racial and religious discrimination, Islam and Muslims in Canada.

Preparedness as it relates to Islam and Muslims.

Anti-terrorism legislation and Muslims.

Associations made between Muslims, Islam and terrorism.

References to any of the following (or related) terms: armed Islamic group; Islamic extremist; Islamist; extreme [branches of] Islam; extremist Islamic regime; hard-line Islamic/Muslim regime; hard-line Muslim; global Islamic militancy; Islamic/Muslim fanatic; Islamic fundamentalist; Muslim fundamentalist; Islamic terrorist; Muslim terrorist; Islamic dictatorship; fundamentalist terrorist groups; Jihad; Jihad militant; Muslim guerillas; Muslim militia; Muslim hijackers; Muslim militant; Islamic militant; Islamic/Muslim radical; Islamic/Muslim suicide bomber; Islamic/Muslim terrorist cell; Islamic Mullahs; Murderous Islamic militant; Muslim dictator; Muslim extremist; Muslim mercenary; Muslim mob; Muslim faction; Muslim organisation; radical Muslim; radical Islamist; violent Islamic group; radical Muslim faction; Islamo-terrorism; Muslim insurgent; Islamo-fascism.

In general, any use of stereotypes (positive or negative) about Islam or Muslims.

Any direct statements or inferences that Islam is a violent religion.

Identification of Muslims with violence.

Attempts to demonise or denigrate Muslims.

Use of exaggeration, rhetoric, invective, irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, euphemism,

deliberately twisted syntax or grammar to denote or connote Islam or Muslims.

Use of stock figures, ridicule, patronising comments or belittling of Islam or Muslims.

Particular features of Islam/Muslims that receive a great deal of attention.

Comments about Islamic culture, dress, food or social customs.

Well-known Islamic and Muslim terms, such as jihad, fatwah and sharia.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. With reference to the latter point, I cannot resist what seems to me to be a highly relevant personal anecdote. One of my sons recently graduated from elementary school. In Canada, this rite of passage takes place when boys and girls are between 13 and 14 years of age. My son's evening consisted of a dinner at a Chinese restaurant, followed by a ceremony and prize-giving, and then a dance. One student among the forty or so who graduated was chosen as valedictorian by the students themselves, guided by the school teaching staff. Dressed in a long, sparkling and slinky black ballgown, with high heels and make-up, she made her way to the podium to the cheers of those assembled. She was also wearing a matching black hijab. In a strong voice and with a coherence that would have put most adults to shame, she proceeded to deliver a witty, cheeky and yet heartfelt speech about memories of shared times together. As an image of cultural, religious and racial harmony, it is difficult to think of a more sublime moment.

2. Not only do the London area ridings consistently match predominant national and provincial trends in political party support, but the city is also renowned as an ideal test market for new products and services. See Acumen Research's page on focus groups at http://www.acumenresearch.com.

3. The most recent data from the Canadian Census of 2001 (http://www.statcan.ca) gives the City of London population as 332,940. Of these, 11,460 are declared as Muslims in the 'Religious' section, and a further 67,005 report 'no religious affiliation'. There is a consensus among Muslims and non-Muslims alike that this figure understates the actual number of Muslims

in London. Including those whose religious affiliation is weak but who are ethnically and culturally Muslim by ancestry alongside those who are reluctant to officially declare themselves Muslim and therefore employ the convenient catch-all 'no religious affiliation', it is possible to interpret the degree of under-reporting. However, there are also important differences, and politics is at the heart of the estimations themselves. One of my interviewees, referred to in the article as 'L3', has recently articulated a controversial hard-line stance against Muslim states, and exhibits a pro-USA outlook on foreign policy. He has thereby incurred the opposition and animosity of many in the Muslim community. L3 was reported in the media as being among those who estimate the number of Muslims in London at around 30,000. Despite this, he claimed in a recent conversation that the census data are correct, and that others are exaggerating the figures to suit their own political purposes. When asked for the origin of the 30,000 figure, L2 promised to look into it, but stated that it was probably based on censuses taken by four London mosques.

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