THE CANADIAN ISLAMOPHOBIA INDUSTRY:

Mapping Islamophobia’s Ecosystem in the Great White North

Jasmin Zine
Data.
Research.
Advocacy.
Abstract

Since the 9/11 attacks, Muslims have been more openly vilified and targeted. Statistics Canada data on police-reported hate crimes between 2009 and 2019 revealed a steady increase of anti-Muslim incidents across the country.

White nationalist terror in Canada has specifically targeted Canadian Muslims. There have been unprecedented attacks against Muslims first at a mosque in Québec City on January 29, 2017, killing six men after evening prayers and then four years later, on June 6, 2021, in London, Ontario, where four members of a Muslim family were intentionally mowed down by a truck and killed.

Within this context, understanding how Islamophobia manifests and is purveyed is more important than ever. In addition to the impact that state policies and systemic anti-Muslim racism have on perpetuating a climate of Islamophobic animus, Islamophobic networks operate in orchestrated ways to support and sustain an industry of hate.

The “Islamophobia industry” is comprised of media outlets; political figures; far-right, White nationalist groups; Islamophobia influencers and ideologues, pro-Israel, fringe-right groups; Muslim dissidents, think tanks, security experts, and the donors who fund their campaigns. These individuals, groups, and institutions comprise a network that supports and engages in activities that demonize and marginalize Islam and Muslims in Canada.

The objectives of this study were to (a) map the political, ideological, institutional, and economic networks that foment Islamophobic fear and moral panic in Canada; (b) examine strategies employed by Islamophobia agents and highlight the ties among players within the Islamophobia industry; (c) create profiles of key public figures, media outlets, and organizations who produce and distribute Islamophobic ideologies and propaganda, and (d) identify the dominant Islamophobic discourses that circulate through these networks.

A social network analysis was performed to examine relevant media articles, websites, public commentary, and videos from Islamophobia influencers and ideologues, organizations, media outlets, and other anti-Muslim special-interest groups that promote Islamophobic campaigns.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to the victims of the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting: Ibrahima Barry, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Abdelkrim Hassane, and Azzedine Soufiane, and the victims of the 2021 London, Ontario, terror attack: Yumna Afzaal, Madiha Salman, Talat Afzaal, and Salman Afzaal, and also to Mohamed Aslim-Zafis. Their lives were brutally taken because of Islamophobic violence. This report honours their memory and contributes to the ongoing struggle to combat Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism in all its forms. Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon.
Abstract..................................................................................................................................................i
Dedication ............................................................................................................................................... ii
Contents ................................................................................................................................................... iii
Figures ...................................................................................................................................................... vii
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................. viii
Chapter 1: The Canadian Islamophobia Industry and Its Ecosystem ...................................................... 1
  1.1 The Islamophobia Industry ......................................................................................................... 3
  1.2 Defining Islamophobia as a System of Oppression .................................................................. 5
    1.2.1 Individual Actions ................................................................................................................ 6
    1.2.2 Ideologies ............................................................................................................................... 6
    1.2.3 Systemic Practices ............................................................................................................... 7
  1.3 Mapping the Canadian Islamophobia Industry ........................................................................... 8
    1.3.1 Theoretical and Methodological Approach ........................................................................ 8
    1.3.2 Research Methods ................................................................................................................. 10
    1.3.3 Archiving Limitations and Difficulties ................................................................................. 10
    1.3.4 Islamophobia’s Ecosystem .................................................................................................... 11
    1.3.5 Types of Connections .......................................................................................................... 13
  1.4 Monetizing Hate .......................................................................................................................... 15
    1.4.1 Gatestone Institute .............................................................................................................. 16
    1.4.2 Middle East Forum .............................................................................................................. 17
    1.4.3 Clarion Project .................................................................................................................... 18
    1.4.4 Shillman Foundation .......................................................................................................... 18
  1.5 Framing the Report ....................................................................................................................... 19
  1.6 Systemic Practices ......................................................................................................................... 24
Chapter 2: Islamophobia in The Great White North: An Overview of Key Issues ........................................ 25
  2.1 Islamophobia by Numbers: Canadian National Polling Data .................................................. 26
  2.2 Politicians Promoting Islamophobia ......................................................................................... 29
  2.3 Liberal Islamophobia .................................................................................................................. 30
Chapter 3: Manufacturing Fear: Discourses of Islamophobia in Canada ................................................. 48
  3.1 Islamophobia’s Playlist ................................................................................................................. 49
  3.2 Islamophobic Imaginaries: Discourses and Conspiracy Theories ............................................. 50
    3.2.1 Islamist Bogeyman ............................................................................................................. 51
    3.2.2 Trojan Horse ...................................................................................................................... 53
    3.2.3 Fifth Column ...................................................................................................................... 56
    3.2.4. Taqiyya .......................................................................................................................... 56
    3.2.5 Creeping Sharia .................................................................................................................. 57
    3.2.6 Muslim Invaders and Civilization Jihad ............................................................................. 60
    3.2.7 Counter-Jihad Ideology ..................................................................................................... 64
    3.2.8 Demographic Replacement and White Genocide ............................................................. 66
    3.2.9 Jihad/Terrorist Narratives ................................................................................................. 69
    3.2.10 Crusader Narratives ......................................................................................................... 70
    3.2.11 Islamofascism .................................................................................................................. 72
    3.2.12 Gendered Islamophobic Discourses ................................................................................. 73
    3.2.13 Discursive Tactics: Weaponizing the Qur’an ................................................................. 75
    3.2.14 Discursive Tactics: Liberal Washing ............................................................................... 75
Chapter 4: Media Platforms: Islamophobia Influencers and Muslim Panics .............................................. 77
  4.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 78
  4.2 Digital Islamophobia, Fake News, and the Disinformation Industry .......................................... 81
  4.3 Canadian Islamophobia Media Networks: Key Influencers ..................................................... 83
    4.3.1 Rebel News ......................................................................................................................... 83
    4.3.2 Bankrolling Bigotry: Rebel News Funding Sources ....................................................... 86
  4.4 Islamophobia Influencers: Key Players and Connections ......................................................... 87
    4.4.1 Ezra Levant ......................................................................................................................... 87
    4.4.2 Lauren Southern ................................................................................................................ 89
    4.4.3 Faith Goldy ......................................................................................................................... 92
    4.4.4 Sheila Gunn Reid ............................................................................................................... 95
    4.4.5 Kevin J. Johnston ............................................................................................................. 98
Chapter 5: The Foot Soldiers of Islamophobic White Nationalism .......................................................... 113

5.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 114
5.1.1 PEGIDA Canada ................................................................................................................................. 116
5.1.2 Proud Boys ....................................................................................................................................... 118
5.1.3 Three Percenters ................................................................................................................................. 119
5.1.4 Soldiers of Odin and Canadian Infidels ......................................................................................... 121
5.1.5 Northern Guard ................................................................................................................................. 123
5.1.6 Blood and Honour, and Combat 18 ................................................................................................. 126
5.1.7 ID Canada .......................................................................................................................................... 127
5.1.8 World Coalition Against Islam ....................................................................................................... 129
5.1.9 Rise Canada and Ron Banerjee ....................................................................................................... 131
5.1.10 Canadian National Party ................................................................................................................... 135
5.1.11 Cultural Action Party ....................................................................................................................... 136
5.1.12 Yellow Vests .................................................................................................................................... 137
5.1.13 Canadian Nationalist Front ............................................................................................................. 139
5.1.14 Paul Fromm ..................................................................................................................................... 141
5.1.15 Students for Western Civilization ................................................................................................. 143
5.1.16 La Meute .......................................................................................................................................... 144
5.1.17 Watch List ....................................................................................................................................... 146

Chapter 6: (Un)Holy Alliances: The Soft Power Behind Islamophobia in Canada ........................................... 152

6.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 153
6.1.1 Challenging Antisemitism and Islamophobia ................................................................................ 154
6.1.2 Pro-Israel Backlash Industry ........................................................................................................... 154
6.2 The Eschatology of Islamophobia ....................................................................................................... 155
6.3 Mobilizations: Lawfare ......................................................................................................................... 156
6.4 The Soft Power Behind Islamophobia in Canada: Key Organizations, Supporters, and Connections .......................................................... 158
6.4.1 Jewish Defence League of Canada (JDL-Canada) ........................................................................ 158
6.4.2 B’nai Brith Canada ......................................................................................................................... 162
6.4.3 Never Again Canada ....................................................................................................................... 165
6.4.4 The Middle East Forum .................................................................................................................. 166
6.4.5 ACT! For Canada .............................................................................................................................. 168
6.4.6 Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms .................................................................... 170
6.4.7 Canadians for the Rule of Law ........................................................................................................ 172
6.4.8 Selected Profiles of Speakers at the 2019 CFTRL All-Day National Teach-In Conference ............. 174
6.5 Christian Soft Power: Charles McVety ............................................................................................... 176

Chapter 7: Native Informers: Muslim Dissidents and Ex-Muslims ................................................................. 179

7.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 180
7.1.1 Fomenting the Islamist Bogeysman ................................................................................................. 181
7.1.2 Promoting Hijab/Niqab Bans ......................................................................................................... 182
7.1.3 Other Shared Islamophobic Narratives ........................................................................................... 182
7.1.4 Quebec City Mosque and London, Ontario, Terror Attacks ................................................................ 182
7.2 Muslim Dissidents ............................................................................................................................... 183
7.2.1 Raheel Raza ..................................................................................................................................... 183
7.2.2 Tarek Fatah ....................................................................................................................................... 186
7.2.3 Salim Mansur ................................................................................................................................... 188
7.2.4 Tahir Gora ....................................................................................................................................... 191
7.2.5 Imam Mohammad Tawhidi ........................................................................................................... 193
7.3 Ex-Muslims ........................................................................................................................................... 197
7.3.1 Sandra Solomon .............................................................................................................................. 197
7.3.2 Yasmine Mohammed ..................................................................................................................... 199
7.4 Watch List .......................................................................................................................................... 203

Chapter 8: Think Tanks and Security Narratives ......................................................................................... 204

8.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 205
8.2 The Mackenzie Institute ....................................................................................................................... 206
8.3 Security Experts ................................................................................................................................. 209
8.3.1 Thomas Quiggin ............................................................................................................................. 209
8.3.2 David B. Harris ............................................................................................................................... 213

Chapter 9: Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 216

Bibliography ............................................................................................................................................... 218
Acknowledgements

The early stages of this project began in 2017 with a partnership with the Bridge Initiative on Islamophobia at Georgetown University. Three graduate research assistants from Wilfrid Laurier University, Fatima Chakroun, Sahver Kuzucuoglu, and Doaa Shalabi, worked under my supervision to develop fact sheets on Islamophobia in Canada for the Bridge Initiative website. Through this process we realized that we were seeing new contours of Islamophobia in Canada through the way key influencers and organizations were interconnected. So we decided to dig deeper. With the support of research funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) we began to investigate how Islamophobia is organized and purveyed in Canada.

The research team grew as other Laurier graduate students, Shifa Abbas and Philip Oddi, came on board along with Fatima, Sahver, and Doaa to help identify and unpack the various dimensions of the Islamophobia industry. This project was made possible through their tenacity in tracking down information and going headfirst into hundreds of rabbit holes to dig up relevant facts and content to help put together this report. I am grateful for their valuable research assistance as well as their commitment and dedication to this work.

I am also indebted to Ihsaan Gardee, the former executive director of the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), who enthusiastically encouraged and supported this project as we were starting out. His vision, leadership, and championing of Canadian Muslims over the years have been impactful within national advocacy efforts to combat Islamophobia.

The Office of Research Services at Wilfrid Laurier University provided invaluable assistance to this project, and I am deeply thankful for their support and backing. I am also very grateful to the Laurier Library for providing a grant to help cover the costs of curating and archiving the hundreds of sources (media articles, websites, and social media content) that were compiled through this research.

Several colleagues offered feedback on the final draft of the report, and I am very appreciative of their peer reviews. Amar Amarasingam, Faisal Bahabba, Farid Hafez, Sheryl Nestel and Irfan Syed all provided important comments and suggestions that strengthened and improved this report. I am thankful for conversations with Bernie Farber about aspects of this report. He did not always agree with the positions taken but nonetheless engaged in productive dialogue with me and offered helpful advice.

This report benefitted greatly from Anne Curry’s careful eye and excellent copyediting skills. I am grateful for her attention to detail and the editing oversight she provided for this very detailed report. I also want to thank Patti Simmons for her excellent work in compiling references for the media and website compendium, which also serves as an archive of related digital resources on Islamophobia in Canada.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to Hatem Bazian and the partnership of the Islamophobia Studies Center (ISC) and the Islamophobia Research and Development Project (IRDP) at the University of California, Berkeley. Their support has enhanced the scope and reach of this work tremendously.
A Note to Readers

This report contains content that depicts graphic and at times violent speech and images that are racist, Islamophobic, anti-Muslim and sexist. This may be triggering for some readers.
Islamophobia in Canada has reached deadly proportions. In recent years the country has been rocked by two unprecedented attacks against Muslims. The first took place at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec in Quebec City on January 29, 2017, when six men were killed after evening prayers. The second attack came four years later, on June 6, 2021, in London, Ontario when four members of a Canadian-Pakistani Muslim family were intentionally mowed down by a truck and killed. Both deadly attacks occurred at the hands of White1 nationalists. Adding to the death toll, in 2020, a man linked to a neo-Nazi death cult stabbed the caretaker at a Toronto mosque to death. In 2022, a man entered the Dar Al-Tawheed Islamic Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, after early morning prayers brandishing a hatchet and bear spray. It is alleged that he was an “ex-Muslim” who had posted anti-Muslim posts on social media and was attempting to “kill terrorists.”

Hate crimes against Muslims range from deadly mass killings and targeted attacks like these, to acts of vandalism at mosques, harassment, and physical aggression. Gendered Islamophobia is increasingly prevalent as Muslim women wearing religious attire have faced verbal and physical assaults across the country. These acts are expressions of the anti-Muslim bigotry and racism that pervade many facets of Canada’s social, cultural, and political landscape.

Since the 9/11 attacks, national polls have revealed negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims among Canadians that include distrust, fear of radicalization, support for bans on religious attire, and concerns that Islam is not compatible with Canadian values. These attitudes justify and fortify state policies that police and regulate Islamic attire in the public sphere as well as security policies that unduly target Muslim communities as suspect and as potential threats to public safety.

Heightened fear and moral panic, proliferation of fake news, and political figures dog whistling Islamophobic ideologies have led to the widespread normalization of Islamophobia, creating the perfect storm for anti-Muslim hate crimes. Within this complex terrain, combatting Islamophobia is like playing a game of “whack-a-mole” as new Islamophobic agitators and groups continue to emerge, align, and gather momentum in a common cause of fomenting Islamophobic paranoia and mounting anti-Muslim campaigns.1

1 Throughout the report, where “White” is used to signify a racial identity, it is capitalized in keeping with other racial categories like Black and Brown. By not capitalizing it we risk setting the category of White/Whiteness apart as a normative standard and diminish its resonance as a signifier of unearned privilege, social dominance, and cultural power. This choice was made to disrupt the seemingly innocuous ways that the politics of naming can reproduce racial power. Nguyen and Pendleton (2020) added the following rationale for this editorial choice: “We believe that it is important to call attention to White as a race as a way to understand and give voice to how Whiteness functions in our social and political institutions and our communities. Moreover, the detachment of “White” as a proper noun allows White people to sit out of conversations about race and removes accountability from White people and White institutions.”

1.1

The Islamophobia Industry

What distinguishes Islamophobia from other forms of oppression is the industry behind it that is purveying anti-Muslim hate. An influential report in the United States, Fear Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America (Ali et al. 2011, 9) was the first to shine a light on “the Islamophobia network of so-called experts, institutions, grassroots, organizations, media outlets, and donors who manufacture, produce, distribute, and mainstream an irrational fear of Islam and Muslims.” Lean’s (2012, 2017) study, The Islamophobia Industry, further exposed the ideologies and tactics of American proponents of Islamophobia—those on the right and on the left of the political spectrum, those from religious and secular groups, and politicians and media personalities—whose propaganda contributes to politicizing and legislatting of fear of Muslims. These studies were able to identify the key elements of the Islamophobia industry and identify major donors financing the promotion of anti-Muslim hate and propaganda in the United States.

Lean (2012, 10) referred to a “tight knit and interconnected confederation of right-wing fear merchants” driving campaigns of anti-Muslim propaganda in the United States. Since the Twin Towers fell on September 11, 2001, Lean argued, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States and Europe were “not the result of a naturally evolving climate of skepticism but a product that has been carefully and methodically nurtured” (13). The orchestrated and funded nature of this kind of Islamophobic enterprise, operating as a clearing house for anti-Muslim ideologies, activities, and transnational campaigns, is why many people characterize this network as an “industry.” The Islamophobia industry is constituted of the intertwined interests of the diverse individuals, groups, and organizations that coordinate in various ways to achieve shared and mutually beneficial political goals. These activities are often funded by or generate revenue from monetizing anti-Muslim bigotry.

According to a 2016 report by the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and University of California, Berkeley’s Center for Race and Gender, there is a small, tightly networked group of donors, organizations, and misinformation experts backed by $208-million dollars in funding to help advance their political interests and anti-Muslim campaigns. In their 2019 follow up report, Hijacked by Hate, CAIR’s research found that in the United States, 1,096 charitable institutions financed at least thirty-nine Islamophobia network groups between 2014 and 2016 through donor-advised funds (DAF). These foundations donated a wide range of sums, from $20 up to $32.4 million. The report also documented that, between 2014 and 2016, these thirty-nine anti-Muslim organizations had access to at least $1.5 billion through their collective organizational financial capacity.2 The financial resources at the disposal of Islamophobia networks is staggering and demonstrates how anti-Muslim bigotry has very deep pockets (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”).

Manufacturing and instrumentalizing fear and hate through the propagation of Islamophobic ideologies is the mainstay of the Islamophobia industry. A wide variety of discourses circulate through the individuals and organizations connected to these Islamophobic networks, including representing Muslims as the “Islamist bogeyman” or “fifth column” and as “interest groups” or “extremists,” and wolves in sheep’s clothing” using deception (taqiyya) to dupe and overtake Western civilization, to name a few (see chapter 3). Ingraining fear and moral panic about Muslims allow for hate crimes as well as draconian security policies and racial profiling to be regarded as legitimate and necessary to preserve public safety (Jamal and Rousseau 2012; Nagra 2011; Razack 2008; CAIR’s report notes that this funding is derived from multiple sources such as private donations, membership fees, and investment vehicles. Data was collected about the overall financial capacity of the Islamophobia network by analyzing its total revenue from a list of each organization’s revenue between 2014 and 2016.

2 3
think tanks and their designated security experts propagate Islamophobic rhetoric under the guise of national security and protecting Canada from dangerous Muslim foreigners and “homegrown radicals.” These stereotypes allow for Muslims to be singled out for undue scrutiny and racial and religious profiling. Islamophobia fortifies the security industrial complex and legitimizes policies that construct Muslims as potential jihadists who require state surveillance and monitoring (Zine 2022).

In addition to systemic forms of Islamophobia, the dog whistles and overt Islamophobic rhetoric among some Canadian politicians, individual actors and groups have coalesced to promote and purvey anti-Muslim animus. They are among the drivers of contemporary Islamophobia. Unpacking the networks of bigotry and anti-Muslim hate and identifying how they bolster ideological and systemic forms of Islamophobia and create a breeding ground for hate crimes are imperative for fully understanding the dynamics of Islamophobia as a system of oppression and the Islamic right (see chapter 4) that translates into individual actions and ideological and systemic forms of oppression that support the logic and rationale of specific power relations” (Zine 2022, 14). This broad definition outlines the sociology of Islamophobia as a dynamic and pervasive form of oppression and power.

Anti-Muslim racism is a manifestation of Islamophobia that is evident through the violence, hatred, and discrimination enacted against Muslim bodies, but since these acts rely upon the demonization of Islam to sustain and reproduce their racial logic, one does not exist without the other. Islam and its markers, referents, and followers, comprise a predominant focus of social and political disapproval, legal regulation, and cultural concern. The historical and ontological specificity of Islamophobia as a form of oppression must be considered in the ways that both religion and race are invoked and in how religion is racialized. Islamophobia has a diversity of racial registers where a variety of anti-Muslim racism(s) intersect, including anti-Arab racism, anti-Brown racism and anti-Black racism. The examples that follow break down the dimensions through which Islamophobia is enacted and institutionalized.

Islamophobia is a term that is often misunderstood. It is not simply a fear or hatred of Islam and Muslims as the term suggests, and it does not imply that Islam cannot be criticized as other religions might be. In this study, Islamophobia has been defined as “a fear and hatred of Islam and Muslims and those perceived as Muslims” that translates into individual actions and ideological and systemic forms of oppression that support the logic and rationale of specific power relations.” (Zine 2022, 14).

Defining Islamophobia as a System of Oppression

Think tanks and their designated security experts propagate Islamophobic rhetoric under the guise of national security and protecting Canada from dangerous Muslim foreigners and “homegrown radicals.” These stereotypes allow for Muslims to be singled out for undue scrutiny and racial and religious profiling. Islamophobia fortifies the security industrial complex and legitimizes policies that construct Muslims as potential jihadists who require state surveillance and monitoring (Zine 2022).

In addition to systemic forms of Islamophobia, the dog whistles and overt Islamophobic rhetoric among some Canadian politicians, individual actors and groups have coalesced to promote and purvey anti-Muslim animus. They are among the drivers of contemporary Islamophobia. Unpacking the networks of bigotry and anti-Muslim hate and identifying how they bolster ideological and systemic forms of Islamophobia and create a breeding ground for hate crimes are imperative for fully understanding the dynamics of Islamophobia as a system of oppression and the Islamic right (see chapter 4) that translates into individual actions and ideological and systemic forms of oppression that support the logic and rationale of specific power relations” (Zine 2022, 14). This broad definition outlines the sociology of Islamophobia as a dynamic and pervasive form of oppression and power.

Anti-Muslim racism is a manifestation of Islamophobia that is evident through the violence, hatred, and discrimination enacted against Muslim bodies, but since these acts rely upon the demonization of Islam to sustain and reproduce their racial logic, one does not exist without the other. Islam and its markers, referents, and followers, comprise a predominant focus of social and political disapproval, legal regulation, and cultural concern. The historical and ontological specificity of Islamophobia as a form of oppression must be considered in the ways that both religion and race are invoked and in how religion is racialized. Islamophobia has a diversity of racial registers where a variety of anti-Muslim racism(s) intersect, including anti-Arab racism, anti-Brown racism and anti-Black racism. The examples that follow break down the dimensions through which Islamophobia is enacted and institutionalized.

Across Canada there are 300 White nationalist groups, up from 130 in 2015. Promoting Islamophobia is a core mandate for some of these Canada-based groups, such as Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA), Soldiers of Odin, Canadian Infidels, Northern Guard, ID Canada, Proud Boys, Cultural Action Party, Yellow Vests, Canadian Nationalist Party, Blood and Honour, Combat 18, Students for Western Civilization, Three Percenters, Rise Canada, and World Coalition Against Islam. Quebec’s Islamophobic group, La Meute, are part of what Nadeau and Helly (2016, 2) warned is “the emergence of an extreme right ‘sensibility’ in the province of Quebec.” All these groups engage in public rhetoric against Islam and Muslims, prominently promoting anti-Muslim narratives in their social-media posts and on their websites.

While White nationalist groups can be regarded as the “foot soldiers” who take their Islamophobic hate to the street in overt ways, there are “soft power” groups (comprised of pro-Israel, fringe-right groups) within the Islamophobia industry that use their spheres of influence and their resources to pervert Islamophobic ideologies under the guise of promoting a “Judeo-Christian democracy” “Canadian values,” “free speech,” and “the rule of law,” thereby camouflaging anti-Muslim narratives through a “liberal washing” of White nationalism. These ideological purveyors espouse conspiracy theories about Canadian Muslim organizations serving as a Trojan horse for Islamist groups like Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood whom they see as having an agenda of global domination.

Unlike Islamophobic ideologues include self-proclaimed “Muslim dissidents,” prominent public figures like Tarek Fatah and Raheel Raza, among others. Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims play the “insider role” as “native informers” validating pejorative stereotypes about Islam, and they play a major part in fomenting and legitimizing anti-Muslim tropes.

A great deal of consultation and deliberation went into naming the specific pro-Israel groups involved in the Islamophobia industry in Canada. All language can be fraught with unintended meanings, so this careful attention was necessary so as not to make gross generalizations, which is what these groups do when it comes to labelling Muslims. While the groups in question identify as Zionists (Jewish and Christian), that term has many implications and relates to a wider political spectrum than what is being addressed in this report. The pro-Israel groups engaged in anti-Muslim activism in Canada fall on the right-wing side of the political spectrum and occupy the fringe of that category. Therefore, they are designated in this report as “pro-Israel, fringe-right” to demarcate their political location as accurately as possible and to not cast unintended aspersions on others who may share certain political sensibilities but do not engage in similar actions.

3  A great deal of consultation and deliberation went into naming the specific pro-Israel groups involved in the Islamophobia industry in Canada. All language can be fraught with unintended meanings, so this careful attention was necessary so as not to make gross generalizations, which is what these groups do when it comes to labelling Muslims. While the groups in question identify as Zionists (Jewish and Christian), that term has many implications and relates to a wider political spectrum than what is being addressed in this report. The pro-Israel groups engaged in anti-Muslim activism in Canada fall on the right-wing side of the political spectrum and occupy the fringe of that category. Therefore, they are designated in this report as “pro-Israel, fringe-right” to demarcate their political location as accurately as possible and to not cast unintended aspersions on others who may share certain political sensibilities but do not engage in similar actions.

4  The aftermath of the 9/11 phase of Islamophobic history has made “Muslimness” salient for those who would otherwise not identify with the category because of lack of religiosity or more secular lifestyle preferences. These more culturally affiliated Muslims (i.e., those who acknowledge a cultural connection to Islam but eschew religious practice) or even those who identify as atheist and distance themselves from Islam are nonetheless still affected by Islamophobia by virtue of racial affiliation and origins within Muslim countries or their Muslim-sounding names.

5  People misidentified as and perceived to be Muslim have also suffered the impact and violence of Islamophobia. For example, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh man mistaken for an Arab Muslim because of his turban, was killed in reprisal for the 9/11 bombings.
1.2.1 Individual Actions

“Individual actions” are manifestations of Islamophobia that include actions like vandalism, name calling, exclusion, harassment, microaggressions, violence, and hate crimes. For example, a report by the Toronto Police Service (2001) revealed a 66 percent increase in hate crimes in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Testimony from 181 Muslim women living in various cities across Canada found that attacks took place against mosques across the country between September 2001 and June 2002; sixteen of which were bomb threats (Helly 2004, 28).

Statistics Canada data on police-reported hate crimes between 2009 and 2020 demonstrate a slow but steady increase in anti-Muslim incidents across Canada for the first half of the 2010s, from thirty-six reports in 2009 to ninety-nine in 2014. From 2012 to 2015, hate crimes against Muslims in Canada grew 253 percent from 45 in 2012 to 159 in 2015. In 2017, police-reported incidents grew 150 percent from 359 incidents compared to 139 the year before. Data from 2010 to 2017 revealed that police-reported that violent hate crimes against Muslims (44 percent) and Indigenous communities (44 percent) were more likely than other hate crimes to involve female victims. In 2019, there were 181 police-reported anti-Muslim hate crimes across the country which decreased in 2020 to 82 incidents. While police-reported hate crimes targeting Muslims have declined somewhat over the past three years, they nonetheless remain far higher than in the early aftermath of 9/11.

Since the terror attack in London, Ontario, on June 6, 2021, there have been several violent Islamophobic attacks targeting Muslim women across Canada. These have involved attacks at knife-point, threats, racial epithets, and harassment, which lead to social-psychological effects and trauma (Awaad 2015; Rousseau et al. 2015). Individual actions are the most prominent and visible phenomenon in the Islamophobic dynamics. We can imagine these acts as being the tip of an iceberg. Hidden below the surface are the ideologies that justify and rationalize these actions and the systemic practices through which Islamophobia is reproduced.

1.2.2 Ideologies

Ubiquitous ideologies and tropes serve to demonize and vilify Islam and Muslims (see chapter 3). These anti-Muslim narratives provide the ideological underpinnings that underline the individual, ideological, and systemic social dynamics of Islamophobia (Abadi 2018; Bazian 2015; Saylor 2014). As noted previously, stereotypes like Muslims are terrorists who engage in taqiyya and are really “wolves in sheep’s clothing” who want to install a “creeping sharia law” that will undermine Western society and civilization are the ideological currency of these groups (see chapter 3). Other stereotypes depict Muslim women as backward and oppressed, without agency or freedom. Kumar (2012) warned that such myths about Islam become common-sense ideas that shape the public imaginary. These notions become hegemonic as they are filtered through the institutions of civil society such as media (television, film, and social media) and education and are embedded in pop culture through widespread circulation on the internet. These discourses are often uncritically absorbed and rarely debunked through counter narratives. Allen (2010, 190) identifies vilifying ideologies as a facet of Islamophobia that is similar in theory, function, and purpose to racism and that perpetuates negatively evaluated meanings about Muslims and Islam through “shared languages and conceptual maps” that shape and sustain negative social consensus (see also Semati 2012; Sheehi 2011). Orientalist ideologies shape Islamophobic imaginaries and provide the rationale for systemic practices through which Islamophobia becomes institutionally embedded and reproduced. These ideologies feed into the dynamic of Islamophobia by justifying individual actions like hate crimes, vandalism, harassment, and violence as well as by proving the rationale for draconian security measures that target Muslims.

In 2017, anti-Muslim rhetoric north and south of the border and related hate crimes against Muslims were heightened, no doubt influenced by former U.S. President Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim views and policies. Trump’s rhetoric was a dog whistle to far-right, White nationalist groups and authorized and emboldened all anti-Muslim voices to promote racism and hate. Islamophobic ideologies have inspired anti-Muslim violence such as the Quebec City mosque shooting: the perpetrator, Alexandre Bissonnette, had searched Trump online 800 times. Racist ideologies underwrite violence and support state policies targeting Muslims. These connections cannot be ignored.

1.2.3 Systemic Practices

Islamophobic ideologies have consequences in the way that they shape, inform, and authorize global militarism as well as domestic immigration, security, and social policies. In this way, Islamophobia provides a rationale for systemic practices such as racial and religious profiling and surveillance, state policies governing religious attire (i.e., the banning of the hijab/headscarf and niqab/face veil), as well as institutional discrimination in education, social services, health care, and law enforcement as well as private-sector companies and institutions.

The targeting and undue surveillance of Muslim charities by Canada revenue services is a growing concern (McSorely 2021). The Muslim Association of Canada is launching a Charter challenge against the Canada Revenue Agency claiming that a year-long audit has been based on unfounded suspicions and “innuendo” that would not have been applied to other religious charities.

Canadian security policies targeting Muslims include the Anti-Terrorism Act (Patel 2012), security certificates (Flatt 2012), and the “no-fly list” (Jamil 2017). Bahdi (2003) has noted that, after 9/11, racial profiling focused more on Arabs and Muslims and that surveillance spilled over into areas such as banking and employment, as well as into increased scrutiny at Canadian airports. Hennebry and Momani (2013) have also pointed out that Canadian security policies and legal frameworks have specifically targeted Arab and Muslim Canadians. Muslims are perceived as potential threats to national safety, and they face scrutiny by security agencies and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) measures (Zine 2022; Nagra 2017).

In addition to security policies, social policies also serve as examples of systemic forms of Islamophobia. From Conservative Member of Parliament Kellie Leitch’s proposal for a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) tip line to report “barbaric cultural practices against women and girls,” (see chapter 2) to the push to ban the niqab at federal citizenship ceremonies and among civil servants, these social policies and proposals have been inspired by gendered Islamophobic ideologies that call for “rescuing” and “protecting” Muslim women from their backward and misogynist faith.

To summarize how the dynamic of Islamophobia operates, individual actions like vandalism, name calling, and hate crimes are supported by widespread ideas like “Muslims are terrorists” and find expression in systemic practices such as racial profiling. The ideological apparatuses supporting the spread of Islamophobic narratives via mainstream media and a growing Islamophobia industry serve to justify and legitimate the individual manifestations of Islamophobia as well as the systemic practices that allow for their reproduction. The discursive dimension of Islamophobia creates the alibi of “Muslim peril,” which authorizes restrictive and draconian state policies targeting Muslims and legitimizes the ongoing “war on terror” and militarized global imperialism.
What is central to this framework of Islamophobia is that at every level—individual, ideological, and systemic—the relations of power underwriting it sustain historically constituted racial logics. As a system of oppression, Islamophobia is embedded in formations of power that create the discursive, structural, and legal context of subordination that Muslims face. In Canada, these conditions are rooted within the racial power structures that stem from White settler colonialism and are reinforced through contemporary global circuits of imperial racial formations enacted by the post 9/11 war on terror.

The “racialization of religion” refers to how racial characteristics are ascribed to religious categories and how racial prototypes are coded as religious markers (Joshi 2006). Grosfoguel and Mielants (2006, 4) described Islamophobia as a form of cultural racism, arguing that religion has a dominant role in cultural racist discourses: “The contemporary tropes about ‘uncivilized,’ ‘barbarian,’ ‘savage,’ ‘primitive,’ ‘underdeveloped,’ ‘authoritarian,’ and ‘terrorist’ inferior people are today concentrated in the ‘other’s’ religious practices and beliefs.” The politics surrounding race, religion, and culture have shaped public policy and opinion in Canada and have primed the ground for Islamophobic subcultures to flourish.

Social Network Theory. Social network theory provides the overarching framework for this study. This approach views social relationships in terms of nodes and ties. Nodes are the individual actors within the networks (in this case the individuals, groups, and organizations comprising the Islamophobia industry), and ties are the relationships between them. While there can be many kinds of ties between the nodes, a network may also be fragmented into multiple components without clear ties (Borgatti and Ofem 2010).

This framework has provided a useful way of conceptualizing and analyzing the Islamophobia industry as a network of ties and allowed us to map where the connections or points of cohesion may or may not exist within it (see figure 1). Network cohesion refers to the measure of the degrees of interconnectedness between nodes (Liu et al. 2017; Moody and Coleman 2015). This measure is useful to detect subgroups or cliques within the larger social network (Burt 1987).

In its most simple form, a social network is a map of all the relevant ties between the nodes being studied. These relationships are displayed in a social-network diagram where nodes are the points and ties are the lines (Freeman 2004). The emphasis that social network theory places on the ties or relationships within a network (and between networks) is relevant to this project in identifying the various linkages between groups in the Islamophobia industry and determining whether these exist through shared ideological ties or formal connections (i.e., social, economic, or political ties).

This approach also involved mapping the social capital of individual actors and the spheres of influence associated with them (Moody and Paxton 2009). Examining how the spheres of influence that exist within Islamophobia networks operate is important to ascertain the flow of information that galvanizes the industry and leads to the spread of Islamophobic ideas and hate. Burt (1999) identified a two-step flow process that consisted of (a) opinion leaders spreading information to the group and (b) a “contagion process” that generates adoption behaviours within the group. Individuals may become opinion leaders not only because they possess certain attributes but also because they occupy a position in the network that enables them to effectively spread information and exert personal influence. Islamophobia influencers and other Islamophobic knowledge producers play the role of opinion leaders who use media platforms and think tanks to promote their views within their own spheres of influence, which are then echoed, amplified, dog-whistled, and reinforced in other sectors of the Islamophobia industry.

Social Network Analysis. Social network analysis (SNA), which draws from social network theory, is defined as a “distinctive set of methods used for mapping, measuring and analyzing the social relationships between people, groups and organizations” (Blanchet and James 2011). SNA identifies communication flows, resource exchanges, or social support. Within this paradigm, a whole-network-analysis (Carrington, Scott, and Wasserman 2005) approach was used, whereby a select set of nodes were identified and the ties between them were assessed. The population of nodes included groups, individuals, and organizations identified as contributing to the spread of Islamophobic ideologies and campaigns. This approach allowed for the mapping of actors within the network and the connections and communication flows between them as part of the ecosystem within which these Islamophobic subcultures reside.

An SNA approach considers the web of relationships in which actors are embedded. Drawing on Borgatti and Ofem (2010), the constellation of these relationships involves the following social-network features:

- **Nodes.** Persons, special-interest groups, organizations, etc.
- **Ties.** Modalities of connection, i.e., friendships, communication patterns, alliances between organizations, exchanges, and conflicts. Ties are not treated in isolation. They link up to paths, thereby representing a mechanism through which they interact and affect one another directly or indirectly. These paths can be thought of as pipes through which information and resources flow (Borgatti and Ofem 2010, 20).
- **Similarities.** Spatial and temporal proximity as well as co-membership in groups and events and sharing of social characteristics such as race or class. (NB: These may not be ties in and of themselves but rather provide the relational conditions that facilitate or inhibit social ties).
- **Social relations.** Ongoing ties such as kinship/friendship or political and cultural affinity.
- **Mental relations.** Shared conceptions and attitudes toward others.
- **Interactions.** Social interactions that take place in the context of discrete events that can be counted over a period of time.
- **Flows.** Tangible and intangible things that are transmitted through interactions (e.g., ideas transmitted via communication). Flows are typically not measured but inferred from...
interational and relational data. For example, if there is an alliance between organizations, it is assumed that knowledge and expertise flow between them.

- **Partner selection.** Homophily, or the tendency of people to form positive ties with people who have similar, socially significant attributes. Such connections are represented as more opportunistic, and strategic ties within the Islamophobia industry are based on affinities stemming from common beliefs rather than shared markers of race, ethnicity, faith, etc. The divergence between these individuals and groups is made congruent by the ideological and political solidarity they share in fomenting anti-Muslim campaigns.

These network features are evident in the social and political ties within the Islamophobia industry and provide a useful typology for understanding the flow of information and resources within it.

### 1.3.2 Research Methods

The early stages of this research began through a partnership with Georgetown University’s Bridge Initiative on Islamophobia and members of the Canadian Islamophobia Industry Research Project (CIIRP) at Wilfrid Laurier University. The CIIRP team developed 12 factsheets that provided detailed information on events, individuals, and policies that impacted Islamophobia in Canada. The need for a more in-depth study became evident as a network of Islamophobic actors and content production was uncovered. The project evolved into mapping all the media influencers, think tanks and their designated security experts, organizations, and groups that play a role in the creation and promotion of Islamophobia in Canada. The scope of the study also includes an examination of “liberal Islamophobia” that includes policies and politics of Québec as well as federal policies that promote anti-Muslim sentiments and practices.

SNA allowed for a mapping of the various actors in the Islamophobia industry as nodes, and the ties and flows between them were identified. Primary and secondary resources including videos, social-media posts, news media, research reports, and academic literature were included in the data collection and analysis. A discourse analysis allowed for common ideologies to be identified among various groups (see chapter 3). In addition to the textual analysis, the Principal Investigator and members of the CIIRP team attended public forums as observers to take notes, which added first-hand information.

To ensure validity, all media sources were cross-referenced and verified. The unstable nature of internet content and social-media posts as well as the proliferation of fake news required due diligence. Quotes were found on multiple sources and verified for content. This required sifting through media bias, fact-checking all claims, and diving deep into internet “rabbit holes.” Internet-based content can be removed and “scrubbed,” posing an increased risk of broken links and citations. This was remedied where possible through screen captures, downloading videos, and archiving links through tools such as Wayback Machine.

To ensure validity, all media sources were cross-referenced and verified. The unstable nature of internet content and social-media posts as well as the proliferation of fake news required due diligence. Quotes were found on multiple sources and verified for content. This required sifting through media bias, fact-checking all claims, and diving deep into internet “rabbit holes.” Internet-based content can be removed and “scrubbed,” posing an increased risk of broken links and citations. This was remedied where possible through screen captures, downloading videos, and archiving links through tools such as Wayback Machine.

### 1.3.3 Archiving Limitations and Difficulties

Outside of the inconsistencies with reporting and media biases, one of the common issues in researching Islamophobia through online sources is how easily resources can be removed from the web. When looking for resources that relate to a lawsuit or fact-checking specific political statements, often the original sources are no longer available, and the remaining versions are unreliable. An example of this is former Conservative leader Andrew Scheer’s policy page, which was removed following his election. The website had included a page of Scheer’s views regarding twenty-six policies, including “Prioritizing Real Refugees” and “Standing up for Religious Freedom.” The removal of the page makes it difficult to track his previously stated positions from a primary source.

The lack of date and time stamps also made mapping out timelines of photos and videos a time-consuming process. Because of this, photos, videos, and images needed to be traced back to original sources. This required locating when and where the footage had been taken and verifying that through their original sources. Additionally, some of the video sources originally cited were later removed by YouTube for violations of their hate-speech policies. Twitter has also de-platformed purveyors of hate speech, and often offending tweets are removed from their platform.

Other limitations came along with the process of archiving web pages and documents. Archiving tools such as Wayback Machine are a valuable resource for the kind of investigative research this project required. It allowed for maintaining records even if they were later “scrubbed” from the internet. However, not all sources were able to be archived since some websites and content uploaders take precautions to avoid this. Saving links on Wayback Machine required additional documents to be created that organized saved web pages by topic and content. In some instances, even when links were verified and saved on Wayback Machine, they were later inaccessible, which presented unforeseen difficulties that could not always be rectified.

Despite the archiving challenges, every effort was made to provide sources and verify content through the report. To address the precarity of on-line sources, access dates are provided in the references to confirm when the source was viewed. Hyperlinked website and media sources were too numerous to include in the bibliography and so are separately archived and can be accessed here: https://scholars.wlu.ca/soci_faculty/14/

### 1.3.4 Islamophobia’s Ecosystem

Unlike most industries where products are manufactured under a corporate umbrella, the Islamophobia Industry is different. It is more dynamic and flexible, with various moving parts that are not attached to one single branch. Still, its purveyors prowl the same terrain and are connected in many significant ways. Beyond legitimizing the work of one another, which is a key feature of how they operate, the Islamophobia industry has harnessed the power of the internet to expand their small networks into national and international organizations.

—Nathan Lean, The Islamophobic Industry (2012, 10)

Islamophobia in Canada manifests within a political, cultural, economic, and social ecosystem in which the dynamics of this oppression incubate and germinate among the constellation of individuals, special-interest groups, and institutions that support and engage in activities that demonize and vilify Islam and Muslims. The ecosystem is a concept that helps illustrate how Islamophobia networks function symbiotically through synergetic subcultures comprising a broad-ranging industry. The fertile ground of the Islamophobia ecosystem is sown through state policies that target Muslims and negative public sentiments (see chapter 2).

Just as energy flows through organisms in a natural ecosystem, ideologies, propaganda, stereotypes, disinformation, and fake news are the life blood of Islamophobia’s ecosystem. The social, political, and cultural ecology of Canada’s Islamophobic subcultures and the anti-Muslim ideas and campaigns they produce are the matrix within which this industry flourishes. Increasingly, the reach of Islamophobia actors is furthered by the internet and social media (as Lean described above) and is demonstrated through their transnational activities and alliances.
There is a symbiotic relationship between the individuals and groups that comprise Canada’s Islamophobia networks. Seemingly disparate special-interest groups and their influencers are aligning in various ways to promote a common agenda of maligning and vilifying Islam and Muslims. Islamophobic subcultures are converging within the wider political and cultural ecosystem and building ties between groups to instrumentalize their shared goals and assets.

Many of the players in the Islamophobia industry are influencers, agitators, and professional provocateurs. They work both independently and in concert to spread Islamophobic paranoia and orchestrate controversies that circulate in far-right echo chambers and in pro-Israel, fringe-right circles. Emerging from this study is the following typology of Islamophobic actors and the ties that bind them.

The Players

Media Outlets and Islamophobia Influencers. In Canada, Rebel News and other far-right outlets circulate racist and Islamophobic narratives that dog-whistle militant anti-Muslim groups. Islamophobic influencers contribute to far-right media forums and use social-media platforms to professionalize and monetize their propaganda and bigotry.

Foot Soldiers. Far-right, White nationalist, and neo-Nazi groups and the agitators behind them who are active in promoting anti-Muslim hate online and through public protests and demonstrations.

Soft-Power Groups. Soft-power groups leverage influence by promoting anti-Muslim campaigns to achieve specific political, ideological, and religious goals that drive Islamophobic subcultures. They do this under the guise of promoting democracy, human rights, free speech, and Judeo-Christian values, ideals to which they deem Islam and Muslims as being antithetical and incompatible. Soft-power groups engage in coercive tactics such as bullying, harassment, and intimidation to silence those who oppose them.

Native Informers. Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims who play the role of authoritative interlocutors, creating and validating Islamophobic narratives and conspiracy theories. They provide the “political cover” for Islamophobic campaigns.

Think Tanks and Designated Security Experts. Create a “cult of expertise” to promote Islamophobic conspiracy theories that brand Muslims as potential radicals and national-security threats.

Political Figures and Influencers. The players in the Islamophobia industry are strengthened and enabled by politicians who authorize Islamophobic narratives and policies that promote anti-Muslim sentiments as part of the wider ecosystem that primes the ground for Islamophobic racism to take root and spread (see chapter 2).

Some of the categories included here are more expansive than those identified in previous studies on the Islamophobia industry. For example, far-right, White nationalist groups, (foot soldiers), and the industry of security experts are captured here but did not figure prominently in American studies though, undoubtedly, they play similar roles as Islamophobia purveyors. As the ties between different sectors of the Islamophobia industry grow, the interactive role of these groups is more evident.

1.3.5
Types of Connections

Islamophobic rhetoric and conspiracy theories are reinforced through their widespread circulation within the integrated Islamophobia networks. The degrees of separation between these groups and others who share the same anti-Muslim ideologies are noted in the report. The instrumental ties between different sectors of the Islamophobia industry involve the following strategies:

Platforming/Co-Platforming. Cooperative and reciprocal ties where individuals move between Islamophobic interest groups to provide and share with one another public platforms for their anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Echoing/Amplifying. The circulation and affirmation of shared Islamophobic tropes, discourses, and conspiracy theories. The reiteration and piggybacking of these ideas by different sectors of the Islamophobia industry lend them credence and further their normalization as common-sense notions.

Legitimizing/Validating. The widespread circulation of ideas in the Islamophobia “playlist” can often be easily discredited, yet these tropes garner legitimacy from being leveraged simultaneously by different media outlets, influencers, organizations, think tanks, by their designated security experts, and by Islamophobic special-interest groups. For example, Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims provide the validation for anti-Muslim views and Islamophobic conspiracy theories through the presumed authority of their insider status.

Enabling. Enabling involves the following activities: (a) financial support for anti-Muslim campaigns, events, speakers, or those behind these activities and/or (b) direct action (e.g., actively participating in rallies, demonstrations, and events held by other Islamophobic interest groups, acting as a security detail). The anti-Muslim ideologies and activities these players orchestrate are made possible in part by the donors who fund their campaigns (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Enabling”).

Platforming/Co-Platforming. Cooperative and reciprocal ties where individuals move between Islamophobic interest groups to provide and share with one another public platforms for their anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Echoing/Amplifying. The circulation and affirmation of shared Islamophobic tropes, discourses, and conspiracy theories. The reiteration and piggybacking of these ideas by different sectors of the Islamophobia industry lend them credence and further their normalization as common-sense notions.

Legitimizing/Validating. The widespread circulation of ideas in the Islamophobia “playlist” can often be easily discredited, yet these tropes garner legitimacy from being leveraged simultaneously by different media outlets, influencers, organizations, think tanks, by their designated security experts, and by Islamophobic special-interest groups. For example, Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims provide the validation for anti-Muslim views and Islamophobic conspiracy theories through the presumed authority of their insider status.

Enabling. Enabling involves the following activities: (a) financial support for anti-Muslim campaigns, events, speakers, or those behind these activities and/or (b) direct action (e.g., actively participating in rallies, demonstrations, and events held by other Islamophobic interest groups, acting as a security detail). The anti-Muslim ideologies and activities these players orchestrate are made possible in part by the donors who fund their campaigns (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Enabling”).

Please note: A more recently identified and troubling tactic includes the infiltration and surveillance of Muslim organizations for the purposes of spying. In 2021, the Ohio chapter of CAIR fired their executive and legal director, Romin Iqbal, alleging that he had been passing on confidential information to the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), founded by one of the longstanding architects of the U.S. Islamophobia industry, Steve Emerson. CAIR further accused IPT of surveilling Muslim American mosques and organizations in coordination with Israeli government officials. These discoveries alert us to new subversive strategies that warrant further monitoring.
Monetizing Hate

A 2018 Carter Center report on Countering the Islamophobia Industry in the United States emphasized that Islamophobia is not just an arbitrary fear of Muslims. Islamophobia is, in large part, the function of an anti-Muslim industry and well-funded and well-connected network of individuals, institutions, and donors (Abadi 2018). Islamophobia actors (individuals and groups) find ways to monetize hate through website donation links, crowdfunding efforts, and revenues from social-media platforms (though Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are working to monitor, de-platform, and demonetize hate groups). Yet often these organizations are funded through larger transnational networks. Anti-Muslim special-interest groups and philanthropic organizations have long been bankrolling bigotry and supporting the activities of Islamophobia groups and their campaigns.

Several reports and studies in the United States and Europe have tracked funding for Islamophobic hate campaigns and the individuals and organizations behind them. In 2011, Ali et al.’s study on America’s Islamophobia networks, Fear Inc, revealed that more than $40 million dedicated to promoting anti-Muslim propaganda flowed from seven foundations over a ten-year period. Funding sources have since diversified and grown exponentially. For example, as noted previously, CAIR’S report, Hijacked by Hate (2019), examined publicly available tax filings of anti-Muslim organizations and found that 1,096 organizations were responsible for funding thirty-nine groups involved in the Islamophobia network between 2014 and 2016. The total revenue capacity during this period amounted to an incredible $1.5 billion. The study mapped the flow of funding from prominent charitable organizations to anti-Muslim special-interest groups through Donor Advised Funds (DAFs), leading to calls for American philanthropic organizations to divest from the Islamophobia industry. These studies have been an invaluable resource for identifying and mapping the sources of funding and the donors bankrolling anti-Muslim bigotry in the United States.

In Canada, a similar analysis of tax filings is not possible since the information required to replicate the U.S. studies is not publicly available. For example, while the Canada Revenue Agency has recently required charities to report on donors not resident in Canada, that information is confidential and not available publicly. Only non-specific aggregated data is publicly accessible, which has raised concerns regarding DAFs in Canadian charity law and the possibility that they could be covertly used to fund hate groups.

Several studies have documented how pro-Israel interests are funding Islamophobia in the United States and internationally (Aked, Jones, and Miller 2019; CAIR 2019; Abdul Hadi 2018; Marusek 2017; Bazian 2015). A 2015 report by the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) examined over 10,000 pages of publicly available tax returns in the United States and confirmed that through DAFs “funders support extreme anti-Muslim and anti-Arab propaganda and virulent attacks against pro-Palestinian organizing with some, if not total anonymity (4).” The report identified the donor institutions and the circulation of funds along with the ideological and political priorities attached to them as being part of an Islamophobia network and a “concerted campaign to stop any and all criticism of Israel.” Based on their detailed study, IJAN maintained that “much of the funding of the Zionist backlash network comes from eleven extraordinarily wealthy individuals, many of whom acquired their wealth and retain investments in industries that directly profit from Israeli domination of Palestinians, Islamophobia, wars in the Middle East, and environmental degradation” (8). The report revealed that bankrolling backlash had involved investing over $300 million in propaganda, surveillance, and lawfare directly aimed at silencing dissent and solidarity with Palestine.
Similarly, a 2018 report authored by Jews Against Anti-Muslim Racism, Jews Say NO!, and Jewish Voice for Peace – New York City detailed how the United Jewish Federation (UJA) of New York used its Jewish Communal Fund to support several anti-Muslim hate groups. The authors acknowledged how these anti-Muslim organizations and their demonizing propaganda prime the ground for anti-Muslim hate crimes. The study outlined the “rapidly emerging alliance between the pro-Israel mainstream and the Islamophobic fringe” (2). This study on Canadian Islamophobia networks relied on verifiable public reports that indicated where support from U.S.-based organizations and foundations were making their way into Canada to bolster the activities of specific individuals and organizations promoting Islamophobic bigotry. These organizations have been investigated and are featured in reports on the financial backing of the Islamophobia industry in the United States and Europe. While a detailed money trail into Canada could not be uncovered, the connections between these groups and Canadian Islamophobia merchants invite speculation and warrant concern.

1.4.1
Gatestone Institute

The Gatestone Institute is an far-right American think tank that was founded in 2008 by Nina Rosenwald, the heiress to the Sears, Roebuck fortune, who has been referred to as the “sugar mama of anti-Muslim hate.” She has used her wealth to forge alliances between the American pro-Israel lobby and the anti-Muslim network.

According to the 2011 Fear Inc. report, since 2001, the Rosenwald Family Foundation donated more than $2.8 million to anti-Muslim organizations. A 2017 article in The Intercept revealed that “foundation disclosures show that Rosenwald, through a foundation called the Abstraction Fund, has donated more than $10.8 million from 2010 through 2015 to groups identified by the CAIR as ‘Islamophobic’”

A PressProgress news report in 2018, examined U.S. Internal Revenue Service filings that indicated that the Gatestone Institute had received a quarter of a million dollars from the Mercer Family Foundation, one of the biggest donors to Donald Trump’s presidential campaign. The Mercers also reportedly finance far-right media like Steve Bannon’s Breitbart News and the political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, which was involved in the Facebook data scandal. Other connections between the Gatestone Institute and the Trump administration have included John Bolton, former Gatestone chairman, who later served as Trump’s national-security advisor.

According to another tax-return investigation by The Guardian in 2018, the Middle East Forum, Gatestone, and the David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC), a key institution in the U.S. Islamophobia industry that houses anti-Muslim publications Jihad Watch and Frontpage Mag, are “well funded by influential right-wing donors,” receiving almost $5 million from several wealthy funders. These investigations reveal that anti-Muslim hate and propaganda are well orchestrated and funded.

Several of Gatestone’s publications revolve around purveying the alleged risk of Islamization through Muslim migration that like a tsunami will engulf and consume Western civilization. This xenophobic propaganda about Muslim migrants is ironic, given that the late William Rosenwald, heir to the founder of Sears, Roebuck and Company’s fortune, founded the National Refugee Service in 1939, which was dedicated to resettling Jews fleeing Nazi pogroms in Europe.

Canadian Connections

- Christine Douglass-Williams, senior advisor, and member of board of governors (see chapter 4)
- Raheel Raza, a “distinguished senior fellow” (see chapter 7)
- Salim Mansur, “senior fellow” (see chapter 7)

In 2020, the Gatestone Institute received a defamation claim from Canadian human-rights activist Ahmad Attia. He alleged that he was maligned in an article published by Gatestone that he said contained “factual inaccuracies” that contributed to “the creation of an erroneous and dishonest narrative about me.” The article promoted the Trojan-horse conspiracy theory that Islamists were infiltrating Canadian conservative politics (see chapter 3). Attia went on to assert that the article portrayed him as a “Muslim extremist who foments hatred and bigotry.” Upon receiving the libel claim, Gatestone deleted the article and tweeted an apology, stating that the author, Jackob Glogauer, had included incorrect claims about Attia. The article was also published by the Middle East Forum (MEF)’s Islamist Watch (see below). They had removed reference to Gatestone in their version and modified the text in the article to protect themselves from a defamation claim. These U.S.-based anti-Muslim think tanks have extended their reach into Canada and are being successfully challenged.

1.4.2
Middle East Forum

The Middle East Forum is a non-profit tax-exempt organization based out of Philadelphia. It was founded by Daniel Pipes, who has been referred to as the “grandfather of Islamophobia” (Lean 2017, 157) and is a key figure in the U.S. Islamophobia industry.

An examination of U.S. tax records revealed that MEF receives the majority of its funding from Gatestone founder Nina Rosenwald’s Abstraction Fund. The Conservative Transparency website recorded that a total of $1,212,000 was transferred from the Abstraction Fund to MEF in 2012. The close ideological alignment and the economic exchange between these organizations strengthen their ties and provide the economic and political currency underwriting their Islamophobic missions.

According to 2015 tax filings, the total functional expenses for the MEF were $3,472,821. Among research grants that the MEF provided to peer institutions in 2015 were $100,000 to Center for Security Policy (CSP) and $10,000 to the DHFC. MEF has also provided grants to IPT and the American Islamic Forum for Democracy.

The MEF has received millions of dollars from Donors Capital Fund ($6,768,000), William Rosenwald Family Fund, Middle Road Foundation, and Abstraction Fund ($4,248,729). These groups have also funded IPT, Clarion Project, DHFC, CSP, Jihad Watch, and the American Islamic Forum for Democracy (See chapter 6 for a full profile of MEF.)

Canadian Connections

MEF funded the Canadians for the Rule of Law conference in 2019 (see chapter 6) that showcased many players in the Canadian Islamophobia industry. An email from conference organizers on March 20, 2019, confirmed that “both MEF and The Lawfare Project gave financial support to last Sunday’s CFTRL Teach-In Conference.” MEF is also noted on the organization’s website as a program supporter.
Clarion Project

The Clarion Project, founded in 2006 by Raphael Shore, a Canadian-Israeli film producer, is one of the central organizations in the U.S. Islamophobia industry. It operates as “a non-profit organization that educates the public about the dangers of radical Islam.” The organization’s previous URL was “RadicalIslam.org.” The Clarion Project’s advisory board has well-known anti-Muslim figures such as Frank Gaffney and Daniel Pipes.

The Clarion Project bankrolled the propagandizing film Obsession: Radical Islam’s War against the West (see chapter 4). The organization promotes conspiracy theories, such as that Muslim organizations are fronts for the Muslim Brotherhood and operate under false and deceptive pretenses (see chapter 3).

Canadian Connections
- Gavin McInnes (Proud Boys founder) co-platformed Ryan Mauro of Clarion Project
- Raheel Raza, advisory board member
- Tarek Fatah, former writer for Clarion Project
- Salim Mansur, contributor to Clarion’s film, Obsession: Radical Islam’s War against the West

Shillman Foundation

The Shillman Foundation was one of the 1,096 funders of thirty-nine Islamophobia network organizations between 2014 and 2016 and is a major donor to the DHFC. In 2015, Shillman Foundation trustee, Robert Shillman, founder and chairman of Cognex Corporation, has served as a director of the DHFC. He has funded a number of pro-Israel groups, including the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA). The ZOA has targeted academics that it believes teach anti-Israel doctrine and Palestinian student groups.

Canadian Connections
- Canadian anti-Islam activists and ideologues have written for DHFC’s Front Page Mag, including Raheel Raza (see chapter 7) and Christine Douglass-Williams (see chapter 4).
- Rebel News has been a beneficiary of grants supporting Shillman Fellows to work with them, including the far-right, White nationalist leader of the English Defence League Tommy Robinson (see chapter 2 Bankrolling Bigotry).
- A PressProgress report revealed that Rebel Media’s coverage of Conservative politician Jason Kenney’s was funded by the Shillman Foundation, which provided support for Rebel’s Alberta correspondent, Keean Bexte.

1.5 Ayman Elkasrawy Case Study: The Islamophobia Industry in Action

Ayman Elkasrawy was a PhD student in electrical engineering at Ryerson University (now Metropolitan Toronto University) who held the position of assistant Imam at the Masjid Toronto mosque. In 2016, while leading prayer, El-Kasrawy recited a supplication that was recorded and posted on the mosque’s website. Eight months later, a Toronto Star article noted that the video had resurfaced in a digitally manipulated version that was spliced together with mistranslated Arabic. The doctored video was reposted to the now defunct CIJ News website under the title Supplications at Masjid Toronto Mosque: “Slay them one by one and spare not one of them.” This version of the video was circulated by numerous news outlets, and Jewish organizations were outraged by what were misconstrued as antisemitic comments. Of particular offence was the alleged statement, “Oh Allah! Purify Al-Aqsa Mosque from the filth of the Jews.” Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem is a contested holy site for both Muslims and Jews. The Canadian pro-Zionist, Jewish-advocacy organization, B’nai Brith Canada (see chapter 6), urged Ryerson (now Toronto Metropolitan) University to fire Elkasrawy. The Jewish Defence League Canada (JDL-Canada) sent the tape to the Toronto police and filed a hate-crime complaint. Elkasrawy was fired from the university and suspended as Imam of Masjid Toronto.

Elkasrawy was blindsided by the accusations and publicly apologized, for any offence caused to the Jewish community, which he stated was not his intent. Wanting to rectify the misunderstanding and to learn more about how his words caused offence he reached out to Bernie Farber, former chief executive officer of the Canadian Jewish Congress, former executive director of the Mosaic Institute, and board chair of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network. Farber accepted the request and, upon meeting Elkasrawy, realized that although his choice of words was problematic, he was not antisemitic. Elkasrawy agreed to take part in a series of workshops on antisemitism and human rights offered by Dr. Karen Mock through the Mosaic Institute.

If Elkasrawy had uttered the words he is alleged to have said during the supplication, they would be without doubt antisemitic, appalling, and indefensible. To determine the veracity of his statements, the Toronto Star contacted several international Arabic-language experts to have them view the tapes. Their scholarly review determined that not only had the video been digitally manipulated (segments from different parts of his supplication were spliced together), it was also mistranslated. For example, what Elkasrawy said was not to “purify Al-Aqsa Mosque from the filth of the Jews,” but rather to “cleanse Al-Aqsa Mosque from the Jews’ desecration of it.” Elkasrawy later acknowledged that referring to “the Jews” was not as clear as saying “Israelis,” which is what he meant. He said he would have preferred to say, “Oh Allah, protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque from occupation,” or “Preserve the sacredness of the Al-Aqsa Mosque from violation.”

The timing of his supplication was during the holy month of Ramadan, when Arab news characterized the clashes as the result of “masked Arab assailants” hurling rocks. The violence and tensions at Al-Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan were the impetus for Elkasrawy’s prayer to preserve this holy site.

In another example of what linguistic specialists referred to as “propaganda translation,” experts clarified that Elkasrawy’s alleged call to “slay them one by one” was not a reference to Jews or
Al-Aqsa Mosque but was taken from another part of his supplication made on behalf of suffering in the Muslim world. Expert examination of the videotape revealed that there were digitally manipulated sections where different parts of Elkasrawy’s prayer were spliced together to provide “slanted translations” transforming the Qur’anic verse that states “Thou art our Protector. Help us against those who stand against faith” to “Give us victory over the disbelieving people.” These fabrications served to weaponize the Qur’an (see chapter 3) to support Islamophobic discourses that represent Islam as a violent and radical faith. Other Islamophobic narratives connected to this controversy included the “counter-jihad” ideology, which promotes dystopic scare stories of Muslim take overs of Western nations (see chapter 3).

The video of Elkasrawy’s prayer was initially posted on CIJ News, an obscure far-right media outlet that has since been taken down, although some posts remain archived on the pro-Israel platform Honest Reporting. CIJ News was founded by Jonathan Daniel Halevi, who was head of the Information Branch of the IDF Spokesperson Unit from 2002 to 2003 and head of the Palestinian Research Branch in the IDF Intelligence Unit between 1998 and 2002. Notably, Halevi was the translator behind the altered video. Aside from his ties to the Israeli military, Halevi was also a prominent blogger at Rebel News (see chapter 4), where he participated in weekly talks with Rebel founder, Ezra Levant.

Despite the Toronto Star providing impartial reviews by third-party Arabic-language experts, Halevi maintained the accuracy of his translation and continued to make posts about the case to his CIJ News site before eventually taking it down after the Toronto Star contacted him. B’nai Brith Canada also refused to accept the Arabic-language experts’ opinions and contacted unnamed translators who endorsed Halevi’s version.

In a comment to the Toronto Sun, Tarek Fatah (see chapter 7) shared another mistranslated video with the discredited Imam, Mohammad Tawhidi (see chapter 7), who claimed that Elkasrawy’s prayer in this video said, “Whoever wants bad to happen to Muslims return his plots to his neck and flip the plot onto him and punish them like you punished Aad and Thamud.” The version that Tawhidi, who is not an expert in Arabic linguistics, put forward is also inconsistent with the translations offered by the scholars. Throughout this controversy, competing translations were leveraged to support the initial narrative against Elkasrawy, which reinforced the idea that Muslims as a population are antisemitic.

As a result of this orchestrated controversy, Elkasrawy not only lost his job at Ryerson University and his position of assistant Imam at the Masjid Toronto mosque but he became publicly branded as antisemitic. The U.S.-based pro-Israel website, Canary Mission, dedicated to documenting academics who are critical of Israeli policies and deemed antisemitic as a result, added Elkasrawy’s profile to their website along with the mistranslation of his supplication. They also posted some of his retweets, which they deemed showed a “hatred for Israel.”

Elkasrawy’s picture was placed on posters at anti-Muslim rallies against Motion 103, a non-binding motion to address Islamophobia in Canada put forward by Liberal MP Iqra Khalid after the Quebec City mosque shooting (see chapter 2). A photo captured members of JDL-Canada and the far-right, White nationalist group, Soldiers of Odin, with arms around each other at a rally in front of a sign that read “Imam Ayman Elkasrawy, Purify Al-Aqsa Mosque from the filth of the Jews.”

This case illustrates the how the interaction of various sectors of the Islamophobia industry came together to foment controversy. The groups involved in this example represent the soft-power groups (JDL-Canada, B’nai Brith Canada, a former IDF spokesperson, Canary Mission), Muslim dissidents (Tarek Fatah, Mohamed Tawhidi), Islamophobia foot soldiers (Soldiers of Odin), and media propagators, Rebel News. In concerted ways that echoed, amplified, and attempted to validate the discourse that Muslims are antisemitic through the weaponization of Qur’an, these diverse individuals and groups became united in a common cause of vilifying Elkasrawy to propagate Islamophobic narratives that engender hatred and distrust of Muslims.

---

6 Elkasrawy was quietly returned to his duties at the Masjid Toronto a few months later. Islamophobia played into the mosque’s decisions regarding this case as they were subject to vandalism and picketing outside by White nationalist groups during Friday prayers, which made them reticent about attracting further negative attention and potential attacks.
Figure 2. The Islamophobia industry in action

Ex-Muslim Sandra Solomon (see chapter 7) waving an Israeli flag alongside members of the Jewish Defence League at a counter-protest against demonstrators rallying in support of Palestinian political prisoners on a hunger strike in Israeli jails. Ironically, she is sporting a kuffaya (symbol of Palestinian resistance) and is pictured next to a sign with the mistranslation of Elkasrawy’s statement (Toronto, May 13, 2017). (Photo: Nurphoto via Getty images)
Chapter 2: Islamophobia in The Great White North: An Overview of Key Issues
To situate this report within a wider political context, this chapter provides an overview of the social, cultural, and political landscape of Islamophobia in Canada. Examining the Canadian backdrop allows for a more holistic understanding of Islamophobia as a “homegrown” phenomenon that provides fertile ground for anti-Muslim bigotry and allows the Islamophobia industry’s ecosystem to thrive.

### 2.1 Islamophobia by Numbers: Canadian National Polling Data

The ideological underpinnings of Islamophobia have become part of mainstream consciousness and not just that of the radical fringe. While this study focuses on the specific subcultures that comprise the Islamophobia industry, examining public opinion provides important insights into how the presence of Islam and Muslims resonate more broadly in the Canadian public sphere.

In an overview of national polling data, Wilkins-Laflamme (2018) found that negative attitudes toward Muslims were more prevalent among Quebec residents, older Canadians, those with lower levels of education, and conservatives. The existence of Islamophobic sentiments in Canada is evident in national as well as in provincial polls in Quebec, as summarized below.

#### Quick Facts: Canadian Public-Opinion Polls

Polls and surveys from 2004 to 2022 measuring public opinion in Canada on issues related to anti-Islamophobia legislation, niqab bans, and the prevalence of Islamophobia in Canadian society have found that most Canadians acknowledge that Islamophobia is a problem in Canada. Yet most Canadians hold unfavourable views about Islam and Muslims, and most are open to policies that would single out Muslims for heightened regulation and monitoring in public spaces.

Data from a 2022 Angus Reid poll revealed that many Canadians believe that religions like Islam, evangelical Christianity and Catholicism are more damaging to society than beneficial.

A 2020 study submitted by the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, the Islamic Social Services Association, and the Noor Cultural Centre reported that 56 percent of Canadians perceived Islam as suppressing women’s rights, yet 47 percent supported banning headscarves in schools. The same study also found that that 51 percent of Canadians supported governments surveillance of mosques—in comparison to 46 percent of Americans.

A 2019 Léger poll in Quebec commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies found that 63 percent of Quebecers supported Bill 21’s ban on religious symbols for judges, police officers, and prison guards, and 59 percent were in favour of a similar ban for teachers. The survey also showed that 53 percent of Quebecers felt that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the province had worsened over the previous five years. A national Léger poll further demonstrated that support for Bill 21 among those who held unfavourable views of Muslims across Canada was relatively equal to that in Quebec.

A 2019 survey by the Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), Canadians are more likely to harbour negative stereotypes about Muslim Canadians than about Christian or Jewish Canadians, and they are least comfortable with a figure of authority who wears a hijab in comparison to any other type of religious attire. Canadians believe in the protection of religious rights generally but are less concerned for the religious rights of their Muslim co-citizens. The survey found that more than half (57 percent) of Canadians responded that Islamophobia is “an increasingly disturbing problem in Canada,” and 60 percent agreed that the government “must take action to combat Islamophobia” in Canada.

Angus Reid Institute conducted a public-opinion poll in July 2018 in partnership with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, finding that 59 percent of Canadians believed that “homegrown radical Islamic terrorism” is “quite serious” or “very serious” threat to Canada, with 41 percent responding that “they believe there are radicalized individuals living in their communities today.”

According to a 2014 Angus Reid poll conducted shortly after the October 2014 shooting on Parliament Hill, while the majority of Canadians viewed the Muslim community as a partner in the fight against radicalization, they also said Muslim community leaders were not doing enough to denounce acts of homegrown terror. Over one third of Canadian (35 percent) were convinced that there were already radicalized individuals living in their communities. Sixty-two percent of Canadians said homegrown terrorism is a serious threat while 38 percent felt the issue was overblown.

A 2017 Angus Reid public-opinion poll indicated that Canadians have a much less positive view of Muslims than of adherents of other religions. Of those surveyed, only 32 percent of respondents from Quebec, and 34 percent from the rest of Canada, held a “generally favourable view of Islam.” However, the percentage of Quebecers who say they hold a positive view of Islam had doubled from 15 percent in 2009 to 32 percent in 2017. This jump may be attributed to Quebec City mosque shooting in January 2017.

A 2017 Radio-Canada poll found that nearly one out for four Canadians (23 percent) would favour a ban on Muslim immigration to Canada. Support for the ban rose to 32 percent in Quebec. The poll also revealed that one out of four Canadians believed that immigrants should be tested for “anti-Canadian values.”

In 2017, an Angus Reid opinion poll measured public responses to Motion 103 (M-103), a non-binding resolution in the Canadian parliament that called on the government to “condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination.” According to respondents, 31 percent believed that M-103 should not be passed because it was “a threat to Canadians’ freedom of speech,” and 42 percent said they would vote against the motion. Forty-five percent believed that Islamophobia and discrimination were a serious problem, while 55 percent believed that anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination had been “overblown” by politicians and the media.

A national study by the Angus Reid Institute on November 2017, in partnership with Faith in Canada 150, about the role of religion in the public square found that almost half (48 percent) of those surveyed said that religion makes “a mix of good and bad” contributions to Canadian society. The religions describe as most “benefitting” to “Canadian public life” were Catholicism (35 percent) and Protestantism (26 percent), while the most “damaging” religion was Islam (46 percent) by a large margin.

A survey published in October 2017 by the Angus Reid Institute measured public responses in Quebec to Bill 62, also referred to as Quebec’s “religious-neutrality bill,” which prohibits those with face coverings from receiving government services. Over 62 percent of those surveyed “strongly support” this bill, while only 4 percent “strongly oppose” it.

A 2017 Ipsos Public Affairs poll conducted with Global News revealed that the majority of Canadians (68 percent) would either strongly or somewhat support a religious-neutrality law like that of Quebec in their part of the country.

An October 2017 survey by the Angus Reid Institute measured Canadian attitudes toward Muslim women who wear the niqab (face veil). In response to the prompt “A woman visiting a government office in a niqab should be ...,” 70 percent of those polled inside Quebec responded
“prohibited” compared to 40 percent in the rest of Canada, while 8 percent of those in Québec responded “welcome” compared to 28 percent in the rest of Canada. Twenty-three percent of people polled in Québec responded “discouraged while tolerated,” compared to 31 percent in the rest of Canada.

A December 2016 poll conducted by Forum Research suggested that, among “identifiable racial groups” in Canada, 28 percent of Canadian adults reported “unfavourable feelings” toward Muslims, and 54 percent reported “favourable feelings.” The poll also found that the most unfavourable feelings toward Muslims were found among Canadians from Québec (28 percent) and among conservatives (40 percent).

A July 2016 survey conducted by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants found that 58 percent of Ontarians supported the government’s decision to accept Syrian refugees, yet 53 percent responded that Canada should only allow immigrants “from countries that have similar values to our own.” Only 32 percent of Ontarians had a “positive impression” of Islam.

An April 2016 Environics survey, in partnership with other organizations, measured the opinions of Canadian Muslims and their relationship to broader Canadian society. Just over half (55 percent) of respondents said they felt a very strong sense of belonging, and 39 percent indicated a generally strong sense of belonging. In terms of concerns about issues facing Muslims in Canada, 67 percent of Canadian Muslims were “very” or “somewhat” worried about media portrayals of Muslims in Canada, 62 percent about discrimination against Muslims, 52 percent about “violent extremism among Canadian Muslims,” and 53 percent about unemployment.

A March 2015 Ipsos survey found that 68 percent of respondents disagreed with allowing Muslim women to wear niqab or burka during citizenship ceremonies, and 72 percent “agreed” that the burqa or niqab are “symbols of oppression and rooted in a culture that is anti-women.”

A 2014 survey conducted by the Association of Canadian Studies and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) indicated that French-speaking Canadians (48 percent) were more likely than English-speaking Canadians (27 percent) to agree with the prompt, “Banning the wearing of visible religious symbols in public institutions will help reduce religious fundamentalism.”

A 2012 nationwide survey conducted by the Association of Canadian Studies and the CRRF that focused on Canadian attitudes toward religion, multiculturalism, and sources of racism revealed that 52 percent of Canadians distrusted Muslims, and 42 percent believed that discrimination against Muslims was “mainly their fault.”

While not addressing public opinion, a 2004 survey report by Council of American-Islamic Relations Canada (now the National Council of Canadian Muslims [NCCM]) provided important insights on “Security Visitation of Canadian Muslims” based on survey data from 467 Muslim Canadians between 18 and 55 years of age. The results showed that locations of contact by security officials included the home (45 percent) and workplaces (23 percent), and that 19 percent of those contacted reported that security officials had contacted them multiple times. According to the responses, security officials targeted mostly men (56 percent), Arabs (54 percent), those between the ages of 18 and 35 (62 percent), and students (38 percent).

2.2 Politicians Promoting Islamophobia

In many Western nations, including Canada, there are significant overlaps between the Islamophobia of the far right and some government narratives and practices (see also Aked, Jones and Miller 2019). For example, Canadian political figures have contributed to purveying Islamophobia as part of their election campaigns. Conservative and far-right politicians along with right-wing think tanks circulate and authorize Islamophobia as a political currency, shaping up the discursive apparatus of the Islamophobia industry and rationalizing the securitization of Muslims as a form of systemic oppression. These political influencers play a key role in the circulation of Islamophobic propaganda, priming the ground for Islamophobic racism to take root and spread throughout the anti-Muslim ecosystem.

Problematic political rhetoric can serve as a dog whistle to far-right groups, authorizing bigoted narratives. For example, at a military swearing-in ceremony in 2006, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper invoked the civilizational discourse of “us and them” in the following statement:

Their alleged target was Canada, Canadian institutions, the Canadian economy, the Canadian people. We are a target because of who we are and how we live, our society, our diversity and our values—values such as freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

This rhetoric positioned Muslims as being illiberal, anti-democratic subjects who are irreconcilable with “civilization and modernity.”

In 2011, Harper publicly stated that “Islamism [sic] is the biggest threat to Canada.” Such unqualified public statements create fear and moral panic about the Muslim presence in Canada. Later in 2015, when introducing new anti-terror legislation in 2015, Harper reiterated this fearmongering: “A great evil has been descending upon our world, an evil which has been growing more and more powerful: violent jihadism.” In the same year, the Harper government introduced the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act (see below), which targeted practices like forced and early marriage and honour killing that are often misperceived to be associated with Islam. He further publicly stated that the niqab came from an “anti-woman” culture in an effort to ban women wearing the face veil from swearing a citizenship oath. Using words and phrases like “barbaric,” “anti-woman culture,” “violent jihadism,” and “great evil descending over our world,” Harper’s rhetoric, fuelled problematic racist stereotypes about Islam and Muslims as a campaign strategy.

People’s Party of Canada (PPC) leader Maxime Bernier also incited anti-Muslim moral panic with sensationalized and unfounded claims that “Islamist extremists have infiltrated Canadian politics” and that the PPC was the only party willing to speak openly about the “Islamist menace.” He accused Andrew Scheer’s Conservative Party of Canada of consorting with “radical Islamists who want to impose their barbaric values on Canada.” Prominent Canadian Muslim politicians Omar Alghabra and Iqra Khalid have faced racist and Islamophobic smear campaigns in other attempts to promote suspicion of Muslims holding political office as a Trojan horse promoting “sharia by stealth” and undermining “Canadian values.”

Speaking at a PPC convention in the run-up to the 2019 federal election, Benjamin Dichter, a failed PPC and Conservative Party of Canada candidate, received a standing ovation for his warning: “Despite what our corporate media and political leaders want to admit, Islamist extremism, and that is the adaptation of political Islam, is rott ing away at our society like syphilis.” Dichter has peddled Islamophobic conspiracy theories, including in a video, Crusade Against Islamisation of the World, which has a subtitle proclaiming that “Moslems and scums destroying
everything in a [sic] area in Paris France.” More recently, Dichter was one of the leaders of the 2022 anti-vaccine mandate Freedom Convoy campaign, where some supporters flew swastikas and Confederate flags.

Taking stock of how Islamophobic political rhetoric and the promotion of anti-Muslim ideologies shape the political and cultural landscape in Canada is important for a broader purview of the various ways Islamophobia is normalized and embedded.

2.3 Liberal Islamophobia

In examining the U.S. Islamophobia industry, Lean (2017) referred to “liberal Islamophobia” as the Islamophobia of the left. He exemplifies this phenomenon by pointing to particular individuals who position themselves as left-leaning but reproduce narrative of the right and far right. Lean drew upon Muslim dissidents as a case in point (see chapter 7). In contrast, in this study liberal Islamophobia refers to a systemic state practice whereby Islamophobic forms of governmentality are camouflaged within the liberal political mainstream.

These “politically embedded” forms of Islamophobia cut across the political spectrum. Values of equity, diversity, and inclusion are espoused and celebrated yet, at the same time, policies and practices are enacted that target Muslims as suspect and illiberal minorities, further authorizing and normalizing Islamophobia. In Canada, politicians of all stripes espouse the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism, on the one hand, but then enact or fail to repeal racist, anti-Muslim policies on the other.

This manifestation of liberal Islamophobia arises when “Islamophilia,” marked by cultural fascination and fetishism, converges with Islamophobia. The paradox of these two contradictory impulses of fetishistic fascination and racial disavowal shapes the political and cultural terrain of multiculturalism (Zine 2022). More than other extreme variants of Islamophobia, liberal Islamophobia does the work of normalizing anti-Muslim racism with greater legitimacy and institutional power.

For example, state policies such as security certificates, part of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (see Flatt 2012); the Anti-Terrorism Act (see Patel 2012); and the no-fly list (Passenger Protect Program), which has unduly targeted Muslim communities (see Jamil 2017). The federal Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act (see below) reproduces the idioms of colonial racism as well as the trope of “saving Brown women from Brown men” (Spivak 1988). More recently, as previously noted, the surveillance of Muslim charities through Canada Revenue Agency audits (McSorley 2021) is among the state profiling activities that have targeted Canadian Muslims and Muslim civil-society groups and led to a climate of Islamophobic suspicion.

Policies in Québec have also focused on policing and regulating Muslim women’s dress in the name of preserving secular values, francophone culture (see below), and the “feminist” project of “rescuing Muslim women” from the shackles of their anachronistic faith. These systemic practices legislating Islamophobia are underwritten by longstanding Orientalist tropes and ideologies that find renewed currency in Canadian public policy. Such policies and practices do more to further the normalization of Islamophobia than far-right conspiracy theories and campaigns.

Quick Facts: Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act

The Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, introduced by the Conservative Party of Canada in 2013, targeted practices perceived to be associated with Muslim and immigrant communities. The negative public reaction that followed caused the government to rescind a suggested hotline for reporting barbaric practices and to rename the Act.

In 2013, Bill S-7, also known as the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, was introduced in the Canadian Senate. In 2015 the Act became law, amending the existing Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act, and the Criminal Code.

The Act criminalized the celebration, aid, or participation in a forced or underage marriage and allowed for immigrants and refugees to be denied residency if they were suspected of polygamy. It also criminalized accompanying anyone under sixteen from Canada with the intention of celebrating or aiding their marriage. Legal critics noted that these practices were already illegal under existing laws, making the Act more about fearmongering and political pandering than safeguarding women.

Members of the opposition party and other critics have contended that criminalizing participation in a forced wedding ceremony may criminalize victims and unknowing bystanders and discourage them from reporting underage marriages to authorities.

A 2015 report by the Canadian Bar Association stated that Bill S-7 was “divisive and misleading and oversimplifies the factors that contribute to discrimination and violence against women and children” (2).

Two Conservative MPs, then Immigration minister Chris Alexander and Status of Women minister Kellie Leitch, attempted to introduce the Barbaric Cultural Practices hotline to coincide with the Act and for use both in Canada and abroad.

According to a Conservative government backgrounder, among the “barbaric cultural practices” that the “tip line” and the police task force would target were polygamy, forced marriage, underage marriage, and honour killings. The tip line would have allowed citizens to report people who they believed were participating in such practices to the RCMP.

The announcement of this hotline also came shortly after Zunera Ishaq made a human-rights complaint for not being able to be sworn in as a Canadian citizen while wearing the niqab. Critics cautioned that the hotline reinforced the fear that Islam was antithetical to “Canadian values.” By losing the federal election, Stephen Harper and his Conservatives also lost the opportunity to fully implement the hotline.

Subsequently, in December 2017, the Senate approved a bill, introduced by Liberal Senator Mobina Jaffer in 2015, that removed the term “barbaric cultural practices” from the Act while keeping the body of the law intact. Senator Jaffer contested the naming of the Act, arguing, “We are implying that these practices are part of cultures and that these cultures are barbaric.”
Québec culture; (c) the inertia of the political class and its complicity with media and minorities; the emergence of a Muslim enemy whose values are perceived as irreconcilable with those of isolated five predominant themes: (a) the fear of a return of religion in the public space; (b) Nadeau and Helly (2016, 6) analyzed Facebook pages supporting Québec's Values Charter and culturally overdetermined subjects fundamentally irreconcilable with the demands of secular the public sphere, Muslim immigrants are constructed as politically disruptive, religiously and 2014 provincial election—and more than a decade of legislation outlawing religious symbols in 6.000 likes by regularly posting articles that demonized Muslims and women in hijab, as well as videos and messages by PEGIDA-Québec and the leader of France’s far-right Rassemblement National party, Marine Le Pen. Other groups trafficking in anti-Muslim hate campaigns like La Meute have become fixtures in the Islamophobia industry (see chapter 5). Québec’s mixture of ethnonationalism, secular, and Islamophobic public policies have laid the groundwork for and anti-Muslim racism that has had deadly consequences (see “2.4.2 Quebec City mosque shooting” below).

2.4 Islamophobia in Québec

The demographics, history, and cultural politics of Québec influence the public views, actions, policies, and legislation that contribute to the normalization of Islamophobia and foment anti-Muslim racism. Secularism within White, francophone ethnonationalism has shaped the cultural politics of Québec.

Notions of belonging within Quebecois nationhood have been historically shaped by ideologies of racial and cultural purity, as demonstrated by the term “pure laine” (pure wool) linked to White French settlers. The term “Québécois de souche” also carries a similar connotation, establishing the genealogy of belonging as the birthright of “old-stock Canadiens.” These xenophobic, White nationalist ideals are reflected in the name of the anti-Muslim far-right group, the Fédération des Québécois de souche.

Islam and Muslims have been front and centre in Québec’s racial project of secularism, as exemplified by key flashpoints in the province’s political and cultural landscape. From debates on “reasonable accommodation” and the integration of religious cultures within secular society in 2007 to the Québec Charter of Values (Bill 60), introduced in 2013—it later failed after the 2014 provincial election—and more than a decade of legislation outlawing religious symbols in the public sphere, Muslim immigrants are constructed as politically disruptive, religiously and culturally overdetermined subjects fundamentally irreconcilable with the demands of secular modernity (Zine 2012). These political views are mirrored in the public sphere. For example, Nadeau and Helly (2016, 6) analyzed Facebook pages supporting Québec’s Values Charter and isolated five predominant themes: (a) the fear of a return of religion in the public space; (b) the emergence of a Muslim enemy whose values are perceived as irreconcilable with those of Québec culture; (c) the inertia of the political class and its complicity with media and minorities; (d) the predominance of legal over political powers and of individual over collective rights; and (e) multiculturalism as a factor of denationalization and social fragmentation. Igniting a sense of paranoid nationalism, the Muslim presence sparked racial and religious fears and anxieties.

Public-opinion polls provide further evidence of public discontent with Muslim Quebecers. A 2019 poll found that roughly one in two Quebecers believed their way of life was threatened by the presence of religious minorities, with 47 percent believing that statement to be true compared with 45 percent who disagreed. Most believed that hatred directed at religious minorities was on the rise, and 53 percent said that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims had gotten worse over the previous five years.

Far-right White nationalist groups capitalize on these racial tensions. For example, the Facebook page Pas d’Islam radical et de charia au Québec (currently over 7,000 followers) garnered 6,000 likes by regularly posting articles that demonized Muslims and women in hijab, as well as videos and messages by PEGIDA-Québec and the leader of France’s far-right Rassemblement National party, Marine Le Pen. Other groups trafficking in anti-Muslim hate campaigns like La Meute have become fixtures in the Islamophobia industry (see chapter 5). Québec’s mixture of ethnonationalist, secular, and Islamophobic public policies have laid the groundwork for and anti-Muslim racism that has had deadly consequences (see “2.4.2 Quebec City mosque shooting” below).

2.4.1 Hate Crimes in Québec

Anti-Muslim hate crimes in Québec have ranged from vandalism at mosques, Islamic schools, and community centres to acts of verbal and physical abuse, including the forceful removal of Muslim women’s hijabs. During the period of 2013 to 2017, during the reasonable-accommodation debates and the tabling of bills banning religious symbols in the public sector, there was a corresponding uptick in Islamophobic hate crimes. The Montreal Gazette reported that there was a 50 percent overall increase in hate crimes across the province between 2016 and 2017—from 327 to 489, according to Statistics Canada. The spike in incidents was due to a rise in the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes, which almost tripled from 41 in 2016 to 117 in 2017.

According to Statistics Canada, anti-Muslim hate crimes peaked in February 2017, the month following the mass shooting that killed six people at the Centre culture Islamique de Québec. It is unsettling that a community victimized by such an unprecedented act of White nationalist Islamophobic violence would continue to be targets of hate crimes. These ongoing incidents demonstrates the deep anti-Muslim animus that inspires such actions.

A 2018 report, Xenophobic and Notably Islamophobic Acts of Hate,7 found that in Québec “the racialized and religious minority groups most targeted by the hate crime reported to police in 2017 were Muslim (24%), Arab (11%), Jewish (10%) and Black (7.5%).” The report presented data from a qualitative study of eighty-six participants across the province who had been victimized by anti-Muslim hate crimes. Twenty-one of the eighty-six participants reported having experienced physical attacks accompanied by xenophobic and Islamophobic speech. Seven of the women participants who wore hijab reported experiencing “relatively serious assaults” more than once. Participants also reported being subject to systemic forms of discrimination in accessing housing, education, health service, and employment as well as encountering racial profiling from police.

In July of 2019, a video of a man in Montreal verbally harassing a woman with her child was posted. In the video, the man yelled racist slurs at the woman after she and her friend were
speaking Arabic. Muslim women in Québec also reported a rise in Islamophobic attacks after the introduction of Bill C-21, known as “An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State,” which bans religious attire including Islamic headscarves and face veils from the public sector (see “2.5 Quick Facts: Bill 21” below).

A chilling example of Islamophobic hate crime in Québec was the pig’s head left outside the Centre culturel islamique de Québec one year before a deadly shooting attack took place (see below), gruesomely foreshadowing the violent events that were to take place there.

As a prelude to violence, one year before the deadly shootings, a gift-wrapped pig’s head was left outside the door of the Centre culturel islamique de Québec with a card that read “Bonne [sic] Appétit.” The see-through cellophane wrapping and blue and white bows representing the colours of Québec’s flag create a macabre and grotesque mise en scene. (Photo: CBC News)

2.4.2 Quebec City Mosque Shooting

January 29, 2017 will go down in Canada’s history as the date of the worst mass murder to take place in a house of worship. This was the day that six Muslim men were shot dead in a Quebec City mosque. An armed White nationalist terrorist, Alexandre Bissonnette, went on a shooting rampage at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec just after evening prayers. Media reports indicated that Bissonnette, a twenty-seven-year-old anthropology student from Université Laval, had browsed websites linked to anti-Muslim propagandist Robert Spencer; former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke; Dylan Roof, a White supremacist terrorist who gunned done nine African American worshippers at a South Carolina church; and Marc Lepine, the shooter in Montreal’s 1989 École Polytechnique massacre. He had also carried out over 800 online searches of U.S President Donald Trump. Bissonnette later confessed to police that he had been motivated by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s message of welcome to refugees following Donald Trump’s travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries. He told police,

I was watching TV, and I learned that the Canadian government was going to take more refugees who couldn’t go to the United States, and they were coming here.... I saw that and I, like, lost my mind. I don’t want us to become like Europe. I don’t want them to kill my parents, my family.... I had to do something, I couldn’t do nothing. It was something that tortured me.

On the day of the terror attack Trudeau tweeted, “To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada.”
A local halal grocery store owner, a professor at Université Laval, three civil servants, and a pharmacy worker were brutally slain by Bissonnette. These men had originally come from Morocco, Algeria, and Guinea. They were fathers, sons, husbands, brothers, and respected members of the local Muslim community: Ibrahima Barry (aged 39), Mamadou Tanou Barry (aged 42), Khaled Belkacemi (aged 60), Aboubaker Thabti (aged 44), Abdelkrim Hassane (aged 41), and Azzedine Soufiane (aged 57). Nineteen other worshippers were injured, including Ayman Derbali, who was paralyzed attempting to stop Bissonnette.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, Québec Premier François Legault stated that there was no need for a day of action devoted to addressing Islamophobia, telling reporters, “I don’t think there is Islamophobia in Québec, so I don’t see why there would be a day dedicated to Islamophobia.” Responding to the premier’s comment, Hassan Guillet, a Québec Imam, denounced the “poisoned words” that he said were filtered into the social and political discourse regarding Muslims in the province.

After four years of national amnesia and community-led campaigns that called for the commemoration of this tragedy and concrete measures to combat the Islamophobia that had led to it, the federal government announced in 2021 that January 29 would be designated as a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia.

See for example the public campaign public campaign spearheaded by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (https://www.cjpm.org/mend_4_4).
switched to a 9 mm semi-automatic Glock pistol. In the span of two minutes Bissonnette fired forty-eight rounds, reloading four times.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau described the shooting as a “terrorist attack,” and the victims as “a group of innocents targeted for practicing their faith.” Québec Premier Philippe Couillard also described the shooting as a terrorist attack, yet Bissonnette was not charged with terrorism. In March 2018, Bissonnette pled guilty to six counts of first-degree murder and six counts of attempted murder. Rejecting the Crown’s request for six consecutive life sentences (150 years) without the possibility of parole, in February 2019, the judge sentenced Bissonnette to life in prison, without the possibility of parole for 40 years.

In March 2019, Bissonnette’s lawyers filed an appeal to reduce his sentence. In 2020, Québec’s Court of Appeal reduced his sentence to life without parole. In 2020, Québec’s Court of Appeal reduced his sentence to life without parole for 25 years, deeming that deemed the original sentence as “cruel and unusual” punishment. This verdict angered many in the local Muslim community, who felt that he had been given too much consideration after committing a mass murder.

As an homage to Bissonnette, in 2019 the New Zealand mosque shooter, a 28-year-old White supremacist responsible for the killing of fifty-one Muslims, had had Alexandre Bissonnette’s name inscribed on his weapons.

### Gendered Islamophobia and “Coerced Unveiling” Policies

There is a specific way in which Islamophobia registers gender as the abject difference that situates Islam and Muslims in tension with the West, civilization, and modernity. Muslim women’s bodies have come to mark that divide (Zine 2022). In Canada there has been more than a decade of efforts by the provincial government in Québec and the federal government to ban religious attire in the public sphere. For example, in 2010, Bill 94 was introduced in Québec by the Liberal government. The proposed law would have banned the wearing of niqab when receiving public services. The Liberal government was defeated in 2012, before the bill was passed into law. In 2015, Stephen Harper’s federal Conservative government attempted (un成功地) to ban the niqab during citizenship-swearing ceremonies. Later in 2019, Bill 21 (see below) was introduced in Québec prohibiting religious attire for state employees such as prosecutors, teachers, and police, under the guise of “religious neutrality.”

These policies enact a form of “sartorial nationalism” (Zine 2012), whereby veiled Muslim women are rendered as illiberal and “unimaginable” as citizens and where national belonging becomes determined sartorially through demonstrating allegiance to dominant secular values and beliefs. These “coerced unveiling” policies and practices (Zine 2022) are based on the problematic ways in which Muslim women’s religious attire has been regarded within the racial project of secularism as a sign of foreign, anti-modern, and anti-democratic religious sensibilities. The irony of the present pandemic moment is that Muslim women in Québec are violating the law when they wear a niqab, but if they cover their face with a protective mask they are “good pandemic citizens.”

Legislating and legalizing Islamophobia through policies that promote secularism and the regulation of Muslim women’s bodies further entrenches Islamophobia as an embedded political practice and lends tacit credence to the Islamophobia industry’s efforts to construct Muslims as incompatible with Canadian society and values. Muslim women’s bodies continue to be the ideological and legal battleground for these contestations.
The Bill was also denounced by the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which tweeted that about the consequences for people excluded from a public position.

The Council raised further concerns that wearing a hijab did not correspond to Québec values: “For me, the hijab is not something women should be wearing because it does have, at some point, significance of oppression of women and the fact they have to cover themselves.”

Charest couched her views in terms of freedom of choice and expression: “It’s the fact that you have to wear something, so it does command an action for the women, and I think women should be free to wear whatever they want.” Yet apparently her comments about women’s freedom to make sartorial choices do not extend to Muslim women, who were left with little choice under Bill 21. Charest stood by her statements: “I stand by what I said yesterday, I don’t regret the way I answered the question.”

One month after Bill 21 was introduced in Québec, Justice Femme, a legal support group in Montreal, received forty reports of gender-based, Islamophobic hate incidents from Muslim women that. They included cyberbullying, employment and workplace discrimination, and physical assault. Justice Femme noted a steady growth in hate-based incidents since the CAQ’s election and the tabling of Bill 21.

Quick Facts: Bill C-21

ALLOWED: Small religious symbols

BANNED: “Overt and conspicuous” symbols

SOURCE: GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

A chart outlining “allowed” vs. “banned” religious symbols in Québec.

In 2019 the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government tabled Bill 21, An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State, to ban public servants from wearing religious symbols at work. This includes schoolteachers, principals, police officers, judges, prison guards, Crown lawyers, bankruptcy registrars, the Speaker of the National Assembly, members of bodies like the labour tribunal, public inquiry commissioners, the provincial justice minister, and more. The preamble to the Bill states that Québec “attaches importance to the equality of women and men,” gesturing to the focus on Muslim women’s headscarves. It also includes the notwithstanding clause, a rarely used instrument that allows governments to pass laws even if courts find they violate people’s Charter rights.

With Bill 21, Québec Premier François Legault invoked the Constitution’s notwithstanding clause to protect laws from being struck down by judges for violating the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The clause, Section 33 of the Charter, is a seldom-used, controversial part of the Constitution that allows government legislation to override some parts of the Charter.

On May 17, 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHC) responded to the bill’s passage in a five-page letter. The letter, leaked to the media, included concerns that Bill 21 did not define what religious symbols are, which could lead to a “potentially discretionary and discriminatory interpretation.” The UNHC noted that the bill did not specify why the ban on religious attire was “necessary and proportionate to protect the security, order, public health and morality or fundamental rights and freedoms of others.” The Council raised further concerns about the consequences for people excluded from a public position.

The Bill was also denounced by the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which tweeted that they were “deeply concerned by Québec’s announcement ... that it [would] seek to ban religious symbols for all provincial public servants in roles such as police officers, judges, teachers and senior officials.”

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association and NCCM filed a legal challenge to the law the day after it passed, arguing that it was unconstitutional. At the same time, they asked the court to consider granting an injunction that would suspend two sections of the law while waiting to debate the larger issues at stake. Judge Michel YerŒeau rejected the request.

A 2019 national poll conducted by Léger and the Association for Canadian Studies found that 63 percent of Quebecers supported a ban on religious symbols for judges, police officers, and prison guards and 59 percent were in favour of a similar ban for teachers. Among those who had a negative view of Islam, 88 percent supported a ban on religious symbols for teachers.

An additional Léger poll indicated that there was slightly more overall support for Bill 21 in Québec than in the rest of Canada. However, when only respondents with an unfavourable view toward Muslims were considered, there was no significant difference between Québec and the rest of Canada. The poll also found that most Quebecers believed that Bill 21 would not improve relations between the majority and the minority.

Bill 21 was denounced by women’s organizations such as AMAL-Québec, which warned that it was “a corrupt model of secularism, one that leads to social and economic exclusion and to rising social tensions.” It was also contested by the Fédération des femmes du Québec. Spokesperson Gabrielle Bouchard told the committee studying the bill that the legislation would create barriers for Muslim women by denying them the right to hold certain jobs if they wore religious attire.

Other Muslim groups, like Laïcité Québec Afrique du Nord, actively supported the legislation. Prominent secular Muslim Quebecers like Djemila Benhabib, Leila Lesbet, and Nadia El-Mabrouk signed open letters or wrote columns backing the religious-symbols ban. Benhabib, a former Parti Québécois candidate who had grown up in Algeria, called the veil “a tool of domination.”

Isabelle Charest, a (CAQ) politician acting as Québec’s minister responsible for the status of women, member of the Comité ministériel des services aux citoyens, and minister of education, weighed in on the debate, arguing that wearing a hijab did not correspond to Québec values: “For me, the hijab is not something women should be wearing because it does have, at some point, significance of oppression of women and the fact they have to cover themselves.”

Charest couched her views in terms of freedom of choice and expression: “It’s the fact that you have to wear something, so it does command an action for the women, and I think women should be free to wear whatever they want.” Yet apparently her comments about women’s freedom to make sartorial choices do not extend to Muslim women, who were left with little choice under Bill 21. Charest stood by her statements: “I stand by what I said yesterday, I don’t regret the way I answered the question.”

One month after Bill 21 was introduced in Québec, Justice Femme, a legal support group in Montreal, received forty reports of gender-based, Islamophobic hate incidents from Muslim women that. They included cyberbullying, employment and workplace discrimination, and physical assault. Justice Femme noted a steady growth in hate-based incidents since the CAQ’s election and the tabling of Bill 21.

In 2021, a Québec third-grade teacher, Fatemeh Anvari, was removed from the classroom because she wore hijab; an act in defiance of the law. Anvari’s students and colleagues put up green ribbons and posters in the school as a show of support for her.
Motion 103 (M-103) is a non-binding resolution of the Canadian parliament that called on the government to “condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination.” The motion was tabled by Liberal MP Iqra Khalid in the wake of the 2017 Quebec City mosque attack. Immediately, M-103 ignited a virulent right-wing backlash that used free speech as an alibi to wage a belligerent ideological campaign to discredit Islamophobia and thereby stop attempts to address and challenge it. A National Post article addressed the fallout: “Though M-103 was a motion, not a piece of legislation, and thus did not create any new laws, it ignited a political firestorm, with Conservatives arguing it would stifle free speech as, they claimed, the term Islamophobia was poorly defined.” The debate over the term “Islamophobia” has weaponized free speech and become a rhetorical prop in right-wing campaigns of ideological intimidation to silence and censor work on Islamophobia.

Anti-M-103 campaigns mounted by Conservative Party members; far-right White nationalist groups and media outlets; pro-Israel, fringe-right groups; Muslim dissidents; and others were attempts to undermine anti-Islamophobia efforts in the face of a horrific terror attack against Muslims at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec. These concerted activities created political cohesion among these groups and galvanized all sectors the Islamophobia industry. The backlash arising from M-103 heralded a period of heightened activity and coordinated actions among diverse Islamophobia actors and represents a key flashpoint moment for Canada’s Islamophobia industry.

Outside of the groups that opposed M-103, an opinion poll published in March 2017 by the Angus Reid Institute measured wider public response to the motion. In response to the question, “if you were a Member of Parliament, how would you vote on this motion (M-103),” 42 percent said they would vote against it; 29 percent would vote in favour, and 29 percent were unsure or would abstain. Three in ten (31 percent) of those surveyed believed M-103 threatened free speech. Canadians were divided on the saliency of Islamophobia. Forty-five percent believed that Islamophobia and discrimination were a serious problem, while 55 percent believed that anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination had been “overblown” by politicians and the media.

Yet another survey on Islamophobia in Canada, released the following year in 2018 by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, reported that more than half of Canadians (57 percent) responded that Islamophobia was “an increasingly disturbing problem in Canada,” and 60 percent agreed that the government “must take action to combat Islamophobia” in Canada. These findings show the overall ambivalence in Canadian public opinion surrounding Islamophobia and M-103. The reticence to address Islamophobia in Canada or even to identify concerns were echoed by various sectors of the Islamophobia industry. Through these networked consultation sessions between September and December 2017 during which the government heard from about 600 people. A report on the proceedings was released in 2018, entitled Taking Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia. What began as an inquiry galvanized by the Quebec City mosque attack to address Islamophobia in Canada was reduced in this report to an “add on.” A “national action plan” with thirty recommendations was highlighted in the report. Only two of these recommendations referenced Islamophobia: the first included Islamophobia tackled on to an education strategy, and the second suggested that “January 29th be designated as a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia, and other forms of religious discrimination,” which was eventually enacted four years later in 2021.

The Conservative Party of Canada’s minority report, which relied heavily on the testimonies of Muslim dissidents (see chapter 7), raised the following concerns, defaulting to the lack of definitional specificity of the term “Islamophobia” to undermine the focus and validity of M-103:

- The debate on M-103 captured the attention of Canadians and the mainstream media for several weeks. The main objection Canadians had to M-103 was that it complicated and confused the issue of anti-Muslim bigotry and violence rather than clarified it. The word ‘Islamophobia,’ which features prominently in M-103, has a long history. Unfortunately, ‘Islamophobia’ has received many definitions, and the failure to use just one definition for the word is highly problematic (70).

The minority report cited people who identify as Muslims making similar arguments to validate their case. For example, elsewhere in the report, Ali Rizvi, an author, noted that the term might have a negative impact on the Muslim community: “The word ‘Islamophobia’ is an umbrella term that also conflates legitimate criticism of Islam—as is being done by many of my fellow liberals and secular activists trying to change our societies in the Muslim world—with the demonization of Muslims, which is obviously wrong” (23). Raheel Raza, president of the Council for Muslims Facing Tomorrow, also argued along with Conservative detractors that the term could also limit freedom of expression: “I believe, though, that using the word ‘Islamophobia’—let me be very clear—in the motion will curtail free speech, because no other ethnic community or religious community is mentioned by name in the motion except Islamophobia” (24). Muslim dissidents (see chapter 7) were showcased in the Conservative Party’s minority report to legitimize anti-M-103 campaigns.

Conservative politicians like Andrew Scheer, and other Conservative MPs raised similar concerns that the term “Islamophobia” was being used to silence free speech and criticism of Islam. These concerns were echoed by various sectors of the Islamophobia industry. Through these networked
circuits, a significant amount of content contributing to the promotion of harmful anti-Muslim stereotypes has been perpetuated under the guise of “objectively critiquing Islam” or “exposing the danger” that Islam poses.

Several pro-Israel groups took on a key role in contesting M-103, promoting conspiracy theories that it was the gateway to an Islamist take over of Canada by making the country a “sharia compliant” state, and warning that MP Khalid was a Muslim Brotherhood operative (see chapter 3). Other warnings included that M-103 would criminalize criticism of Islam and would be tantamount to blasphemy laws. And yet, pro-Israel advocacy groups such as the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and B’nai Brith Canada that contested M-103 on the grounds that it would silence free speech and single out a specific religious group for special treatment, do not offer the same concerns with respect to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. The double standard is curious since the IHRA definition and its illustrations have been widely criticized for being vague yet overly broad and for silencing valid critique of the Israeli state as a racist endeavour (see chapter 6), and yet they have been officially adopted by Canada’s federal government.

Piggybacking on the anti–M-103 bandwagon, PPC leader Maxime Bernier argued that the motion was a first step “towards restricting our right to criticize Islam” and that “given the international situation, and the fact that jihadi terrorism is today the most important threat to our security, I think this is a serious concern we have to take into account.” Bernier, like other prominent detractors and M-103 conspiracists, warned that it would introduce blasphemy laws into Canada and open the door for the Trojan horse of creeping sharia (see chapter 3). Media outlets like Rebel News circulated similar Islamophobic scare stories and misinformation within the far-right echo chamber (see chapter 4).

All the detractors of a motion that sought to acknowledge the salience of Islamophobia in Canada in the wake of a mass murder in a house of worship engaged in a callous political campaign at a time of public mourning and grief. The parliamentary hearings on M-103 heard voices from the political right and Muslim dissidents weaponize free speech and undermine attempts to challenge what had become murderous levels of violence against innocent Muslims.

Quick Facts: Motion 103
Motion 103 was a non-binding motion introduced by Liberal MP Iqra Khalid in December 2016. It called on the Canadian government to condemn Islamophobia and recognize the need to “quell the public climate of fear and hate.” The motion passed in March 2017.

In October 2016, the House of Commons had adopted an anti-Islamophobia motion by unanimous consent as Petition e411. The petition was sponsored by MP Frank Baylis and presented by New Democratic Party leader, Thomas Mulcair. The motion passed quietly and did not meet the same resistance as M-103 did subsequently.

In December 2016, Canadian MP Iqra Khalid introduced Motion-103 (M-103) in response to the growing climate of fear and hatred. On March 23, 2017, shortly after the Quebec City mosque attack, the Canadian parliament approved M-103 with a vote of 201 to 91. The motion called on the Canadian parliament to “condemn Islamophobia” and asked “a parliamentary committee to launch a study on how the government could address the issue, with recommendations due in mid-November.”

Much of the debate surrounding M-103 took place after the Quebec City mosque shooting and focused on the use of the term “Islamophobia.” Saskatchewan Conservative MP David Anderson noted that the lack of a consistent definition made the motion difficult to understand and evaluate. Journalist Tarek Fatah (see chapter 7), who has likened multiculturalism to a drug, stated that including the words “denouncing Islamophobia” in the motion would “infringe on the
indefinite right of Muslim Canadians to critique our religion.”

PPC leader Maxime Bernier claimed that the motion would “seriously threaten free speech” and stated that he would oppose the motion unless it was “amended to remove the word ‘Islamophobia.’”

On February 2017, CBC News reported that Conservative MP Anderson had proposed a counter-motion on Opposition day, which “mirrors M-103 but removes the word ‘Islamophobia’ and instead calls on government to ‘condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus and other religious communities.’”

In February 2017, shortly after the Quebec City mosque shooting, Conservative MP Kellie Leitch called on individuals to support her petition to oppose M-103. MP Leitch suggested that M-103 was “singling Islam out for special treatment.”

Critics also alleged that M-103 would create a path for legislative changes in accordance with “sharia law.”

A March 2017 report published by the Tessellate Institute, a non-profit research institute that explores and documents the lived experiences of Muslims in Canada, analyzed the fifty most used words in tweets on Twitter containing “#M103” from February 12 to the evening of February 15. The analysis found that “many of the tweets communicated an irrational, fearful, and unsubstantiated suspicion towards Muslims and the place of Islam in Canadian society, painting Islam as monolithic, violent, ideological, and as a threat to Western values.”

In a CBC News article, reporter Kathleen Harris noted that MP Khadi had received over “50,000 emails” in response to M-103. Many of the emails included “overt discrimination or direct threats.” When discussing these emails, Khalid stated that she had had to ask her “staff to lock the office behind me as I now fear for their safety…. I have asked them not to answer all phone calls so they don’t hear the threats, insults and unbelievable amount of hate shouted at them and myself.”

In February 2017 during a House of Commons session, Khalid read out some of the hate mail she had received as the result of her support for M-103. The messages she read included disturbing and threatening hate speech: “We will burn down your mosques, draper head Muslim” and “Kill her and be done with it. I agree she is here to kill us. She is sick and she needs to be deported.”

Demonstrations to protest the motion were held across Canada by the Canadian Coalition for Concerned Citizens, a group that held monthly “anti-Muslim demonstrations, billed as protests in defense of free speech.” An article by the CBC reported that small contingents from Soldiers of Odin and PEGIDA, described by the article as “offshoots of European far-right street movements,” were also present at the demonstrations. The largest protest was organized by La Meute (see chapter 5), described in the CBC News article as “an online group that believes radical Islam is on the rise in Quebec.”

M-103 supporters included Arif Virani, MP for Parkdale–High Park, who stated, “In the wake of the horrific terror attack on the mosque in Quebec … we need to address the rise in hatred we are observing. In order to overcome this type of anti-Muslim discrimination we must call it out by name: Islamophobia.”

2.7 Connecting the Dots

The rise in anti-Muslim hate incidents discussed previously may have some association with political policies and flashpoints that fuelled Islamophobic sentiments. For example, the marked increase in hate crimes from 2012 to 2015 (a 235 percent increase) took place during the period when the Quebec Charter of Values was introduced (in 2013), barring public-sector workers from wearing religious symbols like hijabs or niqabs, as well as the introduction of the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act and a proposed tip line in 2015. Also in 2015, the proposed ban on niqabs at citizenship oath–swearing ceremonies was put forward by the federal government. As well, new anti-terror legislation was introduced, accompanied by Islamophobic rhetoric from Prime Minister Stephen Harper, creating anti-Muslim fear and moral panic. While these policies and proposed legislation were not direct causes of hate crimes, they nonetheless contributed to a climate that allowed Islamophobia to flourish.

Adding to heightened anti-Muslim tensions, a study examining media reportage about the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada in 2015–2016 revealed that several news outlets played a major role in reinforcing negative images of these Muslims seeking safe haven. According to a U.S.-based study by Saleem et al. (2017), negative media reports about Muslims have been correlated with increased public support for military action in Muslim countries and for implementing harsher civil restrictions for Muslim Americans.

In Canada, specific flashpoints have triggered anti-Muslim racism. For example, in 2017, after the Quebec City mosque attack and the subsequent backlash associated with Motion 103, there was a spike in hate crimes in Montreal. In 2019, one month after the introduction of Bill 21 in Quebec, Justice Femme, a legal support group, received forty reports from Muslim women experiencing hate-fuelled incidents.

Examining the incidence of hate crimes and hate-related incidents, as they coincide with the introduction of government policies, negative media coverage, and corresponding negative public opinion about Islam and Muslims, demonstrates how, as previously discussed, individual actions, Islamophobic ideologies, and systemic practices (such as anti-Muslim policies) are part of a mutually constitutive system of oppression that reproduces the racial logics of Islamophobia.

The following chapter identifies and outlines the dominant Islamophobic discourses, narratives, and conspiracy theories about Islam and Muslims that circulate within the Islamophobia industry and are also more widely purveyed. These tropes form the ideological substructure upon which the architecture of Islamophobia is built.
3.1 Islamophobia's Playlist

Creating and disseminating Islamophobic propaganda is the mainstay of the Islamophobia industry. Islamophobic ideologies and conspiracy theories serve to justify hate crimes and rationalize Islamophobic violence. Islamophobic discourses also shape public policy in Canada as part of liberal Islamophobic narratives. For example, ideas about Muslim women’s religious attire posing a threat to secular democracy and Canadian values underpin public policies in Quebec like Bill 21 and the stereotype of Muslim “radicals” and “terrorists” legitimate security policies that unduly target Muslims and Muslim organizations for racial and religious profiling.

Negative attitudes and stereotypes associated with Muslims have a long historical genealogy largely rooted in colonial-era discourses, though many narratives predate this period. Edward Said (1979) described how imperial knowledge about Islam and Muslims produced through the colonial study of “Orientalism” promoted representations of an exotic and deviant culture and civilization that was inherently at odds with Eurocentric modernity. The notions of religious and racial abjection that were associated with Muslims were circulated through Orientalist knowledge production (scientific, ethnographic, and literary) as a means of justifying the “white man’s burden” of colonization and enacting measures for racial and religious “upliftment” that would “civilize the savage.” Orientalist tropes have maintained their currency and continue to be deployed at different historical moments to prop up the cultural and political positional superiority of the West in its encounters and relationships with the “Muslim world.” Post 9/11 archetypes of radical terrorists for example, have relied upon Orientalist tropes to construct moral panics around dangerous Muslim “folk devils” or scapegoats (see chapter 4) that have legitimized imperial military campaigns and domestic security measures (Zine 2022).

Another significant discursive vector in the evolution of Islamophobic ideologies was Samuel Huntington’s (1996) influential “clash of civilizations” thesis, which warned of post-cold-war civilizational conflict with Islam and Muslims and with religion and culture being the main drivers of this confrontation. Situating Muslims as a global nemesis at odds with the West is a narrative that has persisted and has gained renewed impetus in contemporary Islamophobic conspiracy theories whereby these notions are steeped in ideas of civilizational wars, not mere clashes. As these narratives are uncritically absorbed by wider publics, they become dominant hegemonic ideologies about Muslims. The lingering effects of these stereotypes shoehorn the 1.5 billion Muslims around the world into a narrow, essentialized, and pathological archetype.

A project spearheaded by the University of Leeds examined dominant European narratives about Islamophobia from eight European Union member nations (France, Germany, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, Greece, and the United Kingdom). According to one of the working papers from this project on European human-rights law,

*these narratives were found to fix Muslims collectively as, in descending order of prevalence, a threat to security; unassimilable; a demographic threat; an Islamisation threat; a threat to local, national, and European identity; as responsible for the oppression of women; as essentially different and violent; as incomplete citizens; as a risk to the majority, and as essentially homophobic. A worsening environment of Islamophobia was identified with respect to media content, political discourse, and experiences of discrimination, indicating the new and increasingly acceptable hostility against Muslims in many spheres of everyday life. (Trispoutis 2017, 6)*

The findings of this European study demonstrate how Islamophobic narratives connect to the normalization of discrimination against Muslims. Uncovering the discursive formations of Islamophobia is important in developing critical responses.
In Canada, similar Islamophobic discourses circulate to promote anti-Muslim racism and conspiracy theories. These take the form of Muslim “scare stories” and fake news reports, and these are featured on the websites of anti-Muslim groups and think tanks. These discourses, outlined below, highlight some of the dominant tropes through which Islamophobic propaganda is disseminated in Canada as well as through global Islamophobia circuits.

3.2 Islamophobic Imaginaries: Discourses and Conspiracy Theories

There is an adage, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.” This understanding can be applied to the way Islamophobic tropes and conspiracies circulate and become regarded as social facts. A phenomenon known as the “illusory truth effect” explains how, when we are repeatedly exposed to misinformation, we are more like to believe it and accept it as truth. The more exposure to specific ideas and tropes that may be false, the more likely it is that this misinformation becomes familiarized and is taken as real. Repetition is how lies gain traction.

A plethora of fake news circulates on the internet and social media, and so the disinformation industry and the brokers who exchange in this false currency have an immense capability to circulate propaganda and conspiracy theories to wider public spheres outside of their own echo chambers (see chapter 4). For example, a BuzzFeed News analysis found that during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, “fake election news stories generated more total engagement on Facebook than the top election stories from nineteen major news outlets.” The ubiquity of Islamophobic tropes in political rhetoric and campaigns, in conservative and mainstream media, and in far-right echo chambers create global circuits where anti-Muslim bigotry can circulate widely.

Islamophobic conspiracy theories have gained traction on the internet and on social media through the proliferation of fake news. When these fabricated claims go unchecked, they misinform the public and provide false narratives that instill fear and moral panic about the Muslim presence in Canada. These ideas have material consequences in the way they inspire anti-Muslim racism and underwrite deadly attacks.

These tropes rely on the cultural production of ignorance and wilful acts to spread confusion and deceit that are often created to sell a product or win favour. The epistemology of ignorance is explained through the study of “agnotology,” a neologism coined by Stanford scholar Robert Proctor, who suggested that “ignorance is not just the not-yet-known, it’s also a political ploy, a deliberate creation by powerful agents who want you ‘not to know’” (Proctor and Shiebinger 2008, 3). Proctor and Shiebinger referred to the “manufactured uncertainties” that are characteristic of agnotology whereby “the idea is one that easily lends itself to paranoia: namely that certain people don’t want you to know certain things or will actively work to organize doubt or uncertainty or misinformation to help maintain [your] ignorance” (8). As a deliberately engineered or strategic ploy, manufacturing ignorance within the context of Islamophobic knowledge production is a mainstay of the Islamophobia industry toolkit.

Proctor and Shiebinger (2008) found that ignorance spreads in two ways: (a) when many people do not understand a concept or fact (“Islamism” is a case in point) and (b) when special-interest groups—like a commercial firm or a political group—work hard to create confusion about an issue. Think of climate-change deniers and how various conservative think tanks and political groups have cast doubt on the science behind global climate change. In the world of Islamophobic knowledge production, politically aligned conservative think tanks (see chapter 8) feature their designated security experts to promote the need for programs such as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and for security policies that target Muslims, to secure doubt and create a sense of peril that rationalizes Islamophobic fears.

Another strategy Proctor and Shiebinger (2008) identified is that ignorance can often be propagated under the guise of “balanced debate,” propagating an oppositional view to create doubt. For instance, the idea that Muslims may be peace-loving citizens, and also a “fifth column” of violent Islamists in our midst appeals to doubt and disqualifies more positive representations. Similarly, the debates, waged by Islamophobia purveyors, on whether Motion 103, stifles free speech critical of Islam and opens the door for blasphemy laws creates moral panic under the guise of safeguarding Canada and protecting democracy. Islamophobic agnotology has a large repertoire of rhetorical and discursive strategies designed to orchestrate confusion and controversy.

The study of agnotology concludes that ignorance is not just the absence of knowledge but also the outcome of political and cultural struggles. Understanding how ignorance can be engineered in specific ways to further political goals help shed light on how the Islamophobia industry utilizes fearmongering tactics that meet little resistance or will to seek counter knowledge. Concerted Islamophobic campaigns actively work to obfuscate complex realities about Islam and Muslims into narrow, ideologically driven claims. Within Islamophobic imaginaries, Muslims signify both physical and civilizational danger. These narratives incite existential fears that can be manifested in real and often dire consequences.

An overview of some dominant conspiracy theories and discourses about Islam and Muslims is provided below (see also figure 3). Many other Islamophobic discourses exist aside from the ones detailed here; however, this examination limits its focus to the dominant tropes identified in Canada during this study.

3.2.1 Islamist Bogeyman

The most prevalent trope in the Islamophobia playlist is the “Islamist bogeyman,” which stands as one of its “greatest hits.” This canard of an alleged global-Islamist takeover conspiracy is consistently purveyed by all sectors of the Islamophobia industry. This is a foundational myth that utilizes fearmongering tactics that meet little resistance or will to seek counter knowledge. Concerted Islamophobic campaigns actively work to obfuscate complex realities about Islam and Muslims into narrow, ideologically driven claims. Within Islamophobic imaginaries, Muslims are portrayed as a threat to Western societies. Purveyors of these conspiracies attempt to sanitize their aims by claiming that they distinguish between “Islamists” and regular Muslims. Yet such distinctions are lost in their totalizing narratives and in their indiscriminate use of the complex and politically variegated term “Islamist,” which they reduce to narrow definitions that fit their desired scripts.

The “Master Plan”

A 2018 article in The Nation described what has come to be regarded in global Islamophobia circles as the “master plan,” allegedly crafted by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) outlining their intent to destroy Western civilization to make way for global domination, as the “secret plan that
wasn’t.” This “secret manifesto” is underpinned by two false conspiratorial claims. The first is that “American Muslims have been engaged in a “stealth” or “civilizational jihad”—a long-term, far-reaching conspiracy to infiltrate the U.S. legal system and other public institutions and impose Islamic law.” A related claim warns that mainstream Muslim American (and now Canadian) organizations are effectively “fronts” for the MB and are secretly controlled by international terrorists. And yet the United States has not designated the MB as a terror organization nor are there any verifiable grounds to support the “Islamist takeover” theory.

The smoking gun in this scare story about an alleged manifesto that outlined MB’s plans for global domination dates from May 1991. An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Group in North America was written by a sole MB member, Mohamed Akram Adlouni, and there has been no evidence to suggest that it was the brainchild of anyone other than him. In the document, Adlouni made alarming statements regarding “civilizational-jihadist process” and “eliminating and destroying Western civilization from within and ‘sabotaging’ its miserable house,” yet there is no evidence to suggest Adlouni’s ideas were ever adopted or even discussed by the MB. Experts have noted that the wording makes it clear that the author was putting forward a proposal rather supplying evidence of a manifesto adopted by the MB leadership. For example, testifying before the House Select Intelligence Committee in 2011, Harvard University professor Tarek Masoud clarified that Adlouni’s memo reflected an aspirational desire for proselytization and political activism and was not evidence of an orchestrated global conspiracy.

The original text was a print document written in Arabic and buried in a storage box for 13 years. It was found in 2004 during a Federal Bureau of Investigation raid on a Virginia residence. Only a single copy is known to exist. This memo is the sole source for the globally circulated civilizational-jihad and Trojan-horse conspiracy theories. Further debunking the saliency of the document, an investigation by the Bridge Initiative on Islamophobia at Georgetown University (often maligned as an MB “front”) revealed that court-obtained documents of MB council meetings in 1991 (when Adlouni sought to have the document discussed) found no reference to the memo.

Islamophobics networks unfailingly refer to the memorandum as an official declaration of the MB’s strategy to enact an Islamist takeover of the West. Prominent anti-Muslim activist, Frank Gaffney, head of the Center for Security Policy, cited the “the Muslim Brotherhood secret plan for taking down our country.” Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, two other leading voices in the anti-Muslim chorus, claimed that “the Brotherhood lays out a plan [in the document] to do nothing less than conquer and Islamize the United States.” The reach of this false narrative is global and has put down transnational roots, including in Canada, where all sectors of the Islamophobics industry promote this dystopic conspiracy theory as a pervasive national threat, further inflaming anti-Muslim fear and animus.

De-Mystifying Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood

Violent jihadist movements such as al-Qaeda or Daesh (a.k.a. Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)) are a minority on the Islamism spectrum (Hamid and Abbas 2019). While these groups use destructive means to achieve their goals and rightly should be condemned, most Islamist movements are non-violent and focus on community and societal development through political and social engagement. Essentializing all Islamist groups as violent, premodern, and irrational reduces a broad political spectrum to the most extreme manifestations.

The Muslim Brotherhood is one of the oldest and largest Islamist organizations in the world. Hassan Al-Banna founded the MB in Egypt in 1928 as a religious revival movement that was also infused with anti-imperialism sentiments (Leiken and Brooke 2007). Following the military’s takeover of Egypt’s leadership in 1952, the MB’s vision for the country clashed with that of the military, which led to the imprisonment and torture of many of its members. Among them was Sayyid Qutb, one of the most well-known thinkers of the group, who was later considered as one of its most controversial. While he is widely believed to be an influential proponent of violent jihad, many scholars maintain that Qutb did not condone violence but believed that Islamist were justified in using force to protect their religion (Akhavi 2013; Calvert 2004; Shepard 2003).

The MB began to experience internal tensions between two camps, those who called for violent jihad and those who rejected those ideas and saw them as the antithesis to Al-Banna’s vision. After Qutb’s execution, the radical factions splintered to form their own Islamist groups, blaming the MB for having abandoned Qutb’s ideology. These groups viewed the MB’s acceptance of and participation in democracy as “blasphemy.” For example, Al Qaeda’s Ayman al-Zawahiri accused MB of “[i]ur[ing] thousands of young Muslim men into lines for elections ... instead of into lines of jihad” (Leiken and Brooke 2007, 107). These dissident jihadist groups are an extreme faction within the wider spectrum of Islamism, where the majority of groups do not advocate violence. Muslims globally have openly rejected violent articulations of their faith by extreme factions and vehemently oppose such radical fringe movements.

The MB’s scope expanded as Al-Banna’s ideas became influential outside of Egypt, inspiring a wide variety of missionary, charitable, and advocacy organizations along with political parties. The MB is active in approximately seventy-seven countries (Nimer 2010). Robert Leiken, the former director of Immigration and National Security Programs at the Nixon Center, has described the current MB as “a collection of national groups with differing outlooks.” After interviewing various MB leaders across seven countries, he asserted that the various groups disagree on many issues, yet they all agree on rejecting global jihad. Leiken advised policy-makers to “analyze each national and local group independently and seek out those that are open to engagement” (Leiken and Brooke 2007, 108).

The intense ideological differences between various Islamists groups led to widespread disillusionment with Islamist ideologies. As a result of these tensions, Asef Bayat (2010, 243) identified the turn to “post-Islamism,” whereby Muslims actively “turn the underlying principles of Islamism on their heads by emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality in place of a singular authoritative figure.” By ignoring the diverse trajectories of Islamist thought and by branding all politically and religiously focused Muslims as “radical Islamists,” Muslim dissidents (see chapter 7), soft-power purveyors (see chapter 6), and others engaged in Islamophobic enterprises, lend credence to the Islamophobia industry’s fiction of Islamist revanchism as an orchestrated planetary takeover.

Other key Islamophobic discourses are fruit from the poisonous tree of the Islamic-bogeyman conspiracy theory, such as the Trojan horse, fifth column, creeping sharia, taqiyya, and Muslim invaders’ civilizational jihad. These related tropes are detailed below, followed by other demonizing narratives and conspiracy theories that comprise the discursive tapestry of anti-Muslim propaganda.

3.2.2 Trojan Horse

The Trojan-horse trope is a popular metaphor employed in Islamophobic ideologies. Many of the groups purveying Islamophobia rely on the Trojan-horse narrative to convey the idea that Muslims in Western nations are operating covertly under the guise of multicultural civility to hide their nefarious plans to infiltrate and take over democratic societies and replace them with an Islamic state and sharia law.

The legend of the Trojan horse, first mentioned in Homer’s Odyssey (dating back to the 8th century BCE), describes how Greek soldiers were able to besiege the historical city of Troy by hiding themselves within a giant wooden horse. Today, the Trojan horse has become a metaphor
for deceptive and subversive actions and motives undertaken by specific individuals or groups. As an Islamophobic discourse it is used to describe how unwitting democratic Western nations will be politically and culturally undone by their liberal immigration policies, which have allowed Muslims who may be “Islamists in hiding” to infiltrate and eventually mount a wholesale takeover.

The power and efficacy of this narrative is evident in a prominent incident that took place in Birmingham, England, in 2013. An alleged plot with the code name “Operation Trojan Horse” was outlined in a mysterious letter that appeared on a city councillor’s desk. The letter allegedly detailed plans by Islamist extremists to infiltrate local schools and run them according to strict Islamic guidelines. The document provided a strategy that involved identifying Muslim-majority schools, co-opting sympathetic parents to support the agenda, installing school governors with similar conservative values, and then having staff disrupt the school from within to undermine anyone who opposed the changes. The letter was never verified, and the source remains unknown, but the allegations led to national hysteria and moral panic.

High level investigations by British authorities examined the possibility of an Islamist plot based on the uncorroborated claims made in the letter. Journalists examining the case for a 2022 New York Times podcast series called the Trojan Horse Affair contested the findings of these counterterrorism reports. For instance, what had been identified as a “terrorist video” turned out to be a documentary used in a school’s anti-crime program.

Despite the dubious nature of the letter and lack of evidence to corroborate its claims, the controversy surrounding the Trojan Horse Affair impacted British education policy and was used to drive broader, controversial reforms in counterterrorism policy. For example, in 2015, as part of the UK’s Prevent counter-extremism prevention strategy, teachers and other school staff were asked profile children and help identify students at “risk of being drawn into terrorism.” In one outrageous case, a nursery school threatened to refer a four-year-old Muslim boy to the deradicalization program. The child had drawn a picture of his father slicing a cucumber that school staff believed to be a “cooker bomb” after they had heard the child say it was a “cuker-bum” (his way of saying “cucumber”). The UK’s Trojan Horse Affair is emblematic of the way that Islamophobic discourses are used as a basis to profile and securitize Muslims and how, incredibly, this case led to unwarranted and disturbing surveillance of Muslim children and toddlers in schools.

In Canada, purveyors of the Trojan-horse conspiracy theory have branded Muslim politicians as conduits for the embedding of Islamism in state policies and practices. Various sectors of the Islamophobia industry promote fears that Muslim politicians are covertly plotting to infiltrate and eventually mount a wholesale takeover. In Canada, purveyors of the Trojan-horse conspiracy theory have branded Muslim politicians as conduits for the embedding of Islamism in state policies and practices. Various sectors of the Islamophobia industry promote fears that Muslim politicians are covertly plotting to infiltrate and eventually mount a wholesale takeover.

The Infidel Task Force Facebook page has a plethora of memes promoting Islamophobic and anti-Muslim themes that exemplify various Islamophobic discourses and conspiracy theories. These memes are used in this chapter to illustrate the widespread cultural production of Islamophobic tropes.

3.2.3 Fifth Column

The term “fifth column” refers to clandestine, subversive groups that infiltrate a nation and introduce its supporters into positions of trust from which they can begin to influence politics and social policy as well as spread disinformation to support their aims. The term can be traced historically to the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) when General Emilio Mola boasted that, in addition to the four columns of troops marching on Madrid, there was already a “fifth column” placed inside the city working to sabotage the Republican government.

Western Muslims are often portrayed as a fifth column—that is collectively seeking to destabilize the identity and values of Western nations for the benefit of an international Islamic cabal seeking to establish a caliphate in the West. This trope is related to the Trojan horse and adds a further subversive layer by casting Muslims as potential spies and saboteurs working clandestinely for the Islamist enemies of the West.

The fifth-column narrative in tandem with the Trojan-horse conspiracy theory suggests that covert plans for Muslim entryism are underway for the purpose of political infiltration and subterfuge of the liberal democratic state by Muslims whose allegiances are not to Canada. Rather, these “infiltrators” are viewed as subversive operatives for Muslim countries and anti-Western and anti-democratic political interests abroad who operate freely under the cover of Canadian multiculturalism. The purveyors of these tropes leverage them to justify their xenophobic anti-immigration views and to add fodder to their broader anti-globalist campaigns. Globalism has evolved from a mainstream ideology to a contemporary far-right dog whistle that refers to nativist fears of conspiracies by secret cabals with world-conquering ambitions. The globalist slur, originally rooted in antisemitic ideologies, now incorporates Islamophobic trapes. The origins of the term, as an antisemitic canard tied to global Jewish conspiracies, makes it all the
more surprising and troubling that some pro-Israel groups are purveying anti-globalist rhetoric against Muslims.

3.2.4 Taqiyya

“Taqiyya,” which refers to a denial of Islamic belief and practice or concealing one’s faith to prevent persecution, has been used by all sectors of the Islamophobia industry as a way of suggesting that Muslims are deceitful and hiding their nefarious aims to overthrow Western civilization behind a friendly facade. The precautionary dissimulation or denial of religious belief and practice in the face of persecution is an obscure and centuries-old custom that has little currency among contemporary Muslims. In a 2018 interview, Imraan Siddiqi of the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Arizona explained, “I mean, 99.99% of Muslims don’t even understand what taqiyya is, but every alt-right Twitter troll is an expert on Islamic theology now, which is completely absurd.”

The way the concept of taqiyya is employed within Islamophobic campaigns is based on a false understanding of Islamic scripture. Rather than being a call to deceive non-Muslims wilfully and cunningly, as part of a ploy to overtake Western nations, taqiyya refers to hiding one’s faith in circumstances where it would safeguard against violence and persecution. Lying, deception, and spreading falsehoods are otherwise rejected in the Islamic tradition, as noted in the following Qur’anic verse: “And if you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allah is well aware of what you do” (4:136). Twisting the meaning and intent behind religious prescriptions and practices is one of the strategies anti-Muslim groups use to spread disinformation through weaponizing the Qur’an (see below).

As a tool of Islamophobic disinformation, the concept of taqiyya is widely employed by various Islamophobic groups and influencers to suggest that Muslims are really “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” For example, Christine Douglass-Williams (see chapter 4) leveraged taqiyya in the following warning:

Islamic supremacists will smile at you, invite you to their gatherings, make you feel loved and welcome, but they do it to deceive you and to overtake you, your land and your freedoms…. jihadist are coming for you, no matter how much other Muslims may smile at you and appear friendly.

Statements like this claim that Muslims’ friendliness is a deceptive ploy to gain trust in Western nations as a prelude to an invasion and takeover.

The fact that the Islamophobia industry uses terms like “Islamists” or “Islamic supremacists” to distinguish these categories does little to mitigate the aspersions these tropes cast on all Muslims who, according to these racist logics, may be potential radicals and extremists using taqiyya to hide their true aims.

3.2.5 Creepvping Sharia

The “creeping sharia” trope has been popularized through conspiracy theories fomented by the Islamophobia industry (Bowen 2012; Lean 2017). The term “sharia” has been negatively
popularized in Islamophobic discourses as a source of barbaric customs that Muslims seek to impose by stealth on the West. The creeping-sharia conspiracy is ascribed to the attempts by Muslims to assert their religious practices within secular nations including requests for religious accommodation for Islamic dress codes, halal food, or prayer as well as building mosques and Islamic schools. This conspiracy theory is leveraged by all sectors of the Islamophobia industry to promote anti-Muslim fear and paranoia.

In contrast to these negative tropes, “sharia” is an Arabic term that means a path leading to water, signifying a quest for spiritual sustenance and guidance. In Islamic theology, sharia refers to a wide-ranging set of moral and ethical principles derived from the Qur’an and the Hadith (sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad). Islamic jurists interpret these sources for the basis for legal rulings known as “fiqh,” a corpus of Islamic law codified in the ninth century though it is open to contemporary re-examination and reform. Sharia guidelines address how to pray, the importance of being fair and just, respect for parents, performing regular charity, and refraining from gossip and lying, to name a few.

The more sensationalized aspects of sharia involve harsh punitive measures, which for the most part have not been widely adopted except where extreme interpretations of Islamic law exist. Islamic law is under continual reinterpretation to meet the demands of changing cultures and society. There is no doubt that some interpretations that are patriarchal and invoke harsh measures have been introduced by hardline clerics in states like Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Muslims globally have condemned and authorized the patriarchal, patriarchal laws adopted by these oppressive regimes. Muslim women’s groups have, for example, challenged narrow, literalist, patriarchal readings of religious texts and the laws derived from them that are based on male guardianship, install outdated family laws favouring men, and impose state mandates for religious attire. These movements have led to family-law reform in Morocco and, more recently, to the lifting of veiling requirements in Saudi Arabia.

Like other faiths, there are variable interpretations of Islamic religious prescriptions and the intent behind them. Even principles that are intended to promote justice can be twisted to support repressive regimes and agendas. The diversity of the Islamic tradition is discounted by the purveyors of Islamophobia since their goal is to establish a singular sensationalist narrative that elicits fear and moral panic.

In Canada, overblown creeping-sharia fears were ignited in Ontario in 2003 when a proposal for faith-based arbitration in family law for Muslims was fiercely contested. Faith-based arbitration had been enacted in Ontario in 1991 and allowed families to use religious arbitrators to mediate conflicts in civil matters such as divorce, child custody, and alimony. Jewish rabbinical courts (beit din) had been using faith-based arbitration since these provisions were introduced in 1991. Yet when a proposal for Islamic arbitration was made more than a decade later, it was met with intense Islamophobic fearmongering that warned that public stoning would take place if implemented. The “sharia tribunal affair” led to protracted debates in Ontario and across the nation from 2003-5 (Korteweg and Selby 2014). Media headlines contained ominous warnings: “Muslim invasion has begun” and “Canada allowing barbaric sharia laws?” The Muslim Canadian Congress (MCC) headed by Tarek Fatah (see chapter 7) called the move “sharia by stealth” and described it as a “Christmas gift to the Mullahs of Iran and Saudi Arabia” (MCC media release, December 20, 2004).

The move to introduce religious arbitration based on Islamic principles was seen as a subversion of Canadian ideals and values: the nation was at risk of being corrupted by foreign ideologies that were regarded as illiberal, premodern, and anti-democratic (Zine 2012). For example, a representative of the Humanist Association of Toronto argued that these tribunals would be “the first step toward an Islamic state in Canada,” and sketched a startling trajectory for an alleged Islamic infiltration strategy beginning with: “Stage One — Using the Arbitration Act, the Shari’a courts appear to get legal sanction” and ending with “Stage Three — Muslims now outnumber Christians and the majority rule of democracy is turned on its head as the majority Muslims make Shari’a the law of the land.” This dystopic fantasy, which invoked demographic-replacement fears of civilizational jihad (see below), is representative of the problematic discourses that circulated around this controversy.

Concerns about “vulnerable Muslim women” were also raised in media and public forums in ways that infantilized Muslim women and rendered them without agency and the political maturity to make decisions about their own affairs. The Western feminist impulse to “save Brown women from Brown men” (Spivak 1988) was used as a rationale for disallowing Muslims the right to faith-based arbitration that other religious groups enjoyed. These gendered Islamophobic narratives bolstered public concern about the creeping sharia that would occur through faith-based arbitration, inflaming anti-Muslim sentiments.

On September 11, 2005 (on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks), after heated public debates promoting Islamophobic fears and anxieties, former Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced the end of faith-based arbitration in the province, stating that “there will be no sharia law in Ontario. There will be no religious arbitration in Ontario. There will be one law for all Ontarians.” This move was intended to silence almost two years of debate over the sharia tribunals and to safeguard secularism. This controversy remains the cautionary tale within Canadian Islamophobic imaginaries of the ongoing doomsday warnings of sharia takeovers that drive anti-Muslim paranoia.
3.2.6
Muslim Invaders and Civilizational Jihad

The “Muslim invaders” and “civilizational jihad” tropes are connected to the Islamist-bogeyman, fifth-column, and Trojan-horse conspiracies, and they also invoke Huntington’s clash-of-civilizations thesis (discussed previously). An examination of far-right terror manifestos found such documents commonly invoke race, immigration, religion, and a “perceived clash of races and civilizations” as the rationale for their acts. Muslims are central figures in these racist imaginaries.

“Muslim invaders” are believed to be the prelude to a wholesale civilizational jihad being waged against Western nations. The Islamic concept of jihad (explained below) refers to various kinds of struggle, whether against one’s lower self or in a defensive war. This term has been misappropriated to promote the narrative of an impending Muslim invasion and takeover. The Muslim-invader narrative has been used by White nationalists to justify their deadly hate crimes and acts of terror. For example, the shooter in Christchurch, New Zealand, who killed fifty-one Muslim worshippers in two mosques, claimed to carry out his attack “to take revenge on the invaders for the hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by foreign invaders in European lands throughout history.” Here the invader narrative was embedded in avenging historical grievances as a justification for anti-Muslim violence.

As previously noted, in Canada, Quebec City mosque shooter and White nationalist Alexandre Bissonnette referred to the influx of Syrian refugees as galvanizing his deadly actions. In 2021, Nathaniel Veltman used a truck to intentionally mow down and kill four members of the Afzaal family in London, Ontario. Veltman, who it is believed may have accessed neo-Nazi websites on the dark web, became celebrated for his actions in White nationalist subcultures, where he became “sainted” for killing Muslims. The far-right network Terrorgram posted a disturbing image of the Afzaal family with the caption “dead invaders” and “injured invader” over the photo of nine-year-old Fazey Afzaal, who survived the attack with serious injuries. This graphically depicts how the Muslim-invader narrative is being promoted through far-right White nationalist circuits and is used as an alibi for deadly terrorist acts that become despicably celebrated as badges of honour.
values. Creeping sharia is believed to be part of the means to attain this goal and the alleged deceptive tactics of taqiyya provide the cover for the Trojan horse of Islamist infiltration. Muslim organizations are seen as fronts to achieve the Islamization of the nation and to fund Islamist terror groups abroad. The Islamist master plan (discussed earlier) is used to support these spurious claims. A single line in the disputed 18-page document, which was authored by one person only, refers to “destroying the western civilization from within” and is cited as the defining piece of evidence to support this wholesale, apocalyptic conspiracy theory. This narrative functions to manufacture fear and moral panic and has gained traction globally.

Emerging from the racial and cultural angst elicited by these tropes is the phenomenon of “anti-Muslim populism,” defined as a fusion of anti-Muslim hatred and populist forms of nationalism. Anti-Muslim populist views warn of Islamisation and purvey pejorative depictions of Islam. In these conceptions, Muslims refuse to integrate, which speaks to the perceived failure of the multicultural project. The Muslim immigrant is constructed as a disruptive, religiously, and culturally overdetermined subject who is fundamentally irreconcilable with the demands of secular modernity and democratic values. These ideas are embedded in the worldviews of various anti-Muslim groups.

In Europe the political neologism of “Eurabia” (a portmanteau of Europe and Arabia), popularized by the far right, promotes cultural and existential fears and paranoia that Europe is being overtaken by Muslims. The term was coined by British author Bat Ye’or (2005, 9) in her book Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis, which “describes Europe’s evolution from a Judeo-Christian civilization with important post Enlightenment secular elements, into a post Judeo-Christian civilization that is subservient to the ideology of jihad and the Islamic powers that propagate it.” Ye’or’s writing has provided the ideological underpinnings for several Islamophobic conspiracy theories, intersecting with demographic-replacement fears, Muslim invaders, and civilizational jihad.

Ideologies promoting Islam’s perceived cultural threat are a proxy for deeper racist fears and White nationalist anxieties. Civilizational discourses have always had racial underpinnings. Islamophobic narratives are a convergence between racial and religious paradigms that are mutually constituted and intertwined. The racial subtext is often hidden beneath the language of the perceived cultural peril posed by Islam, but it is the interplay between both religion and race that underwrites Islamophobic worldviews.
3.2.7 Counter-Jihad Ideology

According to the UK-based Centre for Research and Evidence in Security Threats (CREST), the counter-jihad movement (CJM) is an international network with a shared ideology that sees “Islam” and “the West” as being at war. CJM activists are identified as “a loose collection of bloggers, political parties, street movements, think tanks, campaign groups and pundits across several countries.”

The CREST primer on the CJM outlines their beliefs as follows: (a) a homogenous, literalist and totalitarian Islam is at war with the West (unified by shared Judeo-Christian morality and liberal values); (b) Muslim immigration is a conscious attempt to impose sharia law in the West with a goal of total Islamisation; and (c) Western leaders are too weak to counter Islamic aggression or are complicit with it.

According to Kundnani (2012, 6), in the “counter-jihadist” narrative, the identity that needs to be defended is no longer a conservative notion of national identity but an idea of liberal values, seen as a civilizational inheritance. Islam becomes the new threat to this identity, regarded as both an alien culture and an extremist political ideology. Multiculturalism is seen as enabling not just the weakening of national identity but also “Islamification,” a process of colonization leading to the rule of sharia law.

The CJM’s worldview is embedded in existential angst brought on by the presence of Muslims, who are viewed as inherently antithetical to Western values and irreconcilable with secular modernity.

CJM ideologies often partially align with mainstream narratives produced by both the media and the government in form of counterterrorism policy. The extent to which government security agendas promote a war against radical Islam and sow a climate of suspicion toward Muslims embolden the CJM’s raisons d’être as an unintended consequence. European research has shown how counter-extremism policies are enabling Islamophobic paranoia and allowing far-right campaigns and movements like the CJM to use this to their advantage.

Notably, Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik’s manifesto drew heavily on the ideology and writings of CJM sources. In Canada, views that align with CJM narratives are often espoused by various sectors of the Islamophobia industry, though most prominently by soft-power brokers who circulate them within their spheres of influence. However, these purveyors do not claim any formal affiliation with the CJM.

Notable figures in the CJM include key players in the U.S. Islamophobia industry Pamela Gellar and Robert Spencer. The far-right website Gates of Vienna is considered the hub for the CJM and is an ideological incubator for the movement.
Demographic Replacement and White Genocide

The concept of “demographic replacement” originated in France with philosopher Renaud Camus, who stated that the White French population (and by extension all of Europe) was being replaced by non-White populations, specifically Arabs and North Africans. This ideology is known as the “Great Replacement” and is popular internationally among neo-Nazis, White supremacists, and White nationalist groups and ideologues.

Demographic-replacement fears are driven by the unfounded idea that Western nations will be overrun by growing numbers of Muslim immigrants and refugees, who will ultimately create demographic imbalances imperilling the White population. This apocalyptic scenario is also tied to the idea that a civilizational jihad will ensue once the Muslim invaders gain a social, cultural, and political stronghold in the nations they are infiltrating. These conspiratorial fantasies create a climate of fear regarding non-White immigrants, which can lead to violence and hate crimes toward Muslim minorities.

The ideas underpinning demographic replacement played a significant role in the deadly 2019 terror attack at the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand, which left fifty-one people dead. The shooter’s manifesto, titled “The Great Replacement,” began with three repeated lines:

It’s the birthrates.
It’s the birthrates.
It’s the birthrates.

The manifesto rambled on, providing the shooter’s rationale for targeting Muslims, which was steeped in racist fears about White genocide, Muslim invaders, and civilizational jihad: “They were an obvious, visible and large group of invaders, from a culture with higher fertility rates, higher social trust and strong, robust traditions that seek to occupy my peoples [sic] lands and ethnically replace my own people.”

In Canada, demographic-replacement narratives have been perpetuated primarily by far-right, White nationalist groups and Islamophobic influencers like Lauren Southern and Faith Goldy (see chapter 4). In 2006, Canadian journalist Mark Steyn wrote an article titled “Why the future belongs to Islam” for Maclean’s magazine that promoted demographic-replacement fears: “The Muslim world has youth, numbers and global ambitions. The West is growing old and enfeebled and lacks the will to rebuff those who would supplant it. It’s the end of the world as we’ve known it.” Steyn riffed off of the Eurabia myth to create a dystopic worldview whereby White culture and nationhood are imperilled by Muslim invaders and their biological, cultural, and political power.

While Islam is the fastest-growing religion in Canada, the perception of Canada’s Muslim population and future population growth is not consistent with the facts. The 2016 Ipsos Perils of Perception survey compared perceptions of demographic fact with actual demographic data and found that, in the forty countries where the survey had been administered, nearly all participants overestimated their Muslim populations. Canada ranked 12th in the index that measured misperceptions of Muslim population by country. A 2016 CBC Radio report about the survey highlighted the fact that Canadians on average believe that 17 percent of the population is Muslim and yet, according to the 2011 National Household Survey, only 3.2 percent of Canada’s population is Muslim. Canadians also believed that, by 2020, one in four Canadians or 27 percent of the population would be Muslim. However, according to Statistics Canada data from 2019, the actual percentage of Canada’s Muslim population is only 3.7 percent. This research suggests that the Muslim presence in Canada is being overblown by Canadians, which may be an indicator of demographic angst.

Demographic fears are coded within anti-immigrant xenophobia and embedded in the rhetoric of cultural loss. For example, during the 2019 federal election, People’s Party of Canada leader Maxime Bernier raised unfounded concerns about demographic replacement, arguing that “immigration must not be used as a tool to forcibly change the cultural character and social fabric of Canada” (Budd 2021, 168). Bernier further suggested that immigration should only be offered to those who “[share] Canadian values.” The extent to which the language of “cultural values” is a proxy for anti-Muslim racism cannot be overlooked.

The saliency of the great-replacement theory as an ideological driver for the incitement of violence was tragically evident in the mass shooting that took place in Buffalo, New York, on May 14, 2022. Ten people were killed in the racially motivated attack against Black Americans. The gunman’s manifesto cited the great-replacement theory and drew on the manifesto of the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque shooter, who had also been inspired by the ideologies underlying this theory. The links between these attacks demonstrate how Islamophobia and anti-Black racism are connected through the violent manifestations of these racist ideologies.

In addition to the Buffalo shooting and the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque attack, the great-replacement theory has motivated other deadly terror attacks, including the 2018 antisemitic attack at the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Tree of Life Synagogue and the 2019 shooting in El Paso, Texas, targeting the Latinx community.

The great replacement theory is not only popularized in the far-right echo chambers. Fear of “White decline” and “White genocide” has permeated conservative as well as far-right extremist political ideologies and beliefs. A 2022 poll of 1,500 Americans conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center revealed that...
nearly 7 in 10 Republicans surveyed agree to at least some extent that demographic changes in the United States are deliberately driven by liberal and progressive politicians attempting to gain political power by “replacing more conservative white voters.”

As such views become filtered through conservative media and become more normalized in these circles, they are legitimated and pose an even greater threat when adopted by extremist individual and groups.

Canada is not immune from the widespread circulation of demographic-replacement fears penetrating mainstream attitudes. A study released in June 2022 presented survey data regarding Canadian’s views on conspiracy theories. The report’s findings revealed that 37 percent (or 11 million Canadians) believe that “there is a group of people in this country who are trying to replace native born Canadians with immigrants who agree with their political views.”

The fact that over one third of Canadians believe that there is a cabal in Canada orchestrating a demographic conspiracy to supplant “native born” Canadians with immigrants so that they can covertly implement their political agenda is troubling news that demonstrates how far-right, racist, and xenophobic conspiracy theories are gaining traction in mainstream culture.

Fanning the flames of demographic-replacement fears, the National Citizens Alliance (see chapter 5) Facebook page on the Great Replacement is accompanied by a message saying that “Canada’s traditional peoples are being replaced by third-world migrants, and the country is being radically transformed from a nation-state into a globalist state… We believe that Canada’s traditional population should remain the super majority of Canada.”

"Diversity ensures ethnic cleansing and a global slum" - Renaud Camus (who coined "The Great Replacement")

Faith Goldy promotes the narrative of “White genocide” on Rebel News by visually presenting a chart that documents the alleged decline of White populations in Canada, superimposed on a Canadian flag and map for dramatic emphasis.

3.2.9 Jihad/Terrorist Narratives

A prominent Islamophobic metanarrative is the “Muslim terrorist” archetype. It has a long genealogy but has been most salient in the post-9/11 context. In the aftermath of 9/11, Muslims globally bore the collective guilt and responsibility for the terror attacks against the Twin Towers and the Pentagon and became labelled as potential radicals and extremists who posed a risk to public safety. A very small number of the 1.5 billion Muslims around the globe are involved in reactionary movements and engage in militant violence, extremism, and terrorism, while the vast majority reject and abhor such actions. Nonetheless, the terrorist trope persists and had been used to perpetuate and legitimate the global war on terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, which has resulted in an estimated number of 1.3 million deaths, which could be as high as 2 million.

The terrorist trope relies upon misconstrued notions of the concept of “jihad,” often defined as a “holy war” against the West. However, this is a narrow and limited view. In Islam there is a “greater jihad” (al-jihad al-akbar) that is an inner struggle against one’s lower nature for the purpose of purifying the heart and spiritual upliftment. Then there is the “lesser jihad” (al-jihad al-asghar), an outward struggle, which can include defensive battles and comes with several conditionalities. Yet the indiscriminate holy-war jihadi narrative continues to reinforce the faulty ground of Huntington’s clash-of-civilizations thesis.

In Canada, fears of homegrown jihadist terror can be linked to specific flashpoints, such as the 2006 arrests of seventeen Muslim youth and one adult on terror charges (dubbed the “Toronto 18” case), a fatal shooting on Parliament Hill in 2014 by a Muslim convert, and fears surrounding
returning foreign fighters from Syria. While alarming, these were specific occurrences, and yet their consequences were felt by all Muslim Canadians as security agencies heightened surveillance of Muslim communities and organizations at large (Nagra 2017). Counterterrorism efforts and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs have for more than two decades focused their attention primarily on Muslims. Even Canadian Muslim charities have been branded as fronts for terrorist funding by anti-Muslim activists and groups and have been investigated by the Canada Revenue Agency (McSorely, 2021). The official state targeting of Muslims as potential security threats fortifies far-right, anti-Muslim agendas.

Despite being a narrow stereotype, the terrorist/jihad narrative has been difficult to dislodge from public consciousness. For example, a 2015 New York Times report examined Islamophobic-hate searches after speeches made by former U.S. President Barack Obama that attempted to dispel anti-Muslim sentiments. According to the report, “the president said, ‘It is the responsibility of all Americans—of every faith—to reject discrimination.’ But searches calling Muslims ‘terrorists,’ ‘bad,’ ‘violent’ and ‘evil’ doubled during and shortly after his speech.” Despite efforts to contain them, Muslim terrorist/jihadi tropes continue to circulate with impunity within the Islamophobia industry, and they also have resonance in society at large, where they ignite fear, anger, and hatred.

3.2.10 Crusader Narratives

Crusader imagery is a popular symbol for anti-Muslim groups that weaponize history to promote Islamophobic animus. Medieval iconography such as Crusader crosses and Knights Templar insignias have become prominent emblems of White nationalist subcultures. These symbols were on display at the 2017 White supremacist rally in Charlottesville, North Carolina, and were referenced in the manifestos of anti-Muslim terrorists Anders Breivik in Norway (2011) and of the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque shooter (2019).

The Knights Templar of the Crusader era represented guardians of Anglo-Saxon Christendom and have been revitalized within White supremacist movements. According to Gardell (2014, 147),

that romanticized notions of the medieval Knights Templar heroic adventures would feed the warrior dreams of today’s anti-Muslim Christian soldiers is hardly surprising. Predating Breivik’s compendium, the propaganda videos, web pages, and posters produced by the English Defence League made ample use of Knights Templar and Crusader imagery.

The siege of Vienna in 1683 is another historical battle that has been symbolically resurrected by the far right to foster anti-Muslim campaigns. The defeat of the Ottoman army outside the gates of Vienna, regarded as the historical moment heralding the decline of this Muslim empire, is celebrated by White nationalist movements. This date has become symbolic of Europe’s defeat of “Muslim invaders” and is now used to signify and recuperate that history by using it as an emblem of White supremacist male pride to thwart the perceived contemporary threat posed by Islam and Muslims to the West. The Christchurch, New Zealand, shooter inscribed “1683” on one of the guns that he used to murder fifty-one Muslims in 2019.

The term “Deus vult,” Latin for “God willing” was a rallying cry against Muslims during the First Crusade and continues to be an Islamophobic slogan, along with the Latin phrase “In hoc signo vinces,” which means “in this sign (the Cross) you will conquer.” Faith Goldy and Lauren Southern pose wearing hoodies with the Deus vult slogan from the Crusades. The iconography depicted on the hoodies provides emblems for the anti-Muslim Crusader narrative.
Islamofascism

The term “Islamofascism” dates to 1979, when it was used to characterize Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeni as an “Islamic Fascist.” The neologism “Islamofascism” became more broadly ascribed as a way of conveying a perceived link between Islam and authoritarian governments as well as to groups like al-Qaeda. In 2006, former U.S. President George Bush popularized the term in reference to Middle Eastern terrorist networks, thereby broadening the references attached to it and further imprinting a connection between Islam and terrorism in the public imaginary and in political discourse. Presently the term is less in vogue, but it became resonant in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks as a political shorthand to denote Islamic extremism. However, critics have argued that the term problematically attempts to organize politically disparate groups into “one easily identifiable clan-and in the process manufactures a false sense of a unified US enemy.”

The Islamofascism label is meant to cast Islam and Muslims as being driven by an ideological propensity toward fascism. This unfounded assertion has been critiqued as making little sense when examining the roots of fascism in Europe during the early 20th century and is an attempt to cobble together a connection between fascism and Islam for the sake of shock value.

Gendered Islamophobic Discourses

Gendered Islamophobic discourses refer to pejorative stereotypes about Muslim women as backward, oppressed, and handmaidens to Islamic patriarchy, narratives that have deep roots in colonial-era motifs and have been reproduced in literature, film, and popular culture (Zine 2006; Taylor and Zine 2014). Gendered Islamophobic tropes cut through many of the narratives outlined above in the way that Muslim women are used as discursive props to support anti-Muslim campaigns.

The “oppressed Muslim woman,” for example, is a long-standing Orientalist archetype of Muslim female victimhood. Positioning Muslim women as subjugated, voiceless, and without agency plays into the notion that they are dupes for Muslim men to be used to promote Islamist campaigns. Through this trope, they become bearers of civilizational danger, as their veiled bodies visibly represent the threat of creeping sharia and Muslim barbarism. In these worldviews, multiculturalism is seen as having run amok and having allowed backward cultures to flourish in ways that oppress women and threaten the hegemony of Western lifestyles (Moller-Okin 1999). Within this xenophobic rhetoric, multiculturalism is the altar upon which Canadian culture, Judeo-Christian values, women’s rights, and public safety are being sacrificed.

White nationalist ideologies use gendered Islamophobic narratives to promote dystopic conspiracies whereby veiled Muslim women are an emblem of Islamic triumphalism subverting both secularism and Judeo-Christian values. These anti-Muslim narratives are reinforced by legislated Islamophobia: coerced-unveiling policies such as Bill 21 in Québec, regulation of religious dress in the public sphere, and banishment of veiled Muslim women from public life (Zine 2022). In this way, liberal forms of Islamophobia (see chapter 1) reinforce far-right, anti-Muslim ideologies.

Within Muslim jihadist narratives, the “ISIS bride” has become a contemporary trope popularized and sensationalized in Canadian and British media (Jiwani 2021; Jackson 2021). Muslim women from Western nations who voluntarily left to join the Islamic State have been cast as both “monstrous” and “vulnerable” in media and political discourses (Jackson 2021). These formulations reduce the complex geopolitical, cultural, and social dynamics of this phenomenon into a one-dimensional, ready-made container for anti-Muslim fearmongering. These women represent Western cultural fears and racial angst and symbolize the perceived Islamist aims for global jihad. More nuanced understandings of the geopolitical drivers and motivations of women joining such reactionary movements are absent in these sensationalist paradigms. Instead, these women serve as Islamophobic caricatures to drive global-jihad fearmongering.

As part of demographic-replacement fears, the reproductive power of Muslim women’s bodies represents a biopolitical threat (Bracke, Aguilar, and Hernandez 2020). Muslim women represent...
a biological Trojan horse for Muslim-takeover scenarios, whereby their wombs are viewed as jihadist incubators. Existential fears are animated by the presence of Muslim women in Western nations as well as in countries where there is Islamophobic ethnonationalism such as in Myanmar, China, and India. In China, forced sterilization campaigns for Uyghur women are an example of how the biopolitical dangers that Muslim women’s bodies have come to signify are perilously being controlled through this form of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Gendered Islamophobia is an important undercurrent within anti-Muslim narratives and is used to reinforce state policies and practices that violate Muslim women’s agency, bodily integrity, and sartorial choices and to underwrite Islamist-takeover conspiracy theories that are used to foment Islamophobic paranoia. Visibly marked Muslim women are targeted for harassment and hate crimes, as these demonizing narratives place them at risk and compromise their safety.

**Discursive Tactics: Weaponizing the Qur’an**

The Qur’an has been weaponized and used as a means for promoting theological fictions to exacerbate Islamophobic fears and public anxieties. In such tactics, Qur’anic verses and hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammed) are taken out of context to convey unintended meanings that promote anti-Muslim campaigns. The creeping-sharia, taqiyya, and jihad conspiracy theories are some of the many ways that the deliberate misapprehension of Islamic theology has been promoted via anti-Muslim disinformation campaigns.

Far-right extremists have been gaming the Google search engine to bolster their propaganda and distort facts. An examination of Google searches on topics related to Islam and Muslims revealed that “basic searches for words like ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islam’ return reasonable results with links to reputable sites. But more specific terms, like ‘sharia,’ ‘jihad,’ or ‘taqiyya’—often co-opted by White supremacists—return links to Islamophobic sites filled with misinformation.” The Southern Poverty Law Center reported that “actual content about Islam and sharia in basic searches often gets choked off by anti-Muslim propaganda.” These disinformation sites are often the first to appear in Google searches and to most people may appear as credible sources. Countering this propaganda is difficult, given the plethora of these deliberately misleading sites and the limited resources of Muslim organizations like the Yaqeen Institute in the United States, which have attempted to debunk Islamophobic myths but lack the funding to challenge what the well-financed American Islamophobia industry can bring to bear in promoting disinformation.

**Capture this World by Population Explosion.**

The pregnant bodies of Muslim women signify the bio-political fears of demographic replacement. Globally, Muslim women’s wombs are represented as terrorist incubators in campaigns promoting the idea of a “population jihad,” such as this image promoted by the pro-Hindutva group known as the Struggle for Hindu Existence. Muslim women represent an existential threat through their reproductive power and are viewed as a political threat because of their adherence to Islam. Propaganda that aims to “purify” nations from Muslims reproduce eugenicist ideologies. (Graphic: Upananda Brahmachari)

**Discursive Tactics: Liberal Washing**

“Liberal washing” has been described as a right-wing tactic for “wrapping corporate America’s agenda in the veneer of fight-for-the-little-guy progressivism.” Similarly, in this report, liberal washing is used to denote the ways in which far-right ideologies are dressed up in a liberal veneer as political camouflage. In this way, liberal values are weaponized to promote Islamophobia. For example, soft-power groups in the Islamophobia industry (see chapter 6) use this discursive tactic as a rhetorical strategy whereby xenophobic, Islamophobic, and racist notions are disguised under the facade of liberal discourse using phrases such as “protecting democracy and Canadian values,” “freedom,” and “the rule of law” to counter what are regarded as illiberal, anti-modern, and anti-democratic minorities (Zine 2019).

The coded language of “the rule of law” and “our values” is used to demarcate the boundaries of the nation as a place for the supremacy of White Judeo-Christian democracy. Racialized Muslim minorities are viewed as being unwilling and unable to integrate and adopt dominant societal practices and to tame their Muslimness. Liberal washing disguises White nationalist ideologies by couching them in catchphrases that dress up bigotry as patriotism.

The Conservative Party’s minority report in Taking Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia was written in response to parliamentary hearings about Motion 103 that took place in the wake of the Quebec City mosque shooting (see chapter 1). Their dissenting opinion argued that Islam must be reconciled within the liberal frame of “Canadian values,” a position that fails to recognize that these values are historically based on White settler colonial ideologies. In such a context, Muslims are positioned within the idioms of colonial racism as anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and at odds with secular modernity.

Increasingly, anti-Muslim groups are hiding their racism behind a liberal facade that is too often accepted at face value. Terms like “Judeo-Christian democracy,” the “rule of law,” and “freedom” have double meanings in these rhetorical contexts: they masquerade as good liberal values...
but are a disguise for bigotry against groups whom they deem as uncivilized, premodern, and irreconcilable within “Canadian values.” These rhetorical strategies attempt to mask racism behind a veneer of liberal respectability and democratic ideals. Liberal washing ties into the civilizational-jihad narrative discussed above and uses seemingly benign liberal tropes as political cover for racist ideologies.

This chapter has demystified some dominant anti-Muslim narratives on the Islamophobia playlist. These tropes circulate in Canada and globally, serving to dehumanize Muslims and justify the securitization of Muslims as potential existential and cultural threats. These ideologies are the bread and butter of the Islamophobia industry, which traffics in and monetizes anti-Muslim bigotry and hate. It is imperative to investigate and debunk these manufactured tropes and conspiracy theories since they have had deadly consequences in Canada and around the world. The following chapter examines how these narratives are further weaponized through media outlets and Islamophobia influencers.

Figure 3. Intersecting Islamophobic narratives leveraged by anti-Muslim groups in Canada

Chapter 4

Media Platforms: Islamophobia Influencers and Muslim Panics
The media is integral to the formation, propagation, and dissemination of the anti-Muslim ideologies purveyed by the Islamophobia industry. In perpetuating and reproducing harmful stereotypes, Islamophobia has gone unchallenged under the guise of free speech. Islamophobic ideologies are ubiquitous and circulate with impunity through the vast fake-news universe. Negative stereotypes shore up the rational logics behind hate crimes and inform systemic practices of institutionalized forms of Islamophobia that are reflected in public policies and practices of racial securitization and surveillance. Socially deviant media archetypes of Muslims correspond to what Cohen ([1972] 2014) referred to as the creation of “folk devils” who become scapegoats and are blamed for a variety of social problems. Media sensationalism, salacious click bait, and conspiracy theories lead to the creation of “moral panics” about Islam and Muslims in the public imaginary. According to Cohen ([1972] 2014), moral panics occur when a person or identifiable group becomes perceived as a threat to societal values and interests. Associating Muslims with terrorism, for example, is a way to confer deviance and danger on Muslim identities and beliefs. Fomenting “Muslim panics” is a key function of the Islamophobia industry’s propaganda machine. With widespread circulation, hegemonic Islamophobic narratives become uncritically absorbed as common-sense ideas, allowing for Islamophobia to be normalized.

A large repertoire of narratives stem from Orientalist tropes, popularized in the 18th century alongside European colonial expansion in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia have been used to support racist campaigns against Islam and Muslims (Said 1979). The idioms of colonial racism and Islamophobia that cast Muslims as barbaric, culturally degenerate, and backward are reproduced in contemporary discourses. The Muslim “folk devil” has played a key archetypal role in post 9/11 security discourses, policies, and practices as an emblem of deviance and risk. Islamophobic narratives are strategically redeployed by the Islamophobia industry to foment controversy and recruit the Muslim folk devil into the construction new moral panics.

Canadian media outlets such as Rebel News, Free Bird Media, and Post Millennial promote the idea that “political correctness” threatens freedom of speech by branding themselves as “fearless” and “unyielding” to difficult truths. Their content is widely consumed as a challenge to the liberal sensibilities of the left, which are cast as eroding free inquiry. These media outlets test the boundaries and limits of free speech through sensationalistic rhetoric and the platforming of far-right influencers and ideologues. Controversies related to Muslims in Canada have become the flashpoint for right-wing, conservative, free-speech litmus tests.

For example, the controversy surrounding M-103, the parliamentary motion on Islamophobia (see chapter 1) was fomented by far-right media personalities such as Ezra Levant, Barbara Kay, and Faith Goldy, who argued that the motion would make it illegal to criticize Islam. Conservative websites created moral panics about Canada enacting "modern-day blasphemy laws." The far-right media echo chamber went into overdrive, warning of the perils posed by this non-binding motion to address Islamophobia, which was recast as a ploy for a Muslim Trojan horse (see chapter 3).

Numerous books published in Canada circulate the same Islamophobic tropes as those propagated via far-right media sites. These niche publications boast provocative titles, for example, Christine Douglass-Williams’ Fired by the Canadian Government for Criticizing Islam (2015), Mark Steyn’s ominously titled book, America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It (2008), and Irshad Manji’s The Trouble with Islam Today (2012). The Islamophobia publishing industry supports the circulation of books about Islam by non-specialists (i.e., who are not academically trained Islamic-studies scholars). Within this growing genre, publications are built around self-ser- ving political ideologues vying for popularity in the conservative echo chamber instead of around rigorous and academically validated inquiry. Islamophobic rhetoric is monetized through these ideological clearings that support the theme of Muslims as terrorists, Shore produced a film called The Third Jihad in 2008.

Mainstream-media outlets also function as purveyors of Islamophobic rhetoric through their often outrageous coverage of news stories related to Muslims. While far-right media outlets and their interlocutors utilize more absurd Islamophobic discourses and conspiracy theories, mainstream media also purvey Islamophobic content, which is widely accepted and absorbed by the public and has a greater impact on the normalization of Islamophobia in Canada. Media scholars have noted that since the 9/11 attacks, Canadian media have replaced the Cold War’s “Soviet threat” with “Islamic peril” (Karim 2007). Jiwani and Desnen (2016, 36) surveyed the representation of Muslim youth in mainstream Canadian news media from 2010 to 2013 and found that dominant representations of Muslim youth included being cast as a “contaminating force,” “enemies within the nation,” and “barbarians.”

A study from the University of Alabama (Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux 2019) found that terrorist attacks committed by Muslim extremists received 357 percent more U.S. press coverage than those committed by non-Muslims. Terrorist attacks committed by non-Muslims (or where the religion was unknown) received an average of fifteen headlines, while those committed by Muslim extremists received an average of 105 headlines. The study concluded that the disparity in media coverage was particularly out of sync with reality, given that White and right-wing terrorists carried out nearly two times as many terrorist attacks as Muslim extremists between 2008 and 2016. Disproportionate attention given to terrorist committed by Muslims versus other groups—especially White supremacist groups—operating in the United States fuels the moral panic against Muslims and promotes Islamophobia in the public imaginary. The association of Islam and Muslims with violence and terrorism heightens the public’s fear and perceptions of threat, which legitimizes the securitization and surveillance of Muslims (Nagra 2017; Zine 2022).

Film is another avenue through which negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims are disseminated. The documentary Reel Bad Arabs, based on Jack Shaheen’s (2001) book of the same name, revealed that in 1,000 films that have Arab and Muslim characters (from the year 1896 to 2000), twelve portrayed positive depictions of Arabs, fifty-two were neutral portrayals, and 936 were negative (Shaheen 2006). By using Hollywood’s menacing stock characters of “radical Muslim terrorists” seeking the destruction of the West, the Islamophobia industry has a stable cache of narratives to deploy in animating anti-Muslim fears.

These archetypes have been instrumentalized to further political objectives. For example, in 2005 the documentary Obsession: Radical Islam’s War against the West, written and produced by Canadian-Israeli filmmaker Raphael Shore, was a vehicle for strategically promoting Islamophobia during the 2008 U.S. federal election. The documentary was bankrolled by the Clarion Fund, a key organization in the American Islamophobia industry founded by Shore in 2005. Now called the Clarion Project, it is a “non-profit organization that educates the public about the dangers of radical Islam and other extremist ideologies.” Their film Obsession was widely distributed: there were numerous screenings on American university campuses, and it was sent to 28 million households in swing states during the 2008 U.S. presidential election campaign through seventy different newspapers. The vast, unsolicited circulation of this film portraying the purported threat of global jihad being waged against the West played into Islamophobic fears and into conspiracy theories that Barack Obama, who was running for president, was a covert Muslim. The way this film was funded and distributed demonstrates how Islamophobia is instrumentalized through tight networks that act as producers and purveyors of anti-Muslim propaganda.10

Notably, a 2006 screening of Obsession was hosted by the Jewish organization Aish Toronto at the Toronto Centre for the Arts under the banner of “United Against Terrorism - A Community-
Digital Islamophobia, Fake News, and the Disinformation Industry

The Islamophobia industry creates and circulates easily consumable and widely accepted content that purports to be factual and objective but is instead based on often absurd and unsubstantiated claims. For example, in 2017, a flyer posted in a city park in British Columbia asked residents to be “courteous of their Muslim neighbours” by keeping their dogs on a leash and away from Muslims (because dogs were considered filthy in Islam). The poster falsely carried the logo of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a U.S. advocacy group. A CAIR spokesperson responded: “We see this on occasion where people try to be kind of an agent provocateur and use these kinds of messages to promote hostility toward Muslims and Islam.” Originally, the story had only limited local coverage but, two years later, the false and misleading poster went viral and sparked social-media comments from supporters of anti-Muslim groups. PEGIDA (see chapter 5) said, “I will take any dog over these animals,” and the Canadian Combat Coalition stated that Muslims should be “put down” instead of dogs. A mix of American right-wing websites, Russian state media, and Canadian Facebook groups widely circulated the false story to endorse claims that Muslims were trying to “colonize” Western nations. Such orchestrated controversies about Muslims, which perpetuate false narratives, are the modus operandi of Islamophobia networks.

In addition to the proliferation of anti-Muslim videos and films, there are numerous online platforms where Islamophobic content circulates and gains currency. Because social-media sites like Facebook and Twitter have banned far-right groups and individuals promoting hate, alternative platforms are being created. Media experts note that these new platforms continue to proliferate, like a game of “whack-a-mole” and are difficult to track. In Canada, new legislation is forthcoming to help stop the spread of online hate. The Canadian Anti-Hate Network has put forward key recommendations to hold media platforms accountable for online hate, based on feedback from thirty community organizations.

Digital forms of Islamophobia using social media are far ranging, well orchestrated, and lucrative. An investigation by The Guardian in 2019 revealed a “covert plot” to control some of Facebook’s most followed far-right pages, including one linked to a right-wing terror group, to create what was described as a “commercial enterprise that harvests Islamophobic hate for profit.” At least
nineteen far-right Facebook pages in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Austria, Nigeria, and Israel received messages from Israeli-based accounts with offers to help administer and curate the sites. More than 1,000 coordinated fake-news posts per week were circulated through this network to more than 1 million followers. The posts ranged over ten ad-heavy websites using fake news and anti-Muslim rhetoric as clickbait. The stories were a “blend of distorted news and total fabrication” portraying Muslims as “sharia-imposing terrorists and child abusers, whose existence poses a threat to white culture and western civilization.” Some of the stories included claimed that Justin Trudeau was “allowing ISIS to invade Canada,” and others attacked the first Australian Muslim senator, Mehreen Faruqi, with racist, sexist and Islamophobic remarks.

Through a partnership with the University of Queensland, the Guardian investigation discovered that the network had published at least 165,000 posts and attracted 14.3 million likes, shares, or comments. These posts were amplified by other far-right groups, which garnered further exposure. The Israeli administrators who orchestrated these posts across multiple platforms had a singular focus on maligning Islam and Muslims, though the Guardian researchers believed that the motivation was commercial and that the “hatred, division and political influence” were “by-products” of economic pursuit. Regardless of whether this was an ideologically or economically driven enterprise, the bottom line is that Islamophobic hate is profitable.

In March 2018, the webpage of the Canadian pro-Israel, fringe-right group Never Again Canada (see chapter 6), which has 232,000 followers, was accessed by this network. A BuzzFeed report examining the NAC Facebook page confirmed the focus on “anti-Muslim rhetoric” being promoted on this platform. These reports on digital Islamophobia and its disinformation industry reveal the orchestrated transnational links between far-right websites and at least one pro-Israel, fringe-right group. Through these networks, Islamophobic social-media content is defying the community standards and regulators of platforms like Facebook to purvey anti-Muslim hate.

A 2016 Guardian report noted how far-right websites have effectively gamed the Google search engine so that the top hits for sources relating to the Holocaust are linked to neo-Nazi sites like Stormfront (see chapter 5), thus promoting Holocaust denial. Similarly, the Southern Poverty Law Center investigated how anti-Muslim sites are hijacking algorithms so that web searches divert to sites promoting Islamophobic propaganda. For example, the top hits in searches related to Islamic concepts like sharia or taqiyya lead to anti-Muslim sources and fake news. To address the concerns about antisemitic, Holocaust-denial websites dominating search results, Google tweaked its algorithms, including autofills for suggested searches that came up with problematic options such as “are Jews evil,” “are women evil” and “are Muslims bad.”

A 2016 Guardian report noted how far-right websites have effectively gamed the Google search engine so that the top hits for sources relating to the Holocaust are linked to neo-Nazi sites like Stormfront (see chapter 5), thus promoting Holocaust denial. Similarly, the Southern Poverty Law Center investigated how anti-Muslim sites are hijacking algorithms so that web searches divert to sites promoting Islamophobic propaganda. For example, the top hits in searches related to Islamic concepts like sharia or taqiyya lead to anti-Muslim sources and fake news. To address the concerns about antisemitic, Holocaust-denial websites dominating search results, Google tweaked its algorithms, including autofills for suggested searches that came up with problematic options such as “are Jews evil,” “are women evil” and “are Muslims bad.”

With regard to Islamophobic content, some Google employees made recommendations about curbing Islamophobic disinformation after the imposition of then President Trump’s Muslim travel ban in 2017. This move was met with a conservative backlash against the alleged subversion of public conversation and access to information. Nothing came of the Google employees’ recommendations, which stemmed from their concern about the widespread circulation of disinformation and unwitting access to Islamophobic websites. Yet proactive deflection of narratives rather than the elimination of false narratives must be implemented. Companies like Google must exercise constant vigilance since the game of whack-a-mole with the far-right and other purveyors of hate is an endless battle.

In other cases of false media reporting, stories have been challenged, investigated, and corrected. One case in point is Toronto Sun reporter Sue Ann Levy’s false claim that refugees were slaughtering goats in a Radisson hotel bathroom. The information was based on an unverified Tripadvisor review. In 2018, after the National Newmedia Council found that Levy’s account “breached journalistic standards for accuracy in reporting,” she corrected the erroneous information in the article. Nonetheless, false, misleading, and inflammatory stories flame existing xenophobic animus that cast refugees as culturally deviant “folk devils” responsible for various social ills. These unverified, fabricated stories can create the pretext for acts of hate. For example, an arson attempt took place at the Toronto hotel housing refugees where Levy’s article had claimed, “goats were being slaughtered.” NOW magazine reported that this crime had taken place hours after Levy’s article went online, a correlation she denied as being “contemptable.” While there is no hard evidence to connect Levy’s article with the arson attempt, false allegations that reinforce xenophobic narratives can create the breeding ground for hate crimes.

### 4.3

#### Canadian Islamophobia Media Networks: Key Influencers

Using the banner of imperilled free speech, the promise of “honest” and “fearless” journalism has become the mantra of controversial media outlets to justify promoting hate and bigotry. The most salient media outlet in this category is Rebel News (formerly Rebel Media). The Rebel was formed after the closure of Sun News Network and has since launched and amplified Islamophobia influencers who share their far-right ideologies. Other smaller media outlets are also emerging and expanding the reach of the far-right echo chamber. These networks are a foundational component of the Islamophobia industry and serve as conduits for far-right ideologies to flourish.

##### 4.3.1 Rebel News

**Overview.** Rebel News has been referred to as “Breitbart North” and is a central clearinghouse for Islamophobic narratives in Canada. A self-proclaimed “fearless source of news” that “won’t be found anywhere else,” the Rebel panders to fears about the demise of free speech and, in response, they push the boundaries of hate speech to create a platform for bigotry. Serving as a beacon for the “threat of radical Islam to the West,” Rebel News has launched the careers of many Islamophobia influencers and has platformed White nationalists and neo-Nazis. They are a primary hub for purveying anti-Muslim rhetoric and ideologies.

**Background.** Founded by Ezra Levant and Brian Lilley in 2015, “the Rebel” promotes far-right views and commentary and serves as a platform for far-right ideologues and their supporters. They were joined by former Sun News Network colleagues, Faith Goldy, Gavin McInnes (founder of the White nationalist terror group, Proud Boys), and others to develop their media brand.

Sun News Network was a right-wing media network that was established in 2011. It shut down in 2015 because of low viewership and inability to find an owner. The media outlet encountered a number of controversies in its short span of existence, including Ezra Levant’s display of the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. Levant was also under fire for making racist comments about Roma people. Sun News hosted regular anti-Muslim propagandists such as Robert Spencer and Daniel Pipes (key figures in the U.S. Islamophobia industry). Mark Steyn (see below), Tarek Fatah and Rehama Raza (see chapter 7), among others.

Brian Lilley left in 2017, criticizing Rebel’s “harsh tones” regarding Islam and immigration, as well as the decision to cover the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. He complained that the Rebel had strayed from its initial purpose of providing conservative commentary.

In 2022, Rebel News announced that they were suing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau after what they claimed to be a “hand-picked government censorship panel” had declared that...
Rebel’s journalists “were not qualified as news media” and that “less than 1% of the content [met] the criteria for original news content.” Levant countered that this decision amounted to censorship, precluded Rebel from attending government press conferences, and punished them under the Income Tax Act.

Views

Islamist Bogeyman / Creeping Sharia. According to a 2019 report by UK-based advocacy group, Faith Matters, Rebel News perpetuates a fear of Muslims by promoting notions of “Islamist infiltration” through the influx of Muslim migrants into Canada, by combining themes of “white nationalist defensiveness toward immigration and terrorist attacks with the anger over a politically correct culture that supposedly abstains from levelling criticisms at groups that are undermining society with a different brand of moral values.” Rebel News foments moral panic with reports that represent Muslims as culturally incompatible with Western societies and covertly pushing an agenda to promote sharia law (see chapter 3). The Faith Matters report noted that Rebel’s strategy regarding this has been to find innocuous stories regarding mosques, calls to prayer or even a story concerning a discrimination law to protect Muslims, and paint it as evidence that Muslims are slowly eroding the cultural life of Western society, and are doing so quietly and successfully (10).

Muslim Rapists. A National Post article came to conclusions similar to those of Faith Matters regarding the Rebel’s anti-Muslim racism:

The Rebel itself, however, is littered with blog posts and videos that aggregate, repackage and link to stories that push the narrative of Muslim invasion and violence. Rebel contributors make videos rehashing, often with little or no context, stories about Muslim migrants committing rapes and assaults.

White Nationalism and Neo-Nazi Support. Rebel News faced criticism following their correspondent Faith Goldy’s coverage of the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Goldy was a regular contributor to the Rebel, producing numerous anti-Islam videos for their platform. Goldy’s sympathetic coverage of the neo-Nazi, antisemitic, White nationalist demonstration resulted in a loss of key supporters and contributors, including Brian Lilley, Barbara Kay, and John Robson.

Motion 103 Fearmongering. Using the Rebel News platform, Levant has opposed M-103, Motion 103 Fearmongering

Hate Propaganda. In August 2019, a formal criminal complaint was filed with the Ottawa Police Service against Rebel News for their promotion of hate propaganda, alleging that “the Rebel News videos convey hate messages that overwhelmingly portray members of the Muslim community as terrorists, criminals, paedophiles, rapists, inherently evil, and attempting to take over society.” The complaint, filed by human-rights lawyer Richard Warman, named Ezra Levant, Hamish Marshall, and Faith Bazos (a.k.a. Faith Goldy), alleging that they had “breached section 319(2) of the Criminal Code by wilfully promoting hatred of the Muslim community through hate propaganda published to the world through the Rebel News Network website and YouTube channel.” The complaint also included references to videos hosted by Steven Yaxley Lennon (a.k.a. Tommy Robinson), in the eighty-eight Rebel News videos that were the subject of the complaint, the following anti-Muslim hate propaganda messages were identified: “i. Muslims are violent terrorists and criminals; ii. Muslims are paedophiles and rapists who prey on young girls; and, iii. Muslims and Islam are inherently evil and attempting to take over society and attack Christianity.”

Lawyer Richard Warman confirmed11 that the matter was later turned over to the hate-crimes unit of the Toronto Police Service, who ignored Tommy Robinson’s videos, despite the anti-Muslim content, on the grounds they had been produced in the United Kingdom (though they were circulated by Rebel News, a Toronto-based corporation). An officer contacted YouTube about several of Faith Goldy’s videos on the basis that they were considered hate propaganda. YouTube removed only one of the videos, replacing it with a message that “this video violated our hate propaganda standards” and did nothing further. In the end, the Toronto Police Service did nothing to further pursue the complaint, laid no charges, and closed the file. Such inaction allows demonizing Islamophobic propaganda to circulate with impunity.

Connections

Since its inception Rebel News has been associated with a variety of far-right personalities such as Faith Goldy, Lauren Southern, Katie Hopkins, Laura Loomer, and Gavin McInnes, as well as journalists like Barbara Kay.

A 2016 “Rebel Cruise” to the Caribbean featured Daniel Pipes (founder of the anti-Muslim Middle East Forum think tank, and longstanding key player in the U.S. Islamophobia industry) as a panel moderator for a session discussing “Islam in the West,” alongside Ezra Levant, Faith Goldy, and Raheel Raza.

Rebel News has featured stories by American right-wing commentator Ben Shapiro, who has made false and inflammatory claims that 800 million Muslims or the majority of Muslim globally are “radicalized.” Quebec City mosque shooter Alexandre Bissonnette visited Shapiro’s Twitter feed ninety-three times.

Ezra Levant and Rebel News are staunch supporters of the far-right British White nationalist, Tommy Robinson, founder of the English Defence League. Robinson is an anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim activist. In 2018, he was tried in the United Kingdom for allegations that he had “published a matter which is likely to cause contempt of court.” Levant travelled to the United Kingdom to support Robinson, and he was held in contempt for illegally posting footage of Robinson’s trial. The Rebel spearheaded a crowdfunding campaign to support Robinson and to conduct “real reporting” on the case.

Other Rebel associates include Laura Loomer, an American political activist who worked briefly for Rebel News from June to September 2017. She eventually left due to disagreements about Rebel’s control of her social-media content. Loomer’s anti-Muslim stance was evident in her disruption of U.S. Congressional representatives Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib’s campaigns, calling them “jihadi” and “antisemitic” and accusing Representative Omar of having married her brother so that he could receive citizenship.

The Rebel’s nefarious connections include Gavin MacInnes, founder of the neo-fascist, White nationalist group, the Proud Boys (see chapter 5), which has been designated as a terror organization in Canada. McInnes was a Rebel News host. During a sponsored trip to Israel in 2017, where he was accompanied by fellow Rebel News correspondents Faith Goldy and Sheila Gunn Reid, McInnes reported on his experience visiting the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center. In a controversial rant, he referred to the Holocaust in air quotes and declared that the visit “inspired ‘anti-Semitic’ feelings.” The former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, David Duke, applauded McInnes for his statement that the trip compelled him to want to defend “Super-far-right Nazis.” He has also made inflammatory Islamophobic statements, that “Muslims are stupid” and that they only “respect violence.” McInnes left the Rebel in August 2017.

84

85

11 Personal communication, March 25, 2022.
Another nefarious connection with a far-right ideologue is with the *prolific Rebel blogger* “Victor Laszlo.” Laszlo's posts reinforce the counter-jihadi narrative (see chapter 3) and promote score stories of a Muslim invasion of the Western world. Laszlo is believed to operate under the name of “Vlad Tepes,” who runs a personal blog dedicated to the online counter-jihadi movement. The *Gates of Vienna* blog, an influential ideological clearinghouse for the movement, has repeatedly amplified Vlad Tepes’ contributions.

### 4.3.2

**Bankrolling Bigotry: Rebel News Funding Sources**

In 2017, *VICE News* reported that Rebel had made about $1 million from subscriptions from ten thousand subscribers. They also reportedly receive funds from mega-donors, although their website states that no single donor provides more than 2 percent of Rebel’s revenue.

Further funds are acquired through YouTube, one of Rebel’s biggest platforms, but due to the restructuring of YouTube’s advertisement policies, they reportedly have lost a significant amount of money. As of June 2022, Rebel’s YouTube channel had 1.57 million subscribers, their Facebook page showed 276,000 followers, and on Twitter Rebel News had 375,000 followers.

Rebel News receives revenue from crowdfunding for internal business operations as well as from third-party charities and individuals. Notably, they funded the controversial Canadian professor Jordan Peterson’s research after his rejection by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

A major donor within the U.S. Islamophobia industry, the *Middle East Forum* (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”) offers $2 million in grants for the purpose of “working to promote the Forum's goals of furthering American interests and preserving Western civilization.” The Centre for American Progress has labelled MEF a “controversial far-right think tank that is known for its anti-Islam views.” In 2015, Ezra Levant received an undisclosed sum as a grant from MEF.

Rebel News has been a beneficiary of Shillman fellowships, which have supported far-right personalities like Tommy Robinson, Katie Hopkins, and Laura Loomer. Robert Shillman is a wealthy American philanthropist who is reported to support “US far-right groups that have campaigned against Muslims and refugees.” Tommy Robinson received approximately £5000 a month during his tenure as a Shillman Fellow at Rebel News in 2017.

Rebel News also has ties with the Gatestone Institute (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”), a key donor organization in the *U.S. Islamophobia industry*. Rebel News partnered with Gatestone on the production of “a dozen ‘cross branded’ videos” featuring anti-Muslim advocates including Daniel Pipes and far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders. The topics ranged from The Dangers of Islamization in the West, and the Growing Influence of Sharia Law to Will Europeans Succumb to Islamization, or Will They Rise to Fight Radical Islam and Hold on to Western Values?

As a marketing strategy, Rebel trademarked “Make Canada Great Again” merchandise for sale on their website to capitalize upon Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again” slogan and monetize their “brand.”

### 4.4

**Islamophobia Influencers: Key Players and Connections**

Islamophobia’s media echo chambers have several key figures who serve as influencers. Their status as an influencer is not based solely on the number of followers that makes them popular, but also on the platforms they are able to use to promote their ideas and leverage their social capital and spheres of influence. Such individuals are also referred to as “Islamophobia misinformation experts” (Ali et al. 2011).

In this section, Canadian media personalities who promote anti-Muslim ideologies are featured. The consistency and saliency of their messaging is what warrants them attention. Many of those profiled here, Ezra Levant, Lauren Southern, Faith Goldy, Sheila Gunn Reid, Sue-Ann Levy, and Barbara Kay, have been connected to Rebel News, which is a major hub for the production and promotion of Islamophobic content and has launched the careers of many anti-Muslim interlocutors in the far-right echo chamber. Others, such as Mark Steyn, Kevin Johnston, and Christine Douglass-Williams, have had their work amplified by Rebel News media articles. Mark Steyn has been a featured guest on the Rebel News show. All of those profiled here are connected by shared ideas and a common cause: the promotion of anti-Muslim narratives and conspiracy theories.

### 4.4.1

**Ezra Levant**

**Overview.** Ezra Levant is a conservative broadcaster and media personality who has been called the “commander” of Rebel News. He has also been referred to by Israel’s Haaretz newspaper as “Canada’s Jewish Steve Bannon wannabe.” Levant has had a long and controversial media career during which he was sued for libel and promoted racist views under the guise of promoting free speech. Through his involvement with Rebel News and his support of other anti-Muslim ideologues, Levant relentlessly promotes the idea that the West and Western values are under threat by radical Islamists.

**Background.** Levant attended the University of Alberta, where he earned a law degree. While still a university student, he became known for engaging controversies by criticizing affirmative action and organizing a debate forum with Doug Christie, the lawyer for Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel.

As publisher of the Western Standard magazine in 2015, Levant printed the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*’s cartoons mocking the Prophet Muhammad. He also broadcast the cartoons during the *Sun News TV* launch.

In 2014, Levant paid $80,000 to a Muslim law student in settlement of a libel suit: he had been found liable for defamation. While decrying Canada’s hate-speech laws, Levant had defamed the law student, Khruram Awan, as a serial liar, a bigot, and a Jew-hating “liberal Islamic fascist.” Levant replied to the charges, saying it was “a shocking case of libel chill that should concern anyone who is worried about radical Islam, and the right to call out anti-Semitism in the public square.”

In 2021, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) settled a small claims-court lawsuit with Ezra Levant and Rebel Media News based on a failure to “promptly comply with the terms of a previous settlement between the two parties.” The previous settlement had
been based on a series of defamatory publications by Rebel Media News attacking CJPME for its support of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, an international non-violent campaign to place economic pressure on Israel to ensure it fully maintains the human rights of Palestinians. Rebel Media’s publications accused CJPME of antisemitism, calling them “Jew-baiters” and compared them to Nazis. CJPME rejected Rebel Media’s attempts to weaponize antisemitism and pointed out that “the BDS movement is Canada is a lawful activity that is constitutionally protected as free expression.”

Views

Counter-Jihad. Levant has been tied to extreme anti-Muslim ideologies as part of the counter-jihad movement, though he denies adopting that label. Counter-jihad ideology is connected to the conspiracy theory that Muslims are a Trojan horse living in Western nations that has designs to overthrow Western civilization and impose sharia law (see chapter 3). He contributes to multiple media outlets to propagate the need to fear radical Islam as it creeps into Europe and North America, telling people that fearing jihad is necessary for survival.

Islam Is Not a Faith. At Rebel’s rally against M-103, he stated publicly that he did not view Islam as a “private faith,” insisting that it is a “political expression.”

Liberal-Islamist Conspiracy. Levant considers the Liberal Party as being too open to Muslims, and he has raised concerns about the number of Muslim Liberal Party members. He branded Liberal MP Omar Alghabra as a “Saudi-born extremist.” Levant maintains that Justin Trudeau neglects Canadians and Canadian values in place of pandering to Muslims.

Platforming Hate. Levant has published a number of books as a further platform for his ideologies, most notably The Enemy Within: Terror, Lies, and the Whitewashing of Omar Khadr (2013) and Trumping Trudeau: How Donald Trump Will Change Canada Even If Justin Trudeau Doesn’t Know It Yet (2017).

Connections

Levant has supported and helped build and amplify the public careers of several Islamophobic White nationalists. For example, as noted previously, he is a staunch supporter of the British far-right White nationalist Tommy Robinson. He was held in contempt of court for illegally posting footage he took during Robinson’s trial in an English courthouse.

Levant is an associate of Gavin McInnes, who was employed at Rebel News. McInnes is founder of the far-right White nationalist terrorist group, Proud Boys (see chapter 5). He has also launched the careers of Islamophobia ideologues and influencers like Lauren Southern and Faith Goldy. He worked closely with Goldy at Sun News Network and Rebel News until Goldy was fired.

Hamish Marshall, campaign manager for Andrew Scheer, then leader of the Conservative Party, worked alongside Levant on Rebel’s board of directors. Marshall implemented the political organizing software called NationBuilder that Rebel News uses to monetize its audience. In 2017, Marshall stated that he was severing ties with Rebel, prior to Faith Goldy’s coverage of the Unite the Right rally.

In 2017, JDL-Canada, the Canadian chapter of the Jewish Defense League, partnered with Canada Christian College and Ezra Levant and Rebel News to bring U.S.-based anti-Muslim activist Pamela Geller to Toronto for a discussion on “radical jihad and radical Islam.” These alliances demonstrate the links between pro-Israel, fringe-right groups; far-right media; and Islamophobia influencers in creating coordinated platforms for their shared anti-Muslim views.

Lauren Southern

Southern’s YouTube Makeup Tutorial for Infidels, which begins with her lament about being repeatedly demonetized by YouTube. To avoid the hate-speech monitors, she decides to insert her Islamophobic commentary into makeup tutorials, as the image graphically depicts.
Overview. Lauren Southern is a Canadian alt-right, White nationalist political activist and YouTube personality. She actively promotes Islamophobic conspiracies about Muslim invaders taking over the West and about how White Christians face an existential and cultural threat because of this agenda. She has been connected to xenophobic, far-right campaigns seeking to stop migrants from entering Europe.

Background. Southern is an alt-right media personality with political ambitions. In 2015, she was a candidate for the Libertarian party during the Canadian federal election, and she finished last receiving only 535 votes.

She worked for Rebel News until 2017. Her videos for the Rebel were among the most popular, allegedly prompting her to part ways and go solo to further monetize her popularity independently. However, YouTube began demonetizing her videos and deeming some ineligible for ads. Nonetheless, as of June 2022, her YouTube channel had 691,000 subscribers.

In a video contesting the demonization of her political commentary on YouTube, Southern filmed a mock makeup tutorial titled Makeup Tutorial for Infidels, which interspersed commentary associating Muslims with female genital mutilation and terrorism and ending with her pencilling the words “F*** ISLAM” on her cheeks.

Seeking to segue from YouTube to feature film, in 2018 Southern produced Farmlands, a documentary about “white genocide” taking place against farmers in South Africa that refutes the history of apartheid. She later produced Borderless, an anti-immigrant documentary that was screened at the European Parliament in Brussels in 2019 and embraced by the many far-right politicians dominating European politics.

In 2019, Southern announced to her followers that she was retreating from social media to focus on her personal growth away from the spotlight In 2020, an article in the Atlantic featured interviews with Southern about her “disappearance” from the alt-right circles. The article, written by the director of White Noise, a documentary about rising White nationalism in the United States and abroad, highlighted the deep misogyny of the alt-right subculture as being the reason why Southern was taking a step back from the movement. Far from being an ideological epiphany or reversal in her views, Southern’s commentary in the article made it clear that her alt-right and anti-Muslim sensibilities remained intact.

Southern has been labelled a “tradhat” in alt-right circles, a term referring to women who support traditional values but do not live by them. The definition of the term in the Urban Dictionary features a video of Southern to illustrate the meaning of the term.

Views

Great Replacement. Southern released a video in July 2017 promoting the “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory (see chapter 3) advanced by far-right White nationalist movements and cited in the manifestos of the New Zealand mosque shooter. The video received 250,000 views and was later removed.

Alt-Right White Nationalism. Despite being categorized as alt-right and White nationalist, Southern has rejected being labelled as racist. She has also tried to clarify the position of alt-right ideologue Richard Spencer as being “White nationalist” rather than “White supremacist,” attempting to spell out a moral difference between the two.

Anti-Feminism. Southern is a vocal anti-feminist. In 2015 she showed up at a Slutwalk protest in Vancouver waving a sign that read “There is NO rape culture in the West.”

Muslim Invasion. Southern’s 2016 book, entitled Barbarians: How Baby Boomers, Immigrants, and Islam Screwed My Generation, listed several “facts” for millennials to reckon with, such as her statement that acting “to push back as hard as possible against the Muslim invasion” cannot be construed as “Christian terrorism” (18–19). In one chapter, titled “How Islam is Ruining Everything,” she mocked the idea of Islamophobia as being “most retarded” (89) since fearing Islam is simply “common sense” (90). She maintained that the problem with Islam is that it has not undergone an “enlightenment” in the way that in that Christianity and Judaism have progressed (93). In addition to promoting Judeo-Christian supremacy by deploying Muslim folk-devil ideology, Southern also critiqued immigration (66–87) and multiculturalism (76).

Her YouTube channel engages in discourse suggesting that Christians are under attack and incoming migrants are a threat, and that juxtapose Islam and women’s rights.

Connections

In 2016, she posed alongside former fellow Rebel News correspondent Faith Goldy, sporting hoodies with the far-right, anti-Muslim slogan “Deus vult” and a caption that read “In hoc signo vinces” (in this sign you shall conquer). As previously noted, the term “Deus vult” is Latin for “God willing” and was a rallying cry against Muslims during the First Crusade. Crusader imagery is a popular symbol for anti-Muslim groups that weaponize history to promote Islamophobic narratives.

In 2017, Southern was involved in an international campaign to stop African migrants heading to Europe by boat to seek asylum. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Doctors without Borders conduct search-and-rescue missions on the sea between Italy and Libya looking to aid migrants in distress from the perilous crossing. Working in support of the racist, xenophobic, Defend Europe campaign spearheaded by Austrian Identitarian Movement leader Martin Sellner, Southern was involved in procuring a 250-foot boat called the C-Star to stop the NGOs from enabling what they dubbed a migrant “invasion” taking place that was the product of human trafficking. The C-Star set sail to fulfill its mission of “sending refugees back” by harassing and blocking NGO-run rescue ships. Southern was detained in Italy for attempting to stop a migrant ship operated by group called SOS MEDITERRANEE from bringing in “illegal migrants.” The xenophobic Defend Europe campaign received recognition and endorsement from Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke. Southern played an instrumental role in supporting and fundraising for the anti-migrant ship. She is reported as declaring, “If the politicians won’t stop the boats, we’ll stop the boats!” In the end, Defend Europe’s efforts to stop migrant ships failed, but that did not stop them from claiming victory for what, at the very least, was a publicity stunt to further their cause. Notably, as an act of anti-racist resistance, local fishermen organized and successfully blocked the C-Star from entering a port in Tunisia. Southern’s involvement with Defend Europe, and the Identitarian movement behind the campaign, is an example of the transnational ties that exist through global anti-Muslim networks.

As a result of her involvement in attempting to stop rescue ships that were aiding stranded migrants in the Mediterranean, Southern was banned from generating income on the media-content platform Patreon.
Faith Julia Goldy-Bazos, or Faith Goldy as she is commonly known, is a Canadian alt-right/far-right political commentator and Rebel News host. Goldy uses her social-media platforms to promote anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and xenophobic views and to foment fear of a “white genocide” (see chapter 3). She has publicly recited the Fourteen Words of the White supremacist creed: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Goldy defended her actions saying, “I don’t see that that’s controversial.”

In 2018, Southern attempted to visit the United Kingdom to interview English Defence League leader Tommy Robinson, and she was refused entry. She was officially barred from the United Kingdom for promoting racism. Other far-right, White nationalist activists, Austrian Martin Sellner and American Brittany Pettibone, were also detained and denied entry at the same time.

Southern and Robinson engaged in a “social experiment” passing out flyers that read “Allah is Gay, Allah is Trans, Allah is Lesbian, Allah is Intersex, Allah is Feminist, Allah is Queer, Allah is All of Us” to bait responses. The experiment backfired, and Southern cites this as the reason for her UK ban.

Southern has shown support for Donald Trump. In May 2019, she retweeted a Twitter rant during which Trump commented on free speech, social-media censorship, and the removal of far-right personalities. Her tweet was focused on “establishment conservatives” being banned from social media along with those farther right on the political spectrum.

4.4.3 Faith Goldy

Overview. Faith Goldy-Bazos, or Faith Goldy as she is commonly known, is a Canadian alt-right/far-right political commentator and Rebel News host. Goldy uses her social-media platforms to promote anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and xenophobic views and to foment fear of a “white genocide” (see chapter 3). She has publicly recited the Fourteen Words of the White supremacist creed: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Goldy defended her actions saying, “I don’t see that that’s controversial.”

In 2018, Goldy campaigned to be mayor of Toronto. Her attempt failed when incumbent Mayor John Tory was re-elected. Goldy came in a distant third with 25,667 votes.

Background. A self-proclaimed “Catholic Nationalist for Christ the King & Country,” Goldy has become a social-media celebrity and Islamophobia influencer through her work with Sun News and Rebel News. As of March 2021, she had over 110,000 followers on Twitter (now self-labelled an “inactive account” after losing 10,000 followers) and over 97,000 subscribers on YouTube.

In July 2018, Goldy was removed from PayPal “due to the nature of her activities.” She told her followers that she would be taking payments through Freestart, an alt-right crowdsourcing platform that was later shut down.

On April 8, 2019, Facebook announced it was banning Goldy from its platform under its hate-speech policies, though her presence on other platforms including BitChute are ongoing. In May 2018, Goldy’s Patreon account was terminated on the grounds that she had violated their hate-speech guidelines.

As a Rebel News host, Goldy was given her own program called On the Hunt with Faith Goldy. In August 2017, Levant fired Goldy from the Rebel following her appearance on a podcast for the neo-Nazi website, The Daily Stormer. The podcast aired shortly after the deadly White nationalist, neo-Nazi Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 12, 2017. Goldy livestreamed the rally and captured neo-Nazi James Fields driving into a group of anti-racism protesters and killing Heather Heyer. An article in The New Republic described Goldy’s reporting at the rally as an “entire day fawning over neo-Nazis” and speaking “gloriously of ‘white racial consciousness.’” In a Rebel News video following the attack, Goldy complained that the alt-right were treated unfairly by the media and authorities.

Views

White Genocide. A 2018 article in GQ magazine described Goldy as “one of Canada’s most prominent propagandists of the white-genocide conspiracy theory.” She warned of a declining White demographic in Canada and that “diversity” was a code word for population replacement.

While at the Rebel, Goldy made several anti-Muslim and anti-Islam videos. In one video, titled Islamophilic BBC Attempts to Normalize the Niqab, Goldy asked, “Are we to feel compassion for people who wish to literally wear a facemask as these women are in the Western court of law?” and, “It just couldn’t be more obvious how totally oxymoronic the idea of a feminist wearing a niqab truly is.” Goldy claimed that the BBC was “attempting to normalize the niqab” and “using taxpayer’s dollars to fund Islamist brainwashing.”

Muslims Are Rapists. In 2016, Goldy discussed the alleged Muslim “rape epidemic” in Europe in another segment for the Rebel and questioned whether “American women are next.” She claimed that “after months of an open-door policy to migrants, Germany has totally lost control and spun into crisis.” Citing reports from the anti-Muslim publication FrontPage Mag, produced by the David Horowitz Freedom Center, Goldy raised alarm over a “huge influx of migrant sex attacks.” She called on governments and politicians to “stop lecturing us about what Islam isn’t, okay? How about we discuss what it actually is? Rape culture, misogyny, and victim blaming are all codified in the Qur’an.”

Muslims Are Terrorists. Another episode, More Muslims = More Terrorism, aired following the 2017 Westminster attack in London. In the video Goldy claimed that “the more Muslims there are in a given society, the more likely that society is to experience lawlessness, aggression, and terror attacks,” promoting the anti-Muslim trope that all Muslims are inherently violent. During this episode, Goldy also spoke with Tommy Robinson, the founder of the English Defence League, which is dedicated to anti-Muslim activism in the United Kingdom. The video has been removed for violating Youtube’s hate speech policy.
As noted earlier, Goldy's 2017 *coverage of the Quebec City mosque shooting* promoted the "two suspect" narrative, that an alleged Muslim shooter was involved in the terror attack. Attempting to lend credence to her unfounded assertion, she included video footage of an Imam discussing what she characterized as the conflict between "rival mosques," though the comments were in fact lamenting disagreements among sectarian groups. Goldy's focus on a "rival mosques" theory was an attempt to cast further aspersions and suggest that inter-Muslim conflict could have been the cause of the deadly violence. This victim-blaming strategy is often used to foment doubt and suspicion by appealing to existing stereotypes of violent, dangerous Muslims.

**Muslim Takeover.** An article in Newsweek stated that in Goldy's video of her 2016 trip to Bethlehem, she claimed that the city's "Christian population ... [had] been ethnically cleansed." Discussing her trip in a video on the Rebel's YouTube channel, Goldy claimed that Bethlehem, Jesus's birthplace, has turned into a Muslim town as she expressed discomfort seeing mosques in the area. An article in the Middle East Eye noted that the video "generated a massive response from Christians and non-Muslims alike, both refuting her claims... and expressing the harmonious nature in which people of all faiths live in the city."

**Anti-Muslim Crusade.** Goldy's fixation with the Crusader narrative (see chapter 3) was further demonstrated when she posed alongside Lauren Southern in "Deus vult" hoodies in December 2016. She also used the Crusader battle cry during her trip with Rebel News to Bethlehem upon discovering Muslims living in the West Bank town.

In 2017, Goldy gave a speech at the Rebel's live event in Toronto, in which she called for a "counter-crusade" against Islam and Muslims, claiming that "Islam and their global caliphate have never stopped fighting the war." She declared, "This is a holy war for Islam. They're not just coming for our health care, right. They're coming to break the cross."

**Creeping Sharia.** In 2015, Paul Joseph Watson, a far-right commentator and editor of the conspiracy website Infowars, appeared on *On the Hunt*, during which he and Goldy discussed the "Rise of Islam in Europe: Sharia Courts and No-Go Zones." The "no-go zone" terminology was coined by Daniel Pipes, a key architect of the Islamophobia industry in the United States, to describe inner-city Muslim-migrant enclaves in France and other cities in Europe. Pipes, along with fellow longstanding anti-Muslim activist Steve Emerson, claim that these zones are places governed by strict sharia law, causing non-Muslims to be terrified to enter. Trading in such fake-news stories and conspiracy theories is the mainstay of the Islamophobia industry and their influencers.

**Anti-Muslim Propaganda Inciting Violent Responses.** In 2019, human-rights lawyer Richard Warman filed a [criminal complaint](#) that named Rebel News, Faith Bazos (Goldy), Ezra Levant, and others associated with the Rebel, alleging that they had breached section 319 (2) of the Criminal Code by wilfully promoting hatred of the Muslim community through hate propaganda published via both Rebel News Network and their YouTube channel. In the forty-eight videos that were the subject of the complaint, a content analysis of those attributed to Goldy outlined her anti-Muslim messaging promoting xenophobic and racist tropes of Muslim violence and cultural and sexual degeneracy, weaponizing the Qur'an, and reinforcing Crusader rhetoric while fomenting moral panic about Muslim invasions. The complaint noted that viewer comments on Goldy's Rebel News videos shockedly advocated anti-Muslim violence, including statements that called for "slitting filthy Muslim throats" and stating [said?] that Muslims were "vermin" and should be "exterminated." As previously noted, no charges were laid as a result of the complaint.

**De-Platforming Hate.** Goldy has promoted her far-right, White nationalist views in public spaces by speaking at post-secondary institutions and public spaces such as libraries. Several of her speaking engagements have been met with [counter-protests](#), [demonstrations](#), and [cancellations](#). In August 2017, Goldy was removed from a panel event on free speech at Ryerson University (now Toronto Metropolitan University) following her participation in The Daily Stormer podcast.

Connections.

Goldy has connections throughout the far-right, anti-Muslim ecosystem in Canada, including Ezra Levant, Stephan Molyneux, Gavin McInnes, and Lauren Southern, among others.

In 2019, alongside then Conservative Party of Canada Leader Andrew Scheer, Goldy was a featured speaker at a United We Roll rally that was associated with the Yellow Vest movement (see chapter 5).

Outside of Canada, a Republican Congressman from Iowa, Steve King, a proponent of White nationalism and xenophobic anti-immigrant politics, [endorsed](#) Goldy's mayoral campaign and her "Make Canada Safe Again" platform. He specifically named her "Pro Western Civilization" views as part of what would make her an excellent mayor of Toronto. King is noted for calling on the Obama administration to [spy](#) on U.S. mosques to monitor ISIS infiltration, despite the lack of evidence to support such suspicions.

A May 2019 analysis by PressProgress found that Goldy's top donors for her Toronto mayoral campaign came from some of the city's wealthiest neighbourhoods and included "wealthy investors, real estate developers and corporate consultants who make a living outsourcing Canadian jobs."

In July 2019, Goldy [endorsed](#) Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada (PPC), for prime minister along with his "long-awaited immigration policy" in a video titled Mad Max on Immigration: Major White Pill. She highlighted parts of Bernier's platform that aligned with her views for "maintain(ing) Canada's national identity," and protecting "Western values." Goldy was concerned that all other federal political leaders supported "mass migration." The "white pill" reference spoke to how Maxime Bernier and the PPC promised to [repeal the Multiculturalism Act](#), put more money into securitization, and build a fence across Canada's southern border. The term "white pill" is part of the far-right lexicon and is coded language for an "optimistic world view in the face of adversity" and "believing in the movement you belong to and your role within it."

**Sheila Gunn Reid**

**Overview.** Sheila Gunn Reid is a conservative activist and chief reporter at Rebel News out of Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. She promotes anti-liberal views, denies the existence of climate change, and is distrustful of Islam and Muslims.

**Background.** Reid hosts a program on Rebel News called The Gunn Show. Reporting from western Canada, she boasts that she "brings a western sensibility to Canadian news" and "challenges mainstream media narratives."

In a Rebel News [report](#) in 2018, entitled "How Radical Islamic Groups Got Summer Job Grants," Reid raised concerns regarding how the federal government's summer-job grants were conditional upon the organizations affirming that their core mandate and the summer jobs they were seeking to fill did not oppose human rights such as abortion, LGBTQ rights, and gender identity. She decried some Christian charities being denied these grants because they were not in line with Justin Trudeau's "liberal values," and meanwhile "radical Islamist organizations with ties to terror" receiving Canadian tax dollars because they agreed to uphold the human-rights conditionalities tied to the grants. The Rebel filed a Freedom of Information request to obtain documents related to the allocation of the grants to Muslim community groups. Reid contested the grants awarded to three [Canadian Muslim organizations](#) for reasons that ranged from the posting of lectures by Imam Bilal Philips (accused of inciting terrorism and barred from entering
several nations) to alleged support of Hamas and Hezbollah, and anti-gay rhetoric. Reid accused these organizations of being disingenuous on their applications when they attested to upholding human rights. Meanwhile, she championed the Christian charities that held true to their beliefs and were denied funding. If Muslim organizations support problematic speakers, anti-gay rhetoric, or in other ways do not uphold human rights, they are rightly open to critique and condemnation. Yet, Reid and the Rebel did not hold themselves to the same standards (see “Connections” below).

**Views**

*Muslims Are Rapists.* In 2016, Reid wrote an article for the Rebel suggesting that an inherent rape culture or “rape jihad” exists among Muslim migrants. She argued that the inability of Muslims to adapt to Western culture was responsible.

*Islam Is Inherently Violent.* In 2016, she tweeted that “millions of the billion and a half practitioners of Islam believe in a God that wants us to kill people whose lifestyle we find offensive.” No empirical evidence was provided for this claim.

**Anti-Refugee Xenophobia.** The content on Reid’s YouTube channel features several recurring discourses that are part of the Rebel brand. Reid maintains an anti-Trudeau stance tied to his immigration policies and the resettlement of Syrian refugees.

**Free Speech.** At the Defend Media Freedom Conference in the United Kingdom in 2019, Reid commented on a display of cartoons by “gagged” political cartoonists, which was meant to draw attention to censorship. She questioned why the controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad with a bomb depicted on his turban were not included in the display. She noted that Ezra Levant posted the cartoons in 2006 on the Sun News Network, and that these depictions represented “an act of courage.”

**Connections:**

Reid alleges terror-related associations between Muslim individuals and groups and is critical of their receiving government support. However, she has not levelled the same criticism toward the questionable associations at Rebel News. For example, the security detail for Rebel’s anti-Motion 103 rally was provided by JDL-Canada (see chapter 6). The U.S. branch of JDL has been classified as a right-wing terrorist group by the Federal Bureau of Investigation since 2001.

In 2017, Reid joined Rebel colleagues, Gavin McInnes, and Faith Goldy on a sponsored trip to Israel. Reid and Goldy were featured in an episode of the Gavin McInnes Show discussing the trip. A Canadaland article provided a transcript of the interview (NB: the video is now unavailable), which is replete with antisemitic invective. (Reid reportedly laughed when McInnes stated he had become more antisemitic since the trip to Israel). The interview also featured a racist, sophomoric, and offensive discussion of how “Muslims reek.”

In 2019, as part of the Rebel’s campaign supporting British White nationalist Tommy Robinson, Reid, and fellow Rebel host David Menzies, livestreamed an episode condemning the guilty verdict in Robinson’s contempt of court case. Reid read out a comment in support of Robinson from a Proud Boys member from Alberta and lamented that the legal ramifications for Robinson boded poorly for “the West.”

She featured an interview with Thomas Quiggin (see chapter 8), who accused the charity Islamic Relief Canada of having ties to terrorism through alleged links with the Muslim Brotherhood (see chapter 3) and criticized the Muslim MPs in the Liberal cabinet for channelling funds to support the charity.

On her featured program, The Gunn Show, on Rebel News, Reid interviewed Yellow Vest organizer Glenn Carit in order to debunk “mainstream media lies” that the organization is White supremacist and Islamophobic.
Kevin J. Johnston

Johnston has a history of fomenting anti-Muslim campaigns. In September 2015, he launched an initiative to stop a mosque from being constructed in Meadowvale, Ontario, through the now defunct website, www.stopthemosque.com. During a community hearing in September 2015 over the proposed Meadowview Mosque, during which Johnston testified, Mayor Bonnie Crombie asked if Johnston believed that the proposed mosque would lead to increases in vandalism, crime, losses of freedom of speech, sexual assaults and rapes, and kidnapping of young girls, as outlined on Johnston’s Stop the Mosque website. Johnston replied, “It’s what I believe but I’m not here to talk about that.”

In October 2016, Mayor Crombie filed a hate-crime complaint with Peel police after Johnston published an article in the now defunct Mississauga Gazette, an online publication that Johnston had founded in 2015. The article, which was titled “Bonnie’s Muslims Are Molesting Teenage Girls in Mississauga High Schools,” claimed that Crombie “is converting Mississauga into a dangerous Islamic war zone” so that “they could kill her son just for being gay,” and that she “won’t rest until all girls in Mississauga are victims of rich rapists.”

In March 2017, Johnston offered a $1,000 reward for secret video recordings of schools in the Peel District School Board in which Muslim students could be seen praying during Friday congregational prayers or engaging in hate speech during sermons. A CBC News report described the cash award as a “video bounty.”

In July 2017, the Peel Regional Police arrested and charged Johnston with “wilfully promoting hatred against any identifiable group” for “multiple incidents” over five months across “various social media sites” that “targeted … the Muslim community.” He was released on his own undertaking, under a number of conditions including not being allowed within 100 metres of any mosque or Muslim community centre in Ontario.

According to a Globe and Mail report, Johnston’s online video content and far-right website “mostly focus on denigrating Muslims and arguing that Islam is a threat to the country.” U.S.-based anti-Muslim blogs covered Johnston’s arrest and hate-crime charge, including Frontpage Mag and Robert Spencer’s Jihad Watch. Both publications are housed within the anti-Muslim David Horowitz Freedom Center.

Johnston was at the centre of the largest defamation lawsuit regarding online activity in Canadian history. In July 2017, Johnston and Canadian anti-Muslim activist Ron Banerjee recorded videos in front of the Mississauga location of Paramount Fine Foods, where a Liberal Party fundraiser was being held. As described in court documents, Johnston stated in the videos that he had “deep concerns about the restaurant and finds it suspicious that it is in the middle of an industrial area” and that it is “little more than a front.” Johnston also stated that patrons had to have raped “someone else’s wife.” He went on to claim that “Canada is the victim of Islam.” The owner of the chain, Mohamad Fakih, filed a claim in July 2017 with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and sued for defamation. Fakih and Paramount Fine Foods won a defamation case against Banerjee in December 2018 and against Johnston in May 2019, with damages awarded in the amount of $2.5 million.

Overview. Kevin J. Johnston is an anti-Muslim blogger and activist in Canada who ran failed campaigns for mayor of Mississauga, Ontario, in 2014 and 2018. In 2017, he was charged under section 319 (2) of the Criminal Code for promoting hatred against the Muslim community in Peel Region. Johnston has owned, operated, and maintained websites, online media publications, and multiple social-media accounts, which he has utilized to promote and reinforce his anti-Muslim views, activities, and networks.

Background. Johnston is associated with a network of media sites called the Freedom Report. The Freedom Report Facebook page showed 9,900 followers before being removed.

In 2014, Johnston ran for mayor of the city of Mississauga, Ontario (Canada’s sixth largest city), which he has described as “ground zero for the entire Islamic invasion of the country” (NB: video content removed according to YouTube’s hate-speech guidelines). He lost the election to Bonnie Crombie.

In 2018, he ran for mayor of Mississauga again and lost, though he received 16,000 votes (13.5 percent of the total votes) and came in a distant second behind incumbent Bonnie Crombie. During his campaign, Johnston promoted Islamophobic moral panics, warning that if Mayor Crombie were re-elected, “by 2020, sharia courts will be in Mississauga.” (NB: video content removed in accordance with YouTube’s hate-speech guidelines).

Despite having pled guilty to charges of criminal harassment and causing a disturbance, Johnston put forward a bid to become mayor of Calgary in the October 2021 election (which he lost). The charges were related to altercations with staff in a shopping mall over masking requirements. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Johnston has promoted pandemic denial and is an avowed anti-masker.
In October 2021, Johnston was sentenced to 18 months in prison in Ontario for his public slurs against Fakih, whom he referred to as a “terrorist” and “baby killer.” Despite being charged with hate speech as noted above, Johnston persisted his public defamatory language, leading to charges of contempt of court. Justice Myers expressed some reservation in his decision to sentence Johnston to jail time in case it painted Johnston as a political martyr being silenced for his views. The judge balanced this concern with an overriding consideration of how Johnston’s actions had impacted “vulnerable and racialized people” who might not have access to the financial resources that Fakih possessed. During the sentencing hearing, the judge remarked, “if the court is powerless to stop unrelenting, awful, racist attacks against a man like Mr. Fakih, how are the powerless to feel welcome or safe in Canada?” He further acknowledged that “there is a need in this case for a sentence that makes the public sit up and take notice.”

According to a 2022 CBC media report, Johnston failed to arrive to serve sentences in Ontario and Alberta and was arrested for illegally entering the United States. He was found “wondering on foot” in Montana. Johnston had been scheduled to serve an 18-month sentence for violating YouTube’s free-speech policy, in which he called MP Khalid as a “hard core, terrorist supporting, ISIS loving, Muslim Brotherhood supporter/terrorist scumbag” and “rapist, terrorist, scumbag, ‘Nazis,” and “rapists.” He had described Muslims as being part of a “system to rape, kill and pillage and destroy” Canada. Judge Ferguson’s decision stated that Johnston has urged his followers to stockpile guns and weapons and that he had outlined how he is able to monetize his rants.

Islamist Bogeyman. Johnston has referred to the religion of Islam as an “ideology” and has called the National Council of Canadian Muslims, a civil-liberties and advocacy organization, a “terrorist, Hitleric, fascist regime.” In a YouTube video (NB: video now removed), he claimed that Islamophobia is a “word invented by the Muslim Brotherhood to make stupid white people feel guilty so they could overtake the Western world.” He has referred to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as “jihadi justin,” who is allowing “Islamofascism” to take over Canada.

Death Threats and Islamophobic Misogyny. Johnston has a history of making misogynist statements and advocating violence against women. In a video published on his BitChute page in January 2017, Johnston referred to Liberal MP Iqra Khalid as a “creature” and “thing,” stating MP Khalid “deserves vast quantities of violence done onto her.” Johnston also described MP Khalid as a “hard core, terrorist supporting, ISIS loving, Muslim Brotherhood supporter/member, piece of dirt.” In early 2017, Johnston released a video that has since been removed for violating YouTube’s free-speech policy, in which he called MP Khalid a “terrorist scumbag” and stated, “I believe that you are a terrorist. I believe that you are here to kill me, and kill my children, and kill the entire future of this entire nation.”

In March 2018, Johnston advertised a national speaking tour with images of swastikas that described Black Lives Matter and Antifa as “domestic terrorists.” He named several universities, public libraries, secondary schools, and even an Islamic centre in Brampton, Ontario (in violation of his bail conditions) as his hosts. Some locations listed by Johnston denied involvement in the events, while others outright refused to welcome him.

Defaming Muslims. As noted above, Johnston was ordered to pay $2.5 million to Mohamad Fakih after he had referred publicly to Fakih as a “jihadi” and a “radical Muslim” who “hates white people.” In her decision, Ontario Superior Court Justice Jane Ferguson cited Johnston’s hate speech as including references to Muslims as “terrorists,” “terrorist scumbags,” “racist terrorist scumbags,” “Nazis,” and “rapists.” He had described Muslims as being part of a “system to rape, kill and pillage and destroy” Canada. Judge Ferguson’s decision stated that Johnston has urged his followers to stockpile guns and weapons and that he had outlined how he is able to monetize his rants.

MP Khalid addressed Parliament and read death threats and hate mail that she had been receiving after tabling Motion 103. This included statements made by Johnston in a video originally posted on his FreedomReport.ca website, in which he had stated, “I’ll be there to see you on the ground crying and complaining about the fact that someone shot you because they disagreed with Sharia law and the rape of children. And I’ll be there with a big fat smile on my face, saying, “Heh, heh, Iqra Khalid gets shot by a Canadian patriot.”

In a video uploaded in March 2017 on anti-Muslim group Rise Canada’s YouTube page, Johnston can be seen rallying outside MP Khalid’s office in Mississauga, Ontario, along with the Canadian branch of the German anti-Islamization and far-right nationalist group Pegida (see chapter 5). Johnston said he was “honoured that [MP Khalid] read what I had to say in the House of Commons.” Johnston accused MP Khalid of “infiltrating Mississauga,” described the Qur’an as “hate literature,” and encouraged people to “take up arms” through education.

In a Mississauga City Council meeting in February 2017, during which the city council endorsed MP Khalid’s M-103, Johnston and Mayor Bonnie Crombie reportedly “got into a terse exchange.” Mayor Crombie asked Johnston if he had called MP Khalid a “political terrorist,” to which he responded, “That’s exactly what I said because M-103 is extremely anti-Canadian.”

In March 2018, Johnston addressed Parliament and read death threats and hate mail that she had been receiving after tabling Motion 103. This included statements made by Johnston in a video originally posted on his FreedomReport.ca website, in which he had stated, “I’ll be there to see you on the ground crying and complaining about the fact that someone shot you because they disagreed with Sharia law and the rape of children. And I’ll be there with a big fat smile on my face, saying, “Heh, heh, Iqra Khalid gets shot by a Canadian patriot.”

In a video uploaded in March 2017 on anti-Muslim group Rise Canada’s YouTube page, Johnston can be seen rallying outside MP Khalid’s office in Mississauga, Ontario, along with the Canadian branch of the German anti-Islamization and far-right nationalist group Pegida (see chapter 5). Johnston said he was “honoured that [MP Khalid] read what I had to say in the House of Commons.” Johnston accused MP Khalid of “infiltrating Mississauga,” described the Qur’an as “hate literature,” and encouraged people to “take up arms” through education.

In a Mississauga City Council meeting in February 2017, during which the city council endorsed MP Khalid’s M-103, Johnston and Mayor Bonnie Crombie reportedly “got into a terse exchange.” Mayor Crombie asked Johnston if he had called MP Khalid a “political terrorist,” to which he responded, “That’s exactly what I said because M-103 is extremely anti-Canadian.”

In March 2018, Johnston advertised a national speaking tour with images of swastikas that described Black Lives Matter and Antifa as “domestic terrorists.” He named several universities, public libraries, secondary schools, and even an Islamic centre in Brampton, Ontario (in violation of his bail conditions) as his hosts. Some locations listed by Johnston denied involvement in the events, while others outright refused to welcome him.

Muslims Are Terrorists. Johnston described Omar Khadr, a Canadian who was imprisoned and tortured as a Child at the Guantanamo Bay military prison, as “terrorist ilk.”

Rohingya Genocide Denial. Johnston has denied the existence of a Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar and the ongoing genocide they are facing, despite international condemnation of ethnic cleansing. He claimed that Bengali Muslims have invaded Myanmar’s Rakhine State and “raped and killed their way into the peaceful Buddhist nation.” In an interview with American anti-Rohingya activist, Rick Heizman, Johnston claimed that Muslims are killing Buddhists and “NOT the other way around like all Canadian media are telling you.”

In 2018, Johnston travelled to Myanmar on what he said was an independent trip, though he acknowledged that the state military had provided him access to the country’s beleaguered northern region, which is home to the Rohingya Muslims. He posted hours of videos about his trip (NB: these can no longer be found online), but BuzzFeed reported that Johnston had stated that “international reporting on the ongoing crisis in Rakhine is ‘fake news.’” Echoing the Myanmar government, he claimed that Rohingya Muslims are “terrorists.” According to the BuzzFeed article about this trip, “Johnston rejected the idea that he was used to spread state propaganda, insisting that the government allowed him to the closed-off part of the country because he was the only person willing to tell the truth in the region.”

In February 2018, Johnston began selling shares for his documentary, Rohingya Lie. Meanwhile, in the same year, the United Nations called for Myanmar’s generals to be tried in the International Criminal Court for genocide.
Connections

Johnston has strong ties with Rebel News. He co-hosted a radio show called Rebel Yell with David Menzies and has been interviewed by Rebel News on multiple occasions. He was interviewed twice by Menzies in March 2017 for his activities protesting against the Peel School Board accommodating Friday prayer for Muslim students. During one of the interviews, Johnston stated that the Peel School Board had “committed the act of treason by assisting the enemy of Canada in spreading into our schools and indoctrinating our children.” In July 2017, following his arrest, Ezra Levant interviewed Johnston, who claimed that Canada was “going to fall apart if I go to prison.”

In September 2018 during his mayoral campaign, Johnston livestreamed a video with right-wing, White nationalist journalist and then mayoral candidate for Toronto, Faith Goldy. Numerous videos of their partnership propagating anti-Muslim and anti-migrant rhetoric can be found on Johnston’s BitChute site, including videos with titles such as Removing Illegal Aliens And Protecting Canadian Culture and Banning Face Masks And Banning Radical Mosques.

In 2017, Johnston was a guest speaker at an event hosted by JDL-Canada (see chapter 6). Attendees at the event included Rebel News commentator David Menzies, as well as an organizer with the anti-Islam group Rise Canada, and a member of the Proud Boys (see chapter 5). The national director for JDL-Canada, Meir Weinstein, lamented Johnston’s hate-speech charge and encouraged supporters in the audience to fill the courtroom for his appearances.

As noted above, Johnston has been allied in his Islamophobic campaigns with anti-Muslim activist Ron Banerjee from Rise Canada (see chapter 5).

4.4.6

Mark Steyn

The imagery on this Maclean’s magazine cover plays on the demographic fears promoted in Steyn’s article. A Muslim child wearing a black chador gazes ominously at the camera. The photo works in tandem with the headline and description to inspire an emotional response of Islamophobic fear. Rooting Islamophobic paranoia in the tropes of demographic-replacement fears, the image presents a visual warning to the West about the alleged perils that a growing population of Muslim youth poses to the world.

Overview. Mark Steyn is a Canadian author and journalist. He is renowned for his views that represent Muslims as demographic threats and Islam as a civilizational danger to Western societies. He contributes to a variety of news networks, including Maclean’s and the National Post and is the host of the The Mark Steyn Show. In line with his conservative political stances, Steyn has been a recurring guest on Fox News’ Tucker Carlson Tonight.

Background. Steyn has published books that feature a dystopic examination of Islam, Muslims, and the decline of Western nations. In 2006, he published America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It, warning of the rise of “Islamic imperialism,” cultural relativism, and the
eventual downfall of the West. In response to a human-rights complaint brought against him for publishing Islamophobic articles, in 2009 Steyn published Lights Out: Islam, Free Speech and the Twilight of The West as commentary on Islam, the erosion of free speech, and the “totalitarianism of multiculturalism.” In 2011 he wrote the apocalyptic sequel to America Alone called After America: Get Ready for Armageddon, which warned of a the “civilizational suicide” taking place in the United States.

Views

Demographic Replacement and Civilizational Jihad. In 2007, Steyn was at the centre of a series of complaints filed with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal, regarding his 2006 Maclean’s article, “The Future Belongs to Islam.” The article featured Islamophobic narratives that promoted fears of demographic replacement (see chapter 3) taking place in the West due to aging and declining populations being supplanted by young Muslims prone to jihad, cultural degeneracy, and a pernicious desire to impose sharia law. Steyn elaborated his warning:

On the Continent and elsewhere in the West, native populations are aging and fading and being supplanted remorselessly by a young Muslim demographic. Time for the obligatory “of course”: of course, not all Muslims are terrorists—though enough are hot for jihad to provide an impressive support network of mosques from Vienna to Stockholm to Toronto to Seattle. Of course, not all Muslims support terrorists—though enough of them share their basic objectives (the wish to live under Islamic law in Europe and North America) to function wittingly or otherwise as the “good cop” end of an Islamic good cop / bad cop routine. But, at the very minimum, this fast-moving demographic transformation provides a huge comfort zone for the jihad to move around in.

The human-rights complaints filed against Steyn and Maclean’s were dismissed. The British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal decision stated that Steyn’s article did not meet the threshold for hate that requires rising to “the level of detestation, calumny and vilification necessary to breach … the Code.” The ruling made anti-Muslim rhetoric more acceptable as part of public discourse.

Terrorist Manifesto. Anti-Muslim rhetoric informs Islamophobic violence. Steyn’s writings caught the attention of the Norwegian Islamophobic terrorist and mass murderer Anders Breivik. He was named in the White nationalist terrorist’s manifesto. Steyn later downplayed the nod he was given by Breivik, as well as denying that Islamophobia was a motivation for Breivik’s killings.

Eurabia. Steyn is a purveyor of the myth of Eurabia (a portmanteau of Europe and Arabia), the idea that Europe is being taken over by Muslims. This apocalyptic conspiracy theory claims that Europe’s modernity will be subservient to Islamic imperialism and America is destined to be the last country to resist being “reprimitted” into being a Muslim society. By deeming Muslim cultures as imposing a “primitive” influence on the West, Steyn promotes a narrative that reproduces the ideologies of colonial racism.

Free Speech. Testifying at a 2019 Canadian parliamentary hearing on online hate, Steyn stated, “Free speech is hate speech, and hate speech is free speech.” His writing further blurs those boundaries and may serve as a dog whistle to the Islamophobic far-right.

Connections

The Mark Steyn Show has featured Muslim dissident Raheel Raza (see chapter 7) and Conservative politician Kellie Leitch discussing her proposal for a “values test” for new immigrants and her stance on “barbaric cultural values” (see chapter 2).
nationalist group called Vakur along with Robert Spencer. According to the Reykjavik Grapevine, Williams’ affiliation with the CRRF appeared repeatedly in the publicity materials for the event distributed by Vakur.

**Views**

**Taqiyya / Muslim Deception.** In the text of her speech in Iceland, Williams warned Icelanders about the “duping” of European countries by “unvetted” Muslim migrants that is rendering Europe “vulnerable to Islamic supremacists.” She advocated the far-right notion that even “seemingly moderate Muslims” use “taqiyya” (deception) to hide their campaign to overtake the West, warning that Islamic supremacists will smile at you, invite you to their gatherings, make you feel loved and welcome, but they do it to deceive you and to overtake you, your land and your freedoms... jihadists are coming for you, no matter how much other Muslims may smile at you and appear friendly.

**Muslim Takeover.** In addition to promoting the notion of taqiyya, Williams’ talk fomented Islamophobic conspiracy theories about a global Muslim takeover (see chapter 3) by claiming that “since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Islamic supremacist leaders have sought to recapture the glory days of the Ottomans, and the restoration of Islamic hegemony and supremacy.”

**Muslims Are Rapists.** Using other anti-Muslim tropes, Williams promotes Orientalist narratives of degenerate Muslim masculinity by warning of imperilled European women vulnerable to rape because of a “doctrine that states that Muslim men can take infidel women.” In an interview on Iceland’s conservative talk-radio station Útvarp Saga, Williams stated, “I think that time has come that we need to run surveillance in mosques.”

**Free-Speech Alibi.** Williams protested her dismissal from the CRRF on the grounds that it was a violation of her free speech. After her termination, she wrote Fired by the Canadian Government for Criticizing Islam: Multicultural Canada: A Weak Link in the Battle Against Islamization (2018), in which she presented her experience as an embattled victim of the erosion of free speech, suffering arbitrary and discriminatory treatment amid a stifling multiculturalism and the undermining myth of “Islamophobia.” In making such arguments, Williams often leveraged her multi-ethnic identity as a validation of her xenophobic views, condemning the tyranny of multiculturalism and extolling the “warmth, smiles and acceptance” that she received from her White nationalist hosts in Iceland. Despite her termination from the CRRF, Williams has defended her views as fair warning of the “deceptive works of Muslim Brotherhood operatives in their infiltration of the West.” Williams has been a major proponent of the Islamist-bogeyman discourse (see chapter 3).

**Victim Blaming.** At the Canadians for the Rule of Law conference in 2019 (see chapter 6), which took place three days following the Christchurch, New Zealand, terror attack that killed fifty-one people, Williams was questioned about her “warning to Icelanders.” During a session where panelists repeatedly referred to the Al Noor Mosque, where the terror attack had occurred, as a “known site of radicalization,” the author of this report questioned Williams (a speaker on the panel) about how her rhetoric created an ideological breeding ground for anti-Muslim hate that can inspire White nationalist violence. This question led to this report’s author being physically assaulted and forcibly removed from this “free speech” conference. For the Islamophobia networks, free speech applies to the views they endorse, and they actively and forcibly suppress others that challenge them.

**Motion 103 Fearmongering.** For example, Williams was a staunch opponent of Motion 103 (M-103; non-binding motion to condemn Islamophobia) on the unfounded grounds that it curtailed free speech and public debate. In an article for the conservative, U.S.-based Gatestone Institute, she posited that “M-103 puts Islam above all other religions in that any other religion can be discussed openly, criticized openly and even be mocked openly without punishment or state penalty.” Williams further claimed that M-103 is a Trojan horse for imposing sharia law in Canada: “M-103 usurps democratic rights and freedoms and imposes sharia values in which Islam will not, and must not, be criticized.”

**Islamist Bogeyman.** In a 2020 interview with the Middle East Forum (see chapter 1), Williams maintained that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had “created” fertile ground for the expansion of Islamism by attempting to combat Islamophobia, through new immigration policies, turning a blind eye to Islamist terrorism in Canada, re-establishing relations with Iran, and abandoning Israel.

**Muslims Are Dangerous.** Williams is a prolific writer for Jihad Watch, in which she propagates ideas that Muslims are a threat to Christians, that Canada harbours dangerous migrant refugees, and that violence against Muslim women is the result of a “supremacist ideology.”

**Burka Bans and Free Speech.** Her Jihad Watch articles have endorsed burka bans and claims that anti-Islamophobia efforts are a threat to free speech.

**Connections**

Williams serves along with David B. Harris (see chapter 8) on the advisory board for Muslims Facing Tomorrow, founded by Muslim dissidents Raheel Raza and Salim Mansur (see chapter 7). She served as a senior advisor for the Gatestone Institute (see chapter 1) from 2011-13 and then served on the board of governors for the Gatestone Policy Council.


Williams is affiliated with the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation, an organization that promotes ideas about the “myth of Palestinian peoplehood” and equates criticism of Israel with Nazism. She is a board member of Canadians for the Rule of Law (CFTRL) and was a speaker at the 2019 conference, as previously noted. CFTRL actively recruits members to support their anti-Palestinian stance and campaigns against the Boycott Divestment Sanctions Movement, while stoking fear of Islam and Muslims in Canada (see chapter 6).

Williams has taken part in several interviews as part of Secure Freedom Radio, a project of the U.S.-based anti-Muslim think tank Center for Security Policy, (founded by Frank Gaffney Jr., a former Reagan administration official known for promoting Islamophobic conspiracy theories of civilizational jihad, creeping sharia, and the Islamist bogeyman [see chapter 3]).

Williams wrote an article for Jihad Watch in support of controversial University of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson, after he stated that “Islam was not compatible with democracy.” She thanked Peterson for supporting her after she was removed from the CRRF.
Barbara Kay

Overview. Barbara Kay is a Canadian journalist who contributes to several media networks but is primarily known as a columnist for the National Post. Her articles typically engage in anti-left rhetoric and promote fears that free speech is under threat. She promotes Islamophobic fearmongering about the threat of Islam and of creeping sharia and contends that the niqab and hijab are symbols of an anti-woman culture.

Background. Kay is a columnist for the National Post and contributes to other media outlets such as the Post Millennial, Canadian Jewish News, and The Walrus.

Kay joined Rebel News in February 2017 as their Montreal voice but left later that year complaining that there were “contributors tarnishing the Rebel brand” and called for a return to subjects that “resonate with mainstream conservatives.”

She was also a commentator for CBC Radio’s comedy news-trivia program, as the “token conservative” until she was let go in 2016 for her “politically incorrect views” on Indigenous cultural appropriation. Unrepentant, she went on to support controversial academic Frances Widdowson, who challenged the “unquestioned use of oral history” in documenting the effects of residential-school abuses. As Canadians mourned over 200 unmarked graves of Indigenous children that were found in 2021 at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, invalidating the voices of survivors is even more abhorrent.

Views

Radical Islam and the Left. Kay is known for her anti-liberal views, warning that the “alt-left” threaten free speech and support the violence of Antifa. She has spoken of an alliance between “radical Islam” and the left. Her website advertises articles regarding antifaism, rape culture, the niqab, “Islamism,” “honour/shame culture,” and “transgenderism,” to name a few.

Motion 103 Fearmongering. Kay was a strong and vocal critic of M-103, stating that it would prevent people from being able to criticize Islam. She was concerned that the parliamentary report that emerged from the M-103 hearings would not be objective due to the potential involvement of Muslim organizations. She also critiqued the naming of January 29 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia, stating that “Canadians don’t need a National Day scolding us for being Islamophobic.” Kay has been a longstanding critic of the term “Islamophobia,” despite revealing that she did not understand its definition.

Criticizing Israel Is Antisemitic. Kay coined the term “Quebecistan” in 2006, arguing that “Quebec was the most anti-Israel of all provinces and therefore the most vulnerable to tolerance for Islamist terrorist sympathizers.” Her views were in response to a Lebanese-Canadian “justice and peace” march in Montreal, which she construed as an anti-Israel Hezbollah rally. The discourse that “Muslims are anti-Semitic” (see chapter 3) if they are critical of Israel politics is prevalent among many of the avowed “free-speech champions” that promote Islamophobia. Free speech is an alibi and rhetorical prop in these anti-Muslim campaigns.

Honour Killing. Weighing in on the issue of honour killing, Kay has refuted the idea that such crimes are forms of domestic violence and instead pointed to the abuses of multiculturalism, which has led to a failure to acknowledge that “not all cultures are equally wonderful in all respects.”

Banning Hijab/Niqab. Her articles about Islam and Canadian Muslims promote recurring tropes of Islam’s insidious growing influence on Canadian institutions. For example, she critiqued the inclusion of a hijab-positive children’s book in the school curriculum, branded it as “propaganda” promoted by “virtue signalling multiculturalist parents and teachers.”

Kay supports Québec’s niqab ban as “progressive” public policy. She argues that Muslim women’s choice to wear the niqab is “psychologically stressful” and “offensive to free people.” She limits the exercise of “freedom” to those views, beliefs, and clothing she supports. Kay’s skewed logic suggests that Muslim women’s clothing choices should be subject to state control and legislation if they are a source of discomfort for others. In other words, individual bodily freedom should be sacrificed so as not to cause “offence” to others who disapprove based on the meanings they attach to those sartorial choices. This is a highly hypocritical stance, given her vocal support for freedom of expression. Kay’s anti-niqab commentary spans over nineteen separate articles in which she supports state legislation dictating what women in Québec and across Canada should be allowed to wear in the public sphere.

Connections

As noted previously, Kay was associated with Rebel News but disengaged when she became disenchanted with “the Rebel brand.” Nonetheless, she publicly stated her admiration and respect for Ezra Levant and Faith Goldy.

She has written articles that appear on Campus Watch, a project of the Middle East Forum, including one on the dangers of Islamism in Canadian universities. As previously noted, MEF is headed by Daniel Pipes and is one of the main entities of the U.S. Islamophobia industry.

Along with Pipes, Kay is an executive member of the Academic Council of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research (CIJR), a pro-Israel think tank. CIJR has hosted prominent international anti-Muslim ideologues such as Steve Emerson and Melanie Phillips. CIJR was one of the supporting organizations for the 2019 Canadiens for the Rule of Law conference (see chapter 6).

Kay was a noted speaker for the ACT! For Canada group (see Chapter 6)

Sue-Ann Levy

Overview. Sue-Ann Levy is a journalist for the Toronto Sun and Post Media. Her controversial reporting and anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim narratives have been a hallmark of her career. She has stated that she has been labelled as “crazy” as the result of her journalism.

Background. Levy describes herself as a “right- of centre” journalist for the Toronto Sun and a columnist for Post Media. She left the Toronto Sun after 30 years in July 2021. Levy has deemed herself a “--- disturber” on Twitter and flaunts her “take-no-prisoners writing style” via her webpage.

Views

Anti-Refugee Xenophobia. As previously noted, one of the controversial incidents surrounding Levy was her article that falsely claimed goats were being slaughtered in a Radisson hotel bathroom by Syrian refugees. She based this claim on a Tripadvisor hotel review. The National Newsmedia Council found that this “breached journalistic standards for accuracy in reporting,” and Levy later corrected her article. The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) suggested that Levy’s article may have inspired an arson attack at the east-end Toronto hotel she wrote about, though this connection cannot be verified. OCAP circulated posters of Levy criticizing her bigoted views on immigrants, refugees, and poverty.

Levy was criticized for a tweet implying that Barack Obama was lying about wanting friendly relations with Israel as a result of his “#MuslimBS.” Responding to tweets that Obama is Christian,
Levy promoted the Islamophobic conspiracy theory that Obama might be Muslim and have a hidden Islamic agenda.

Connections
Levy appeared on Rebel News in an interview with Ezra Levant where she complained about being banned from Toronto’s CP24 media for being contrary to mainstream ideals.

4.4.10

Stefan Molyneux

Overview. Stefan Molyneux is a Canadian vlogger and talk-show host known for his White supremacist views steeped in “race science,” eugenics, and conspiracy theories. He hosts podcasts and interviews with many conservative pundits, featuring topics with apocalyptic warnings such as The Death of Canada: Prepare Yourself, The Impending Collapse of Western Civilization, The Death of Europe, and Migratory Patterns of Predatory Immigrants.

Background. Molyneux is a self-proclaimed philosopher who created Freedomain Radio in 2004 as a platform for his views. According to the Southern Poverty Law Centre, in the thirteen years since, Molyneux has published over 1,000 podcasts and videos. Freedomain operates from donations and claims not to have ads or sponsors. The donation page boasts over half a billion views and download, and the website serves as clearinghouse for discourses supporting “racial science,” biological determinism, and social Darwinism. Molyneux has conducted interviews with diverse figures such as Noam Chomsky and Jordan Peterson, as well as Trump supporters such as Dinesh D’Souza and Candace Owens.

Alongside alt-right founder Richard Spencer and Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, Molyneux’s channel was removed when YouTube banned almost 25,000 channels for violating hate-speech policies. He was also banned from PayPal and suspended from Twitter. It has been speculated that by labelling himself as a philosopher, he was able to avoid being banned earlier along with other White supremacist propagandists.

Molyneux is the self-published author of several books that present his perspectives on topics such as anarchy, the lost art of arguments, secularism, and relationships. Reviewing his book Universal Preferable Behaviour: A Rational Proof for Secular Ethics, philosopher David Gordon such as anarchy, the lost art of arguments, secularism, and relationships. Reviewing his book Molyneux is the other White supremacist propagandists.

Views

Eugenics. Molyneux, who describes himself as an “anarcho-capitalist” is a promoter of men’s rights. He has been described as one of the “most popular promoters of the alt-right’s new scientific racism.” On his YouTube platform (since removed for hate speech), Molyneux promoted pseudoscientific race propaganda, encouraging belief in biological determinism, social Darwinism, and non-White racial inferiority. Underscoring these ideas, he has stated, “I don’t view humanity as a single species.”

Promoting Debunked “Racial Science.” Molyneux has used his public platforms to regularly dispense inflammatory rhetoric. He has been quoted declaring that immigrants are incompatible with success in a free-market economy due to their low IQ. He also stated that “screaming racism at people because blacks are collectively less intelligent … is insane.” In 2017, Molyneux was interviewed on the conservative, political talk show The Rubin Report about the “racial science” of IQ testing based on widely discredited biologically essentialist arguments. Alarming, as of May 2022, the video received 1,380,102 views, underscoring concerns about the online circulation of false and misleading information that promotes racist ideologies.

Biological Determinism and Misogyny. Molyneux has also made problematic claims that mothers are responsible for men who grow up to be violent and that women are responsible for domestic violence, arguing that “women chose assholes who guarantee child abuse.”

Islam is Antithetical to the West. Following the shooting at an Orlando, Florida, nightclub in 2016, Molyneux declared that Islam is antithetical to Western civilization.

Connections
A scheduled speaking tour with Molyneux and Lauren Southern in Australia and New Zealand was cancelled after bookings for their public speaking events were denied. An Australian High Court ruling cited security concerns, and the mayor of Auckland stated in the news, “I made clear my view that people who want to come to our country purely to demean and abuse people on the basis of their faith, race or culture are not welcome here.”

Molyneux has collaborated with other far-right media and anti-Muslim influencers such as British columnist Katie Hopkins. Hopkins joined Rebel News in 2018 until they cut ties with her in 2019, and she forfeited her lucrative Shillman Fellowship. In a 2018 interview with Hopkins on “The Ugly Truth About Diversity,” they discussed the dangers of multiculturalism and the erosion of free speech. Hopkins warned that multiculturalism means that “we will all die together” from jihadi Muslim violence, and that after visiting the migrant camps in Calais, France, she was able to confirm that immigrants bring hatred with them when they arrive in the West. She claimed that the West has been made to “bow down” to Islam due to the demands of Muslim immigrants and told Molyneux that she spends more time in the United States due to her feeling of a “takeover” in the United Kingdom. Molyneux made the unsubstantiated claim that “hundreds of thousands of young, white, British girls, often Christian of course, are being raped by these Pakistani gangs” who he claimed are never charged and are enabled by police cover-ups. Both promoted the racialized narrative of “Muslim grooming gangs” preying on vulnerable young British women as part of organized campaigns of sexual abuse.

Molyneux interviewed Bill Warner, listed as one of the ten members of the anti-Muslim inner circle by the Southern Poverty Law Center on the topic of “Political Islam.” In this conversation, Warner stated that Muslims can never be friends with a non-Muslims, and that everything done by Muslims is to advance Islam. Molyneux warned that, unlike Christianity, Islam allows for deception and lies, reinforcing the Islamophobic narrative of taqiyya (see chapter 3).

4.4.11

Watch List

Post Millennial
The Post Millennial calls itself a “centre-right” media channel with a mission to “accurately and adequately report Canadian news events as they unfold and progress, and to share this reporting with as many Canadians and citizens of the world as possible.”

The publication has a mainly social-media–based presence. As of May 2022, they had almost 169,000 followers on Twitter, 115,763 followers on Facebook, and their YouTube channel had 29,000 subscribers. Their funding originates from “private-investors.” Other funds are derived
from subscriptions and memberships fees through their website.

The Post Millennial frequently posts anti-Trudeau rhetoric, claiming that the federal government has *failed in defending* the country from radical Islam. They emphasize a fear of creeping censorship in Canada and seek to combat this growing *liberal desire.*

The Post Millennial recruited Jeff Ballingal, founder of the conservative political-advocacy group *Ontario Proud,* to their ranks. Ballingal had *helped* Doug Ford win the leadership of the Ontario Conservative Party in 2018. Ontario Proud supporters *harassed* Masuma Khan, a Muslim student from Dalhousie University, on Facebook calling her a “towel head” and “terrorist,” stating that “we should force feed her bacon.” Khan had *stated* that a video of her at an anti-Trump rally in Halifax was “factually incorrect.” (She was protesting the separation of migrant children from their families at the United States–Mexico border.) The video, circulated on Ontario Proud’s Facebook page, claimed that Khan and other protesters had “chased away” visiting U.S Marines. Khan responded on Twitter: “I did not chase any marines away. They were taking a photograph and realized it was a rally for separated families and left because according to their code they cannot partake, engage at all.” The inaccurate *video* of Khan circulating via Ontario Proud’s Twitter account went viral and was shared 1.5 million times on social media, thereby adding to the widespread orchestration and propagation of views maligning activist Muslims.

**Free Bird Media**

Free Bird Media (FBM) is described in a PressProgress *media report* as an “alt-right website whose video archives are filled with hours of speeches and interviews featuring prominent figures on Canada’s far-right, including two men recently charged with hate crimes.”

The hate-crime charges noted were in connection with anti-Muslim activist Kevin Johnston and with far-right, Your Ward News editor James Sears, who in 2019 was charged with and found guilty of wilful promotion of hate against Jews and women and was handed a *maximum one-year jail sentence*.

FBM, founded by Alexander Van Hamme, describes itself as an “independent media platform seeking to protect and promote freedom of thought by publishing news and opinions from different points of view on controversial subjects.” The platform is a vehicle for highlighting free-speech debates at Canadian universities.

Funding for FBM is secured through *Patreon* and Paypal donations through their website, as well as by merchandising. *FBM-branded hats* are modelled after Donald Trump’s MAGA hats.

As of June 2022, the FBM *YouTube page* had 5,310 followers. According to a PressProgress *report,* it *shares video content* featuring Islamophobia media influencers *Faith Goldy* and *Kevin Johnston,* as well as interviews with *Meir Weinstein* of JDL-Canada (see chapter 6) and White nationalist leaders *Paul Fromm* and *Richard Spencer.* The page also extensively covers content surrounding the Yellow Vest and PEGIDA *protests* (see chapter 5).

FBM received support from Ontario PC candidate Donna Skelly, who was an invited speaker at a *Young Conservatives event,* during which she was photographed waving a FBM hat. Skelly later disassociated herself, claiming that she was unaware of what FBM was before endorsing them.

This chapter has highlighted how far-right media and Islamophobia influencers play a central role in the dissemination of anti-Muslim racism. The following chapter examines how White Nationalist groups and ideologues propagate and promote Islamophobia in Canada.
White nationalist violence has targeted racialized and Jewish communities across Canada for decades. Since 9/11, Muslim communities, which are both racially and religiously minoritized, have become the primary targets for many far-right groups who espouse White ethnonationalism, anti-Muslim populism, and Islamophobia.

The existence of White nationalist groups in Canada is not a new phenomenon. The 1920s marked the era in which the Ku Klux Klan established roots in Canada with the formation of a Montreal branch (Kinsella 1994, 11). Within months, cross burnings took place throughout western Ontario, and in 1922 the Klan committed murder by burning the Collège de Saint-Boniface in Winnipeg, killing ten students (Kinsella 1994, 11). Between the 1940s and 1960s, Canada saw an explosion of right-wing extremist activity, and a revival of White-supremacy identity politics emerged in Canadian society (Berry 2017; Perry and Scrivens 2016).

In the 1960s, far-right ideologies focused on redefining the meaning of “Whiteness,” which White supremacist groups believed was being destabilized due to the civil-rights movement (Berry 2017, 103). Between the 1960 and 1970s, there was an increase in racial anxieties and tensions as the result of unemployment and inflation, which were believed to be results of new immigration laws introduced by the Canadian government (Perry and Scrivens 2016). These xenophobic anxieties have continued to shape identity politics within White supremacist and White nationalist groups based on ideologies of “racial protectionism” (Berry 2017).

The 1980s saw the rise of White supremacist groups like the Aryan Resistance Movement, the Heritage Front, and the Church of the Creator, as well as the rise of skinhead culture. Members of these groups were involved in violent actions across the country. White nationalist movements and subcultures have now existed in Canada for several decades and continue to grow.

According to Perry and Scrivens (2016), between 2015 and 2018, White nationalist groups increased in number by almost 25 percent, making Canada now home to almost 300 hate groups across the country. Perry and Scrivens (2016) found that another 30,000 individuals, separate from these groups were involved in ethnonationalist causes.

As this report demonstrates, several of these groups vilify Canadian Muslims and promote Islamophobic conspiracies. In fact, a 2020 study by David et al. shared the findings of an Online Environmental Scan of Right-Wing Extremism in Canada and found that anti-Muslim rhetoric was one of the two most salient topics of conversation among these groups (the second topic being anti-Trudeau grievances). Similarly, Campana and Tanner’s 2019 report on anti-Muslim racism in Canada’s far-right examined the discourses purveyed by far-right groups in real virtual public spaces and determined that “the crystallization of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim ideas is one of the main features of the contemporary Canadian far-right” (8). These ideologies include an emphasis on “raising awareness of perceived threats” and the “preservation of whiteness” (14). To this end, anti-immigration discourses that scapegoat Muslims, and the dangers of multiculturalism, are central to their discursive repertoire. Other dominant tropes produced and disseminated by these groups relate to the existential threat that Muslims pose in relation to a White genocide, the Islamic Trojan horse and civilization danger, and Muslims as terrorists. One of the far-right activists interviewed in Campana and Tanner’s study warned that it was a “mathematical inevitability” that Muslims would eventually outnumber White Canadians and that this would result in Canada becoming in an Islamic state (22). Such narratives animate racist fears about Muslims as the source of an impending White genocide in Canada. In these worldviews, such scare stories can be used to justify violent acts as a defensive mechanism to safeguard the sanctity of Canada as a White nation.

In creating strategies to combat narratives of hate and violence, Kundnani (2012) pointed out the blind spots and double standards that existed with regard to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) approaches. Although research on counter-narratives to challenge the messages of jihadists has been substantial, less consideration has been given to counter-narrative strategies that undermine and challenge far-right ideologies. When far-right, White nationalist ideologies circulate freely without alternate discourses to counter them, they can more easily proliferate and gain traction. Responding to these concerns, more researchers are now focusing on countering White nationalist ideologies. For example, a report by the Hedayat Center (Allchorn, 2021a) outlined strategies for building successful radical-right counter-narrative campaigns in order to challenge the influencers who dominate the far-right echo chambers and can indoctrinate others.

These echo chambers include Stormfront, a prominent American White nationalist online forum created by Don Black in 1995. The website is organized thematically into forums in which members can discuss specific topics such as “Ideology and Philosophy,” “Culture and Customs,” and “History and Revisionism,” alongside a variety of social, cultural, and political issues championed by the White nationalist subcultures that use this forum to communicate. Stormfront’s founder Don Black was previously grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1970s. In a troubling scenario, he was arrested in 1981 for attempting to invade the Caribbean island of Dominica and transform it into a “white state.” Black created Stormfront as a means of creating a far-reaching White nationalist community online.

According to a 2014 study on the proliferation of White nationalist ideologies, Islamophobic sentiments were more widely expressed by Canadian Stormfront subscribers than American ones (Schafer, Mullins, and Box 2014). The Canadian Stormfront online forum includes threads discussing “white decline” in Canada, animosity toward multiculturalism and diversity, immigrant fearmongering, and “anchor babies,” to name a few. Utilizing Stormfront, Canadian White-nationalism supporters are able to share and discuss their common views and organize and plan member meetups. Stormfront hosts a Canadian-based forum for which neo-Nazi Paul Fromm (see below) was a regular contributor and daily radio-show personality. His website allegedly posted the manifesto of the New Zealand mosque shooter.

In Canada and internationally, White nationalist propaganda is increasingly tied to Islamophobic ideologies and campaigns. While the influence of these groups outside of their echo chambers is low, their growth raises concerns, especially given that White Nationalist and neo-Nazi ideologies have inspired deadly Islamophobic attack in this country. According to Campana and Tanner (2019, 6), “all these actors are related in some way—although their level of proximity varies—and they often rely on the same ideological arsenal.” The fraternity of these groups through their shared beliefs and networks enhances their base of anti-Muslim activism.

The following section outlines the various groups and individuals that constitute the “foot soldiers” of Islamophobia in Canada. These groups and their ideologies are of varying prominence, significance, and influence. They represent the range and scope of Canada’s anti-Muslim, White nationalist groups, ranging from relatively small groups to larger transnational networks. A watch list is included to capture other groups, also of differing size and influence, that warrant further attention. The foot soldiers featured in this chapter provide a sense of the current landscape of anti-Muslim hate groups. The profiles highlight information on the background of and the views purveyed by these various groups, as well as identifying relevant connections to other individuals and groups that spread anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobic ideologies—and in some cases engage in hate crimes.
**PEGIDA Canada**

**Overview.** PEGIDA Canada has been involved in numerous demonstrations and rallies to promote their anti-Muslim agenda across the country. It is at these rallies that members from different alt-right groups come together and interact with one another, sharing a common cause. Their gatherings are often small though they have drawn hundreds and at times over a thousand supporters. They have often been met with and outnumbered by counter-protests. On their official Facebook event pages, PEGIDA has stated that the purpose of these events is to “provide information on Islam” or to “Expose Hate.” During their May 4, 2019 rally, attendees were filmed burning a Qur’an.

**Background.** PEGIDA stands for “Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West” and is defined as a “political movement without ideology,” though their aim is “to stop the increasing Islamization of Western Civilization.” The organization was founded in Germany by Lutz Bachmann in 2014.

Their website emphasizes PEGIDA’s mandate as being the preservation of German identity and the respectful use of [German] art, culture, language, and traditions. Preserving German ethnonationalism involves stopping political and religious fanaticism, radicalism, “Islamization,” “genderisation,” and early sexualization of children.

PEGIDA maintains that Germany must implement immigration laws based on demographic, economic, and cultural considerations and seek an end to “unregulated mass immigration.”

The Canada-based chapter, PEDIGA Canada, was founded in 2015 by Brian Hanson and Tom Hill. The group describe themselves as an organization dedicated to “Canadians who wish to preserve their culture.” Smaller chapters can be found in: Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and New Brunswick.

PEGIDA Canada leader Janice Bultje is a resident of Chatham-Kent in southwestern Ontario who uses the alias of “Jenny Hill.” Bultje/Hill stated that “Pegida Canada largely is middle class and white, but includes blue collar workers and academics, men, women, Christians, Jews, students and seniors.”

The Canadian Centre for Identity Based Conflict lists PEGIDA’s philosophical underpinnings as nationalism and anti-Islam on a portion of its website reserved for “violent transnational social movements.”

The organization’s primary goal is to eliminate the growth and infiltration of Islam in the West. The PEGIDA Canada website states that their group represents “patriots of Canada against the Islamization of the West.” Two of the main principles, according to the group’s literature, are “No Radical Islam” and “No Sharia Law.” PEGIDA states that they are only willing to accept immigrants to Canada if they do not follow Islam.

PEGIDA Canada’s website notes that they are in favour of the admission and integration of refugees so long as this allows “protects and preserves Christian-Judeo based culture” from “violent political ideology.” In their view, Muslim immigration must be regulated since Islam is charged with promoting radicalism and preaching hatred. They are against allowing practices such as “Sharia law and Sharia police” into Canadian communities, a baseless concern intended to stoke fear and promote prejudice.

**Views**

**Promoting Judeo-Christian Civilization.** PEGIDA’s mandate is “For the preservation of Canada as a Christian-Judeo-based culture.” A 2021 report on Canadian radical-right narratives identified PEGIDA’s ideologies as being “civilizationism,” anti-Muslim populism, and Eurabia conspiracy theories.

**Muslims Are Terrorists.** On June 10, 2019, PEGIDA Canada commented on a tweet from Robert Spencer (a key figure in the U.S. Islamophobia industry who operates Jihad Watch) that read “Turkey calls for global crackdown against ‘anti-Islam’ attacks from the ‘far right.’” Their response to this was, “Such so-called terror attacks against Muslims are infrequent and uncoordinated with any larger group, but Muslim attacks against infidels are organized, calculated and ubiquitous,” linking Muslims directly to terrorism.

**Islimist Bogeyman.** A June 26, 2019, tweet stated, “I believe that the jihadist ideology in the 21st century is a far greater threat to Western democracies than the communist ideology of the 20th century.” In line with the Islamist-bogeyman conspiracy theory (see chapter 3), PEGIDA tweeted about a Muslim student association with the caption “oka MB,” which refers to the Muslim Brotherhood (see chapter 3).

**Violent Muslim Takeover.** The “Community” section of PEGIDA Canada’s official Facebook page (since removed) displayed inflammatory anti-Muslim rhetoric and imagery. An image posted in 2017 was captioned “3-Phases of Muslim Immigration [Few in Number, Large Minority, Clear Majority].” Another image, of a Muslim man, posted in 2015, read “All I want to do is move to your country, rape your women, bomb your buses, riot in your streets and demand that you accept my religion. Why can’t you be more tolerant?”

PEGIDA Alberta’s Facebook page (with 1,937 followers as of May 2022) provided the following warning in an ad picturing a Canadian flag:

> Canadians proudly raise their children to be intelligent, open-minded, self confident, self reliant, compassionate and more... How dare you try to change them into guilt-ridden, backwards, third-world mentality, and valueless objects! NO ISLAM IN SCHOOL-AT ANY LEVEL.

**Anti-Muslim Xenophobia.** In 2017 PEGIDA-Québec rallied against Motion 103 following the Quebec City mosque attack. A spokesperson for the group was reported as stating, “We need to take less Muslims into our country. We see this all over the place. It’s worse for Muslims. It’s worse for us.”

**Muslim Contagion.** Weaponizing the COVID-19 public health crisis, PEGIDA on both sides of the Atlantic have portrayed Islam as a “virus carrier.” PEGIDA Canada linked the spread of Islam to the spread of the virus in the following tweet: “Rapid Spread could have something to do with Islam?” The group has also promoted anti-Muslim conspiracy theories that claim that the Islamic State / ISIS is behind the pandemic and seeks to profit from it and exploit it to further their agenda of Islamizing the West. The coronavirus and Islam are represented as “inva...” contaminating and imperiling the West and therefore in need of “containment.”

**Muslins as Parasites.** While PEGIDA states that they are against those who preach hatred toward others, PEGIDA Canada’s official Twitter account consists of derogatory commentaries on Muslims and contains reference to Islam as a parasite.

**Connections**

PEGIDA has drawn together a collection of far-right groups as part of their Islamophobic campaigns. The Canadian Centre for Identity Based Conflict identified the following Canadian
White nationalist groups committed to anti-Muslim agendas as known affiliates of PEGIDA: Soldiers of Odin, Northern Guard, Proud Boys, and Three Percenter Militia members.

PEGIDA Canada’s leader Janice Bultje was noted as one of the 250 signatories required to officially register Maxime Bernier’s People’s Party of Canada.

5.1.2
Proud Boys

Overview. The American branch of the Proud Boys were active participants in the U.S. Capitol siege in January 2021. Several members were arrested and charged after allegedly pepper-spraying police officers. In February 2021, Proud Boys were placed on Canada’s official list of terrorist entities.

Background. Proud Boys were founded in 2016 in the United States by British-Canadian Gavin McInnis, a co-founder of VICE News, though he left the news company in 2008.

The Proud Boys gained prominence alongside the 2016 U.S. presidential election, in support of Donald Trump whose values appeared to echo their own. Their official Facebook and Twitter pages (before they were shut down) had over 20,000 followers at the end of 2017. A Rewire survey of private Facebook groups that claimed to be affiliated with Proud Boys chapters found that were at least 6,000 members in 2017.

In 2017, the Proud Boys attended the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and a member of the group, Jason Kessler, helped to organize the event. Some Proud Boy members went to trial for assaulting protesters in 2018. On August 19 of that year, two were convicted on assault charges.

Canadian Proud Boys have also been involved in controversial incidents. In 2017, a group of men claiming to be members of the group were involved with the disruption of an Indigenous event on Canada Day. These men were later identified as members of the Canadian Armed Forces. They were suspended after the incident and then reinstated to regular duty.

In August 2019, the group’s Facebook page contained posts about Patrik Mathews, a Canadian soldier exposed as having ties with the neo-Nazi group, The Base. Proud Boys stood behind Matthews as a media victim and claimed that “the media is more responsible for death and violence than any ‘Nazi’ group in Canada has ever been.”

Views

Ethnonationalism. A 2021 report on Canadian radical-right narratives identified Proud Boys Canada’s ideologies as “ethnonationalism,” “chauvinism,” and “pro-gun sentiments.”

Creeping Sharia. McInnis is openly Islamophobic. In 2017, he stated, “I’m not a fan of Islam. I think it’s fair to call me Islamophobic.” He has also been quoted as saying, “When people in America say ‘Muslim are what? One or two percent of the population? There’s never gonna be sharia law here.’ And I say have a look at Britain. Have a look at Europe. That’s where we’re headed.” Continuing his inflammatory Islamophobic rhetoric, McInnis stated, “Give us a reason to accept you, because you know what? Sharia law ain’t it. Raping women ain’t it. Cutting off clits ain’t it. Throwing gay people off roofs ain’t it. You are a disgrace.”

Anti-Muslim Rhetoric. Proud Boys are known for their anti-Muslim and misogynistic rhetoric. The group’s founders have made statements such as “It’s such a rape culture with these immigrants, I don’t even think these women see it as rape”; “Muslims have a problem with inbreeding”; and

“Palestinians are stupid. Muslims are stupid.”

Connections

In June 2019, the Proud Boys Canada, along with Yellow Vests, were involved in protests that ended with violent confrontations at the Hamilton Pride festival in Ontario.

In the United States, the Proud Boys planned a large rally in Portland on August 17, 2019. The attendees included other White nationalist groups, Patriot Prayer and Three Percenters. The group believed they had received direct support from then U.S. President Donald Trump after he tweeted about the rally.

In 2018, McInnes produced a video for his Conservative Review TV show, Get Off My Lawn, featuring Ryan Mauro from the Clarion Project, during which he declared that “Nazis are not a thing. Islam is a thing.” The Clarion Project is a major beneficiary of dedicated funding that supports the U.S. Islamophobia network in promoting their anti-Islam projects, such as the film Obsession: Radical Islam’s War against the West (see chapter 4). Canadian Raheel Raza (see chapter 6) is a member of the Clarion Project’s advisory board.

5.1.3
Three Percenters

The logo for Three Percenters Canada is depicted here. Other insignia publicly promoted by White nationalist groups are included in this chapter.

Overview. The Three Percenters are listed as a terrorist entity in Canada and have been labelled as one of Canada’s most dangerous groups by Maxime Fiset, a former neo-Nazi who works with the Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV) in Montreal.

The American branch of the Three Percenters was named in a plot to storm the U.S. Capitol to remove Democratic party members in March 2021. This was after group members had been accused of taking part in the U.S. Capitol riot on January 6, 2021, which left six people dead. Following the riot, Three Percenters leader Chris Hill said he had been contacted by several people interested in joining the groups that took part in the Capitol siege.
Background: According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), the Three Percenters draw their name from an unsubstantiated claim that during the 1700s only three percent of the colonists were actively fighting in the field against British forces. The SPLC noted that “they believe that a small force of armed individuals can overthrow a tyrannical government, and many Three Percenters engage in paramilitary training and organizing to do so.”

The American group was co-founded in late 2008 by Mike Vanderboegh, who was active in 1990s Alabama militia groups. In 2017, following the events of the Charlottesville riots, a twenty-three-year-old member of the Three Percenters, Jerry Drake Varnell, was arrested as he tried to set off a truck bomb outside a bank in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

In 2015, a member from Phoenix, Arizona, prompted an FBI Bureau of Investigation alert after posting a video stating he was heading to upstate New York with guns to challenge a Muslim group. That same month, a Three Percenter member in Dallas, Texas, led a protest by armed, masked men.

A 2018 CBC News report revealed that the American organization has moved into the Canadian provinces of Alberta (200 members), Ontario (600 members) and Québec, with the goal of having members across the country.

The Canadian leader of the Three Percenters is Beau Welling, president of the Alberta chapter. The group has been labelled “a far-right anti-Islamic organization that claims to be heavily armed and ready for war” on Canadian soil.” Demonstrating their combat readiness, at rallies group members sport fatigue and carry shock canes that are used to stun cattle.

The Canadian Three Percenters include members from current and ex-military, police, and first responders. Dr. Barbara Perry, a leading expert on far-right extremism, stated that she was “scared of this group” and said in an interview that the group is “a far-right prepper militia, who are actively arming and engaging in paramilitary training … to defend Canada from what they see as the inevitable invasion by Muslims.” During an interview with CBC News in April 2018, Maxime Fiset shared Perry’s concerns regarding the threat posed by the Three Percenters in Canada.

The group is distrustful of mainstream media, according to a 2017 VICE News report, and promotes anti-Muslim fearmongering and propaganda. For example, when four hunters went missing and were presumed dead in northern Alberta in what was determined to be an accident, Three Percenter leader Beau Welling claimed that “jihadis” might have killed them, and there must be “terrorist training camps” in northern Alberta.

Welling was also involved in an incident during which he staked out a Calgary mosque after receiving “undercover intel” that “jihadis” were being trained there. After witnessing a box being brought into the mosque at 4:30 a.m., he concluded that the box must have been full of guns and ammunition. He later stated that that the group is actively checking into at least sixteen mosques across Canada. The group’s actions are animated by Islamophobic discourses of a jihadist take over of Canada and, given their paramilitary training, their surveillance of mosques is a serious security concern.

Views

Anti-Muslim Populism. A 2021 report on Canadian radical-right narratives identified the ideologies of Three Percenters Canada as rooted in “anti-Muslim populism,” “militarism,” and “pro-gun” sentiments.

Anti-Muslim Rhetoric. The group promotes anti-government, anti-Islam, and Islamophobic propaganda though they deny this. The Alberta chapter leader, Beau Welling, stated, “We are not anti-Islam; it is the extremism that we dislike.” In June 2014—a year before this statement—Welling told VICE News that being anti-Islam would be a fair description of the group’s ideologies, saying, “We dislike Islam and the Muslims.”

Muslim Invaders. Echoing the Muslim-invaders narrative. 2017, Welling stated that refugees and immigration were part of a “planned tactical citizen invasion.” VICE News reported that “Welling once posted that all Muslims are guilty by association and ‘fuck the moderate Muslims.’”

Referencing a debunked story about fights involving Syrian high-school students in Red Deer, Alberta, that led to anti-immigrant protests at the school, a Three Percenter supporter posted in the closed online group that Syrian children should be rounded up “like animals.”

Violent Threats. The group’s Facebook page has featured troubling and threatening statements, such as “The only good Muslim is a dead Muslim.” Other posts by followers (not Welling) have called for the purging of Muslims and the assassination of Justin Trudeau before he can let more immigrants in.

Connections

Some members of the Alberta Three Percenters served as a security detail at a June 2017 rally in Calgary hosted by World Coalition Against Islam (see below) and fronted by anti-Islam activist Sandra Solomon (see chapter 6). This event has been referred to as the group’s “coming-out party.”

Several members of this group were identified providing security for a 2017 rally in Québec against the gun registry. This rally was supported by several far-right groups, including Storm Alliance and La Meute (see below).

5.1.4

Soldiers of Odin and Canadian Infidels

Canadian Infidel “swag” sold on Redbubble (since removed) that depicted guns and a call to action for an anti-Islam “dating service.” The branding and sale of White nationalist paraphernalia monetizes racist hate.
Overview. The Soldiers of Odin is an anti-immigrant group that primarily targets Muslim immigrants. They are known for conducting street patrols and participating in anti-immigration protests. The Canadian chapters of Soldiers of Odin can be found within most provinces across Canada, though the group has expanded significantly in British Columbia.

Background. The Soldiers of Odin (SOO) was founded in Finland in 2015 by Mika Ranta, a self-proclaimed neo-Nazi (Ekman 2018, 5). Ranta started SOO in response to Finland’s refugee crisis, and he and his followers believed that Finns needed protection from refugee populations. The movement has expanded outside of Finland and can now be found in other countries, such as Norway (Odins Soldater), Sweden, Ireland (the name changed to Clann Eirean Defence Association in 2017), and Canada.

Although the group denies accusations of racism, Ranta has connections to the Nazi group, Nordic Resistance Movement. In 2017, Ranta received an eighteen-month suspended sentence after being convicted of a racially motivated assault on two immigrants.

In Canada the groups has splintered into offshoots called “Wolves of Odin,” “Canadian Infidels,” and “The Clann,” based in western Canada.

In 2018, the Edmonton, Alberta, branch of SOO (one of the group’s first active Canadian chapters) announced that they were “resigning” and rebranding as the Canadian Infidels under the leadership of Tyson Hunt. This offshoot is also referred to as the Wolves of Odin. SOO has spawned another offshoot known as The Clann. All factions are united in their perception of Muslims as a civilizational threat.

“Wolves of Odin” (a.k.a. Wolfpack) was used to designate some members after a controversy around group members posing with political candidates in Alberta.

On January 28, 2019, VICE News reported that the Canadian Infidels stood outside the Al Rashid mosque in Edmonton wearing toques with the word “kafr” (infidel) written in Arabic. After an altercation occurred, police were called, and witnesses described the situation as “an attempt to scout the property and provoke the community.” It was reported and later confirmed that one of the men involved in the incident was the group’s leader, Tyson Hunt. A press release from the Al Rashid Mosque noted that the Alberta chapter of Sons of Odin, a.k.a. Canadian Infidels, had trespassed and were surveilling the mosque.

On February 23, 2021, members of SOO and of Urban Infidels took part in a protest against COVID-19 restrictions in Edmonton. This event was condemned by Premier Jason Kenny after promotional materials for the event included images from the Charlottesville, Virginia, riot—the Unite the Right rally—in 2017. Edmonton police stated several weeks later that “[they] did not have the evidence that the protesters’ tiki torches were symbols of hate.” Tiki torches are known as emblems of White nationalism.

Views

Anti-Muslim Populism. A 2021 report on Canadian radical-right narratives identifies the SOO Canada’s ideologies as “anti-Muslim populism,” “ethnonationalism,” and “vigilantism.”

Trojan-Horse Conspiracy. SOO and their offshoots promote Islamophobic conspiracy theories centred on the Trojan-horse strategy, which accuses the federal government of importing political Islam into Canadian public policy.

Creeping Sharia / Muslim Invasion. A 2019 report in the Toronto Star described on the online activities of SOO and their offshoot groups:

The Wolfpack page warns of “an influx of radicalized Islamic and Marxist bad actors who wish to subdue our laws to instil sharia laws and Marxist revolutionary ideals on our once-great society,” while the first question when one attempts to join either Wolves of Odin Facebook groups is, “Do you agree that we are in the midst of a foreign invasion?”

Muslim Takeover / White Genocide. Canadian Infidels have warned that Canada is heading in the direction of being a radical Islamic state, losing what makes it a free and multicultural society. Hunt was known to post comments on his Facebook page (since removed) on topics like banning burkas in Canada. He has been quoted as saying, “Whites need to take a stand to protect our race,” a gesture to the belief that a White genocide is underway.

Anti-Muslim Xenophobia. Both the SOO, and the Canadian Infidels are concerned about immigration. Specifically, it is their resistance to Muslim immigration that has allowed them to gain followers.

Connections

In October 2018, Alberta Conservative candidates were photographed with the Edmonton chapter of the SOO during a public event. This event also included members of Soldiers of Christ, Proud Boys, Clannsman, and Three Percenters Alberta.

A former member of SOO is also noted as having been one of the 250 signatories on documents required for the People’s Party of Canada to gain official status.

SOO provided security for a Toronto mosque protest that was held by JDL-Canada (see chapter 6) and anti-Muslim activist Sandra Solomon (see chapter 7). These ties demonstrate how the different players are networked within the Islamophobia ecosystem and provide mutual aid and endorsement. While it seems counterintuitive that White nationalists and a Jewish group would align, given the history of antisemitism in these movements, it is their shared Islamophobic views that unite them.

5.1.5 Northern Guard

Overview. Northern Guard, a splinter group of SOO, is committed to the pursuit of White nationalism and resistance to White genocide. Northern Guard leader Nick Gallant promotes xenophobic ideologies that undergird the racial anxieties of White decline, warning followers that immigration is the biggest threat to Canada. These beliefs legitimate their call to promote White nationalism.

Background. Researchers at the University of New Brunswick have found an alarming increase in far-right activity in Atlantic Canada, including the presence of the Northern Guard. The appearance of this group in Halifax in January 2019 raised concerns for Muslims and other racialized groups.
After splintering from the SOO, the Northern Guard grew under the leadership of Nick Gallant. In a 2018 video interview uploaded to the group’s Facebook page (now removed), Ronny Cameron of the Proud Boys spoke with Gallant, who described himself as a White nationalist who believes that a White genocide is taking place and that White nationalism is the only way to “save” Canada. He also warned that Christianity was in danger and needed to be protected (16:40). The group has been described by the Canadian Anti-Hate Network as “one of the most militant groups in the anti-Muslim movement.” The group is chauvinistic and male-driven, and excludes women, although there are plans to create a female faction called the “Northern Maidens.”

Views

Creeping Sharia / Muslim Takeover. The group’s Facebook page featured numerous links and comments that associated Islam with terrorism and promoting Islamophobic fearmongering and conspiracy theories about a sharia-based takeover of Canada. In the same interview mentioned above, leader Nick Gallant referred to Islam as a “plague” (21:33).

Xenophobia / White Decline. The Northern Guard promotes anti-immigration and xenophobic ideologies and warnings of White genocide. The Vancouver Island chapter was the most active in promoting these views on their now defunct Facebook page. Their farewell message stated that they would continue to find a voice for the “oppressed whites and those who feel their European heritage is under siege.” The Northern Guard is also actively involved in promoting vile antisemitic tropes.

Connections

The Saskatchewan chapter is known to have direct links to the neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan movements. Darren Jones, the vice-president of the Saskatchewan chapter, was an anti-police activist, a supporter of the neo-Nazi Charlottesville march, and a proud Nazi and Ku Klux Klan supporter. Jones has been linked to Christian Waters, the grand dragon of the Saskatchewan Ku Klux Klan. Eric St. Cyr, administrator of the official Northern Guard Facebook page also has known ties to the Ku Klux Klan. In response to these controversial ties, Nick Gallant shut down the chapter.

In 2019, People’s Party of Canada leader, Maxime Bernier, was pictured with members of the Northern Guard while one member posed with the “OK” hand symbol that is used to denote White power. Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale’s office responded to the photograph by accusing Bernier of legitimizing White supremacy and White nationalism. Bernier claimed to not have been aware of their affiliation, but nonetheless, the PPC’s political platform has attracted support from White nationalist Northern Guard members.
5.1.6
Blood and Honour, and Combat 18

Overview: Blood and Honour, and Combat 18, are neo-Nazi organizations that were officially been added to Canada’s list of terrorist organizations in 2019. Blood and Honour supporters come from backgrounds that include skinhead culture, and those who identify as Christian.

According to Public Safety Canada, the group has been involved in several attacks throughout North America and in several European Union member states. These include the murder of two homeless men in 1998 in Florida and firebombings in February 2012 that targeted Romani families in the Czech Republic.

The Canadian chapter of Blood and Honour is under the leadership of Kyle McKee, the former founder and spokesperson for Alberta’s Aryan Guard. McKee has a history of arrests for violent crimes including an assault against a North African cab driver in 2006 and assaults against Sikh men in Edmonton in 2012. Disturbingly, McKee has “Kill Jews” tattooed on his shins.

Background. Blood and Honour was founded in 1987 by Ian Stewart Donaldson in the United Kingdom. Donaldson was an organizer for the National Front (Kinsella 1994, 258). In the 1980s, he formed the White nationalist punk-rock band Skrewdriver, which was known for their openly racist and xenophobic lyrics. One song promotes disturbing messaging: “Put up a fence, close the borders, they don’t fit in,” or “[N-word], [N-word], get on that boat, row, get out of here, go go go” (Kinsella 1994, 259).

The band became associated with the National Front and British National Party. Donaldson later aligned himself with neo-Nazi movements, and then in 1987 he founded Blood and Honour with Nicky Crane. The group continued to grow during the 1990s. With his ties through the punk band, Donaldson was able to bring in large numbers of followers from skinhead communities across the United Kingdom.

Combat 18 is a neo-Nazi organization that was founded in 1992 by Charlie Sargent and Harold Covington, also in the United Kingdom. The group has strong ties to several groups, including Blood and Honour, National Socialist Movement, Racial Volunteer Force, Nazi Lawriders, Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Gulf Cartel, and the Loyalist Volunteer Force.

Combat 18 gained control of Blood and Honour following Donaldson’s death in 1993. Shortly after this, many skinhead bands accused Combat 18 of profiteering from their music, which caused a growing feud that led to a separation and dissension among the groups. One faction favoured promoting White power through music, while the other favoured a more radical approach that included terrorism. This split followed the group to the United States, which saw the formation of two rival Blood and Honour groups, Blood and Honour America Division and Blood and Honour USA.

According to Alberta’s Organization for the Prevention of Violence, Blood and Honour’s presence in Canada reached 60 to 70 members between 2016 and 2017, but the group has failed to expand beyond Alberta, and its membership began to decline after 2017.

Views

Race War. Donaldson was quoted as saying, “Eventually there will be a race war and we have to be strong enough to keep this country pure and if it means bloodshed at the end of the day, then let it be.” He also advised, “To achieve all of this we, and our European comrades, must above all have faith. Our enemies are strong, and presently we are relatively weak in numbers, but unbeatable in spirit.”

Connections

Blood and Honour America consists of the skinhead groups Volkfront and Troops of Tomorrow, the Christian identity groups Christian Guard and the Daughters of Yahweh, and the neo-Nazi White Revolution, among others.

5.1.7
ID Canada

Overview. Generation Identity is a part of the Identitarian movement, which originated in France to oppose non-White immigration, especially Muslim immigration, which they have warned threatens Europe’s White identity. Martin Sellner currently leads the Austrian chapter of Generation Identity. In April of 2019, BBC News reported that Sellner openly admitted to being a part of the neo-Nazi movement. He admitted having spray-painted a swastika on a synagogue in 2006, though he now claims to have reformed from his neo-Nazi leanings.

Background. Generation Identity was originally formed in 2014. The Canadian chapter rebranded themselves as ID Canada in August 2017, when they came under new leadership. In 2019, the Canadian Anti-Hate Network identified Mark Stewart as part of the leadership of ID Canada. Discussing the regional shift, the group stated that “while the vast majority of our core Canadian tenets come from Europe, this organization needed its own unique Canadian brand.”

This separation was emphasized following the news that Generation Identity in Europe had received a donation from the New Zealand mosque shooter. ID Canada stated on Twitter that they no longer had any connections with their European counterparts.

In 2018 the group posted posters in several Canadian cities with slogans that said “Stop the Ethnocide of old stock Canadians” and “You’re being Replaced.”

13 The anti-Black racist rhetoric used here and elsewhere in this chapter has been modified in recognition of the epistemic violence of this hate speech.
Great Replacement. **ID Canada** is an ethnonationalist and Identitarian youth movement that decries Canada’s decaying identity, increased third-world immigration, and what they perceive as the prevalence of anti-European sentiments in the country. Influenced by the Great-Replacement conspiracy theory (see chapter 3), they warn that a demographic replacement of “old stock Canadians” is underway and that measures must be taken to prevent further racial and cultural decline.

**White Decline:** On their now defunct website, they declared that Canada was never meant to be a melting pot and that “diversity was Canada’s greatest weakness.” They proclaim that “Canada is not a nation of immigrants” and that “the Dominion of Canada was formed by Europeans.” The group argues that the protection of “decaying ideals of political correctness and diversity” are disrespecting Canada’s European ancestors. They validate the settler colonial foundations of Canada and erase the existence of Indigenous sovereignty claims through what they state as a refusal to “re-write- history” and pretend that the nation existed before European colonization.

Demographic Replacement / White Genocide: ID Canada retweeted an article from The Washington Post on school diversification in the United States to reinforce the idea that demographic replacement is taking place and will lead to an eventual White genocide. The tweet read, “In 2020, whites will no longer represent a majority of American children. Diversity has spread to school districts across the country, and there are many more diverse districts today.” To further support this xenophobic worldview, their website offered reading recommendations for those seeking to join their movement. These include titles such as *Canada in Decay: Mass Immigration, Diversity, and the Ethnocide of Euro-Canadians, Faustian Man in a Multicultural Age, Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance, and Generation Identity: A Declaration of War Against The 68ers.*

White Settler Colonialism: ID Canada’s ideologies are rooted in Anglo-European hegemony and racial exclusion whereby only the descendants of White colonial settlers are considered the rightful heirs to the nation. Underpinning their xenophobic narratives is the idea that Canada does not belong to those [who] “come here to reap the benefits of our social assistance, healthcare, education and most importantly – the labours and sacrifices of our forefathers.” Their website stated that their mission was to remind non-White “ethnic” Canadians of the sacrifices made by European settlers and to re-instill traditional Western values.

**Eurabia:** The Identitarian groups in Europe operate as a far-right nativist movement that also promotes xenophobic and Islamophobic ideologies. They caution that Muslims pose a demographic and civilizational threat that would result in the Islamization of Europe, a fear captured by the cautionary political neologism of “Eurabia.”

Connections

**The Daily Beast** reported that Sellner had been in contact with the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque shooter prior to his terror spree. Sellner denied the allegations though later admitted that he had received $1,500 from a man with the same name as the shooter.

Sellner, his fiancée, U.S.-based alt-right ideologue Brittany Pettibone, and Canadian Islamophobia influencer Lauren Southern (see chapter 4) were banned from entering the United Kingdom in March 2018 on the grounds that their visit posed “a serious threat to the fundamental interests of society and are likely to incite tensions between local communities in the United Kingdom.”

In 2018, ID Canada publicized their support for the anti-Muslim, far-right, White nationalist Faith Goldy’s campaign for mayor of Toronto (see chapter 4).

---

**World Coalition Against Islam**

**Overview.** World Coalition Against Islam (WCAI) is a small but relatively active organization that engages in rallies and protests that focus on immigration and Islam.

**Background.** WCAI is an anti-Islam group that is dedicated to preserving Canadian culture, values, and traditions. Their website declared that they refuse to allow Canadian culture and values to become corrupted by “evil invaders.” Their mission statement asserted that “WCAI is about Canada First, Islamic Invaders Last, Keep Canada Canadian.” Their online following was estimated at 12,000 before the page became defunct.

Given restrictions on Facebook and other social-media platforms that monitor for hate speech, WCAI started using a new social-media platform, Canund (also defunct), that was based in the United States. The website bore the message “Welcome Patriots. We have true North American Patriots with real freedom of speech.” In April 2019, VICE News reported that the website had been founded by Scott Bachelard, who stated that the site was “intended to create a space where people can go and not worry about being kicked or banned. If we have a problem with someone, we let them know but everything pretty much goes, except nude pics and pornography.”

The WCAI page on Canund (now removed) promoted Islamophobic content that included imagery with captions such as “In every country where Muslims are the minority, they are obsessed with minority rights. But in countries where they are the majority, there are no minority rights.”

**Views**

**Islamophobic Campaigns.** The group is anti-Islam, as demonstrated by their name. On their official Twitter page, they state that the purpose of their organization is to focus on the “Islam problem.” In 2017, the group planned to have a “Patriotic Unity Mega Festival” with live music and a pig roast (Muslims do not eat pork because of religious prohibition). The group’s Facebook
“Muslim Cleansing” and Pro-Trump Rhetoric. The Facebook page for the Ontario chapter consists of disturbing imagery attacking Muslim communities, along with statements that “not all are terrorist, but all are ailing Sharia Law” and suggesting that Muslim refugees should be fed to “starving bears.” WCAI has associated their cause to Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim policies and warned that “evil leftists and globalists getting in our way obstructing what we know is right for our country.”

A 2022 Hamilton Spectator article noted that, WCAI’s Alberta chapter Facebook page included videos of Joey De Luca, one of the group’s founders, referring to Muslims a “sewage” and “parasites.”

The Canadian Anti-Hate Networks noted the following statements from WCAI leaders:

In my speeches I refer to [Muslims] as sewage and scum and filth - parasites - because it’s what they are…. A country is like a beautiful, crystal, glacier lake. You know? A pure lake. Pure, clean water that you can drink out of and swim in. And then all of a sudden you start dumping sewage into it, eventually that lake becomes like, contaminated. And it ruins the quality of the water in that lake. And by dumping Muslims into certain communities – certain like, mass immigration, it’s the same effect as dumping sewage into a lake. (Joey De Luca)

Can we just start executing muslims if they get the point. (Jesse Wielenga)

They have also tweeted ominous warnings that “WCAI Will drive Islam out of Canada with our last dying breath if it comes down to it.”

Anti-Refugee Fake News. WCAI was responsible for spreading a false news story claiming that Syrian teenagers assaulted their classmates. They then organized a protest outside the high school in Red Deer, Alberta, in an attempt to foment anti-Muslim fears. They have stated that the government should focus its efforts on solving homelessness rather than aiding asylum seekers.

White Nationalism. A member of the organization identified as “Jesse Canada” often posts comments on his Facebook page, such as “European heritage will be saved, we will die trying rather than be a slave to sewage” and “Country and race is what matters.”

Neo-Nazi Rhetoric. The group has also tweeted out “1488” on several occasions. This is a White supremacist symbol that is a combination of two phrases, the “14-word slogan” of the Nazi creed and “88” which stands for “Heil Hitler” (H being the eighth letter of the alphabet).

Connections

WCAI member “Jesse Canada” has posted imagery from Ku Klux Klan rallies on social media and encouraged his followers to follow ID Canada’s official Facebook page.

WCAI has been linked to Stephen Garvey of the National Citizens Alliance, a far-right political party headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, through their shared opposition to sharia law and Motion103 (see chapter 2.6 “Quick Facts: Motion 103”). They have organized events and amplified the work of far-right, anti-Muslim, and White nationalist figures such as Paul Fromm, Sandra Solomon (see chapter 7), and Brad Salzberg of the Cultural Action Party.

WCAI Alberta worked with Soldiers of Odin on “joint patrols” of Calgary streets.

In 2018, NOW Toronto reported that JDL-Canada’s leader, Meir Weinstein, had condemned the WCAI demonstration dedicated to marking the first anniversary of the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, which had brought together far-right, racist, White nationalist and antisemetic groups. Weinstein urged Canadians to be “united against such hate.” However, a few hours earlier, Weinstein had posted a defence of WCAI’s rally on Facebook and criticized an article in The Canadian Jewish News that condemned the antisemitism of the Unite the Right rally, dismissing the piece as “fake news” and countering that there would be no antisemitism at the WCAI demonstration. Islamophobic and antisemitic online trolling ensued after Weinstein’s post criticizing WCAI, which drew responses from Ron Banerjee and anti-Islamic activist Sandra Solomon (see chapter 7), among others. The infighting included an accusation by Solomon that JDL-Canada was “trying to crush my rally.”

In 2022, Hamilton MPP Paul Miller was ousted from the provincial New Democratic Party in Ontario when pre-election vetting revealed that he was a member of WCAI’s Facebook group. Miller denied that he had joined the group’s Facebook page and claimed that his account had been compromised.

5.1.9 Rise Canada and Ron Banerjee

Overview. Rise Canada is an anti-Muslim group that works in coalition with other Islamophobic organizations whose members oppose religious accommodations for Muslim students in schools and Motion 103, the parliamentary motion condemning Islamophobia (see chapter 2.6 “Quick Facts: Motion 103”). Rise Canada’s social-media accounts often post inflammatory and derogatory statements about Islam and Muslims. The views expressed by Rise Canada and its founder, Ron Banerjee, reinforce White nationalism by promoting ideas that Muslims are incompatible with “Canadian values” and democracy. Banerjee is ideologically associated with the anti-Muslim narratives of Hindutva nationalism and has connections to several groups that are part of Canada’s Islamophobia networks.

Background. According to its website, Rise Canada “defend[s] Canadian values, which often conflict with the Islamic way of thinking.” The group’s stated aim is “to awaken the masses to the danger of losing our inalienable rights.” While the year of Rise Canada’s founding is not publicly available, the website’s earliest posts date to February 2014.

In Rise Canada’s “Meet Our Senior Advisors” section, Ron Banerjee is the only name listed. Banerjee is a Canadian anti-Muslim activist who has protested religious accommodations for Muslim schoolchildren and who has organized anti-Islam and anti-Muslim rallies throughout Canada. In a video of one of Rise Canada’s rallies, Banerjee stated that “Islamophobia is a fake term; there is no islamophobia [sic].” According to court documents, Banerjee owns Rise Canada’s website.

In 2011, Banerjee publicly opposed Valley Park Middle School in Toronto, Ontario, allowing 400 Muslim students to offer the Friday prayers in the school’s cafeteria. In a July 2011 interview for Citytv on the topic, Banerjee claimed that “this is part of the Islam-ification of society.” In a July 2011 op-ed, Banerjee described the Toronto District School Board as “thoroughly infected with Islamist sympathies.”

In January 2017, Rise Canada and Banerjee protested the accommodation policy of Peel District School Board (PDSB) in Mississauga, Ontario, which allows Muslim students to pray the Friday prayers on school premises. In a video published on Rise Canada’s YouTube channel (the video is now removed), anti-Muslim activist Sandra Solomon is seen supporting Banerjee’s appeal in front of the PDSB and declaring that “Allah is Satan!” In another video, Banerjee is seen confronting someone from the school board, saying, “Will they start blowing you up? Will they...
In March 2017, the PDSB held a meeting to discuss, among other issues, religious accommodations for Muslim students. Protesters in attendance disrupted the meeting by ripping pages out of a Qur’an and shouting Islamophobic slurs. During the meeting, Banerjee delivered prepared remarks before the board, saying that “allowing students to take Islamic prayers may violate Canadian values” and shouting “Islam is poison!”

Rise Canada actively opposed Motion 103 (M-103; see chapter 2.6 “Quick Facts: Motion 103”). They called on the Canadian government to condemn Islamophobia and “all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination,” as well as to recognize the need to “quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear.”

In February 2017, Rise Canada members marched to a mosque in downtown Toronto and protested against M-103 while holding banners saying “ban Islam.” Another video posted on Rise Canada’s YouTube channel in January 2018, titled “Rise Canada members grill Liberal MP Ruby Sahota over M103,” showed MP Sahota discussing the motion. Rise Canada members referred to the motion as “Islamofascism” and “civilization jihad” (see chapter 3).

In September 2017, Jennifer Bush, a Canadian anti-Muslim activist, confronted then New Democratic Party leadership candidate Jagmeet Singh at a campaign event in Brampton, Ontario, and accused him of wanting to support sharia law and of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. In response to this incident, Rise Canada’s video “put out a statement that Bush was a “heroic independent activist” and “supporter” of Rise Canada but not a member. Rise Canada’s statement went on to praise Bush’s “inclusive message of constructive criticism of [Singh’s] policies.”

In a video published on Rise Canada’s YouTube account in January 2018, in which a protester disrupted a town-hall meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Rise Canada cited “the example set months ago by JENNIFER BUSH” and described Rise Canada as “proud to empower Canadian patriots.” Bush has also been featured in numerous other videos posted on Rise Canada’s YouTube account.

**Racism and Homophobia.** Banerjee has made disparaging remarks about Black Canadians and Afro-Caribbeans and about Sikh Canadians. He has also argued that Islam is not compatible with democracy. He has stated that “Western nations like Canada should also be based on Western values, not on Islamic values, not on jihad values, not on sharia value, but on decent, civilized, Western values.” Banerjee has also argued that Islam is not a religion. According to Banerjee, it is an “insult to the other great religions of the world” to “refer to Islam as a religion because it is so different.”

**Anti-Muslim Tweets.** According to court documents, Banerjee “owns and administers a number of social media accounts.” The Twitter account Canadian Hindu Advocacy (see details below) circulated misogynist language and disparaging and derogatory comments about Malala Yousafzai, as well as anti-Muslim slurs. Banerjee has claimed that Islamophobia is a “false term” that was “created by the Muslim Brotherhood.”

**Demographic Replacement.** In January 2010, Banerjee made disparaging remarks about Muslims and Islam in support of the far-right, Islamophobic Dutch politician Geert Wilders at an event organized by JDL-Canada. At the event, Banerjee discussed the “birth rates of Islamic immigrants” in Canada, rhetoric that supports demographic-replacement conspiracy theories, saying that Islamic civilization “has invented and has contributed less to human advancement than a pack of donkeys.”

**Islam Is a Menace.** Banerjee has referred to Islam as a “tide” and “menace” and echoed Wilders’ assertion that Islam is not a religion. According to Banerjee, it is an “insult to the other great religions of the world” to “refer to Islam as a religion because it is so different.”

**Islam Promotes Jihadi Culture.** In January 2018, Rise Canada tweeted a Facebook post by Banerjee, in which he stated that “many White Muslims from Europe, i.e. Chechnya and Kosovo, have been implicated in jihadi attacks,” which he claimed “PROVES that IQ differences are not about RACE or skin color AT ALL. It is about culture and religion more than anything.” Rise Canada has also made prejudicial statements about Sikhs. In April 2018, Rise Canada tweeted that Sikhs are “cowards, very good at shooting women children blowing [sic] up Air India jets, but no match for real men.”

Banerjee: “We MUST defeat Islam but we must do it together, as Westerners and Buddhists and Hindus together.”

**Israel and Civilizational Superiority.** Banerjee has referred to Israel as “a jewel in a sea of muck.” He also advocated that citizenship be taken away from Muslims and stated that “Islam must be prohibited and banned from all civilized countries in the world.” Banerjee further called for “no Muslims and no Islam in Canada or America.”

According to a report in the Toronto Star in July 2011, protesters gathered at the Toronto School District Board, many from Canadian Hindu Advocacy, JDL-Canada, and the Christian Heritage Party. Messaging during the protest included slogans like “Islam is a wicked, evil ideology” and “close the mosque!” He also advocated that citizenship be taken away from Muslims and stated that “Islam must be prohibited and banned from all civilized countries in the world.”

**Desecrating the Qur’an.** Rise Canada has an extensive record of tweeting prejudicial and inflammatory statements about Muslims and Islam. In a video posted on Rise Canada’s YouTube account in October 2015 (since removed), Banerjee could be seen holding a Qur’an while spitting on it and wiping it across his buttocks. In a video uploaded to Rise Canada’s YouTube account in January 2018, Banerjee described Islam as “basically a rape cult.”

**Views**

**Hindu Nationalism.** Rise Canada is a proponent of Hindu nationalism. According to Rise Canada’s 2018 annual report, it has worked with PEGIDA Canada, Myanmar Buddhist organizations, and “many Hindu Nationalists.” In September 2018, Rise Canada tweeted a Facebook post by Banerjee, in which he described those who opposed Hindu nationalism as “brown boot lickers” and “vile creatures.” Rise Canada’s Twitter account, which had the handle “@CanadaVsTerror,” has been removed.

**Killing Muslims and Sikhs.** On June 21, 2022, Banerjee was captured in a video rant saying, “I support the killing of Muslims and Sikhs in the Republic of India because they deserve to die.” The Toronto Police Services are investigating this incident.

**Islam is a Menace.** Banerjee has referred to Islam as a “tide” and “menace” and echoed Wilders’ assertion that Islam is not a religion. According to Banerjee, it is an “insult to the other great religions of the world” to “refer to Islam as a religion because it is so different.”

**Islam Promotes Jihadi Culture.** In January 2018, Rise Canada tweeted a Facebook post by Banerjee, in which he stated that “many White Muslims from Europe, i.e. Chechnya and Kosovo, have been implicated in jihadi attacks,” which he claimed “PROVES that IQ differences are not about RACE or skin color AT ALL. It is about culture and religion more than anything.” Rise Canada has also made prejudicial statements about Sikhs. In April 2018, Rise Canada tweeted that Sikhs are “cowards, very good at shooting women children blowing [sic] up Air India jets, but no match for real men.”

**Israel and Civilizational Superiority.** Banerjee has referred to Israel as “a jewel in a sea of muck.” He has stated that “Western nations like Canada should also be based on Western values, not on Islamic values, not on jihad values, not on sharia value, but on decent, civilized, Western values.” Banerjee has also argued that Islam is not compatible with democracy.

**Pro-Trump Rhetoric.** In November 2016, Rise Canada tweeted its support of then U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump, stating, “Both Trump and Hindus know this Islam is vile and despicable. Kudos to both.”

**Racism and Homophobia.** Banerjee has also made generalizing, racist, and discriminatory statements about Black Canadians and Afro-Caribbeans and about Sikh Canadians. He has also used homophobic slurs and reportedly physically assaulted a gay-rights activist.
Connections
Ron Banerjee, described in a National Post report as a “long-time activist on the extreme anti-Islam fringe,” directs Canadian Hindu Advocacy (CHA). Established in 2008, CHA has described itself as an organization that “advocate[s] for Canadian Hindus” and “stand[s] up for Canada, traditional Canadian values, and democratic principles.” CHA has strong ties with Rise Canada. In a July 2011 op-ed, Banerjee described CHA as an organization that “exist[s] to counter hate and oppression, mostly from Sikh and Muslim fundamentalists.”

In February 2007, a group called Concerned Citizens Against Terror for Citizens of Newmarket organized a panel at a mosque in Newmarket, Ontario. The event was titled “House of Worship or House of Terror.” The Star reported that those behind the event included Banerjee and Meir Weinstein, head of JDL-Canada.

In July 2017, Banerjee and anti-Muslim activist Kevin Johnston attended a protest organized by JDL-Canada in front of Paramount Fine Foods in Mississauga. At the time, the restaurant owner, Mohamed Fakih, was hosting a fundraiser for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Protesters gathered at the site of the restaurant in opposition to the government’s settlement of Omar Khadr’s lawsuit.

As detailed in a court decision pertaining to Banerjee and Johnston’s speech at the protest, Banerjee stated that he and Johnston were not allowed into Paramount restaurant because “you gotta be a jihadist” and “you have to have raped your wife at least a few times to be allowed in there.”

Fakih brought a defamation lawsuit against Johnston and Banerjee, referred to as Paramount v. Johnston. In June 2018, Justice Shaun Nakatsuru of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice rejected a motion by Banerjee to dismiss the lawsuit, stating that Banerjee was “an experienced and prolific speaker of hateful language” and that his comments “went beyond offensive or hurtful expression” and “involved hallmarks of hate.”

The lawsuit against Banerjee ended in a settlement that included an “unqualified apology” along with a confidential cash payment and a fine of $100,000 should he publish similar statements about Mr. Fakih and/or Paramount Fine Foods.

In a video uploaded in March 2017, Banerjee, Kevin Johnston, and David Menzies of Rebel News were observed attending a meeting with Kellie Leitch, MP for the Conservative Party of Canada and proponent of the barbaric-cultural-practices tip line (see chapter 2.3 “Quick Facts: Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act”). Following the meeting, Banerjee engaged in fundraising for a “stop the mosque” campaign in Meadowvale related to a mosque rezoning project in Mississauga, Ontario.

In October 2018, then Toronto mayoral candidate Faith Goldy spoke at a Hindu temple at the invitation of Banerjee and Rise Canada. Banerjee also has connections with anti-Muslim activist Eric Brassau, who has mock-performed being Muslim (he is not) on city streets while wearing a thobe and topi (prayer cap traditionally worn in South Asia). Brassau received a nine-month sentence on summary conviction for willfully promoting hatred after distributing hate literature that, according to Judge S. Ford Clements, “vilified Muslims and disparages their religion.”

In a Rise Canada YouTube video, published in June 2018, Banerjee stated that Rise Canada, the Canadian Combat Coalition (C3), the JDLC-Canada, and others had formed a “multi faith, multi-ethnic alliance” to “work together to promote patriotism” and “promote Canadian values.” In a Rise Canada YouTube video, published in September 2018, the description stated that C3, with Rise Canada and JDL-Canada, had organized a vigil for “worldwide victims of terror” at the site of the deadly Toronto van attack, which took place in April 2018.

5.1.10
Canadian Nationalist Party

Overview. The Canadian Nationalist Party (CNP) actively promotes Islamophobic and anti-immigration views. They frequently attend mass rallies across Canada and on several occasions have been filmed taking part in controversial actions. During a May 4, 2019 rally, a man wearing a CNP shirt was filmed burning and spitting on the Qur’an.

On June 3, 2019, CNP party leader Travis Patron posted a video, titled Beware the Parasitic Tribe to the CNP YouTube channel, in which he asked for the removal of “these people” from Canada. In response to this video, members of the Jewish community have become worried that Patron was specifically targeting them. Since then, the RCMP in Saskatchewan have launched an investigation into the group (Seglins, Wesley, and Thomas 2019). Patron was arrested in February 2021 for “advocating hate” in his video.

Background. The CNP is a far-right political party founded by Travis Patron on June 1, 2017. On May 1, 2019, Elections Canada acknowledged that the CNP would be eligible to run in the 43rd federal election if the party provided confirmation that they had 250 supporters. On August 30, 2019, the CCNP was granted eligibility to officially register as a political party for the election in October of that year. The 250 supporters required for official-party status sought to remain anonymous due to safety concerns and “public shaming.” Names of party members were made publicly available, as required by Elections Canada, and were subsequently released on the Anti-Racist Canada website. Later the party faced the threat of deregistration for providing a false address on official documents.

The group has stated that they have received a generous number of donations since receiving official status; totalling $962 according to the image posted on their Facebook page, though donor names were blacked out. A video released on their official YouTube channel in 2019 stated that campaign donations would be used to “advance the nationalist movement in Canada” (2:03).

Views
Banning Burkas. The CNP platform included placing a ban on the burka to be “in solidarity with Canadian culture.”

Islam Is a Cancer. Their official website referred to Islam as a “cultural cancer” full of hostility and argued that Islam is not compatible with the West. Under a caption that read “No Country voted Islam” was an image of the ISIS flag, conflating Islam with terrorism.

Demographic Replacement. The CNP’s political platform reflects their xenophobic fears. The party vowed to reinstate the Immigration Act of 1952 and to reduce the number of annual immigrants. They claimed that the percentage of Canadians of European-descent had dropped from 97 percent to 64 percent and demanded "demographic change" be "discontinued." These demographic fears are connected to far-right conspiracy theories inspired by the ideas behind the Great Replacement (see chapter 3).

Undermining Human Rights, Equity, and Diversity. The party’s campaign platform included repealing the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Employment Equity Act, and Bill 69; revoking Motion 103 on Islamophobia, and seeking to revise or repeal the Bill of Rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Promoting Eurocentric Hegemony. They proposed a National Education Plan that would establish a mandatory national curriculum based on European and Christian Values.
Connections
Several members listed as belonging to this party have strong connections to other far-right individuals and groups, including Paul Fromm (see below), Kevin J. Johnston (see chapter 4), and members of Soldiers of Odin and Blood and Honour (see above).

5.1.11
Cultural Action Party

Overview. The Cultural Action Party (CAP) and its founder, Brad Salzberg, are opposed to the promotion of sharia law, immigration, and Justin Trudeau's stance on Christianity in Canada.

Background. The CAP registered as a political party in British Columbia in 2015. The party was founded by Brad Salzberg and aims to retain Canada's traditional identity, heritage, and official languages. As of June 2022, CAP had 2,947 followers on Twitter.

The party platform includes a referendum on repealing the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 and regulating immigration to reflect what they refer to as “appropriate economics, social and cultural needs.”

CAP advocates the separation of religion and state at all levels of government and in judicial, legal, and educational institutions, though in contradiction to their secular aims, the party also states that they intend to “Support Canada’s Christian and Pro-Life Communities.”

Views

Left-Wing Pro-Islam Conspiracy. In a 2018 video, Facts VS. Feelings, Salzberg stated that he believed universities were “anti-Christian,” and “anti-Anglophone” and blamed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for launching Canada into a “post modern war” (0:57). He promoted the idea that Islam preaches hatred and has continued to do so because it is protected by Justin Trudeau (4:30).

White Decline. In the same 2018 video, Salzberg outlined CAP’s philosophy: “We [Cultural Action Party] believe in nationalism, in anglophone identity and Christian Canadian identity.” He warned that Canadian culture and identity is being destroyed by globalism, liberalism, multiculturalism, mass immigration, Islamic sharia law (8:15).

Demographic Replacement. In a video series on his YouTube channel, titled Multicultural Myths in Canada, Salzberg openly espoused anti-immigrant views. He made the claim that 90 percent of immigrants who come to Canada come from third-world countries and warned that “immigration will take care of the demographic component” [referring to the elimination of Canadians of White European heritage] of the erosion of English Canada (5:47). These views are consistent with far-right ideologies of demographic replacement (see chapter 3).

Religious Bigotry. CAP’s website provides links to the Facebook pages Canadians Against Sharia Law and United Christians of Canada. Both sites promote anti-Islam views. The party has also propagated anti-Sikh views.

Connections

Salzberg’s LinkedIn page notes that he has published articles for ACT! For Canada (see chapter 6), The Council of European Canadians, and Immigration Watch Canada.

The Canadian Centre for Identity Based Conflict (CCIBC) recorded coordination between CAP and the WCAI at a Vancouver rally. CCIBC also noted that Women Against Shariah Law / Canadians Against Shariah Law have been affiliated with CAP and that their webpages have been linked to the CAP website.

In 2017, CAP supported MP Kellie Leitch for Conservative Party leader, noting that she shared their “core values” and was the “only candidate dedicated to social conservative values such as the retention of national sovereignty, traditional Canadian identity and immigration policies.” Leitch was a proponent of instituting a “barbaric cultural practices tip line” (see chapter 2.3 “Quick Facts: Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act”). Leitch declined CAP’s support, denying her campaign was based on ethnonationalism.

5.1.12
Yellow Vests

Overview. The Yellow Vest movement started in France and has moved into Canada. They are active in organizing protests across Canada. Their Facebook page features anti-liberal, xenophobic, anti-Muslim, and anti-government messages. One of its main organizers has a history of posting racist, anti-Muslim, and antisemitic comments.

Background: The Yellow Vest movement (gilets jaunes) began in France in November 2018. The protests began as a response to French President Emmanuel Macron’s policies, which aimed to raise pump prices, with the cost of diesel increasing by about 20 percent to an average of €1.49 per litre.

These protests started spontaneously, and supporters began to wear fluorescent safety vests. Analysts have said that those joining the Yellow Vest movement likely have been lower- or middle-income workers who receive limited public services in exchange for some of the highest tax bills in Europe. On November 17, 2018, nearly 300,000 people protested alongside the Yellow Vests across France. The movement is noted to be largely White-dominated and exclusive of marginalized racialized communities, which are among the most disenfranchised in France.

The Canadian version of the Yellow Vests has little relation to its French counterpart. Rather than being spurred by economic conditions, the Canadian Yellow Vest movement has galvanized around a more overt xenophobic campaign. Less than two months after it had begun, the movement transformed into what has been viewed by some as the most cohesive right-wing-protest movement in recent history.

In 2019, the Canadian Anti-Hate Network reported that a group called Yellow Vest Canada Exposed had documented dozens of death threats on the Yellow Vest Canada Facebook page directed toward Muslims, the Prime Minister, and others; hatred directed at Muslims, left-leaning individuals, government, the mainstream media, and, occasionally, law enforcement; conspiracy theories; and support for the Conservative Party of Canada and Bernier’s People’s Party of Canada.

Views

Anti-Muslim Propagandizing. Tyler Malenfant is the administrator for Yellow Vest Canada’s Facebook page. He has made controversial statements such as “Politicians welcome ISIS” and has asked that returning ISIS fighters be used as gladiators for pay-per-view entertainment. He has also called liberal journalists “liars” and “propagandists.”
Creeping Sharia. A CBC News article reported that, at a 2019 Yellow Vest protest, posters warning that the Trudeau government wants to introduce sharia law in Canada were on display.

Xenophobia. Dave Selvers started organizing Yellow Vest demonstrations in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, in 2019. He was also the organizer for the Yellow Vest convoy that was part of the United We Roll convoy, which was supposed to be about concerns regarding the oil and gas industry in western Canada but became more about promoting xenophobic views regarding immigrants and refugees and concerns about Canadian sovereignty and “globalism.”

Anti-Muslim Racism/Sexism. Selvers actively participated in Motion 103 protests, making racist comments warning, “We’re overrun with Muslim terrorists, subhuman African trash, Mexican filth, Middle East swim and Haitian scum,” as well as sexist comments that “women do not belong in politics.” Members of the group’s Facebook page have advocated for the deportation of Liberal MP Iqra Khalid who tabled M-103.

White Genocide. Selvers also believes that White Canadians (specifically White heterosexual males) are facing genocide and that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is allowing it to happen. In 2017 he posted to his blog: “CANADA’S LIBERAL GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO KILLING OFF THE WHITE PEOPLE WHO BUILT THIS COUNTRY, LIBERALS ARE THE ENEMY.”

Religious Chauvinism. While they malign Islam and Muslims, the group’s Facebook posts include claims that “ANY political who wants to criminalize Quoting The Bible is Satanic.”

Connections

In August 2019, members of Yellow Vest attended a rally in Estevan, Saskatchewan, along with members of the Northern Guard, Canadian Combat Coalition, and Proud Boys.

Along with other members of the Conservative caucus, Andrew Scheer spoke at a Yellow Vest rally at which attendees, such as neo-Nazi supporter Faith Goldy and other members of far-right groups, were present. At the rally Scheer declared, “We’re fighting for you. We’re standing with you.”

5.1.13

Canadian Nationalist Front

Overview. The Canadian Nationalist Front is a group run by Kevin Goudreau. Despite sporting a swastika tattoo, Goudreau has claimed that he is not a White supremacist, but instead refers to himself as a White nationalist. He actively attends rallies for White Pride, which he insisted in a 2017 YouTube video is not a racist concept. Goudreau has argued that White Pride flags are “religious symbols,” not racist emblems. He claims that what unites White people “besides genetics, blood, and heritage are ancient religious symbols,” such as those emblazoned on White Pride flags symbolizing the ancient Christian Celtic cross (1:28). This religious symbol has been appropriated and incorporated into the White nationalist iconography of the CNF.

Background. The CNF website states the group’s mandate is to

- preserve heritage, culture, and traditional values by reforming to reflect our true immigration, new immigration policy for a return to Canada’s traditional ethnic demographics of Euro-Canadian pioneer settlers and natives. Real equal rights, eliminating affirmative action, discrimination against Euro-Canadians, and end to minority group special privileges.

Goudreau has been a long-time figure within Canada’s racist movement. He was active in Heritage Front, whose leader Wolfgang Droege had compiled a “hit list” that included mainly Jewish community members. This group collapsed in the 1990s.

Although he has claimed not be a White supremacist, Goudreau has condemned White race “traitors.” He has publicly posted that he has a “hit list of race traitors,” issuing a warning that, if one betrays their race, he and his people will massacre their entire family. Goudreau named “valid high value targets,” including the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, human-rights commissions, police hate-crimes units, immigration lawyers, and media outlets. The post horrifyingly suggested that targets should be shot twice to ensure that they were dead. Human-rights lawyer Richard
Doxing” refers to maliciously posting personal and identifying information about an individual on the internet or social media. This practice has been particularly concerning as it has been used to target minority groups. In 2020, Warman requested a peace bond on behalf of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network after they were named as a suggested target on Goudreau’s hit list.

Goudreau threatened Evan Balgord of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, stating in a now removed Twitter post that Balgord was “going to pay for his crimes against Euro-Canadians” and admitting to creating a doxing database. These disturbing public death threats and doxing qualify the CNF as a danger to the individuals and groups they target and to national security.

**Great Replacement**

In 2011 Goudreau started the Canadian Nationalist Front blog, in which he shares his views on immigration and “racism against whites.” He propagates the ideology of the Great Replacement (see chapter 3), warning that White Canadians will be “replaced” by minority groups. These baseless demographic-replacement fears were echoed by the New Zealand mosque shooter and other White nationalist terrorists such as Anders Breivik.

**Neo-Nazi Symbols**

Goudreau has a large swastika tattooed on the centre of his chest and online photographs show him giving the “Sieg Heil” Nazi salute, demonstrating his association with neo-Nazi ideologies. He was a follower of Ernst Zundel, a Holocaust denier who was deported from Canada in 2005 as a national-security threat.

**White Pride / Racial Death Threats**

Goudreau has stated that the term “White Pride” is not racist because other groups are allowed to have pride even though they promote racism toward the White community. He singled out the organization Black Lives Matter, suggesting that they are the ones promoting hatred, though, on Facebook he promoted the violent racist and xenophobic idea that “[we] should send nuclear packages to Haiti to prevent future immigration.”

**Islamophobic Hate Speech and Death Threats**

Other threatening and inflammatory posts have targeted Muslims: “Kill Islam, kill them all, hang them high,” “Toronto is 52% non-white, before it is too late we will defeat them,” “Ladies and Gentlemen, we are at a state of holy war,” and asking his followers to fight and choose their targets like a “surgical strike.” These statements are dangerous public incitements to violence that are likely actionable as hate propaganda under Canadian legislation.

**Christchurch, New Zealand, Terror Attack – Victim Blaming**

Goudreau was investigated by police following statements made about the attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019, whereby he suggested that the “mosques in New Zealand had been recruiting terrorists and radicalizing followers.”

Despite Goudreau’s alarming calls to violence, the Peterborough, Ontario, police did not press charges against him.

**Connections**

Goudreau’s website links to groups and websites such as Stormfront (see chapter 5.1 above), David Duke, and White Aryan Resistance, all known for their White supremacist beliefs.

During the 2019 federal election, Goudreau publicly endorsed Maxime Bernier and the People’s Party of Canada: “I’m throwing my weight behind the People’s Party of Canada because I want (a) massive reduction in immigration.” Goudreau’s support for PPC policies and values demonstrates the attraction the party holds among neo-Nazi and White nationalist followers.

**Paul Fromm**

**Overview.** Paul Fromm is associated with the U.S.-based White supremacist organization The Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), the group that first attracted the American White supremacist mass murderer Dylan Roof to organized racism. The CCC was formed in 1985 and acted as a modern reincarnation of the White Citizens Councils, which were set up during the 1950s and 1960s to resist the desegregation of public schools in the southern United States.

Fromm is a notable public figure in the far-right esosphere. He has hosted a daily radio show on the White nationalist forum, Stormfront (see chapter 5.1 above), gives lectures across the United States and Canada, and appeared at annual conferences hosted by the CCC and the White nationalist group American Renaissance.

**Background.** Fromm, born to a Catholic family, was raised in Etobicoke, Ontario. He attended the University of Toronto, where he co-founded the ultra-conservative Edmund Burke Society (EBS) group with Don Andrews and Leigh Smith. In the early 1970s, Fromm led an EBS takeover of the Social Credit Party. In 1972, the group changed its name to the Western Guard.

Fromm has founded several other organizations including Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform in 1976 to oppose multiculturalism and aid to third-world countries. In 1981 he founded the Canadian Association for Free Expression to defend anti-Semites, racists, and Holocaust deniers at the Canadian Human Rights Commission from persecution under hate-crime and human-rights legislation.

In 2006, Fromm co-founded the Aryan Guard, a known neo-Nazi organization that has been linked to several assaults on minorities. The group disbanded in 2009, although it still claims to be active. In March 2009, it held a rally featuring “White Pride Worldwide” flags along with as many as forty marches.

Fromm worked as a high-school English teacher with the Peel District School Board for 19 years. In 2007 he was fired from his position after his involvement with a Heritage Front event, during which he shared a stage with David Duke of the Ku Klux Klan, become known.
Fromm has pursued political ambitions over the years. In 2014, he ran for mayor of Mississauga, Ontario, on an anti-immigration platform. He made homophobic and racist comments during public speeches. He also offered White supremacist and Holocaust-denial literature at his campaign tables. In 2018, he made a run for mayor of Hamilton, Ontario, which was also unsuccessful.

He has attempted to lend his support to candidates for leader of the Conservative Party such as Tania Granic Allen, who declined his endorsement. In 2020, Fromm donated funds to support Conservative MP Derek Sloan’s bid for party leader. This resulted in a move to remove Sloan from the Conservative caucus. Sloan has denied having knowledge of Fromm or his donation. Nonetheless, Fromm found ideological affinity with these Conservative Party members and demonstrated his support for their political platform.

Views

Neo-Nazi ideologies. Fromm is notorious for his White nationalist, supremacist, and neo-Nazi ideologies, though he rejects these labels, stating, “I don’t consider myself a White supremacist or a neo-Nazi. My followers and supporters are opponents of the Canada’s anti-European immigration policies and supporters of free speech.”

However Fromm has been associated with supporting racist and neo-Nazi beliefs by uttering comments such as “Sieg Heil!” “white power,” “Hail The Order!” and “[N-word], [N-word],” out out out” while performing the Nazi salute.

White Decline. In 2007 at a CCC conference, Fromm characterized America as “feminized, de-Christianised, and deracialized,” eventually referring to it as “Absurd-istan.” During the 2008 CCC leadership conference, Fromm proclaimed that White people should feel “no more guilt” and demand a ban on immigration. He warned that the White population were at risk of being outgrown by Mexicans.

Great Replacement. Further echoing the xenophobic fears underlying narratives of demographic replacement (see chapter 3), Fromm had advocated for immigration controls that would “stop the replacement of the European founding settler people in this country.”

Endorsing Terror Manifesto. Fromm has been under investigation for endorsing the manifesto of the Christchurch, New Zealand, shooter and uploading it to his website Canadian Association for Free Expression. Following the mosque shootings in 2019, which resulted in the death of fifty-one Muslims, Fromm stated during a speaking engagement that he agreed with 95 percent of the shooter's manifesto, which to him “[made] sense.” Toward the end of the video, he stated that people who are Muslim should just “behave themselves” (1:40).

Connections

In July 2019, Fromm posed with Maxime Bernier; the PPC leader. Following this encounter, Fromm endorsed Bernier as an individual who would put “Canada First.” He also praised Bernier’s immigration policies as the right steps toward “regaining control” of Canada’s border.

Fromm tweeted his support for the Yellow Vests and the Nationalist Party of Canada and their rally to protest the “Trudeau invasion of illegals.”

He has been photographed speaking at events held by Blood and Honour, Combat 18, and Volksfront, as well as sharing a podium with former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.

5.1.15

Students for Western Civilization

Overview. Students for Western Civilization (SWC) is a pan-European nationalist and autonomist student group based in Toronto, Canada. The group had a following of 3,393 followers on their Facebook page (before it was removed) though it is not known how many members of this group are currently active. In November 2020, they released a blog post stating that they were “starting a Branch at McGill University.”

The group is founded on the following principles:

- SWC advocates for the rights, interests and identity of European-Canadians by promoting viewpoint diversity in academia and the media; combating anti-White discrimination; fighting anti-White hate speech; and preserving and enhancing our cultural heritage.

Background. Founded by George Hutcherson in 2015, SWC became active after Ryerson University (now Toronto Metropolitan University) officials began removing signs that read “White Students Union,” which had been placed around campus by the group.

In 2017, SWC placed other posters around campus that advertised their group. Later, in 2019, the group circulated posters that read “If everyone is Canadian, then to be Canadian means nothing.”
According to a 2017 *VICE News* article investigating their online donations, many supporters provide regular donations ranging from $30 to $100 to support La Meute’s activities. The group also has an online shop to raise funds through the sale of paraphernalia.

The group’s insignia is a wolf paw, referring to their name, which translates to “wolf pack.”

**Views**

**Muslims Are Radicals.** The group connects itself to French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who is a proponent of anti-Muslim policies in France. According to the group’s spokesperson, Sylvain Brouillette, “There’s no such thing as a moderate Muslim. There’s only one Islam and it’s radical.”

*A La Presse* report cited information from Le Meute’s official leaflets: “Our democracy would be in danger” because of radical Islam. Sharia would threaten us. “Don’t let these aggressors make Québec a land of Islam. Let’s wake up before we face our dead, civil war, chaos.”

**Trojan Horse.** Eric Venne a.k.a Corvus, a founding member and Afghan war veteran, described the influx of Syrian refugees in 2015 as a Trojan horse for Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists. He disrupted an information session for a group of volunteers hosting a family of Syrian refugees, yelling, “Think about your choices, and above all, the security of the nation.”

According to the *CCIBC’s profile* of the group, La Meute uses the clarion call to Canadians about a “Muslim invasion” and incites fear through Daesh/ISIS propaganda videos.

**Islamophobia is Castrating.** Corvus has denounced the term “Islamophobia,” which he argues is a “castrating word used by Islamists to diminish our opinions.”

**Connections**

A pig’s head, wrapped in cellophane with blue and white bows, was discovered at the Centre Culturel islamique du Québec mosque, with a card that read “Bonne [sic] Appétit” a year before the shooting that killed six Muslim men (see chapter 2.4 “Quick Facts: Quebec City mosque shooting”). The incident was discussed on the *Facebook* page of La Meute. A woman from La Meute’s security unit is reported to have said regarding the pig’s blood, “It has to flow into the ground, so it becomes unsanitary, impure for the construction of a mosque. But cooking fat, or pig’s piss, plenty of things are available at a butcher near you loll!” She then remarked at how shocked people at the mosque would be, “running around like chickens with their heads cut off.”

A 2017 *Radio-Canada* investigation found that seventy-five members of La Meute’s private Facebook group were part of the Canadian Armed Forces, with some visibly identified by their military uniform. La Meute has called Storm Alliance (the latest version of Soldats d’Odin) members “friends and allies.”

A *CBC News* story on the group’s activities noted their association with far-right activist Alexandre Cormier-Denis, who ran in a provincial Montreal by-election in 2017. Cormier-Denis’s campaign posters were denounced as being racist and Islamophobic and were later removed by...
Montreal police. The posters depicted two images of the same woman: one wearing a hat with a Québec symbol and the other in a niqab. The tagline read “Choose your Québec.”

La Meute organizers and supporters include members of the federal Conservative Party. The Conservative Party of Canada has cut ties with the president of its Rivière-du-Nord riding association, Hugues Bonneau, because of his association with La Meute. In June of 2018, Radio-Canada found his profile under the alias “H Loup Garou Bonneau.” The profile described him as chief of sector 740, clan 15. He was also found to be a member of the La Meute group in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. Bonneau maintained that La Meute is mislabelled as extremist, that members are “just ordinary citizens who hold the Liberal Party to account.” Conservative Party spokesperson Catherine Major told Radio-Canada that the Conservatives had discovered “unacceptable comments” on Hugues Bonneau’s Facebook page and that he “offered his resignation as soon as he was contacted.”

Canada’s Defence League. A group with a mainly Facebook presence. Their page was created in 2013 and as of May 2022 had 3,935 followers. The group’s slogan reads, “Enemy invaders are in government positions because they have aiders.” The posts featured on the website have included dangerous threats such as “Politicians continue to bow to Islam for votes: Unless they outlaw the cult, blood will flow.” Other posts include subjects such as

- A vote for the left is a vote for Islamic domination: The Islamic Takeover of North America is ongoing: Convert or die is the agenda under sharia law.
- The United Nations is being run by Nazi’s and Muslims: Continues condemnation of Israel and Christianity.
- Foreign and Domestic: We are in an end times war against enemies of the West.
- Are you ready: Islam has only one objective: Complete domination.
- The west is under attack and it’s growing: CSIS investigates & advises government of the threats we face. Government is infiltrated by Islamic ideologists that pave the way.
- Question everything a Muslim tells you. Muslims are liars.

Posts also include biblical passages, references to the “rapture” and the “end of days,” and pro-Israel posts and commentaries. Other posts demonstrate support for Donald Trump. While there is not a lot of interaction with their posts, the threatening nature of some of the messages this group promotes are troubling.

Atalante Québec. This small neo-fascist group reportedly takes a harder line against anti-immigration than La Meute. Following the lead of Identitarian groups in Europe, they engage in community-oriented charity work that benefits “old stock Canadian” communities, exhibiting good will to their “own kind” while engaging in xenophobic actions and spreading Islamophobic propaganda. A 2017 VICE News report noted one of their anti-Muslim activities: “Scaling the nearby walls of the Citadelle, Atalante Québec unfurled a banner that read, ‘Terrorists to the death! Islam Out!’” A 2017 La Presse news report stated that the group’s website warned of the “quiet extermination” of “our” people, further invoking demographic-replacement fears. In messages shared in Québec’s far-right echo chamber, they called for “remigration” as well as an “effective birth rate policy” to “reverse the phenomenon” and safeguard their “determination to survive as a people.”
Québec Identitaire. Mosques in Limoilou, Ste-Foy, and Québec City were targeted with flyers that said “Islam out of my country” and were signed by Québec Identitaire. Most notably, in 2016 the group was named in a police report regarding the investigation of a pig’s head with a note that read “Bonne [sic] appétit” outside the Centre culturel islamique de Québec in Québec City, where the attack killing six Muslims would occur a year later (see chapter 2.4 Quick Facts: Québec City Mosque Shooting”). To date, police have not arrested anyone in relation to this hate crime. While small (estimated at 5–10 members) and less active since 2017, this group espouses ethnonationalist, Muslim populist, and Identitarian ideologies. According to a report on Canadian radical-right narratives (Allchorn, 2021b), “732” was featured on a banner unfurled in 2012 by Québec Identitaire’s namesake in Poitiers, France, referring to the year in which “the Frankish king Charles Martel turned back the invading Moors” (13). These views are consistent with far-right, Muslim-invader narratives that invoke historical reference to the Crusades as an anti-Muslim rallying cry.

Horizon Québec Actuel and Parti Indépendantiste. Horizon Québec Actuel is an ultranationalist far-right group based in Québec. The group reportedly formed after several members met with French Front National leader Marine Le Pen in 2016. The group’s founders, Alexandre Cormier-Denis and Philippe Plamondon, were former members of the Parti Québécois. Cormier-Denis’s failed political bid as a candidate for the Parti indépendantiste in 2017 was built around an Islamophobic campaign poster (see photo below). The party has known ties to individuals involved with neo-Nazi, White nationalist movements.

Mouvement républicain du Québec (MrQ). This ethnonationalist group is dedicated to the preservation of “pure laine” Quebecers and their distinct culture. According to Montréal-Antifasciste’s fact sheet,
on their website, they state that they are friends and partners with organizations such as the Canadian Coalition of Concerned Citizens (George Hallak’s well-known one-man anti-immigrant and Islamophobic group), the Rebel Media–related Facebook group “Make Canada Great Again,” and several other Canadian independence parties, most of which have conservative and xenophobic views.

Reportedly, the group also actively trades in conspiracy theories, including those that promote antisemitic ideologies.

Fédération des Québécois de souche (FQS). This far-right, Québec-based organization coalesced in 2007 during the debates on reasonable accommodation in the province. The group is reported to have been inspired by neo-Nazi groups like the U.S.-based National Alliance, and the first members of FQS were recruited from the Québec page of Stormfront. The group Montréal-Antifasciste website has documented some of the troubling racist and xenophobic rhetoric of FQS supporters:

I admit that I would like the idea of a crusade gathering whites from several countries to liberate all the white countries one by one.

Immigration is not desirable, as it brings poverty, unemployment and debt to society, in addition to bringing the danger of ethnic blending.

More Muslims, more accommodation, more loss for Québec’s heritage.

Everyone here is against non-white immigration.

This is the moment to train paramilitary troops in the white skin environment.

Parti Patriote. This Québec-based ethnonationalist party was founded in 2019. Their platform characterizes multiculturalism as a “perverse postmodern doctrine aiming for the cultural genocide of the Québécois people.” The group opposes “mass immigration” and espouses the Great Replacement conspiracy theory (see chapter 3), which promotes fears of “white genocide.” Their social media promotes xenophobic, anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. In particular, the party objects to the integration of Muslims and uses posters of veiled Muslim women to promote the notion that Muslims are pose a major problem for Québec society. Their supporters on social media are reported to have referred to Muslims as “parasites” and “plagues.” Party leader Donald Proulx has shared platforms with La Meute and neo-Nazi leader Kevin Gourdreau.

Vous en voulez des pancartes partout au Québec ?

Faites un don au Parti Patriote www.partipatriote.ca

Patriot Party anti-immigrant posters. The middle poster depicts a blonde, White woman repelling mass immigration in Québec, visually inscribing the racial divide and underlying desire for White purity.
Canadian Combat Coalition (C3). An alt-right group focused on anti-Muslim immigration and fearmongering about sharia law. They were active in challenging Motion 103 on “free speech” grounds and have been associated with Rise Canada and JDL-Canada.

National Citizens Alliance. The National Citizens Alliance registered as a federal party in 2019. They are headed by Stephen Garvey, a proponent of far-right conspiracy theories including the Great Replacement (page now removed). Garvey attended an anti-immigration protest at a school in Red Deer, Alberta, with members of World Coalition Against Islam, during which he asserted the need to protect Canadian culture in schools.

Council of European Canadians. This group is founded on ethnonationalist principles based on the belief that “Canada derives from and is an integral part of European civilization and that Canada should remain majority [sic], not exclusively European in its ethnic composition and cultural character.” They are opposed to federal multiculturalism forming the basis of Canadian society and instead advocate for Eurocentric social and cultural hegemony. The promotion of White, European, ethnonational aims is often tied to xenophobic racism.

Canadian Hindu Volunteers. A member of this organization, Diwakar Sharma, shared an Islamophobic post on the group’s Facebook page that referred to Muslims as having “invaded and massacred others,” promoting the Muslim-invader narrative (see chapter 3) and perpetuating anti-Muslim hostilities. The post warned members to educate their children to stay away from and not befriend Muslim children and to boycott Muslim-run businesses. The group appears to follow the Islamophobic ideology of Hindutva nationalism that has led to the oppression of Muslims in India, and the ideologies underpinning it may be transmitted to groups with allegiance to these anti-Muslim views in Canada.

A report on Hindu nationalist influence in the United States (Macher, 2022) revealed a network of funding that aids in the circulation of ideologies that promote Islamophobic fears. These networks may further mobilize and join forces with other Islamophobic players fortifying the scope, reach, and efficacy of a transnational Islamophobia industry and therefore warrant concern. Groups aligned with Hindutva nationalism have already been involved in anti-Muslim campaigns in Canada; therefore, it is likely that this sector will continue to grow and build further alliances with other like-minded groups that are part of Islamophobia’s ecosystem in this country.

Eco-Fascist Groups. In the Christchurch, New Zealand, shooter’s manifesto, he identified himself as an “ethno-nationalist eco-fascist.” The ideas surrounding eco-fascism include linking White nationalism with far-right environmentalism. Neo-Nazi groups are increasingly aligning with eco-fascist ideals that are steeped in eugenic ideologies surrounding the need for “controlled pruning of the human population.” Far-right movements are using eco-fascist ideals as a fashionable gambit to recruit young people to their ranks.

This chapter has focused on the role of White nationalist groups and ideologues as Islamophobia’s foot soldiers promoting and purveying anti-Muslim bigotry and hate. The following chapter will address the “soft power” groups within the Islamophobia industry who leverage different political spheres of influence and activism to promote their Islamophobic campaigns.
Chapter 6:

(Un)Holy Alliances: The Soft Power Behind Islamophobia in Canada

6.1 Introduction

Some pro-Israel, fringe-right groups (that identify as Jewish and Western evangelical Christian) have formed strategic alliances to promote and purvey anti-Muslim animus and foment Islamophobic campaigns. Their collaborations have been documented in U.S.-based research on the Islamophobia industry (Bazian 2015, 2020; Lean 2011, 2017; Ali et al. 2014; Marusek 2017; Abdelhadi 2018). These special-interest groups are allied in a shared commitment to challenge criticisms of Israel as an existential threat and as evidence of antisemitism. Safeguarding Israel from international critique or moral reproach serves specific political and theological interests whereby the Muslim presence and the Palestinian struggle for self-determination are regarded as a threat to Zionist political authority and Jewish and Christian spiritual sovereignty in the region.

An Amnesty International investigation released in 2022 condemned Israel’s oppression and domination of Palestinians (including discrimination, dispossession, repression of dissent, killings, and injuries) as an apartheid system that is “designed to privilege Jewish Israelis at the expense of Palestinians.” The report further defined apartheid as “system of prolonged and cruel discriminatory treatment by one racial group of members of another with the intentions to control the second racial group.” Diverting attention away from these human-rights violations by vilifying Palestinians and Muslims through transnational propaganda campaigns has been the mission of some pro-Israel, fringe-right groups that operate within the global expanse of the Islamophobia industry. Anti-Palestinian racism is intertwined with Islamophobia in these campaigns that promote a strategic brand of distraction politics.

The mutual strategic interests of these groups and the spheres of influence they leverage are part of the “soft power” behind the Islamophobia industry. Soft power refers to the ability to influence, persuade, and move people by way of argument (Nye 2004). It is a means of pursuing desired goals using persuasive tactics that create attraction to an objective or cause without resorting to overt aggression as a means of coercion. While the terms “soft power” and “hard power” (i.e., coercion through economic or military means) are most often used to describe state governance and international relations, they can also be adapted to signify the kinds of strategies used by individuals and groups to achieve strategic goals in micropolitical contexts.

The soft-power brokers in the Islamophobia industry promote social, cultural, and political ideas in an attempt to influence, shape, and inform public opinion and policies. However, they also use more coercive tactics like bullying, harassment, and intimidation to silence opposition. These groups validate bigotry by dressing it up as patriotism and hiding it behind rhetoric like upholding “democracy” and “the rule of law” or preserving and promoting “Judeo-Christian values.” They attempt to legitimate their anti-Muslim views through respectable influential channels such as conferences featuring high-profile speakers such as political figures, academics, journalists, lawyers, security experts, and professional leaders.

Among the pro-Israel, fringe-right groups that have been identified as promoting anti-Muslim ideologies and Islamophobic scare stories, their goals are geared toward propagating the Islamist bogeyman conspiracies that they claim threaten both Israel and the West. Muslim organizations in Canada and the United States are branded by these groups as fronts for Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood, posing serious political and existential threats to Western democracy and freedom by serving as a Trojan horse for an Islamist take over and civilizational jihad (see chapter 3). These conspiracy theories are not unlike the views that are promoted by the far-right White nationalist ‘foot soldiers’ of Islamophobia discussed in the previous chapter. However, when these ideas are espoused by groups with social and political clout that have wide spheres of influence in professional circles, as well as the economic resources to promote
anti-Muslim narratives, they are imbued with a greater sense of legitimacy. Under such “liberal washed” political cover (see chapter 3) and given the elevated social status of the players, the instrumentalization of Islamophobia by these groups is rarely questioned which allows their anti-Muslim narratives to circulate with greater impunity as they are echoed, amplified, and reinforced by different sectors of the Islamophobia industry.

### 6.1.1 Challenging Antisemitism and Islamophobia

It is important to state at the outset of this chapter that challenging antisemitism is as important as challenging Islamophobia. However, combatting one form of oppression should not reproduce the other. Therefore, while some pro-Israel, fringe-right groups are involved in the Islamophobia industry in Canada, the United States, and globally (Abdul-Hadi 2018; Marusek 2017; Bazian 2015), this fact should not lead to the demonization of Jews. Antisemitism should not be the by-product of this inquiry. In fact, antisemitism and Islamophobia have much in common. For example, unfounded Jewish conspiracy theories stemming from the fabricated text of the Elders of Zion manufacture the false claim of a centuries-old Jewish quest for global domination, similar to the fabricated tropes of an Islamist global “takeover” by the Muslim Brotherhood. Outlining the role of specific pro-Israel, fringe-right groups in Islamophobia networks is not intended to lend credence to antisemitic conspiracy myths.

It is unfortunate that many of the groups and individuals profiled here who rightly condemn antisemitic conspiracy theories of global domination are actively promoting unfounded Islamophobic conspiracies about Muslims. Nonetheless, it is important to state that the Islamophobic actions described here are not reflective of all Jews and all Jewish organizations and must not be read in ways that malign the Jewish community. Similarly, the Christian Zionist organizations who are highlighted here are not a reflection of the wider Christian community. Both Jews and Christians have been involved in positive interfaith movements against racism and bigotry and have been allies against Islamophobia. The individuals and groups profiled here are outliers in both Jewish and Christian communities, and most of their co-religionists would likely not endorse or support their views and tactics.

### 6.1.2 Pro-Israel Backlash Industry

Globally, countless scholars and pro-Palestinian activists have faced backlash for criticizing Israel, a situation that is exacerbated by International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism, which includes as antisemitic a broad range of criticisms of the state of Israel, particularly targeting decolonial and anti-racist critiques of the policies, structures, and practices of that nation. In Canada, Independent Jewish Voices have joined prominent Jewish scholars (including Kenneth Stern, one of the main drafters of the IHRA working definition) and Jewish organizations globally that have spoken out against how the IHRA definition is silencing criticism of Israel by equating it with antisemitism and thereby undermining academic freedom. Over 600 Canadian academics, in addition to 130 Canadian Jewish faculty, have signed open letters opposing the IHRA working definition. By weaponizing antisemitism and using the working definition as an alibi to censor legitimate criticism of Israel and its policies, especially criticisms that charge Israel with engaging in racist, colonial, and apartheid practices, pro-Israel, fringe-right groups and influential individuals supporting these campaigns have interfered in university affairs in countries such as Canada, the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom. These lobby groups have challenged university hires, questioned research funding, and instigated campaigns to fire tenured scholars for holding critical viewpoints, while at the same time claiming to champion free speech.

In addition to the chilling effect of the IHRA working definition, the backlash that comes with showing support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement is part of the new McCarthyist tactics used to malign and target scholars and activists who raise legitimate political concerns as an exercise of academic freedom and moral conscience. Such campaigns are orchestrated and well funded. For example, the U.S.-based website Canary Mission has targeted scholars who support Palestine or BDS or have in any way criticized the state of Israel in an attempt to silence anti-racist and decolonial scholarship. The Middle East Forum (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”), a major donor in the Islamophobia industry, is the primary funder behind Campus Watch, whose goal is to “review and critique Middle East Studies in North America” though their focus is on attacking scholars who support Palestinian rights or criticize Israel’s policies and labelling them as “extremists.” Campus Watch also targets students. Muslim Students’ Associations are labelled as “fascist” Islamist fronts. Ironically, the problems Campus Watch seeks to address (as noted on their website) are precisely what they create and reproduce when it comes to promoting Islamophobia: “analytical failures, the mixing of politics with scholarship, intolerance of alternative views, apologetics, and the abuse of power over students.”

The pro-Israel, fringe-right groups profiled here champion free speech when it comes to criticizing Islam, Muslims, or Muslim countries but maintain a clear double standard with respect to criticism of Israel, especially regarding its appalling treatment of Palestinians. Publicly exposing Islamophobia networks invites backlash, hate mail, doxing campaigns, and political and professional attack from these groups.

### 6.2 The Eschatology of Islamophobia

For Zionist Jews, the political and ideological concept of a Jewish homeland is a construct rooted in a literal reading of Abraham’s Covenant found in the Old Testament. It involves the belief that on some future date, the Messiah will come and restore Israel, ushering in the Kingdom of God. Fulfillment of this apocalyptic biblical prophecy requires the destruction of the Dome of the Rock, one of Islam’s holiest sites, Al-Aqsa Mosque, as a precondition for the building of the third and last temple.

According to Lean (2012, 210), “for Religious Zionists, the land must be cleansed. If not, the return of the Messiah in an earthward journey to deliver salvation to His people will remain an imagined scenario,” and “religious Zionists offer no concessions to those whose presence is thought to impede this divine plan. In preparation for the end of days ‘foreign’ inhabitants must go.” For those subscribing to the contingencies of this eschatological prophecy, these apocalyptic conditionalities must guide the geopolitical and interfaith decisions of the Israeli state. As Leonhard (2010, 52) contended, “religion and Jewish attitudes concerning the end times remain key factors in determining the direction of Israeli policy.”

Christian Zionists’ loyalty to Israel is based on the belief that it is a continuation of biblical Israel and that its founding in 1948 is the “final human era” and part of “God’s plan.” Their interest lies in the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy that the return of the Jewish people to the “Promised Land” will usher in the end of days and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Christian Zionists believe God’s promises made to Abraham and Israel are irrefutable, and that those who oppose the path to salvation and stand against God’s promise will incur divine wrath. They maintain that failing to support Israel’s political dominance will incur divine judgment. Ensuring Jewish
The report highlighted how lawfare is linked to furthering anti-Palestinian Islamophobic civil society. Published by the Charity and Security Network (CSN), weaponizing legal processesPalestinian-solidarity efforts undertaken by humanitarian and civil-society groups. According to the report, lawfare involves the use of legal forums to further political interests. Lawfare is defined as “the misuse of legal systems and principles against an enemy, such as by damaging or delegitimizing them, tying up their time or winning a public relations victory. The term is a portmanteau of the words “law” and “warfare.” Specifically, lawfare strategies have been used to silence and shut down Palestinian-solidarity efforts undertaken by humanitarian and civil-society groups. According to a 2021 report published by the Charity and Security Network (CSN), weaponizing legal processes for political purposes by targeting human-rights and anti-racism advocates and organizations involved in humanitarian work supporting the Palestinian struggle is a key tactic in undermining civil society.

The report highlighted how lawfare is linked to furthering anti-Palestinian Islamophobic campaigns:

- The legal attacks described in this report take advantage of vague legal standards and use disinformation churned out by a cottage industry of faux think tanks that draw on a troubling history of Islamophobia, mischaracterizing their targets as supporters of terrorism. Specifically, these disinformation groups have teamed up with pro-Israel extremist groups to attack programs that aid Palestinians, support human rights in Palestine, seek peace between Palestine and Israel or call for an end to Israel’s occupation and annexation program. They have targeted a diverse set of civil society actors, including foundations, large aid groups, and small human rights organizations.

Lawfare tactics take a variety of forms, including litigation, regulatory complaints, and pressure campaigns to cut aid and funding. These efforts have significant financial backing. In the 2016–17 fiscal year, the U.S.-based Lawfare Project received $430,000 from Fidelity Charitable. The CSN report also investigated the 2018 Internal Revenue Services filings of five key lawfare organizations, which showed the millions of dollars in revenue and the six-figure salaries of their respective chief executive officers, underscoring the highly lucrative nature of this venture.

The CSN report noted that lawfare claims are generally based on “disinformation and misrepresentation of the facts.” Lawfare efforts routinely use Islamist-bogeyman conspiracy theories (see chapter 3) as a justification and rationale for targeting Muslim civil-society groups. In a 2008 Campus Watch article, Brooke Goldstein (the former director of the Middle East Forum’s Legal Project and the current executive director of The Lawfare Project), claimed that Muslim groups in Canada and the United States are conducting a “soft jihad” through use of the courts (i.e., through what she characterized as “frivolous claims” of Islamophobia), as well as through sharia banking and within the school system, reinforcing Muslim-infiltration tropes (see chapter 3). In 2017, Goldstein further asserted that “Islamophobia... is a contrived term that was invented by the Muslim Brotherhood with the sole purpose of stigmatizing those who are engaged in dialogue about militant Islam.”

Goldstein’s co-authored book, Lawfare: The War Against Free Speech, warned of “Islamist lawfare,” which she described as a legal campaign designed to “further the goals of the Islamist movement” that “uses the law as a weapon of war to silence and punish free speech about militant Islam, terrorism and its sources of funding.” The irony of her claims when read against the work of her pro-Israel Lawfare Project in legally “silencing, and punishing” critics of Israel and its policies, demonstrates willful political blindness and self-serving double standards.

A key U.S.-based lawfare organization, Shurat Hadin, or Israel Law Center (which has admitted ties to Mossad, Israel’s spy agency), has been instrumental in mounting legal challenges against organizations such as Tripadvisor, Expedia.com, and AirBnB, who were under pressure from an Amnesty International–boycott effort to cease services in illegal West Bank settlements. AirBnB initially blocked the booking of rentals in these areas and then reversed their decision in response to Shurat Hadin’s efforts. In another effort to use judicial means to promote political agendas, in July 2019, Shurat Hadin filed legal petitions to block U.S. elected official Ilhan Omar from entering Israel.

In Canada, lawfare tactics have been used to target Muslim civil-society groups such as the International Relief Fund for the Afflicted and Needy-Canada (IRFAN), Islamic Relief Canada, the Islamic Society of North America-Canada, which they allege are “sham charities” operating as covert fronts for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. IRFAN had its charitable status revoked in 2011 as the result of accusations that the organization was channelling funds to Hamas (a charge IRFAN denied), which led to their inclusion on Canada’s list of terrorist entities in 2014. In 2017, IRFAN applied to be removed from the list and to have their charity status reinstated, with their lawyers arguing that the listing was “unreasonable, unconstitutional and without merit, as it administrates humanitarian aid to people in “extreme poverty.” Their application stated “that when the government listed it as a terrorist it could not identify any recipients of donations as ‘an illicit individual or entity.’” After a 2018 review, IRFAN remains a listed terrorist entity on the Public Safety Canada site.
A 2019 conference hosted by pro-Israel group Canadians for the Rule of Law (see below) actively supported the mobilization of lawfare in Canada. The opening keynote of the conference was given by Benjamin Ryberg of The Lawfare Project (U.S.). The forum also featured Rachel May Weinstein of Shurat Hadin (U.S., Israel) and Tara Steinberg (Canadians for the Rule of Law board member), who has promoted pro-Israel lawfare initiatives in Canada.

6.4
The Soft Power Behind Islamophobia in Canada: Key Organizations, Supporters, and Connections

This section highlights some of the groups, key members, and ideologues who promote and support Islamophobia through events, publications, websites, videos, and other coordinated activities and campaigns that contribute to the soft power behind Canada’s Islamophobia industry.

6.4.1 Jewish Defence League of Canada (JDL-Canada)

Overview. The Jewish Defense League (JDL) is a pro-Israel, fringe-right organization associated with violent actions, Islamophobic propaganda, and anti-Muslim activism. JDL was founded in the United States in 1968, where it was designated a terror organization in 2001. Established in 1979, the Canadian branch of JDL has worked with anti-Muslim activists to promote Islamophobic propaganda campaigns. To achieve their aims, JDL has leveraged violent, aggressive “hard power” tactics in a micropolitical context, as well as working in concert with soft-power groups and other sectors of the Islamophobia industry who wage their wars on an ideological battlefront.

Background. The mandate of the Jewish Defence League of Canada (JDL-Canada) involves the restoration of pride and integrity to the Jewish people, the return of “Jewish values,” the reclamation of the Jewish sense of justice, and the abolition of hatred and bigotry.

JDL was established in New York City in 1968 by Rabbi Meir Kahane amid the “white backlash” to the New York City teachers’ union strikes of 1968, which, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, “brought to the surface tension between the predominantly Jewish union teachers and Black residents seeking greater control over local schools.” These tensions rising amid a volatile racial climate later prompted more working-class Jews to join JDL.

In 1970, JDL shifted its efforts to focus primarily on the persecution of Soviet Jews, through protests against Soviet officials and disruptions at Soviet institutions and gatherings in the United States. JDL has also targeted, among others, Muslims and Arabs, with tactics that have included a deadly bombing in the United States and a mass murder in Israel.

JDL is a designated terror organization in the United States. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, “the FBI deemed the league a right-wing terrorist group in their report “Terrorism 2000/2001,” but its domestic influence has waned in the years since, and today the JDL has no active chapters in the U.S.”

In December 2001, Irving David Rubin, the then leader of JDL, and Earl Leslie Krugel, a leading member, were arrested for conspiring to bomb a mosque located outside Los Angeles, California, and an office of U.S. Representative Darrell Issa, a Christian of Lebanese descent. The Washington Post reported that the investigation involved the use of an informant and FBI surveillance. Krugel was recorded by the informant as saying that “Arabs needed a wake-up call” and “the JDL needed to do something to one of their ‘filthy’ mosques.” Rubin was also recorded stating his desire to “hunt down” Palestinians and to demonstrate that the JDL was “still alive in a militant way.”

In 2015, Laith Marouf, the vice-president internal of the Concordia Student Union (CSU) in Montreal stated that, in 2001, Rubin had attended council meetings at the university and was known for threatening students. Rubin was also suspected of being behind the Committee for the Elimination of Palestine, which had sent death threats to CSU members. According to a press release published by Independent Jewish Voices and Palestinian and Jewish Unity, Rubin was later accused of planning to bomb Concordia University. According to Marouf, “it was a very scary time. When the threats, and bomb threats, and actual bomb plans, were being made ... terrorism was being plotted in Montreal against students.” Concordia’s Office on Campus rejected JDL-Canada’s “sensationalist tactics,” noting that “they pretend to be here to protect the Jewish community but in fact they contribute to a climate of fear.” Rubin eventually died in 2002 of an apparent suicide as he awaited trial in “relation to charges that he and another man plotted to bomb a mosque and the office of an Arab-American congressman” (as previously noted).

Meir Weinstein is the national director of the Canadian branch of JDL and is described by JDL-Canada as a “disciple” of Rabbi Kahane. JDL-Canada was first established in 1979, and Weinstein revived the previously dormant group in 2006 in the wake of rallies in Toronto and Montreal against the Lebanon war of 2006.

The violent history of JDL-Canada’s activities has been documented, and includes the 1976 arrest of members for setting off a bomb at the home of antisemitic Toronto mayoral candidate Don Andrews, threats against and altercations with Palestinian supporters at protests, and assaulting a journalist.

In December 2017, JDL-Canada member Yosef Steynovitz was indicted by a U.S. grand jury for assault and hate crime against a Palestinian-American during the American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference in Washington, DC. The annual conference has had a history of platforming anti-Muslim speakers and funders. Steynovitz pleaded not guilty to the charges, and a trial was scheduled in 2019.

In March 2017 at a demonstration against Motion 103, a JDL-Canada member assaulted and made death threats against Canadian journalist Kevin Metcalf, who was recording the demonstration.

At a pro-Palestine rally in Toronto in 2021, a man wearing a shirt with a JDL logo brandished a weapon in a violent altercation with supporters of Palestine. Video footage captured the incident, which was first wrongly characterized as pro-Palestine demonstrators attacking a group of pro-Israel supporters and then widely condemned as antisemitic violence.

In 2017, Facebook removed JDL-Canada’s page, citing its community-standards policy for “dangerous organizations.” Weinstein criticized the move as being the result of “anti-Israel and anti-Jewish bias.” Weinstein’s Facebook account was also reportedly suspended for 30 days.

In 2021 Meir Weinstein announced that he was stepping down from his activities with JDL-Canada.
York University (Toronto) Federation of Students 2019 AGM report outlining JDL-Canada’s presence at a campus rally protesting actions of the Israeli state, which resulted in assaults on peacefully demonstrating students.

Views

Global Islamic Terror. On its website (page now removed), JDL-Canada stated that “global Islamic terrorism must be eliminated.” It listed Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, Hitler Loyalists, and the Nation of Islam, among others, as “domestic separatist terrorists creating division & instability.”

Radical Muslims. In 2017, Weinstein told Global News that part of the impetus for setting up the organization’s proposed Montreal chapter was the need to “keep an eye” on radical Muslims in Montreal. JDL-Canada stated that their presence in Montreal was aimed at solidifying the relationships with other anti-jihadist forces in Québec to “highlight and confront the problem of radical Islam and shut down institutions that promote radical Islamic ideology.”

Anti-Arab Racism. On Facebook, Weinstein stated that violence was “in Arab DNA.” He was also a member of a group called “Death to Arabs.”

Xenophobic Racism against Syrian Refugees. At a 2017 memorial service for Rabbi Binyamin Kahane, Weinstein noted that “so-called Syrian refugees” were causing terror in Europe. He repeated a poem once read aloud by Donald Trump that had been used to infer that Syrian refugees were akin to “snakes” that would harm those helping them.

Palestine Supporters Are Nazis. In response to potential pro-Palestinian counter-protesters during a 2019 “Walk for Israel,” Weinstein stated that it was fair to “break their legs” and likened them to Nazis marching with swastikas in Jewish communities.

Anti-Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Harassment. JDL-Canada has engaged in anti-Palestine activities on Canadian university campuses. This has included heckling and intimidating participants at the University of Toronto’s Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions 2014 campaign launch and protesting Palestinian mural art at York University in 2015.

Islamist Bogeyman. Following the murder of Corporal Nathan Cirillo at Canada’s National War Memorial in 2014, JDL-Canada used this opportunity to draw links between Canadian Muslim charities and domestic terrorism, citing their alleged alliance with groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood. They claimed that these groups had active bases in Canadian universities and Islamic centres.

Weinstein wrote an open letter to the government of Canada in 2014 to urge authorities to look into the “possible misuse” of Islamic Relief Canada’s charitable status. They also alleged that the Muslim Association of Canada “funnelled $300,000 to a Hamas-linked charity.” Casting aspersions against Muslim organizations and charities as funders of Islamist radicalism is part of the stock repertoire of Islamophobic conspiracy theories (see chapter 3).

Motion 103 Fearmongering. In February 2018, JDL-Canada, under the name “The Center for Jewish Defense,” encouraged supporters to attend a public meeting to oppose Motion 103. The Facebook event page claimed that the motion “denies free speech and promotes radical Islam.”

Connections

In September 2013, JDL-Canada hosted Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, American anti-Muslim activists who had gained international recognition for organizing a campaign in 2010 against an Islamic community centre in Manhattan, New York. In response to the concerns voiced by the National Council of Canadian Muslims about their visit, Spencer described that organization as enabling “the advancing jihad.” At JDL-Canada’s event, Geller claimed that Muslims are “scrubbing the textbooks, they are proselytizing for Islam in the school—the five pillars and all that nonsense.” She called the burka “the most offensive garment I have ever seen.” Spencer stated that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the “second largest inter-
The organization regularly share calls to actions on their platforms supporting their pro-Israel stance, such as petitions against university faculty exercising their academic freedom to criticize Israel and its policies; interfering in university hiring processes involving faculty critical of Israel; attempting to shut down, the efforts of BDS movements, and policing speakers invited to Islamic events. BBC went as far as to write to the Canadian Border Services Agency to stop the entry of the Black Muslim leader Siraj Wahaj into Canada, where he was scheduled to speak at a Muslim conference.

A 2021 Canadian Charity Law article noted that two registered charities, the League for Human Rights of B’nai Brith and B’nai Brith Foundation District No. 22 had had their status revoked as the result of a 2014 Canada Revenue Agency audit that cited non-compliance with requirements set out in subsection 168 (1) of the Income Tax Act. The organization “did not devote its resources to charitable activities that it carried on itself, gifted to non-qualified donees, failed to be constituted for exclusively charitable purposes, did not maintain adequate books and records, and issued donation receipts for directed donations.”

Views

B’nai Brith Canada

Overview. B’nai Brith is an International pro-Israel, Jewish-advocacy organization. The Canadian chapter engages in a wide range of programming and services for the Canadian Jewish community. The organization also maintains a focus on challenging “radical Islam” and “anti-terrorism” efforts.

Background. B’nai Brith Canada (BBC) was established in 1875 as an independent advocacy group for Jewish Canadians. The organization offers a wide range of programming, including education, social, and community programming and human-rights initiatives in the service of Jewish people. BBC has developed a strong social-media profile and built close ties with the Canadian Conservative Party.

Michael Mostyn, previously a litigation lawyer in Toronto, has been the chief executive officer in Canada since 2014. He ran for the York Centre federal riding, representing the Conservative Party, in 2004, 2006, and 2011.

BBC offers membership to Jewish-identifying people and voluntary opportunities to non-Jewish supporters. In 2007, a group dubbed “Concerned Members of B’nai Brith” took the organization to task for “lacking responsible governance.” According to a 2008 Canadian Jewish News report, internal critics of BBC said its leadership has not complied with corporate rules and the organization’s own by-laws that require disclosure of audited financial statements prior to annual general meetings. They said the organization is overly centralized and secretive.

Dissenting members also took issue with the organization’s close ties to the Conservative Party and the potential impact this would have on their charitable status. After these challenges, eight individuals from the Concerned Members of B’nai Brith were stripped of all membership rights for “conduct unbecoming.”
**Radical Islam and Nazis.** On November 9, 2009, BBC ran a full-page newspaper ad in the National Post that likened “radical Islam” to Nazism. The ad was headlined “The Unholy Alliance” and compared Nazism and “radical Islam” as having in common “Killing Canadian men and women on the battlefields,” “Incitement of children through schools and media,” “Annihilation of World Jewry and subjugation of everyone else,” and “World Domination.” The repeated use of an unqualified, amorphous “radical Islam” makes these associations synonymous with the Islamic faith and renders all Muslims suspect. The ad was condemned by Canadian Jewish Holocaust Survivors group, the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims.

**Motion 103 Fearmongering.** When providing testimony during the tabling of Motion 103 (M-103), Michael Mostyn stated, “We strongly endorse the importance for your work on M-103 to be broad-based. An unbalanced emphasis on Islamophobia creates the impression that Canadian Muslims are the only victims of hate crimes.” Mostyn went on to state that Islamophobia is a “confusing term” with competing definitions.

Prior to giving testimony regarding Motion 103, BBC raised concerns, with what they criticized as a “broad” definition of Islamophobia adopted by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), stating that it would not allow students or teachers to claim “dislike” for “Islamic politics or culture.” Within a few hours of placing the complaint, the TDSB changed their definition for Islamophobia and recalled the Islamic Heritage Month Resource Guidebook, which contained the definition.

**Connections**

Though BBC mounted a campaign against what they alleged to be objectionable speakers at the 2018 Islamic Circle of North America conference, later that year they co-sponsored an event featuring Ben Shapiro. Shapiro, a former editor of Breitbart News had stated that the “Palestinian Arab population is rotten to the core” and that “Arabics like to bomb crap and live in open sewage.” Shapiro rejected accusations that he had contributed to the incitement of Québec City mosque shooter Alexander Bissonnette, despite the fact that Bissonnette had visited Shapiro’s Twitter account ninety-three times in the month prior to the shooting.

BBC was a proud sponsor of the 2019 CFTRL conference (see below). Other sponsors included the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation, Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms, among others. The conference received funding from the Middle East Forum think tank, which protects Western values from Middle Eastern threats.

In the Ayman Elkasrawy case (see chapter 1), BBC took action against Elkasrawy by demanding that then Ryerson University Fire him (and JL-Canada filed a hate-crime complaint). The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies (FSWC) and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs also labelled the case as antisemitic. Expert third-party translators, provided by the Toronto Star, verified the Arabic translation, and determined that it was the result of a deliberate mistranslation of a short prayer rather than wilful hate speech toward Jewish people (see chapter 1).

FSWC joined BBC in filing complaints with the TDSB about their Islamic Heritage Month guidebook, urging them to pull the guide from circulation pending a review of the document. They argued that the definition of Islamophobia in the guide did not allow for criticism of political Islam and therefore violated Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And yet both groups had been supportive of the IHRA definition of antisemitism that had been adopted by the federal government and, as previously noted, does not allow criticism of Israel as a colonial or racist endeavour.

Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper was awarded the B’nai B’rith International Presidential Gold Medal in recognition of his commitment to the Jewish people and the state of Israel.

### 6.4.3

**Never Again Canada**

**Overview.** Never Again Canada (NAC) was founded in 2014 to fight anti-jewish incitement in Canada, antisemitism, propaganda against Jews and Israel, terror, and Jew hatred.

**Background.** NAC’s mission is not “allowing history to repeat itself,” and standing against terrorism, anti-Jewish sentiment, antisemitism, and “propaganda that are being spread around the world about the Jews and Israel.”

**Views**

**Islamic Terror.** NAC’s now defunct Facebook page claimed that Islamic terror was responsible for the current antisemitism and that “the only effective way to fight antisemitism and Islamic terror is to first identify it, then challenge it, confront it and then remove it as early as possible for best survival rates and results.”

A 2017 statement on NAC’s website attempted to distance from a wholesale anti-Islam narrative, noting that

- the fight against Islamist extremism—particularly where such extremism is wedded to anti-jewish incitement—should not be conflated with a critique against Islam in general.
- To conflate the Islam practiced by millions of Canadians with an extremist Islamist notion that Muslims and Islam are dangerous. Articles they feature fabricate stories such as the following fearmongering headline: “Canadian PM calls on Canadians to welcome ISIS terrorists ‘If we welcome them they won’t attack us.’”

**Dangerous Muslims.** A common trope purveyed on the NAC website is that Muslims and Islam are dangerous. Articles they feature demonize stories such as the following fearmongering headline: “Canadian PM calls on Canadians to welcome ISIS terrorists ‘If we welcome them they won’t attack us.’”

**Supporting Hindutva Nationalism.** The now defunct Facebook page was a compilation of anti-Palestinian, anti-Muslim, and pro-Likud posts. NAC has gone so far as to demonize those protesting atrocities in Kashmir as “Islamists” who are “leftist and anti-India,” stating that “Canada’s Jewish Community and Canadians alike must stand with our Hindu friends and India.” A report from the Islamophobia Studies Center at the University of California, Berkeley, outlined the transnational ties and alliances between Israel and India and the promotion of anti-Muslim propaganda by groups promoting pro-Israel interests and Islamophobic Hindutva nationalism. Such alliances have been coalescing in Canada for some time.

**Connections**

In June 2017, NAC released a statement refuting an alliance with JL-Canada, stating that they “neither comprise a formal network nor affiliate with one another in any other fashion,” though in demonstrations and at court hearings NAC members have been present alongside JL-Canada members. A Now magazine report stated that “NAC’s Facebook page has featured several JL-Canada events, including a lecture last December [2016] by noted U.S. ‘counter-jihad’ blogger and Islamophobia kingpin, Robert Spencer on ‘The Threat Of The Syrian Refugee Trojan Horse.’”
On April 9, 2017, Sandra Solomon, along with Tarek Fatah, Ron Banerjee, and Tahir Gora were speakers at the [Muslims Against M-103](#) conference, supported by NAC. In one Facebook post, video and comments were used to fundraise to cover travel and accommodation for Sandra Solomon on her Canada tour (see chapter 7).

On February 17, 2017, NAC [demonstrated in Toronto](#) in front of Masjid Toronto against Motion 103 along with Canadians Against Islamization and Suffragettes Against Sharia (another [pop-up venture](#) by Sandra Solomon), holding up signs and barring the way to the entrance of the mosque.

A 2019 Buzzfeed News [investigation](#) into NAC showed it was regularly coordinating content with other webpages, including at least twenty-five other Facebook pages with a collective following of 1.5 million followers. These pages included United American Infidels Against Tyranny, Obama Enemies, and “Deport the Grand Mufti.” This collaboration significantly increases the audience for their anti-Muslim content.

A 2019 Toronto Star [article](#) revealed that “Never Again Canada endorsed White supremacist Faith Goldy when she ran for mayor of Toronto, writing ‘Make sure you Vote for FAITH … We need strong Leadership in Toronto to Save it from the Corrupt Liberals and the Creeping Sharia Law [sic].’”

The NAC website has featured articles from Islamophobic news outlets, such as Breitbart, Geller Report, Fox News, The Times of Israel, Jerusalem Post, and Jihad Watch, which feature an exclusively negative view of Islam and Muslims.

### 6.4.4 The Middle East Forum

**Overview.** The Middle East Forum (MEF) is a U.S.-based right-wing, anti-Islam, pro-Israel think tank that spreads disinformation, creates McCarthyist “watch lists” targeting academics, and advocates rigid foreign policy. The Center for American Progress [described](#) the MEF as a “controversial far-right think tank that is known for its anti-Islam views and hawkish foreign policy recommendations.” Given that the MEF has ties to organizations in Canada, they warrant inclusion in this report as both funders (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”) and as transnational soft-power brokers.

**Background.** MEF is a think tank led by Daniel Pipes that “promotes American interests in the Middle East and protects Western values from Middle Eastern threats.” It pursues these [goals](#) through policy recommendations, public lectures, television appearances, and the distribution of $1.5 million in grants (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”) and as transnational soft-power brokers.

**Views.**

Radical Islam. MEF [views](#) the Middle East as an amalgam of “dictatorships, radical ideologies, existential conflicts” and focuses on ways to defeat “radical Islam” abroad and “lawful Islamism” domestically. MEF promotes the Islamist-bogeyman and “stealth jihad” conspiracy theories through their numerous [publications](#).

**Connections.** MEF provides funding to numerous anti-Muslim organizations and has provided legal services to a number of anti-Muslim activists globally, such as Geert Wilders and Tommy Robinson. They have provided support for ACT! For Canada and Valerie Price (see below), as well as being a financial sponsor for the CFTRL conference in April 2019 (see below).

On November 2002, Campus Watch was [involved in](#) a controversy over its “blacklisting project,” whereby it “posted ‘dossiers’ on eight scholars who … criticize US foreign policy and the Israeli occupation.” In [response](#), approximately 100 professors asked to have their names added to the list in opposition to the project. The “dossiers” were subsequently [dropped](#) from the page. However, Campus Watch continues to keep a list of recommended “Professors to Avoid” and a list of the professors who stood against the McCarthyist dossiers under the title “Solidarity with Apologists.” Professors targeted by these intimidation tactics received “tens of thousands of racist, obscene and threatening emails.”


The goal of [Jihad Intel](#) is to educate “law enforcement and the general public with intelligence on radical Islamic and Islamic terrorist groups” and to provide “local and state police with tools to connect the dots before major terrorist incidents.” This initiative reinforces the essentialized narratives connecting Muslims to terrorism and promotes the securitization of organizations they deem as having “radical” ties, which include legitimate Muslim civil-society organizations.

The Legal Project [seeks](#) to “protect researchers and analysts who work on the topics of terrorism, terrorist funding, and radical Islam from lawsuits designed to silence their exercise of free speech.” In 2006, The Legal Project [defended Steven Emerson](#), a prominent anti-Muslim activist, in a lawsuit mounted against him by the Islamic Society of Boston, which had [alleged](#) that he and sixteen others had “waged a media war” against their efforts to build a mosque and cultural centre.

In June 2011, Dutch anti-Islam politician, Geert Wilders was [acquitted](#) of inciting hatred against Muslims. Wilders [thanked](#) The Legal Project for their “help, advice and [assistance],” and The Legal Project [acknowledged](#) that it had “worked on Wilders’ behalf and [had] raised substantial
funds for his defense.”

The MEF and Pipes were cited numerous times in Anders Breivik’s manifesto detailing the far-right mass murderer’s motivations for his July 2011 attack that resulted in the death of more than seventy Norwegians. Other individuals cited in the manifesto were Frank Gaffney, Steven Emerson, Pamela Geller, and Robert Spencer.

In 2018, MEF stated that it had provided the funding for British anti-Muslim activist Tommy Robinson’s legal defence through its Legal Project. Additionally, MEF organized two “Free Tommy” rallies, one of which turned violent. The think tank also covered the travel costs of Representative Paul Gosar (R-AZ) who spoke at one of the London rallies, describing Muslim men as a “scourge on society.”

6.4.5

ACT! For Canada

Overview. ACT! For Canada (AFC), branded as a “grassroots organization,” is the Canadian branch of ACT! for America, Brigitte Gabriel’s U.S.-based Islamophobic, anti-sharia organization.

AFC was created in 2011 in Montreal, Québec, with Valerie Price as the organization’s national director. Price claims solidarity with “liberal Muslims” against Islamism, claims that “Islamophobia” is a term created by “Islamists” and that Islam and Muslims receive exceptional rights in Canada.

Background. The organization’s mandate states that:

Act! For Canada (AFC) stands on guard to defend Canada and the Canadian people against all enemies, foreign and domestic who, through stealth or outright aggression, seek to undermine the freedoms, economic prosperity, traditional values and heritage of the Canadian nation and peoples.

More recent posts speak to the “Great Reset” anti-establishment conspiracy theory that maintains that the global elite have planned and managed the Covid-19 pandemic.

AFC claims to be patriotic, concerned, and outspoken in defence of Canadian democratic values against Islamism. Their stated attempt to differentiate political Islam from a moderate, mainstream Islam is undermined by their problematic content, their generalized statements, and their stereotypical assumptions about Islam and Muslims.

With eight chapters in Québec, Ontario, British Columbia, and New Brunswick, AFC has hosted gatherings and engaged speakers to inform the public about the “dangers” of “political Islam” (see chapter 3). The organization claims to stand for not only patriotic Canadians but also for those who are willing to act if Canadian values are attacked by Islamists. Their motto is “Don’t just love Canada, ACT! For Canada.”

Their key issues include preserving the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, mass-immigration and replacement agendas, restoration and protection, Islamization and red-green alliances, a globallist Communist takeover of Canada, and women and children.

Views

Motion 103 Fearmongering. AFC is a prominent opponent of Motion 103. They regard Islamophobia as a term invented by Islamists to curtail criticism of Islam. They take issue with Motion 103 singling out Muslims for special attention. There is no mention of the Quebec City mosque attack, which precipitated the motion, despite AFC’s mandate to “defend Canada and the Canadian people against all enemies, foreign and domestic who, through stealth or outright aggression” undermine Canada and its values. Only if Muslims are not considered part of Canada can this omission be justified.

Radical Islam and Securitizing Muslims. The organization monitors what they call “Radical Islamic Activity” in regional city and town halls, school boards, and mosques for ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS and offer surveillance tips for citizens at large to monitor possible terrorist activity.

Creeping Sharia / Stealth Jihad. One of the core mandates of AFC is to defend against the “Islamization of our nation through stealth implementation of anti-Canadian Sharia law.” The organization believes that accommodating Islamic practices in public schools and the existence of private Islamic schools are ways that “triumphalist Islam” is infiltrating Canada via a stealth jihad.

AFC National Director Valerie Price offered a personal statement on the website that raised alarms about halal food being served in school cafeterias, which she claimed was being used to fund terrorism. She refers to Muslim students offering prayers in a Toronto school cafeteria (referred to as a “mosqueteria”) as another example of the “special treatment” Muslims receive at the expense of secularism.

Islam, Gendered Violence, and Inequality. AFC’s website has made several references to practices like female genital mutilation, forced and child marriage, and honour killing being part of an “Islamic doctrine of women” that is antithetical to “western principles.” These practices are wrongly connected to Islam, and such information relies on individuals who have been described by the Southern Poverty Law Center as the “anti-Muslim inner circle.” For example, AFC has promoted the work of Bill Warner (a.k.a. French), who serves as the head of the U.S.-based for-profit Center for the Study of Political Islam. He does not have an academic background in Islam or Islamic law and jurisprudence, and yet has authored several books on these topics. Despite the lack of credentials and scholarly authority, Warner has made the claim that Islam is not a religion but a political ideology.

Price has further argued that the exemption of menstruating women from the obligation of regular prayers is a sign of Islam’s gender inequality.

Muslim Rape Culture. AFC’s website has featured such topics such as sexual assault of Canadian women, sex trafficking, and “grooming gangs,” which are tied to what they argue is the sexual deviance of Islam and Muslims. Web links to these topics include videos from prominent Canadian Islamophobia influencers Ezra Levant and Rebel Media, Faith Goldy, and Kevin Johnston, spread xenophobic propaganda connecting violent and deviant sexual practices and assaults to Muslim migrants. The AFC website has also provided videos relating to “taharrush gamea,” a term used to refer to coordinated sexual assaults against women as part of an alleged Muslim “rape culture,” so that predatory sexual violence is ascribed uniquely to Muslim men. However, patriarchal sexual violence transcends religious, cultural, and national boundaries. Scholars working on public sexual violence have critiqued the unfounded narrative of an endemic Muslim rape culture as fostering Islamophobia and xenophobic conspiracies.

Love Jihad. A series of videos and articles have been posted on the website that discourage non-Muslim women from dating or marrying Muslim men. The narrative that Muslim men are dangerous and are actively trying to marry and convert non-Muslim women has been promoted in India, where this Islamophobic conspiracy theory is referred to as a “love jihad.” The linked sources warning against dating or marrying Muslim men include articles from Daniel Pipes, Faith Goldy, and Phyllis Chesler, as well as from an evangelical Christian site called the Crescent Project, which is devoted to ministering to Muslims around the world to “awaken them to the truth of Christ.”
Islamophobia and Globalism. AFC has raised concerns about asylum seekers and the UN Global Compact for Migration as part of a xenophobic, anti-globalist narrative. They have also opposed Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government, whom they see as furthering globalism to the detriment of Canada.

**Pandemic Hoax.** Other articles and books promoted on AFC’s website have circulated pandemic conspiracies.

**Connections**

Speakers at AFC events have included David Harris (see chapter 8), Barbara Kay (see chapter 4), Salim Mansur and Raheel Raza (see chapter 7), and Robert Spencer, among others. In 2017, Price was a featured speaker at an anti-Motion 103 conference during which she thanked Meir Weinstein and JDL-Canada for their “protection” during the event. In 2019 AFC co-hosted a forum on Canadian immigration policy in partnership with JDL-Canada.

AFC and Middle East Forum were sponsors for the CFTRL conference in March 2019 (see below). AFC supported Maxime Bernier of the People’s Party of Canada (PPC) as the “only one willing to discuss the ‘Islamic Menace,’” as well as Benjamin Dichter, founder of LGBTory, who joined the PPC and has made openly Islamophobic statements, claiming that Islamists had infiltrated both Liberal and Conservative parties.

The AFC has echoed and amplified their anti-Muslim messaging by cross-posting on social media with other like-minded individuals and groups, including Tarek Fatah (see chapter 8) and Point de Bascule, which describes itself as a resource for exposing “methods and means used by Islamist organizations and leaders to implement their program in Canada.” AFC also promoted Thomas Quiggin’s Operation Kill Switch campaign (see chapter 8).

AFC released the letter that terrorism expert Thomas Quiggin, along with Raheel Raza, Tahir Gora, and Benjamin Dichter, had addressed to the RCMP regarding the investigation of the Prime Minister of Canada and several of his ministers as supporters and funders of terrorism. Quiggin’s report, Canada Is Funding Terrorism with Taxpayers’ Money, alleged that Prime Minister Trudeau and members of the Liberal government fund terrorism by supporting the efforts of Islamic Relief Canada.

AFC has included on their website the logos of organizations such as Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms (see below) and the Council of European Canadians. They participated in a national conference held in Toronto to study the implications of M-103, the use of the undefined term “Islamophobia,” and the consequential chill that it portends if criticism of Islam is considered unacceptable and punishable by law. Salim Mansur (see chapter 7) is a fellow with Mozuud.

AFC has included on their website the logos of organizations such as Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms, Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms and the Council of European Canadians. They participated in a national conference held in Toronto to study the implications of M-103, the use of the undefined term “Islamophobia,” and the consequent chill that it portends if criticism of Islam is considered unacceptable and punishable by law. Salim Mansur (see chapter 7) is a fellow with Mozuud.

**Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms**

**Overview.** The Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms (C3RF) was created to contest Motion 103, which the group claimed would silence free speech and valid critiques of Islam and Muslims. While the focus of the group has expanded to challenging globalism and migration, as well as pandemic lockdowns, there remains a sharp focus on promoting the creeping-sharia narrative and numerous campaigns against “Islamophobia Day.”

**Background.** C3RF seeks to educate Canadians about the “threats to the Canadian Charter of Rights.” The organization coalesced to oppose the passing of Motion 103, which they allege has the potential to “adversely impact the ability of Canadians to express themselves freely.” They argue that the term “Islamophobia” is “confusing and alarming.”

The organization has also issue with assertions of systemic anti-Black racism on a page that presents images of monkeys (historically egregious anti-Black racist imagery), alongside an article that argues that institutionalized anti-Black racism lacks a “coherent fact based rationale.”

**Views**

**Motion 103 Fearmongering.** The group warns that the federal Liberal government is criminalizing criticism of Islam and opening the door for a sharia-based Islamic takeover of Canadian law. In 2017, C3RF held events across the country campaigning against Motion 103 and the Trudeau government, including a conference on Motion 103, Learning Circle on Free Speech.

C3RF held a contest requesting people to submit instances of when an accusation of Islamophobia was meant to silence free speech. The preface for the competition illogically drew similarities between Islamophobia and “Battered Women’s Syndrome,” arguing that both invert the victim-oppressor relationship.

C3RF rejected nationwide calls for a National Day of Remembrance and Action against Islamophobia to commemorate the Quebec City mosque shooting. They promoted a number of measures such signing petitions and writing to political leaders to oppose the memorialization of this tragedy and the focus on Islamophobia.

**Creeping Sharia.** In a brochure distributed to alert the public to their Motion 103 fears, C3RF alleged that there are Canadian Muslims in Canada who want sharia law implemented in this country and question whether Motion103 is being used as a covert strategy to promote creeping sharia. The brochure states, “Motion M-103 and Petition e-411 on which it is based present a useful vehicle to bring about the normalization of sharia law as a respectable form of multicultural expression.”

**Muslim Organizations Are Islamist Fronts.** C3RF has promoted Thomas Quiggin’s conspiracy theory (see chapter 8) that Canadian Muslim organizations are fronts for terrorist groups and that the federal Liberal government is channelling funding to support groups like Hamas.

**Connections**

According to a 2017 VICE News report, Georganne Burke, the outreach chair for MP Andrew Scheer’s campaign to lead the Conservative Party, was involved in the founding of the C3RF. Mozuud Freedom Fund, a pro-Israel organization, has stated on their website that Mozuud contributed to creating C3RF. They participated in a national conference held in Toronto to study the implications of M-103, the use of the undefined term “Islamophobia,” and the consequent chill that it portends if criticism of Islam is considered unacceptable and punishable by law. Salim Mansur (see chapter 7) is a fellow with Mozuud.

The 2017 C3RF Learning Circle on Free Speech conference featured speakers profiled in this report, including Tarek Fatah and Raheel Raza (see chapter 7), Sue-Ann Levy (see chapter 4), and Thomas Quiggin (see chapter 8). In addition, the conference platformed Clare Lopez from the U.S.-based Center for Security Policy, identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as an anti-Muslim hate group. Lopez regularly promotes the conspiracy theory of Muslim Brotherhood infiltration in the United States and that sharia law is taking hold in American courts. JDL-Canada were acknowledged for providing protection for the C3RF conference.
The C3RF also have their own tab on Immigration Watch Canada, a page that maintains that immigration is a “social engineering experiment on Canada’s ‘mainstream population’ in order to make it into a minority.”

The C3RF provided a platform for Christine Douglass-William’s (see chapter 4) comments about being fired from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, adding the claim, “Speaking against #M103 and ‘Islamophobia’ not allowed.”

The C3RF website promotes the writings of the false cleric, Imam Tawhidi (see chapter 8). Their Facebook page has also shared a post from anti-Muslim activist Ben Shapiro.

A link on the C3RF website labelled “Torpedoing Islamophobia” connects to the web page of the far-right Gates of Vienna, a leading blogsite for the counter-jihad movement (see chapter 3). A report by UK-based HOPE Not Hate profiled Gates of Vienna’s founder Baron Bodsieky (a.k.a. Edward S. May) and identified the blogsite as “one of the most influential counter-jihad sites in the world” that “has become a platform for many of the movement’s most extreme and hardline writers.” Norwegian anti-Muslim terrorist Anders Breivik was a follower of the Gates of Vienna page and cited the group eighty-six times in his manifesto.

The C3RF were one of the supporting organizations of the CFTRL conference (see below). Many of the founders of C3RF are also part of CFTRL. These soft-power groups splinter into various offshoot organizations with the same players and mandates.

6.4.7 Canadians for the Rule of Law

Overview. CFTRL is a registered charitable organization based in Toronto, Ontario. The prime objectives of the organization are stated as “assist[ing] authorities in enforcing and administering the law in Canada” and “increas[ing] public awareness and knowledge of legal rights and obligations in Canada.” They have actively recruited members to support their pro-Israel, anti-BDS, and anti-Palestinian politics while stoking fears of Islam and Muslims in Canada.

Background. CFTRL claims to uphold the rule of law and inform policy. The group is focused on challenging groups and individuals whom they brand as an “Islamist,” terrorist, or antisemitic. While on the surface CFTRL appears to present an innocuous and noble set of values, such as upholding democracy and human rights, underlying it is a singular focus on protecting Israel from criticism and invoking the Islamist bogeyman and vilifying Palestinian-solidarity movements to secure that goal.

CFTRL’s All-Day National Teach-In conference (see below) took place on March 17, 2019, just two days after the attacks in two New Zealand mosques during which a White nationalist shot dead fifty-one Muslims. An opening acknowledgement at the conference condemned the New Zealand attacks and was followed by a moment of silence, albeit not for the Muslim victims but for “free speech.”

The conference topics included media propaganda, hate speech (targeting Israel), religion in public spaces; terrorism and public safety (focusing on “radical Islam”), promoting lawfare in Canada, “sham” Muslim charities funding terrorism, and taking action against the Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions movement.

Members of CFTRL and the speakers they platform are highly educated, successful professionals in fields like law, medicine, politics, business, and the social-service sector, bolstering the mainstream credibility of the organization.

Views

Protecting “Free Speech.” The focus of CFTRL’s 2019 conference included protecting rights, free speech, and the “rule of law” from the organizations, “political tribes,” and “disruptors” that threaten “law-abiding citizens.” This rhetoric constructs a binary world of those who live within the rule of law (i.e., individuals subscribing to “Canadian” Judeo-Christian values) and those who do not (i.e., followers of “radical” Islam, casting aspersions on all Muslims as potential extremists).

A Muslim professor (and this report’s author) who attended the conference was assaulted after challenging a speaker’s remarks, which promoted derogatory stereotypes and disinformation about Muslims, despite the conference claim of promoting “free speech.”

Islamist Bogeyman and Civilizational Jihad. Featured sessions and speakers at the 2019 conference actively promoted anti-Muslim ideologies and Islamophobic conspiracy theories of an Islamist takeover of Canada and of civilizational jihad. They referred indiscriminately to “Islamists” as a pervasive threat to Canada and globally without acknowledging the wide spectrum of beliefs that exist within the scope of political Islam (see chapter 3).

CFTRL speakers have implicated several entities and organizations as being “radical” or “terror supporting,” portraying them as fronts for Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood: Muslim Student Associations, mosques, madrassas (Islamic schools), and Muslim charities and organizations, such as Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Islamic Society of North America, the National Council of Canadian Muslims, and International Relief Fund for the Afflicted and Needy-Canada.

Trojan Horse. Speakers platformed by CFTRL trafficked in Muslim scare stories that promoted the Trojan-horse conspiracy theory. A session on “Sham Charities” warned of a nefarious plot by Muslim organizations to have their supporters and agents “burrow” into societies and subvert the political system to impose sharia law and install a caliphate in Canada. A plan was outlined that implicated Muslim groups in a conspiracy to “infiltrate” positions of power to assert their triumphalist aims using deception (taqiyya).

Chart on alleged Muslim "sham charities" handed out to attendees at the 2019 CFTRL conference in Vaughan, Ontario
Connections

CFTRL’s 2019 conference, assembled several speakers and supporters of their mission, such as B’nai Brith Canada, Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, Mozuud Freedom Foundation, Harbans Fellowships, Canada Christian College, The Lawfare Project, and Shurat Hadin, among others. Additional named supporters of the conference included the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem Canada, Speaker’s Action Group (an initiative of the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation), Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, and Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism Policy.

Funding for the 2019 CFTRL conference was provided by the Middle East Forum (see chapters 1.4 “Monetizing Hate” and 6.4.5 “ACT! For Canada”).

The orchestration of these networks through shared membership, co-platforming speakers, and other cooperative ties has ensured their cohesion and reinforced the anti-Muslim messaging they circulate.

6.4.8

Selected Profiles of Speakers at the 2019 CFTRL All-Day National Teach-In Conference

The March 2019 All-Day National Teach-In conference highlighted the connections between pro-Israel, fringe-right groups and Muslim dissidents (see chapter 7), who have created strategic alliances to further their collective anti-Muslim rhetoric and campaigns.

Panelists and keynote speakers for the conference included Daniel Bordman, Christine Douglass-Williams, Tahir Gora, Salim Mansur (Gatestone Institute, Clarion Fund, People’s Party of Canada, Mozuud Freedom Foundation), Ross McLean, Michael Mostyn, and Benjamin Ryberg (Lawfare Project). David Nitkin was the chair and emcee for the event. Controversial evangelical Christian leader and right-wing, conservative political activist Charles McVety was an invited speaker featured in the program. A full list of 2019 conference speakers is available on the website.

Notably, prominent Canadian lawyers, such as Donald Carr, have been featured speakers at CFTRL conferences and webinars, proudly acknowledging their law firms in their bios.

More recently, the 2020 conference included controversial false cleric Imam Tawhidi (see chapter 7), as well as prominent anti-Muslim activist Daniel Pipes (MEF). Further details on CFTRL board members can be found in other sections of this report, demonstrating their cross-platform linkages and connections.

The following profiles provide a quick overview of “who’s who” in connection with CFTRL.

Daniel Bordman

Daniel Bordman began his career in the entertainment industry as a stand-up comedian and working for various political charities and NGOs. He hosted a show called Uninterrupted with Daniel Bordman on Tahir Gora’s TAG TV, which promotes itself as a “Multicultural TV Channel.” Bordman also has written for Post Millenial, an online news outlet (see chapter 4). He has asserted that the Canadian government has a pro-Islamic agenda and colludes with groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS.

In 2021, Walled Soliman, a prominent Canadian Muslim lawyer, won a $500,000 defamation award against Bordman, who had accused Soliman of being a terrorism supporter and having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. The legal ruling described Bordman as “a hatemonger, a racist, and a member of the alt-right community of demagogues, hatemongers, conspiracy theorists, and Islamophobes.”

Christine Douglass-Williams

Christine Douglass-Williams is a journalist and regular writer for Jihad Watch, an anti-Muslim website run by Robert Spencer and affiliated with the David Horowitz Freedom Center. Douglass-Williams is also connected to the Gatestone International Policy Institute (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”), Vakur (a White nationalist group in Iceland), Crossroads Christian Communications, World Evangelical Alliance, and Inside World Report. She has authored numerous articles and books critical of Islam and Muslims. She was a Conservative-appointed director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation until she was removed from her position due to her “Islamophobic commentary” (see chapter 4 for full profile).

Tahir Gora

Tahir Gora refers to himself as a “Canadian journalist, writer and socio-political activist” and an avid “critic of Islamism and terrorism.” Gora has founded multiple outlets and the online YouTube channel TAG TV. He has also claimed to have designed “deradicalization” programs. Gora has written dozens of articles raising alarm about growing Islamic radicalization across the world (see chapter ? for full profile).

Ross Mclean

Former Toronto police officer Ross McLean is described as a “security and intelligence specialist” and media commentator and a “calls it as he sees it” on issues of securitization, crime, and terrorism. McLean is listed as a professor of marketing at Canada Christian College under the direction of its president, Charles McVety (see below). He has claimed to have provided “close protection for crime and terror for several billionaire clients, a Global Fortune 500 company, and has designed and protected some of the most secure facilities in North America.” His Twitter account contains retweets and commentary supporting Donald Trump and his policies, the Israel Defense Forces, The Quiggin Report (see chapter 8), and Rebel News (see chapter 4).

David Nitkin

David Nitken, CFTRL’s president and professional ethicist is described as a writer, social activist, and community organizer. He is the founder and president of EthicScan. Nitkin, who served as the emcee for the 2019 CFTRL conference, spoke on a panel about “Religion in Public Space” and chaired the “Terrorism and Public Safety” panel featuring Ross McLean and Christine Douglass-Williams. He is also associated with C3RF. Nitkin is the founder of the anti-BDS, pro-Israel site Stop Sponsoring Hatred. In a letter to the Canadian prime minister, Nitkin denounced Motion 103, citing his unsubstantiated claim that three Imams in the greater Toronto area had links with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian government. He does not believe that Muslims “need a separate law which is supported by groups that have close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and in essence are trying to put in place a form of Sharia blasphemy law.”
Christian Soft Power: Charles McVety

Overview. Charles McVety is a Canadian evangelical Christian leader, president of the Canada Christian College (CCC), and a political activist whose homophobic, anti-feminist and anti-choice views, as well as his friendly connections to Ontario Premier Doug Ford, have raised concerns.

Background. McVety is the national director for Christians United for Israel (CUFI) Canada, which is affiliated with the CUFI America umbrella organization. CUFI America includes numerous evangelical groups and leaders, Pat Robertson among them, and boasts a collective membership of more than 40 million.

In 2011, McVety invited Geert Wilders, an anti-Muslim politician from the Netherlands, to speak at CCC. In response to public criticism for bringing a prominent racist and Islamophobic figure to speak at the institution, McVety stated, "You can go on and on about the threats of terrorism, but the threats you want to see us dealing with is the continued loss of freedom for our Christian friends in the Middle East to freely admit that they are Christians and to freely worship Jesus Christ. That's the real issue in the Middle East, not the one that you focus on for many, many years."

In 2016, McVety opposed the Canadian government giving $15 million in aid to the people of Gaza through the United National Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, stating that it was "outrageous for our government to give $15,000,000 of taxpayers' money to reward the terrorist regime in Gaza via UNRWA. This agency has been proven to be teaching hate, anti-Palestine rhetoric, all forms of Islamophobia." McVety insisted that “Motion 103, along with its coinciding Petition E-411 are nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to quell criticism of Islam.”

Anti-Palestine Rhetoric. In 2016, McVety opposed the Canadian government giving $15 million in aid to the people of Gaza through the United National Relief and Works Agency, stating that it was "outrageous for our government to give $15,000,000 of taxpayers' money to reward the terrorist regime in Gaza via UNRWA. This agency has been proven to be teaching hate, promoting violence and antisemitism."

Views

Islam and Muslims as a Threat / Demographic Jihad. McVety has stated that, unlike other religions, Islam has a “mandate for a hostile takeover” and likened Islam to a “war machine.” His comments have linked Islam with terrorism: “This nonsense that Islamic terrorism has nothing to do with Islam is something that I can’t digest… according to Jesus Christ, we have to love Muslims, but we don’t have to love Islam.” He has also stoked unfounded fears that a hostile “Islamist takeover” of Canada would implement extreme manifestations of sharia law: “I have a daughter and I don’t want to see her covered in a burka. I love freedom, and I don’t love shariah governance.” McVety has warned of a “demographic jihad” in Canada.

Motion 103 Fearmongering. In February 2017, McVety and the CCC hosted a rally against Motion 103 organized by Ezra Levant of Rebel News. Federal Conservative politicians Kellie Leitch and Chris Alexander (responsible for the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act; see chapter 2) took part in the event. The rally was emceed by White nationalist Faith Goldy, who proclaimed that she would “not stand idly by as blasphemy motions are brought into our country.” Alexander claimed that he had “a lot of trouble with a motion that talks about hatred this, phobia that, and doesn’t mention the number one threat in the world today which is Islamic jihadist terrorism.”

McVety actively contested Motion 103, and also Petition e411, which had been initiated by Samer Mahzoub of the Canadian Muslim Forum and called upon the House of Commons to “recognize that extremist individuals do not represent the religion of Islam,” and to “condemn all forms of Islamophobia.” McVety insisted that “Motion 103, along with its coinciding Petition E-411 are nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to quell criticism of Islam.”

Connections

As announced on the MEF’s Campus Watch site, in 2008, McVety appointed former executive vice-president of B’nai Brith Frank Dimant as the inaugural chair of the Israel Studies department at CCC, which he referred to as “a powerful symbol of the extraordinary working relationship and devotion of the Evangelical movement with the Modern State of Israel and Jewish people all over the world.”

In 2011, McVety invited Geert Wilders, an anti-Muslim politician from the Netherlands, to speak at CCC. In response to public criticism for bringing a prominent racist and Islamophobic figure to speak at the institution, McVety stated: "Geert Wilders has a warning for Canada, and his warning is about a lack of free speech here and the threat of demographic jihad.... Islam is not just a religion, it's a political and cultural system as well and we know that Christians, Jews and Hindus don't have the
In a 2012 article in The Canadian Charger, Michael Laxer outlined the connections between Tarek Fatah (see chapter 7), Charles McVety, and Meir Weinstein of JDL-Canada, who had shared the stage at a collaborative screening of a film titled The Return of Omar Khadr: The Unholy Alliance of Islamism and the Left. The idea that the left is colluding with a supposed Islamist movement is part of the Islamo-gauchisme (“Islamo-leftism”) conspiracies circulating in France’s far-right circles as well as among governmental officials including President Emmanuel Macron. These ideas were already seeded in Canada a decade ago, as this event demonstrated.

As previously noted, in 2017, JDL-Canada partnered with CCC and Ezra Levant and Rebel News to bring U.S.-based anti-Muslim activist Pamela Geller to Toronto for a discussion on “radical jihad and radical Islam.” These alliances demonstrate the links between pro-Israel, fringe-right groups; far-right media; and Islamophobia influencers that create coordinated platforms for their shared anti-Muslim views.

Rebel News held their 2017 rally against Motion 103 at CCC.

McVety is known for homophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric, and yet in 2020 the Ontario Ford government awarded the CCC university status, a controversial move condemned by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. According to the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, McVety also received a grant from the Ford government for $12,078 for a “Jesus in the City parade” under the Celebrate Ontario program. Premier Doug Ford defended accusations of favouritism.

Watch List

Gad Saad. Saad is a professor of marketing and university research chair in evolutionary behavioural sciences and Darwinian consumption at Concordia University. In a conversation with controversial media personality Joe Rogan, Saad made the following comments warning against Muslim migration to the West and citing demographic fears:

When you argue this could happen in the United States, you are not stretching at all, if you look at a long-term view of Islamic immigration, if what you focus on is: Do we have the proper vetting processes to stop ISIS from coming in. That is a very short-term solution... It is not as though every country that is Islamic became, overnight, Islamic. In some cases, it was a very quick invasion, while in other cases it took 500 years before the demographic reality shift. So yes, if you look at it in the perspective of 5-10-50-100 years, the U.S stands no threat. But take a long-term view. I love this quote, I think it was from the Taliban: The U.S. has all the clocks and watches, but we have all the time in the world, eventually we will conquer you.

As another rationale for his anti–Muslim migration stance, Saad went on to claim that the presence of Islam is a detriment to the societies where Muslims have migrated:

Let me draw another analogy: At the end of every day, you can weigh yourself and get one of three results. You’ve either lost weight, your weight did not change, or you have put on weight. Think about it with Islam: When Islam comes into a place, the society can either get better, it can remain unchanged, or it can get worse. Do we have enough data after 1,400 years to suggest that we can try to bet about what will happen to society [if we continue to allow mass Muslim immigration]? Sadly, yes, we do.

Soft-power groups and the individuals associated with them further their specific political agendas and campaigns and play a key role in the Islamophobia industry. They are often in alliance with Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims, who are discussed in the following chapter as key figures in both propagating and legitimating Islamophobic narratives.
Introduction

The Islamophobia industry draws heavily on the views and writings of the confrontational voices of self-proclaimed Muslim dissidents, reformers, and ex-Muslims, lauded as authoritative interlocutors on Islam and Muslims. Bolstered by their “insider” status, they act as instigators and propagators of anti-Islamic narratives as well as validating and authorizing the circulation of these tropes. It may appear as counterintuitive that people claiming a Muslim identity would produce and purvey the same kind of anti-Muslim rhetoric as Islamophobic hate groups; nonetheless, these players occupy a central role within the Islamophobia industry, producing and propelling up its ideologies and providing validation to the racist logics behind these bigotties.

As we have seen in this report, trafficking in Islamophobia is profitable, as anti-Muslim hate has been monetized and commodified, benefitting its purveyors and their campaigns. Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims are beneficiaries of the notoriety and donor support from the Islamophobia industry and have built careers by investing in these roles.

Hamid Dabashi (2011, 6) referred to the role these “insider experts” play as “native informers,” who he charges are responsible for authenticating and corroborating efforts to demonize and vilify Islam and Muslims. He likens them to inhabitants of colonized countries who aligned with the colonizers and acted in service of empire and its ideological and commercial interests. Dabashi referred to these native informers as “comprador intellectuals” responsible for propelling up the imperial project for personal gain and careerism who are “paid to facilitate cultural domination and political pacification” (39).

Contemporary Muslim native informers play the role of “cultural brokers,” re-signifying the ideological currency of Orientalist tropes that promote the religious and cultural degeneracy of Muslims to justify and consolidate colonial missions as projects of racial upliftment. By reauthorizing these narratives, Dabashi argued, “native informers have digested and internalized this language and now speak it with the authority of natives. There is no longer any need for ‘expert knowledge’ when you can hear the facts from the horse’s mouth” (18). In this way, contemporary native informers produce, validate, and promote Islamophobia as authoritative and “authentic” interlocutors empowered by their insider status. Like Muslim native informers of the colonial era, today’s Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims earn notoriety and opportunities to monetize their propaganda within the Islamophobia industry through their exclusive exposés. They market themselves strategically as professional Islamophobia provocateurs to purchase social and political capital.

The term “Muslim dissident” is used here to refer to individuals whose “discourse serves as a justification for intellectual Islamophobia in various forums and across social networks” (Brahimi 2019, 86). These players perform specific roles in the theatre of Islamophobia. Muslim dissidents present themselves Islamic “reformers” and “Muslim refuseniks” delivering a “wake-up” call for fellow Muslims. Some argue that Islam is not inherently evil, but that the religion needs to be saved, reformed, and transformed so it is more compatible with modern civilization (Sharify-Funk 2012). Others openly incite Islamophobic fears and moral panic by equating Islam with terrorism and violence and depicting mosques as nefarious sites of indoctrination and radicalization while accusing some Canadian Muslim organizations of having ties to global jihadist groups. Similarly, ex-Muslims share their personal narratives of oppression and liberation from the “shackles” of Islam as first-hand evidence of the backwardness of Islam and its incompatibility with Western values and civilization.

It is understandable that many Muslims opposed to how Islam has been co-opted and politicized by patriarchal, authoritarian regimes engaging in suppression, human-rights violations, and violence may feel estranged from religion and choose to withdraw from it or seek to reform it. These extreme manifestations of religious authority require resistance as do less extreme but nonetheless problematic forms of narrow, patriarchal, or literalist readings of religious texts; however, choosing to invoke conspiracy theories, promote Islamophobic propaganda, and align with anti-Muslim organizations endorsing hate campaigns in Western nations cannot be dressed up as a noble cause to fight oppression.

Canadian Muslim dissidents gained recognition following the 9/11 attacks, branding themselves as “reformists” attempting to manage the “clash of civilizations” and claiming to be the “authoritative voice” representing “progressive” Muslim perspectives. They contribute to the soft-power spheres of influence in the Islamophobia industry. Many dissidents are featured as distinguished fellows at anti-Muslim think tanks. Their views are represented as a clarion call against the “Islamization” of the West as they purport to protect secular values and sensibilities from the encroachment of predatory Islamism. Their narratives create moral panics surrounding the Muslim folk devil by reproducing the clash-of-civilizations binary and reinforcing racist fears of Islamic insurgency by leveraging the seal of insider authority.

The individual testimonies of Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims are represented as authoritative insights into Islam and Muslim experiences and are celebrated within the far-right echo chamber, where they find cover from being exposed and delegitimated as marginal, opportunistic voices. However, despite the critiques and shortcomings, Sharify-Funk (2012) noted that Muslim-dissident literature has become an influential source of information on Islam and Muslims among mainstream Western lay readers in North America, Europe, and beyond.

Muslim-dissident commentaries are also featured in major newspapers such as National Post, The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, and Toronto Sun and in the publications and websites of Canadian think tanks such as The Mackenzie Institute (see chapter 8), as well as American think tanks such as Gatestone Institute, and the Clarion Project (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”). Their role as creators, validators, and purveyors of Islamophobic narratives is secured through their links and ties with other sectors of the Islamophobia industry and the donors who support it, which amplifies these ideologies through transnational circuits of anti-Muslim bigotry.

Contemporary Muslim native informers supply the Islamophobia industry with the justification for their Islamophobic claims. For example, Dabashi (2011, 17) noted that “native informers like Hiri Ali, Nafisi, and Irshad Manji are paraded before their North American and Western European audiences as ‘voices of dissent’ against the innate and enduring barbarity of Islam.” Similarly, in their influential report on the American Islamophobia industry, Ali et al. (2011, 56) identified the role those native informers play to “help validate and authenticate manufactured myths about Muslims and Islam, contributing the small echo chamber of men and women committed to promoting Islamophobia in the United States.” The role of Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims should not however be understood as simply “enablers” of Islamophobia; rather, they are central figures in the creation and propagation of Islamophobic ideologies. Some of the dominant tropes and narratives shared among these players are presented.

Fomenting the Islamist Bogeyman

Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims promote the idea that Islamism is the most imminent danger facing modern Western civilization. Their conspiracy theories link political Islamism with a violent quest for global domination and the installation of a global caliphate system. Islamism is represented as synonymous with radicalization and religious extremism. However, depicting Islamism as a contemporary anti-Western bogeyman decontextualizes a very heterogeneous phenomenon, misrepresenting historical facts and willfully ignoring that Islamism is a broad
ideological terrain that encompasses a variety of political views and cultural movements (see chapter 3). For example, in a 2013 talk for the Israeli Presidential Conference in Jerusalem titled “Political Islam: Where Is It Headed?” Raheel Raza (see below) described Islamism as a product of the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Wahabism, conflating these diverse movements with different historical, social, and cultural backgrounds into a global conspiracy against modern Western civilization.

These fabricated claims, authorized by Muslim insiders, are further propagated and disseminated by far-right, White nationalist groups (see chapter 5) and pro-Israel, fringe-right groups (see chapter 6). The reiteration of the narrative through these diverse yet networked forums provide for its stability, authority, and salience, allowing it to circulate with unchecked impunity. In this way, Muslim dissidents, and ex-Muslims provide political cover for Islamophobic campaigns and their violent repercussions.

7.1.2
Promoting Hijab/Niqab Bans
Prominent Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims have long supported policies that ban women’s Islamic attire such as hijabs (headscarves) and niqabs (face veils) from the public sphere. These policies include various attempts to regulate women’s dress in Québec (Bill 94, Bill 21) where promoting secularism and laïcité has been a racialized project that reinforces gendered Islamophobia (Zine, 2006), as well as the unsuccessful move by the Harper government in 2015 to ban the niqab at citizenship ceremonies. Canadian Muslim dissidents have been vocal in arguing that religious Muslim women should not have the right to choose what they wear, a right secular woman enjoy. They condemn Islamic attire as a symbol of oppression and creeping Islamism, ignoring the meanings that Muslim women themselves attach to their religious dress (Bullock 2002; Zine 2006; Lewis 2015; Zempi 2019). Illogically, under the guise of safeguarding women’s rights, Muslim-dissident views endorse the state’s regulation of women’s bodies. Muslim dissidents promote the “coerced unveiling” (Zine 2022) of Muslim women through policies like Bill 21 in Québec, which provides the licence and authorization for other sectors of the Islamophobia industry such as Rebel News to echo and amplify these anti-Muslim standpoints.

7.1.3
Other Shared Islamophobic Narratives
Other Islamophobic narratives that are commonly held and reinforced among Canadian Muslim native informers include vehemently opposing Motion 103 and the term “Islamophobia”; supporting Muslim immigration bans; promoting Islamophobic paranoia about creeping sharia; accusing Muslim organizations of having ties to terrorism funding; suggesting that mosques are hotbeds of extremism; leveraging their insider status to weaponize the Qur’an; and supporting Israel without qualification. The extent to which these ideas underwrite Islamophobic violence does not figure into their campaigns of moral authority.

7.1.4
Quebec City Mosque and London, Ontario, Terror Attacks
Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims have offered little comment on either the 2017 Quebec City mosque attack or the 2021 terror attack in London, Ontario, targeting Canadian Muslims. Their silence is conspicuous in the face of their otherwise outspoken claims of upholding public safety in Canada. The demonstrated threat of White nationalist violence does not appear to be on their radar, and instead they have doubled down on stoking anti-Muslim bigotry (which informs and incites the former).

For example, with regard to the Quebec City mosque shooting, Tarek Fatah promoted the “second Muslim shooter” conspiracy theory, which was also propagated by neo-Nazi White nationalist Faith Goldy. Denying that Islamophobic White nationalist violence played a role in the terror attack, he tweeted that “leftists circulate fake news reports that Quebec City Mosque shooters were White Supremacists. Shameless [sic] guilt-ridden white libs.” Fatah also retweeted an article by Thomas Quiggin (see chapter 8) suggesting that the Quebec City mosque where the attack had occurred had ties to Hamas.

On July 14, 2021, a few short weeks after the London terror attack on June 6, 2021, Fatah wrote an article for the Toronto Sun highlighting the “cries of ordinary Muslims.” The article featured Raheel Raza and focused solely on the fearmongering around the “growing infiltration of Islamist extremism” in Canada but made no mention of the deadly Islamophobic attack against a Canadian Muslim family in London, Ontario, just weeks before. Instead, the article criticized the focus on Islamophobia by Canadian politicians. In the article Raza was quoted as saying, “It seems Canadian politicians would rather uphold the medieval agenda of the Islamists rather than those of us who embrace Canadian values and refuse to play the victim card.”

An open letter endorsed by Raheel Raza, Tarek Fatah, Tahir Gora, and Yasmine Mohammed, among others, criticized the National Summit on Islamophobia that was about to take place on July 22, 2021 and took issue with community recommendations to combat anti-Muslim racism. The letter invoked the same tired tropes of the “Islamic threat” in Canada and the need to fortify securitization of Muslims and uphold Bill 21, which was facing a “smear campaign” by Muslim groups. There was no mention of the terror attacks that had precipitated the community recommendations that the authors and signatories condemned. This sent the message that combatting Islamophobia poses greater threat to the political agenda of Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims than deadly White nationalist violence, which they underplay or ignore entirely.

Clearly, information that deviates from the anti-Muslim narratives they propagate is a threat to their political campaigns, hence these efforts to deflect public attention back to the Islamist bogeyman.

As freelance Muslim commentators, Muslim dissidents, ex-Muslims, and their organizations work in tandem with other sectors of the Islamophobia industry and play a key role in its ecosystem as protagonists and provocateurs. This next section profiles several of these commentators, the views they promote, and their connections to other players within both national and transnational Islamophobic networks.

7.2
Muslim Dissidents

7.2.1
Raheel Raza
Overview. Raza is a journalist and writer on Islam and Muslims in the West and the president of Muslims Facing Tomorrow. She has appeared numerous times in front of the Canadian parliament and the United States Congress to testify on issues of radicalization. She is regularly...
Background. Raheel Raza was born in Pakistan and immigrated to Canada in 1989. She worked for the Ontario government till 2007.


In 2020, Raza published a book entitled The ABCs of Islamism: Everything You Wanted to Know About Radical Islam but Were Afraid to Ask. Raza maintains that “extremist ideology has taken over my faith and installed itself in the corridors of power in the Western world.”

She produced a documentary titled Whose Sharia is it anyway? dealing with the 2003 sharia debate in Ontario. The debate erupted over the proposed use of Islamic law in faith-based arbitration (see chapter 3).

In 2012, Raza was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal.

She is the founder and president of Muslims Facing Tomorrow, which identifies as a non-profit community-based organization “that distinguishes between Islam, as a monotheistic faith tradition, and Shari’a, as a time bound humanly constructed legal-political system in the name of Islam from the 9th–10th century that is mostly at odds with the modern world.”

Views

Islamist Takeover. In a 2008 article, Raza claimed that “as a political ideology, in the long-term Islamism seeks to establish an Islamic state in North America.”

In 2013, Raza participated in the Israeli Presidential Conference, a conference organized by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during which she delivered a talk titled “Political Islam: Where Is It Headed?” She warned that “Islamists misrepresent the faith, demanding reorientation of Muslim societies [and] to go back to seventh century Arabia.” She went further to make the inflammatory and sensationalized claim that “as ugly as terrorism is, Islamism is far more dangerous.”

Further promoting paranoia about “dangerous Muslims,” in 2014, Raza published a letter on her blog, titled “AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL CANADIANS – Canada is Under attack,” in which she stated that Canada needs to “close all mosques for three months to have intense scrutiny on the Imams and their sermons” and to “put a moratorium on immigration from Muslim countries for a set period till matters here settle down.”

Radical Islam. In 2016, Clarion Project produced a short film narrated by Raza, called By the Numbers: the Untold Story of Muslim Opinions and Demographics, that asserted that “radical Islamists” and is a covert means of promoting antisemitism.

Raza has multiple connections to organizations that are part of Islamophobia networks in the United States. She is a speaker, writer, and analyst for the Clarion Project and a distinguished senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute, both major funders of the Islamophobia industry (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”).

Islamophobia Undermines Free Speech. Regarding Islamophobia, Raza has argued that many Muslims in the West use “Islamophobia” as a penalty card against free speech whenever there is criticism of Muslims. This knee-jerk and reactionary response stifles dialogue, debate and discussion—all signs of a healthy thriving democracy.

She attributes the popularity of the term to what she calls “white liberal guilt.” For Raza, using the term “Islamophobia” is “not only racist but, for the most part, a form of emotional extortion intended to extract special concessions from well-meaning but gullible people the West.”

Adding fodder to conspiracy theories, in a video for the Clarion Project Raza claimed that “the term Islamophobia was deliberately coined after 9/11 by the Muslim Brotherhood to stem any conversation, debate, or discussion, about Islam or Muslims. And M-103 does exactly this.”

Motion 103 Fearmongering. Speaking at a 2017 conference hosted by Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms (see chapter 6) Raza referred to Motion 103 as a “slap in the face of democracy and freedoms.” She urged participants to not take their “eye off the ball” of what she claimed is a “global jihadist insurgency caused by a racial Islamoid agenda.”

She went on to make unfounded claims that “M-103, the BDS Movement, Anti-Fa, paying large sums of money to terrorists, giving citizenship back to extremists … are not isolated incidents. They are coming at us fast and furious as a pre-planning subversive agenda.”

Raza argued that opposing Motion 103 is “a duty of every citizen of our democracy.”

Connecting Motion 103 to a conspiracy theory and absurdly suggesting that it is part of a larger nefarious plot by global jihadists is evidence of the Islamophobic paranoia that Muslim dissidents, in concert with other sectors of the Islamophobia industry, are intent on fomenting.

Banning Niqab. In an interview with Ezra Levant for Rebel News regarding banning niqabs in public, Raza stated that people who are pushing this face covering, this face mask, are pushing it on the basis of religious freedom; it is not religious. “...we are talking about a cultural practice that has been enforced on us here, and it should be made totally unconstitutional.”

Islamic Victimhood” Narrative. In a 2014 article for the Gatestone Institute (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”), Raza accused prominent Muslim organizations of feigning victimhood by propagating “exaggerated claims of wide-ranging persecution” while being fronts for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Anti-Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions / Muslims Are Antisemitic: Raza opposes the BDS movement (see chapter 6) and views Israel to be “the only liberal democracy in the area where one can find gender equality and freedom for its citizens.” She believes Muslims are indoctrinated into antisemitism at an early age and that interfaith dialogue has been “hijacked by [extremist] Islamists” and is a covert means of promoting antisemitism.

Connections

Raza has multiple connections to organizations that are part of Islamophobia networks in the United States. She is a speaker, writer, and analyst for the Clarion Project and a distinguished senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute, both major funders of the Islamophobia industry (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”).
In 2016 Raza was a speaker for Act! for America, an organization headed by Brigitte Gabriel. Considered a major proponent of Islamophobia in the United States, it is one of the largest anti-Muslim organizations boasting more than one million members. She was also a noted speaker for the Act! For Canada group (see chapter 6).

Raza is a frequent commentator and guest on Rebel Media and a writer and researcher for the Mackenzie Institute. She was a speaker at the Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedoms conference that opposed Motion 103.

Raza served as the director of interfaith affairs for the Muslim Canadian Congress (MCC) founded by Tarek Fatah.

In 2019, Raheel Raza was named a defendant in a defamation suit (along with Thomas Quiggin and Tahir Gora) launched by the charity Islamic Relief Canada. Raza’s article for the Clarion Project, titled “When NGO’s go Rogue” (since removed from their website), cited Quiggin’s report, which alleged that Islamic Relief Canada was connected to Hamas (see chapter 8).

7.2.2

Tarek Fatah

Overview. Tarek Fatah is a Canadian writer who has consistently denied the existence of Islamophobia in Canada, opposed the niqab, and called for a ban on the burka. He is a prominent opponent of Motion 103.

Background. Fatah was born in Pakistan and identifies as a liberal Muslim. In a 2017 article, he described Pakistan as a “genocidal (Islamic) state,” from which he fled to live in Canada. After the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, Fatah founded the Muslim Canadian Congress, an organization that claims to “represent the Muslims in Canada who are not currently represented by another organization.”

He wrote a weekly column in the Toronto Sun. Examples of his articles include “‘Don’t use divisive term ‘Islamophobia,’” expert tells MPs: “As MPs look for Islamophobia, mosques continue promoting intolerance”; and “Mosque sermon calls on Allah to slay non-Muslims ‘one by one.’”

Fatah’s first book was titled Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State (2008). His second book, The Jew Is Not My Enemy (2010), won the Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Award in Politics and History awarded by the Koffler Centre of the Arts in Toronto. In 2007, he was included in the Maclean’s magazine list of the fifty most well-known and respected personalities.

Views

Islamist Bogeyman/ Fifth Column. Fatah regularly accuses prominent North American Muslim organizations and politicians of being linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. In June 2018, he accused the largest U.S. Muslim civil-rights advocacy group, the Council of American-Islamic Relations, of having ties with them.

In January 2019, Fatah accused U.S. congresswoman Ilhan Omar of being a “fifth columnist” and described the hijab she wore as a “Muslim Brotherhood flag.”

Muslims Are Terrorists. In response to the Quebec City mosque shooting, Fatah falsely claimed that the gunman, Alexandre Bissonnette, “was not alone” and that “his Muslim accomplice has been made state witness to avoid talk of Muslim on Muslim terror.”

He also retweeted an article by Thomas Quiggin (see chapter 8) suggesting that the Quebec City mosque where the attack occurred had ties to Hamas.

Islamophobia Is Islamofascist. Fatah dismisses the term “Islamophobia,” using Andrew Cummins’ characterization that it is “a word created by fascists, and used by cowards, to manipulate morons.”

Motion 103. Fatah was an outspoken opponent of Motion 103. In 2017, before addressing the parliamentary Committee on Canadian Heritage about Islamophobia in Canada, Fatah was quoted in the Toronto Sun as arguing that, in denouncing Islamophobia, the government’s actions were tantamount to violent state repression of religious criticism:

I hope to make the MPs realize that if they include the words ‘denouncing Islamophobia’ in their proposals, they will infringe on the inalienable right of Muslim Canadians to critique our religion as has been the rich tradition that has been stifled by Mullahs, Kings and Caliphs by murdering us.

In his testimony at the parliamentary-committee hearings, Fatah claimed M-103 was intended to persecute Muslims who oppose Islamists.

Muslims Are Anti-Christian and Antisemitic / Weaponizing the Qur’an. While addressing the Parliamentary committee hearings on Motion 103 and Islamophobia in Canada, Fatah claimed that Muslims “mock Christians and Jews daily. When we read the opening words of the Quran that is the Surah Al-Fatiha five times a day, a minimum of twenty times a day, anyone who prays is mocking Christians and Jews.”

Fatah weaponized the Qur’an by providing a limited interpretation of the opening verse. He unequivocally claimed that the Qur’an refers to Jews and Christians as “those who have gone astray” and incurred God’s anger and that Muslims willfully invoke this meaning during daily prayers. This reading of the Qur’an’s opening verse is not universally accepted by religious scholars, and many influential interpretations of the verse make no reference to it. Like all religious texts, the Qur’an is open to interpretation and often the various meanings ascribed to it are subject to the imposition of diverse historical, cultural, and political standpoints (Abu El Fadl 2001). The meanings derived from all religious texts can be literal, narrow, and chauvinistic, or they can be more holistic, variegated, and contextual.

Nonetheless, various dubious organizations promote the divisive reading that Fatah endorses. It can be found on an evangelical Christian website, was attributed to an oddly named, self-proclaimed “Christian apologist to Islam,” and has been in wider circulation through media articles in outlets such as the Israel National News. It also appeared in an article from the American Center for Democracy, whose leadership team includes former Israel Defense Forces intelligence officer Jonathan Halevi, responsible for mistranslating a Toronto Imam’s prayer that caused him to be accused of antisemitism (see chapter 1), and Nina Rosenwald founder of the Gatestone Institute (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”.

Banning Niqab. Fatah has been a vocal opponent of the veil and niqab since the mid-2000s. In 2006, he wrote that “wearing veils—whether as an expression of religious identity, or as a means of political defiance—is not in the best interest of Canada’s Muslim communities.”

17 An explanation of this verse by influential Qur’anic commentator Muhammed Asad provides a reading that is reflective of prominent contemporary scholarly views: https://www.alim.org/quran/translation/asad/surah1/

18 As Shariyf-Funk (2012, 141) explained, “We face a fundamental paradox: Islam is one, and it is many. Its meaning for believers transcends history, yet the development of diverse Muslim standpoints and beliefs is an inevitable outcome of historic processes.”
In 2013, Fatah wrote an article in the Toronto Sun, titled “West Should Ban Niqab,” which stated that “it’s time to take the veil off the lies Islamists tell and to ban the niqab and burka from all public places.”

Later in 2018, after Doug Ford was elected Ontario’s premier, Fatah called on Ford to ban the burqa “forever,” citing “security concerns.” Given that mandatory face coverings in public spaces came into effect with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the alleged security concerns regarding Muslim face veils raised by Fatah and others have proven to be even more unfounded.

“Islamofascism” and Veiling. Fatah has repeatedly claimed that the hijab is a “political flag of the Islamofascist Muslim Brotherhood.”

He has labelled all Muslim women who wear the veil to be ISIS sympathizers. In September 2014, Fatah tweeted that if a woman “is against ISIS, then she’d take it [the hijab] off.”

Multiculturalism Is a Drug. In an August 2018 tweet, Fatah likened multiculturalism to a drug, stating, “Once a politician gets addicted to its high, they are done forever; prisoners of overseas agendas that are hostile to Canada.” Fatah has supported Maxime Bernier’s views on immigration and called for the Multiculturalism Act to “be revoked for the simple reason that not all cultures are equal.”

Muslim Ban. Fatah supported Donald Trump’s ban on Muslim immigration and suggested that condemnation of the ban was misplaced White guilt.

Connections
Fatah is a close associate of Raheel Raza, who was the director of interfaith affairs for the Canadian Muslim Congress, an organization he founded.

He co-authored an article with Raza in the Ottawa Citizen in 2010, criticizing the establishment of a Muslim community centre in New York, erroneously dubbed the “Ground Zero Mosque.” The authors stated, “We Muslims know the idea behind the Ground Zero mosque is meant to be a deliberate provocation to thumb our noses at the infidel.”

Fatah was an author for the Clarion Project in 2017.

Fatah’s weekly column at the Toronto Sun was picked up by the Middle East Forum, (MEF) where he was the Robert J. and Abby B. Levine Writing Fellow. The MEF website was a platform for 155 articles by Fatah from 2014 to 2021.

In a Toronto Sun video, Fatah defended far-right British White nationalist Tommy Robinson, decrying his imprisonment in a London, United Kingdom, jail alongside “Muslim outlaws.”

7.2.3
Salt Mansur

Overview. Salim Mansur is a frequent guest on radio and television shows discussing issues of Muslims, multiculturalism, and radicalization in Canada. He has testified before Canadian parliamentary standing committees on immigration and public safety. Mansur is the vice-president of Muslims Facing Tomorrow. He is a writer and senior fellow for the Gatestone Institute and the pro-Israel Mozuud Freedom Foundation.

Background. Mansur was born in Calcutta, India, and then immigrated to Canada where he finished his graduate studies and earned a PhD in political science from the University of Toronto. He is a retired professor of political science at Western University.

Mansur has written several books on Islam and Muslims in the West, such as Islam’s Predicament: Perspectives of a Dissident Muslim (2016), The Qur’an Problem and Islamism: Reflections of a Dissident Muslim (2017), and Delectable Lie: A Liberal Repudiation of Multiculturalism (2013).

He is a columnist and commentator for Rebel Media and the Toronto Sun.

Mansur was one of the contributors to the 2005 film Obsession: Radical Islam’s War against the West produced by the Clarion Project.

In 2017, he was awarded the Canadian Senate’s 150th Anniversary Medal in recognition of his “work promoting interfaith understanding, particularly Jewish-Muslim reconciliation.”

In September 2018, he announced his candidacy for the Conservative Party of Canada in the London North Centre riding, but was later disqualified by the party’s candidate-selection committee. He was interviewed by Ezra Levant on Rebel News about the decision, and he stated that the Conservative Party’s campaign manager Hamish Marshall (a former Rebel News director) had told him he would be considered an “Islamohobe” and would be disruptive to the campaign. Mansur told Levant that he defined himself as an “anti-Islamist Muslim.”

In July 2019, Mansur announced that he was joining the People’s Party of Canada and running as their candidate for the same riding, London North Centre. His campaign was unsuccessful.

Views

Muslims Are Premodern. Echoing racist colonial narratives, Mansur believes that “Muslims, in general, are a ‘third-world’ people whose understanding and practice of Islam remain fixed in their pre-modern cultures.” Accordingly, he states that this worldview is “hugely obstructive in easing their transition to modernity.”

Islamist Bogeyman / Creeping Sharia. Following his disqualification from running as a Conservative candidate for the 2019 elections, Mansur released a statement warning against the dangers of Islamism and stating that “Canada is at a crossroads. The twin forces of globalism and Islamism will unalterably change the culture and politics of our beloved Canada.” In a follow up interview with Ezra Levant on Rebel News, he claimed that 90 percent of the mosques in Canada, both Sunni and Shia, are “Islamist” and seek to impose premodern sharia law in Canada.

Muslim Travel Ban. Supporting Donald Trump’s 2017 travel ban on people from seven Muslim-majority countries, Mansur wrote that the ban was not directed at Islam, but at Muslims. The ban is, after all, conditional—until the American people and their government have figured out what in the complex reality of the Muslim world—religious, political, economic and cultural—contributes to turning a significant portion of Muslims into jihadi operatives at war against the United States.

In a precursor to Trump’s anti-Muslim policy, in 2012, Mansur called upon then Immigration and Citizenship minister, Jason Kenney, to introduce a moratorium on immigration from Muslim nations. Mansur claimed, “This is not racist, their values, ideologies, politics and culture is [sic] completely incompatible with the values of Canada as a liberal democracy.”

Islamophobia Is Overblown. Mansur has denied that Muslims are “victims of anti-Islamic bigotry” and that “Muslim violence and terror are misguided and have nothing to do with the true teaching of Islam.” He went further to say that “neither could be farther from the truth.”

In fact, Mansur believes that “Western democracies have been overly sensitive in not smearing or profiling all Muslims in counteracting the violence and terror of the extremist Muslims in their midst.”
Motion 103 Violates Free Speech. Mansur opposed Motion M-103, claiming that it “threatens freedom of speech in Canada.”

Political Correctness. Mansur has condemned political correctness for its “reluctance to hold the Muslims who commit violence accountable for the threats they pose to others.”

Criticizing Israel Is Antisemitic. Mansur has written numerous commentaries for the pro-Israel Gatestone Institute that unequivocally support Israel’s policies regarding Palestine. For example, in 2019, Mansur argued that views that refer to Israel as an “apartheid state” are a form of antisemitism.

He applauded former Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s visit to the Israeli Knesset in 2014, and praised Harper and Jason Kenney for how they “openly and unapologetically spoke about support for Israel in language unheard of in Canada, while denouncing in no uncertain terms the paranoid politics of the anti-Israel groups.”

Mansur has stated that the United Nations is entrenched in “historic bigotry against Jews and Israel” and opposes UN resolution 2334, which condemns the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories since 1967. He referred to the resolution as being a “sickening surrender to Arab-Muslim jihad in the name of peace.”

Connections
Mansur is listed as a distinguished senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute and is frequently interviewed and quoted by the Clarion Project (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”).

He is listed as a fellow of the pro-Israel Mozuud Freedom Foundation. Mozuud is a not-for-profit organization founded by Irving Weisdorf (see chapter 6) in 2015 that claims to “promote Canadian values: individual rights and responsibilities; equality before the law; freedom of speech, association and religion.” Weisdorf has denied that Islamophobia exists, stating that “fear of Islam is justified and is not a “phobia.”... Islamists want to ... limit our freedom to criticize Islam in any way, even the appalling aspects of it.”

Mansur was one of the speakers at the Canadians for the Rule of Law (CFTRL) conference in Toronto on March 17, 2019. He was one of the two panellists who spoke about “Hate Speech.”

He was a noted speaker for ACT! For Canada group (see chapter 6).

As previously noted, in 2019 Mansur joined the far-right People’s Party of Canada for the federal election held that year after being disqualified from seeking a Conservative Party nomination.

Tahir Gora

Overview. Tahir Gora is the founder and director of the Canadian Thinkers Forum and of TAG TV. Gora has appeared numerous times at Canadian parliamentary hearings to testify on issues of citizenship and immigration, radicalization, and terrorism.

Background. Tahir Gora was born in Pakistan before immigrating to Canada in 1999. He has had a career spanning over 30 years in the media industry.

He heads the Canadian Thinkers Forum, which is a not-for-profit organization and a think tank that deals with study reports on complexities of multiculturalism; growing Islamic radicalization in Canada; the new rise of antisemitism; and polygamy, forced marriages, and women abuse issues in South Asian and Middle Eastern diaspora.

The website for Canadian Thinkers Forum is now defunct.

Gora is the founder of TAG TV, an online television network based in Toronto.

In 2008, he founded the Muslim Committee against Antisemitism.

Gora, along with Thomas Quiggin and others, wrote a book titled The Danger of Political Islam to Canada: With a Warning to America (Quiggin et al. 2017) as a response to Motion 103.

In 2012, Gora was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal.
Gora, along with Tarek Fatah and others, established Muslim Brotherhood on "Sham Charities," referring to Muslim organizations believed to be fronts for Hamas and the He was one of the speakers at the CFTRL conference Quiggin. They are both founders of the well-known Islamophobic speakers, such as Daniel Pipes.

He has a close collaborative relationship with Thomas Quiggin (see chapter 8), who was listed as an expert at CTF and a principal member of the TAG TV team. CTF has invited and platformed well-known Islamophobic speakers, such as Daniel Pipes.

Gora is a writer at Clarion Project, which is "a non-profit organization that educates the public about the dangers of radical Islam" (see chapter 1.4 "Monetizing Hate").

Gora therefore believes that the state and society at large can regulate women's bodies should they disagree with their clothing choices.

Barbaric Cultural Practices. Gora supported Bill S-7, also known as Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act (see chapter 1), arguing that it "seems to address our concerns in regard to issues of polygamy, forced marriages, and women abuse in Canadian South Asian and Middle Eastern communities particularly."

Weaponizing Qur’an. In a 2016 article for the Clarion Project, titled "Islamophobia – Paranoid or Reality," Gora cited out of context a particular version of Riyad Us-Salheen, a compilation of Qur’anic verses and Hadith narratives (collection of the Prophet Muhammad’s sayings) curated in the 13th century. He listed controversial and sensationalized issues such as stoning adulterers, honour killing, women’s inferiority, and dominating infidels, arguing that these frame the Muslim mindset. Gora stated that the failure of "our Canadian Muslim organizations and Muslim MPs such as Iqra Khalid to condemn this syllabus" is the reason for the dislike of Canadian Muslims.

Anti-BDS. He has been a fierce critic of the non-violent BDS movement and stated that "calling Israel an apartheid state is not fair."

Make America Great Again. A supporter of Donald Trump, Gora regarded his presidency as "a hope for many progressive Muslims around the globe."

Connections
Gora is a writer at Clarion Project, which is "a non-profit organization that educates the public about the dangers of radical Islam" (see chapter 1.4 "Monetizing Hate").

He has a close collaborative relationship with Thomas Quiggin (see chapter 8), who was listed as an expert at CTF and a principal member of the TAG TV team. CTF has invited and platformed well-known Islamophobic speakers, such as Daniel Pipes.

Gora is also closely affiliated with Raheel Raza, and she wrote the introduction to his book with Quiggin. They are both founders of the Muslim Reform Movement.

He was one of the speakers at the CFTRL conference (see chapter 6), and he led the session on "Sham Charities," referring to Muslim organizations believed to be fronts for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Gora, along with Tarek Fatah and others, established Muslims for Max, a group of "Muslims who support Maxime Bernier, oppose Islamism, identity politics, and the Corrosion of Western Values in Canada."

Gora is a member of the People’s Party of Canada and was their candidate for the Mississauga-Malton riding in the 2019 federal election. His campaign was unsuccessful.

In 2019, Gora was named as a defendant in a defamation suit (along with Thomas Quiggin and Raheel Raza) launched by the charity Islamic Relief Canada (see chapter 8).

7.2.5 Imam Mohammad Tawhidi

Overview. Mohammad Tawhidi is a self-proclaimed “leading voice in the global movement of Islamic reform who has dedicated his life to ideologically tackling the spread of Islamic Extremism.” He refers to himself as an “Imam of Peace,” though has been widely debunked as a fraud and “charlatan.” His professed academic credentials as a religious scholar have proven to be false, leading him to be dubbed the “fake sheikh.” Nonetheless, Tawhidi had 810, 600 Twitter followers as of June 2022.

While based in Australia, his networks in the Islamophobia industry extend transnationally where he has been allied with several anti-Muslim causes and alliances. Using the cover of a Muslim identity and falsely declared religious authority, Tawhidi serves as purveyor of Islamophobia conspiracy theories and a validator of far-right and pro-Israel anti-Muslim ideologies.

Background. Tawhidi identifies as a Shia Muslim born in Qum, Iran. He is president of the Islamic Association of South Australia, which he founded in 2016. He has not been recognized by the Australian National Imams Council.

He is author of a book titled The Tragedy of Islam: Admissions of a Muslim Imam (2018). The book is described as a "unique journey highlighting the details of this life that prompted his transition from an extremist to a reformist."

Tawhidi’s profile is included here because he often gives talks in Canada and weighs in on Canadian politics related to Islam and Muslims and has become an interlocutor on controversial and sensationalized issues in Canada. For example, in 2017, he suggested that Syrian refugees should not complain that their religion was being disparaged since the Trudeau government had provided millions of dollars of assistance. He that argued that despite this support “their mentality [would] remain bankrupt.”

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.

He has referred to people involved in media as “collaborators” and described his relationships with “Islamic organizations and institutions” as “cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries in efforts to prevent radicalization.”

Funding and Influence. Tawhidi has claimed to be very well funded by “various mosques and Islamic institutions” and to have millions of dollars available to fund his projects and media campaigns.

Northern Ireland. Tawhidi has referred to his book as a "true story of survival and redemption" and has claimed to have been involved in Northern Ireland’s "peace process." He has claimed to have been involved in the "peace process" and to have provided millions of dollars of assistance. He that argued that despite this support “their mentality [would] remain bankrupt.”

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.

Tawhidi’s profile is included here because he often gives talks in Canada and weighs in on Canadian politics related to Islam and Muslims and has become an interlocutor on controversial and sensationalized issues in Canada. For example, in 2017, he suggested that Syrian refugees should not complain that their religion was being disparaged since the Trudeau government had provided millions of dollars of assistance. He that argued that despite this support “their mentality [would] remain bankrupt.”

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.

After a shooting in Toronto in 2018, Tawhidi immediately issued a claim that ISIS was responsible. Although ISIS had taken credit, Toronto police stated there was no evidence suggesting their involvement. Tawhidi insisted that the shooting was the result of “allegiance” as opposed to mental-health issues.

He has set up crowdfunding campaigns and initiated a project to develop a "professional media platform" for promoting his views and seeking donations from followers. Positioning himself as an “expert” in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) industry, he claims he has been "cooperating with government departments, intelligence services and police in several countries to tackle the growth of Islamic extremism." He has also monetized claims that he was receiving death threats, asking his followers for funds to ensure his safety.
Views

**Demographic Replacement / Jihad.** Tawhidi is an Islamophobia influencer whose views resonate within the far-right echo chamber, such as the idea that Muslims are waging a “population jihad” in Western nations. He appeared in a video with former Rebel correspondent and anti-Islam, far-right White nationalist Tommy Robinson (see chapter 4) during which he (Tawhidi) endorsed the population-jihad conspiracy theory, which stokes Islamophobic demographic-replacement fears (see chapter 3). In the interview, Tawhidi alleged that population-jihad campaigns were being funded by the Saudi government, rewarding Muslim families for having lots of children.

**Taqiyya.** Tawhidi has advocated investigations of private Islamic schools for “radicalization and indoctrination.” He regards Muslims in the West as engaging in “taqiyya,” or Islamic deception (see chapter 3). His “doctrine of peace” includes denouncing “Halal Certifications” for food products which he regards as threatening the Australian way of life.

**Muslim Immigration Bans.** In 2017, he publicly supported a temporary Australian ban on Muslims from the Middle East, which echoed the controversial call by Senator Pauline Hanson, Australia’s right-wing One Nation leader, to ban Muslim immigration following a London, United Kingdom, terror attack. He has also supported limiting the building of mosques in Australia. He told Conservative journalist Andrew Bolt that Islamic Hadith literature should be banned, saying “Ditch it and ban it and it should be illegal to have this book.”

**Islamist Takeover.** He has fomented sectarian divisions by promoting fears about an alleged Sunni plot to install an Australian caliphate. This rhetoric supports and echoes far-right conspiracy theories. In some of his most gross, outlandish, and inflammatory allegations, Tawhidi warned that the impending caliphate would ensure that tax evaders would be beheaded: “They put his head in a pot, they eat it, then they rape his wife that same night.”

**Motion 103 Fearmongering.** In a 2018 tweet, Tawhidi likened Motion 103 (see chapter 2.6 “Quick Facts” Motion 103”) to an “Islamist law” that prevents Jews from being able to “discuss what threatens Jerusalem.”

**Op-Eds.** He was a regular contributor to HuffPost during 2017–18, when he wrote articles on the dangers of multiculturalism, why Palestine is Jewish land, and how to spot “fake” Muslim reformers.

Connections

Tawhidi was an invited speaker at the CFTRL conference in 2020 (postponed due to the pandemic), along with Daniel Pipes, a key figure in the U.S. Islamophobia industry. Other speakers sharing the platform at the conference included Raheel Raza, Tahir Gora, Salim Mansur, Charles McVety, Christine Douglass-Williams, Ross McLean, Daniel Bordman, and David Nitkin, among others. CFTRL’s 2019 All-Day National Teach-In (see chapter 6) featured sessions and speakers from pro-Israel, fringe-right groups purveying Islamophobic conspiracy theories of an Islamist takeover of Canada and of civilizational jihad.

Tawhidi was a guest speaker at the Canadian Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center’s 2019 Spirit of Hope gala held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, alongside members of Hasbara Fellowships Canada and former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley.

In 2021, Tawhidi was a speaker for the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation on the topic of “how Islamists impact the Peace Process” in Israel. This event had several co-sponsors, including The Lawfare Project (see chapter 6).

He is on the honorary board of the Canadian pro-Israel group Doctors Against Racism and Antisemitism, which also includes Barbara Kay (see chapter 4). Their activities include calls to action advocating for the de-platforming of Palestinian speakers.

Tawhidi was asked to provide Arabic translation in the Ayman elkasrawy case (see case study in chapter 1). Elkasrawy was alleged to have read an antisemitic prayer during a sermon in a Toronto mosque in 2016. In a comment to the Toronto Sun in 2017, Tarek Fatah stated that he had shared another videotaped sermon by Elkasrawy with Tawhidi for his commentary. This alliance demonstrates how Tawhidi has been recruited as an authoritative interlocutor on Canadian Muslim controversies.

In 2018, while attending a Canadian event hosted by Raheel Raza and Muslims Facing Tomorrow, he is pictured sitting with Senator Salma Ataullahjan and Joe Oliver, former minister of finance. Tawhidi’s rubbing elbows with Conservative politicians has raised concerns in Canadian media. He has endorsed candidates for federal and municipal elections in Canada. During the 2019 federal election campaign, he praised Conservative leader Andrew Scheer on Twitter. He supported the anti-Muslim, far-right, White nationalist Faith Goldy’s mayoral campaign in Toronto in 2019, endorsing her policies on “crime and Islamic extremism.” Given Tawhidi’s problematic views on Islam and Muslims, his allegiances to and alliances with specific people, political parties, and special-interest groups demonstrate where and with whom he finds ideological affinity and shared political goals.
Along with Muslim dissidents, ex-Muslims offer anti-Muslim hate groups and media outlets sensationalized individual testimonies that support the wholesale vilification of Muslim faith and culture and prop up Islamophobic ideologies and conspiracy theories. Their claim to fame is based solely on what they present as their personal stories, which has allowed them to gain some measure of notoriety and public attention.

7.3.1 Sandra Solomon

In a 2018 Facebook video post (now removed), Soloman is burning pages of the Qur’an in front of a cross, theatrically tying Christian religious iconography into an act of Islamophobic desecration.

Overview. One of the most outspoken ex-Muslims is Sandra Solomon, a Palestinian who converted to Christianity. She is known for outrageous publicity stunts and anti-Muslim protests that are orchestrated with key allies in Islamophobia networks, which include far-right White nationalist groups, pro-Israel, fringe-right groups, and Hindu anti-Muslim activists.

Background. Solomon’s website states that the Qur’an should be considered “hate speech.” She has become one of the most infamous faces in the anti-Muslim movement in Canada, known for her hate-motivated actions around Islamic centres, such as ripping pages out of the Qur’an and distributing hate-filled flyers in front of mosques.

Solomon was behind a “spy on Muslims” series, whereby she and a male colleague encouraged viewers of their YouTube video to wear burkas and infiltrate mosques to take photos and videos. She wrote the following message to her supporters:
We must keep our eyes open for everything they do or say. Don't trust any Muslim [sic] no matter how peaceful they look. Let’s work together to expose them. No sharia law. No M-103 [a notion in Canadian parliament to condemn hate speech against Muslims] we will not be quelled [sic].

She was also behind a campaign to spread disinformation prior to the 2019 federal election using a video of a speech given by a religious leader, Mufti Aasim Rashid, in Kamloops, British Columbia. Mufti Rashid allegedly stated that if Justin Trudeau were re-elected he would institute sharia law in Canada. The comments were later discovered to have been taken out of context. A CBC News article revealed that Solomon was behind the misleading video, which was circulating on social media. It received 50,000 views on YouTube, and on various anti-Trudeau Facebook pages it was shared 7,000 times and had 185,000 likes in total. Orchestrating controversies and purveying disinformation and fake news is a key strategy in the Islamophobia toolkit (see chapter 1 “Ayman Elkasrawy Case Study”).

Views

Taqiyya. In a 2017 interview, Solomon promoted the Islamophobic narrative that Muslims engage in wilful lies and deception in front of “infidels” to “get what they want.” She claims that the Muslim agenda is to use deceit to take over Canada and implement sharia law.

Islamist Bogeyman and Motion 103. Solomon is a proponent of the conspiracy theory that the Muslim Brotherhood is behind the passage of Motion 103. She claims that the motion is tantamount to a “blasphemy law” and is a gateway to the wholesale implementation of sharia law in Canada.

Muslim Infiltration. She has characterized Muslim immigration to the West as an “infiltration” by design to enact a global Islamist campaign. In a live video posted to Never Again Canada in 2018, Solomon stated, “I don’t see 1.5 billion Muslims struggling to do good. They are struggling to build the Caliphate, yes. They are struggling to take over and dominate the world.”

Creeping Sharia. As noted above, prior to the 2019 federal election, Solomon posted a YouTube video of a Muslim leader allegedly claiming that re-electing Trudeau would bring sharia law to Canada. Anti-Muslim propaganda is being used by far-right actors to target Trudeau, who is depicted as an Islamist sympathizer.

Islamophobia Is Invented. Solomon has claimed that there is no such thing as Islamophobia and that the “word itself is invented.”

Connections

Solomon was the former Ontario spokesperson for Rise Canada, an anti-Islamic nationalistic organization. Later, Solomon became one of the administrators of the Never Again Canada (NAC; see chapter 6) Facebook page.

The Jewish Defence League in Canada has partnered with Soldiers of Odin (see chapter 5), a far-right, anti-immigrant group, to provide security to Sandra Solomon during her campaigns.

Solomon also recruited the services of far-right, White nationalist militia group Three Percenters (see chapter 5) as a security detail for a 2017 rally in Calgary. Support of Solomon was the group’s first major public intervention.

On February 17, 2017, NAC demonstrated in front of Masjid Toronto against Motion 103. Canadians Against Islamization, NAC, and Suffragettes Against Sharia (another pop-up venture by Sandra Solomon) held up signs and barred the way to the entry of the mosque.

On April 9, 2017, Solomon, along with Tarek Fatah, Ron Banerjee, and Tahir Gora were speakers at the Muslims Against M-103 conference sponsored by NAC.

Her 2019 speaking tour was advertised on the Facebook pages of NAC and other affiliated far-right groups.

In 2017, Rise Canada and Banerjee protested to the Peel District School Board about their accommodation policy, which allows Muslim students to pray the Friday prayers on school premises. In a video published on Rise Canada’s YouTube channel in January 2017, Solomon was seen supporting Banerjee’s appeal in front of the Peel District School Board and saying, “Allah is Satan.”

On February 17, 2017, NAC demonstrated in front of Masjid Toronto against Motion 103. Canadians Against Islamization, NAC, and Suffragettes Against Sharia (another pop-up venture by Sandra Solomon) held up signs and barred the way to the entry of the mosque.

On April 9, 2017, Solomon, along with Tarek Fatah, Ron Banerjee, and Tahir Gora were speakers at the Muslims Against M-103 conference sponsored by NAC.

Her 2019 speaking tour was advertised on the Facebook pages of NAC and other affiliated far-right groups.

In 2017, Rise Canada and Banerjee protested to the Peel District School Board about their accommodation policy, which allows Muslim students to pray the Friday prayers on school premises. In a video published on Rise Canada’s YouTube channel in January 2017, Solomon was seen supporting Banerjee’s appeal in front of the Peel District School Board and saying, “Allah is Satan.”

Pictured in this YouTube screen grab, Solomon is placing flyers that feature a Canadian flag and ripped pages of the Qur’an on the windshield of cars outside a fundraising event for Muslim television show Let the Quran Speak.

7.3.2

Yasmin Mohammed


As a prominent ex-Muslim, Mohammed has been given a large platform to perpetuate Islamophobic tropes and rhetoric. She maintains connections to key members of the Islamophobia industry in Canada and around the world.

Background. Mohammed is the founder and president of Free Hearts Free Minds, an organization “committed to helping ex-Muslims to successfully transition out of Islam and into a happy, healthy life.” This support is monetized through counselling sessions, ranging in cost from $100 per hour to $1,600 per month, from “session facilitators” who have “lived through the experience of leaving Islam.”
Mohammed is described as a “university educator” and “professor” who “teaches at various universities across Canada.” While she has received invitations to speak at events on university campuses, her website does not provide any information that suggests she has earned the required academic credentials of a professor.

Mohammed’s 2019 memoir, *Unveiled: How Western Liberals Empower Radical Islam,* is advertised as “Infidel meets The Handmaid’s Tale.” In an interview, Mohammed identified her audience: “This book was written for Western liberals, … my friends, fellow liberals who do not understand what celebrating Islam is doing.” She called the defence of Islam by Western liberals “a misguided attempt to curb anti-Muslim bigotry.” Her book has been endorsed by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Majid Nawaz (founder of the Quilliam Foundation) in the United Kingdom along with leaders of the new atheist movement, including Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins. Amazon deemed the book’s content as being too controversial for their advertising program.

Mohammed has gained notoriety through her blog Confessions of an Ex-Muslim and her social-media handles @ConfessionsExMu, now @YasMohammedXX.

Views

Islam’s Global Domination. In a 2017 interview, Mohammed said Islam, as Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s said, it’s more than just a religion, it has political goals. Its politics mixed in with religion, with a little bit of smatterings of religion, but really, it’s a political ideology. Islam’s goal is to make the whole planet slaves of Allah. That’s the purpose of it. That’s what jihad is all about. So, when that goal is being reached, it makes Muslims happy.

Islam Is Violent. Mohammed warned, “We have been dealing with Muslims killing in the name of religion for 1,400 years. We are accustomed to Islamists, like the Muslim Brotherhood, and Jihadis like al-Qaida and ISIS.”

Islam Is Worse than Nazism. In a 2017 tweet, Mohammed stated her belief that Islam is “worse than Naziism.”

In our next podcast we agree that Islam is worse than Nazism. Lefties think because it’s a ‘white’ ideology, it must be worse. Guess again.

5:05 PM · Aug 18, 2017 · Twitter Web Client

67 Retweets 87 Quote Tweets 205 Likes

Islamophobia Is a False Narrative. In an appearance on the Rubin Report, Mohammed denied the existence of Islamophobia. She echoed this view on Twitter: “Islamophobia=Fear of Islam. A legitimate and valid fear. You’re referring to discrimination against Muslims. Not the same.”

Hijab Bans. She has been a proponent of the hijab ban in France and in Québec. She believes Canadians should learn from France before they become victims of terrorist attacks in Canada.

She burned a hijab in a video shared on social media. In an interview with the Jerusalem Post, she called the hijab “a tool of oppression—a garment that perpetuates rape culture.”

On Twitter, Mohammed suggested that a photo of actor Jada Pinkett-Smith wearing hijab was “another woman playing dress-up with a tool of misogyny that gets women killed.”

No Hijab Day: As founder of No Hijab Day, Mohammed believes that women who celebrate the hijab are either Westerners who do not understand the history or Muslims who have been brainwashed to believe that showing their hair in public will condemn them to hell.
In an article criticizing World Hijab Day, Mohammed wrote, “It’s particularly sardonic that cosmetic companies embrace hijabi culture.” In an interview she suggested the hijab is against Western values, warning that “In the US, it has become an anti-Trump symbol, which is why you see it everywhere at the liberal Women’s March. But there’s nothing liberal about religious modesty culture—it’s the opposite of women’s liberation and feminism.”

Mohammed criticized American actress Jada Pinkett-Smith for wearing hijab while visiting the United Arab Emirates, claiming she was promoting a “tool of misogyny.”

Connections

In a presentation to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage regarding Motion 103, Mohammed made connections with prominent personalities within the Islamophobia industry: “I link arms with Muslims like Tarek Fatah and Raheel Raza here in Canada, Imam Tawhidi in Australia, Asra Nomani in the U.S, and Maajid Nawaz in the U.K., Muslims who fight against these archaic laws both in Muslim-majority countries and of course over here in the west.”

Her website features pictures under the heading “Yasmine and friends,” including Sam Harris, Ayaan Ali Hirsi, and Maajid Nawaz. Mohammed was convinced by Sam Harris to self-publish her book, Unveiled: How Western Liberals Empower Radical Islam (2019).

Mohammed has publicly defended Tommy Robinson, British far-right, anti-Islam activist, founder of English Defence League, and member of the neo-fascist and White nationalist British National Party.

In 2019 she had a speaking engagement at the University of British Columbia hosted by Free Speech Club, which has given platforms to Stefan Molyneux and Lauren Southern (see chapter 4).

7.4

Watch List

**Canadian Institute of Humane Islam** (CIHI). A non-for-profit organization incorporated in 2020. The website does not acknowledge board members or any individuals associated with CIHI. There is no information regarding the vision or mission of the group. They circulate articles related to the Muslim Brotherhood and “radical Islam” that are the basis for known conspiracy theories. The unexplained notion of “Renovated Muslims” is presented as a subject tab, which includes an article by Saied Shoaaib about how “Islamists invented the Islamophobia concept to advance their Islamist agenda to Islamize and even radicalize the west.” Contributions to the website include articles by Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Thomas Quiggin (see chapter 8) and a book review by Daniel Pipes.

**Djemila Benhabib.** A writer and failed Parti Québécois politician. She is author of My Life Against the Koran (2009). In 2016, she was sued by a private Islamic school in Montreal after she claimed in a radio interview that the school offered students “an indoctrination worthy of a military camp in Afghanistan or Pakistan,” while warning of the presence of “radical Islamism” in Québec. She went on to make further inflammatory claims about the school, alleging it was a place where: “women walk behind men with their heads down, where children are obliged to recite Qur’anic verses and where men are probably going to commit honour crimes against their sisters.” Security was increased at the Islamic school for fear of violent reprisals should Benhabib’s comments be taken literally. The school sought a $95,000 in damages in an unsuccessful slander suit, which was dismissed by the judge, who stated that there was no intent to harm the school’s reputation. During the legal battle, Benhabib was supported by the president of Regards de femmes, a feminist group from France, who flew to Canada with another member to support her, demonstrating the transnational alliances that exist in promoting the racial project of secularism and gendered Islamophobia.

This chapter has highlighted the pivotal role that Muslim dissidents and ex-Muslims play in legitimizing and validating Islamophobic narratives through their role as “insiders.” They enable, echo, and amplify the discourses that circulate elsewhere within the Islamophobia ecosystem and provide cover for anti-Muslim groups who align with them to justify their bigoted campaigns.

The following chapter examines the role that think tanks and their designated security experts play as knowledge brokers within the Canadian Islamophobia industry.
8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how think tanks and their designated security experts contribute to Islamophobic rhetoric under the guise of security and the protection of the nation from foreign threats. A constellation of institutions and non-state actors contribute to a surveillant governmentality, under which Muslims are singled out for scrutiny and profiling. The Muslim “folk devil” has been a predominate target of racial securitization, whereby racial and religious identities are conflated with the assessment of risk and public safety (Zine 2022). As previously discussed, folk devils are identifiable groups who become scapegoats that are blamed for a variety of social problems, leading to the construction of moral panics.

The negative Islamophobic stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media and the Islamophobia industry undergird the racial logics behind hate crimes, and they inform the systemic practices of institutionalized forms of Islamophobia that are reflected in public policies and in practices of racial securitization and surveillance. For example, political and ideological labels such as “radical” and “jihadist” are coded into an index of suspicion that authorizes racial and religious profiling. These Islamophobic ideologies inform systemic and institutional practices that shape security policies that have placed Muslim communities at the centre of national-security agendas.

Security policies in Canada such as Bill C-36, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001, security certificates issued under the Immigration, Refugee and Protection Act, the Passenger Protect Program (no-fly list), and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs have targeted Muslims communities and contributed to the public perceptions of distrust.

While Canadian national security is of concern to all citizens, when Muslims are singled out as the primary source of domestic terrorism, such narratives promote fear, distrust, and moral panic as they cast Muslims as dangerous foreigners. Muslim communities have registered concern over the small numbers of Muslims who have been recruited to fight in extremist groups abroad, and they understand how Islamophobia and violent Islamism become part of a vicious cycle (Abbas 2019). It is possible to examine how radicalization concerns are rooted in geopolitical power struggles without promoting the harmful stereotypes that terrorism is endemic to Muslim communities or that Islam is the driver for terrorist acts. Such notions create a breeding ground for anti-Muslim animus, which has had deadly consequences in Canada.

Several studies examine the racial securitization of Muslim communities in Canada by government agencies, such as CSIS and the RCMP, and police counterterrorism units (Zine 2022; Akseer 2018; Nagra 2017; Jamil 2014; Hennebry and Momani 2013; Odartey-Wellington 2009; Bahdi 2003). Muslim charities have been subject to undue scrutiny and monitoring by the Canada Revenue Agency as sites of alleged terrorism financing (see McSorley 2021). Islamophobic ideologies frame the rationale for post 9/11 security policies and practices that have situated Muslims as risks to public safety and national security and as propagators of global terror. Within the operational dynamics of Islamophobia, these discourses justify and authorize institutional practices of racial surveillance and religious profiling.

As this study has demonstrated, Islamophobic tropes are ubiquitous and largely circulate unchecked. Among the sectors that purvey these discourses are right-wing think tanks and their designated security experts, often former military personnel, who rely on these credentials to play the role of authorities on terrorism and Islam. The security and military commentators profiled here propagate fearmongering conspiracy theories and false essentializing narratives that include the “impending invasion” of Islam in the West (specifically Canada) and the alleged nefarious plot to enact violent jihad against non-believers and forcibly spread Islam globally. These ideas are echoed and amplified by other sectors of the Canadian Islamophobia industry as we have seen throughout this report. The validation and corroboration of anti-Muslim conspiracy
The Mackenzie Institute

Overview. The Mackenzie Institute is an independent conservative think tank whose mission involves “a strategic and pragmatic approach to security matters that affect both domestic and global audiences.” They are a clearinghouse for propaganda, in the guise of research, that foments fears of Islamic extremism in Canada and abroad. A May 2022, search for the keyword “Islam” on the website brought up 427 results, the majority of which were related to terrorism. In contrast, a search for “white nationalism” showed nine articles, two of which dealt with Saddam Hussein and the Islamist group Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Several other articles that appeared in “White nationalist” search category were about violent Islamist movements. White extremism was not addressed, despite the deadly attacks by members of these groups in Canada and globally.

Despite claiming to be a leading Canadian organization for research and information on terrorism in Canada, not one of their articles or reports addressed the Quebec City mosque attack in 2017 or the London, Ontario, terror attack against a Canadian Muslim family in 2021.

Background. The Mackenzie Institute is a registered charity based in Toronto that produces information about political issues and security within Canada and abroad. The organization engages writers from Canada, the United States, and Israel. They publish book reviews, opinion pieces, articles, and interviews that examine security issues to inform government, policymakers, the private sector, and educational institutions.

The institute includes many ex-military members. Founded in 1986 by Dr. Maurice Tugwell, a former British military officer, the Mackenzie Institute has continued under the leadership of director John Thompson since 1990. Oddly, in 2017, Thompson started a crowdfunding campaign to support his career.

The Mackenzie Institute website notes several corporate funders, including the National Post.

The following section provides profiles of a key Canadian security think tank and various security experts and outlines their views and their connections to the Islamophobia ecosystem. It is noteworthy that none of the national-security experts profiled here have written about the 2017 Quebec City mosque attack or the 2021 London, Ontario, terror attack, where the victims were Muslim, and the assailants were White men espousing White nationalist sympathies and anti-Muslim racism. An exception is Thomas Quiggin’s 2018 article in the Toronto Sun, which attempted to portray the Centre culturel islamique de Québec, where the deadly attack that killed six Muslim men occurred, as having ties to Hamas. Such allegations cast aspersions that the mosque was targeted because of their support for terrorist organizations, a vile attempt at victim blaming in the aftermath of a national tragedy.

For these security experts, Muslims are only of interest as prospective radicals or jihadi extremists who threaten public safety, not when they are the victims of terrorist acts and hate crimes. National-security interests become limited to instances when White Canadians are imperilled by perceived foreign threats. This erasure of White nationalist violence against Muslims by right-wing security circles and think tanks reinforces the racial distinctions that govern who is deemed a real or imagined threat and who can kill and commit acts of terror under the cover of security experts who fail to take stock of these deadly actions.

Islam and Terrorism. The Mackenzie Institute has listed numerous organizations on its in-house terrorism-watch list because of their alleged ties to Islam and extremist ideologies. The institute claims that the terrorism profiles form “a robust and up to date list of the worlds [sic] largest threats.” Most groups they include in the profiles fall under the Islamist banner; no far-right, White nationalistic groups are included. They identify the anti-fascist movement, Antifa, as meeting the threshold of a terror group under Canadian law. Except for Iran, state terrorism is not addressed as a concern.

An article with the derogatory title, “The Barbarians of Islam,” uses the language of colonial racism to characterize protesters in Egypt’s Tahrir Square in 2011.

Muslim Terrorist Conspiracies. The Mackenzie Institute website curates the work of writers who promote Islamophobic narratives. Contributors include Muslim dissident Raheel Raza (see chapter 7), who has accused Muslim organizations of having terrorist ties and promoted calls for closing mosques and curbing Muslim immigration, and Thomas Quiggin (see below), who actively promotes ideas of an Islamist takeover of Canada. Other publications archived on the Mackenzie Institute website support a variety of conspiracy theories regarding demographic replacement, the global Islamist threat, civilizational jihad, and homegrown Muslim terrorism in Canada.

In another spurious conspiracy theory, a 2016 article (reprinted with permission from the Terrorism and Security Experts of Canada Network) claimed that the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) was working with the Muslim Students’ Association (MSA) at the University of Ottawa, which they alleged was an Islamist group operating as a front for the Muslim Brotherhood. The two groups had “had their display tables set side by side” at an Islamic Awareness Week event, and this was painted as a deliberate attempt by the MSA to coopt BLM members. The article recommended closing common prayer rooms at the university, claiming they might be infiltrated as sites for “an Islamist underworld.”

Islamophobia. Nineteen articles appeared in a keyword search of “Islamophobia” in Mackenzie Institute publications (written by their contributors or reprinted with permission from the Gatestone Institute). These included an article claiming that “Islamophobia” is a term used by Muslim extremists to play the victim and to silence opposition. Other articles related to alleged Islamist terror in Canada; the alleged Islamization of France; the characterization of Islamism as a virus; claims that some prominent Canadian Muslim organizations have ties to terrorist groups; accusations that anti-Semitism in Sweden is driven by immigrant Muslims; and the perceived threat of Syrian refugees as potential security risks, to name a few. It is unclear how the content of these articles fits under the banner of “Islamophobia” other than that they serve to purvey it.

Ignoring White Terror. The Mackenzie Institute’s focus on extremism does not account for the rise in White nationalist and alt-right groups in Canada as a risk to public safety (see chapter 5). For example, neo-Nazi groups Three Percenters, Blood and Honour, Combat 18, and Proud Boys are named on the list of terror organizations in Canada but are absent from their collection of terrorism profiles.

Connections

The Mackenzie Institute has had a long association with Raheel Raza, who has served on their board of directors. She has contributed numerous publications, speaking from the presumed authority of a Muslim dissident (see chapter 7). Her opinion-based articles rely on her “insider” status and cover topics such as “the rise of extremism in Canada,” the need to ban the niqab and burka in all public places, and the unfounded nature of the Muslim community’s calls for challenging Islamophobia in Canada.
Several publications on the Mackenzie Institute’s website have been either cross-posted from or originated with other networks, such as the Clarion Project and the Gatestone Institute (see chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”).

The knowledge transfer between these think tanks occurs through shared contributors. For example, Giulio Meotti also writes for the Gatestone Institute as do Raheel Raza and Thomas Quiggin (see below). Meotti’s writing promotes fearmongering claims that Europe’s armies are part of a “Great Western Retreat” and are unprepared for the rise of Islamism. He questions how many Muslims will be infected with the “ISIS virus.”

The Mackenzie Institute’s authors of a 2006 article supported and amplified the work of the Middle East Forum’s (MEF) Islamist Watch. MEF is the beneficiary of Gatestone Institute funds to propagate their anti-Muslim campaigns. The Mackenzie Institute article on Islamist Watch claimed that “lawful Islamism” possesses an insidious agenda of corrupting Western societies by imposing sharia law, creating Muslim-only zones, and shutting down criticism of Islam, as part of a gradual, calculated takeover of society and the development of a worldwide caliphate.

In 2014, the Canadian Jewish News reported that John Thompson had participated in a United Jewish Appeal Speakers Action Group panel alongside Raheel Raza of Muslims Facing Tomorrow (see chapter 7) and a representatives of pro-Israel media outlet Honest Reporting Canada. They discussed conflict in the Middle East, impending jihadi wars, and Iran’s political insurgency. The alliance between the think tank, pro-Israel media, and Muslim dissidents was evident in this symposium.

Christine Douglass-Williams (see chapter 4) contributed an article to the Mackenzie Institute in 2018, lauding and amplifying Robert Spencer’s book about what he claimed was “Islam’s problematic history.” In the book he outlined a selective, decontextualized, and one-sided history of jihad as evidence of a centuries-old Islamist plot for global domination.

Clare Lopez was a contributing writer for the Mackenzie Institute in 2013–14. Lopez is the vice-president for research and analysis at the Center or Security Policy in the United States, an organization considered by the Southern Poverty Law Center to be among the prominent American anti-Muslim hate groups. Lopez has been an advisory board member at the Clarion Project and a writer for the Gatestone Institute.

8.3

Security Experts

Other regular contributors to the Mackenzie Institute’s publications include Thomas Quiggin, and David B. Harris, who are profiled below. They are showcased as security experts who provide commentary on the perceived threat of Islamism in Canada.

8.3.1

Thomas Quiggin

Overview. Thomas Quiggin is an expert on terrorism and national security. He has published widely on security threats to Canada and other Western nations. He has penned numerous articles outlining what he views as pervasive Islamist threats to Western societies. In 2017, he co-authored a book with Tahir Gora and others on the alleged danger of political Islam in Canada. He also authored two reports in 2018, one that alleged that Canadian Muslim charities are fronts for transnational terrorism funding and the other that mosques and Islamic schools are promoting “extremist literature.”

Background. Quiggin has cited the RCMP, Canadian Armed Forces, Bank of Canada, International War Crimes Tribunal, and the Privy Council as organizations through which he “obtained practical intelligence experience.”

From 2006 to 2007, he was senior fellow at S Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Quiggin was a senior research fellow at the Canadian Centre for Security, Intelligence and Defence Studies at Carleton University from 2007 to 2010.

He runs the Terrorism and Security Analyses of Canada Network (TSEC), which does not appear to have a website. According to his 2017 bio, Quiggin is a court expert on terrorism.

News media, scholars, and human-rights advocacy groups classify Quiggin’s writing about Islam and Muslims as “unfounded,” “stigmatizing,” “[failing] to offer effective solutions to the challenge of violent extremism,” and moreover making “gross generalizations” that at times border on the absurd, cataloguing every real, imagined or exaggerated piece of news about Muslim communities across Canada.” Furthermore, a 2019 Maclean’s article noted that “Quiggin’s various research conclusions and work with the obscure TSEC Network have been vehemently criticized by acknowledged security and terrorism experts.”

He is the moderator and primary contributor to the The Quiggin Report, a weekly news podcast series that promises to offer “behind the scenes insight into the world of intelligence and how western governments deal with, the growing phenomenon of extremist groups, gaining influence within western governments.” Funding for The Quiggin Report is provided by donors on his Patreon website.

Ironically, according to declassified documents from 2008 released by the U.S. Department of Defense, Quiggin was asked to join the defence team in the case of United States v. Khadr as an expert consultant on al Qaeda and terrorism intelligence. Omar Khadr had been held in Guantanamo Bay as an enemy combatant since 2002 when he was only 15 years of age. The documents stated that Quiggin would be asked to assist the defence in “analyzing discovery relating to al Qaeda, analyzing government motions to admit evidence relating to al Qaeda before trial, and preparing expert witnesses, and preparing cross-examination of experts

208 209
the prosecution may use in addressing these areas.” Quiggin was also to assist the defence in understanding specific terminology like “jihad” and “bayet” (oath of allegiance), which the document noted are often misunderstood and without proper reference to the “multiple meanings of the words” and their “contextual meaning” (that presumably Quiggin would supply) could lead to “unreliable intelligence.” Given Quiggin’s record of propagating unfounded jihadist-conspiracy theories and narratives about “civilizational jihad” (see chapter 3) that lack context and are unreliable in their facts and analysis, his proposed role in assisting the defence in this case was odd and perplexing.

In 2018 Quiggin produced a report, titled The Government of Canada Is Funding Terrorism with Taxpayers’ Money, in which he alleged that “Canadian taxpayers’ money has been used to fund terrorism for over two decades. Registered charities have frequently been the vehicle.” Specifically, the report attempted to connect the Canadian charity Islamic Relief Canada to the militant group Hamas. The report alleged that IRC channels money to Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) that is then channelled to Hamas in Palestine. IRW is a charitable humanitarian-aid organization that Israel designated as a terrorist organization in 2014 because of their relief efforts in Gaza and the West Bank. In 2020, the chief executive officer of IRW stated they “categorically refute” these allegations along with charges that they have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. IRW cited 500 audits over the last decade that did not produce any evidence to support the claims against them and are challenging the allegations in court. Similarly, in 2019, Islamic Relief Canada mounted a defamation suit against Thomas Quiggin, Tahir Gora, Raheel Raza, and others. Quiggin introduced a crowdfunding campaign called Operation: Kill Switch to help pay for his legal defence.

Views

Civilizational Jihad. In a 2014 report, Quiggin claimed that prominent Muslim organizations and community members are part of a “civilization-jihadist process” using “multiple front organizations and persistent denials.” His articles for the Mackenzie Institute have included commentary on “civilizational jihad,” representations of the non-violent Islamist group Hizb-ut-Tahrir as providing the “mood music to which suicide bombers dance,” and the threat of Syrian refugees being taken in by “extremist groups” in Canada. These articles are based on unsubstantiated conjecture, conspiracy theories, and defamatory anti-Muslim campaigns against Canadian Muslim organizations.

Islamist Trojan Horse. As noted above, Quiggin has claimed that there are a number of front organizations among Muslim organizations and charities working toward “nothing short of a complete takeover of Canadian and American societies, infiltrating their institutions, eventually taking political power and absorbing them into a global Islamic caliphate.” He has accused Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and many of his cabinet ministers, including Muslim MPs Iqra Khalid, Ahmed Hussen, and Omar Alghabra, of being “involved in orchestrating this terrorist funding.”

Quiggin has actively promoted conspiracy theories alleging that the Muslim Brotherhood has direct ties to Muslim Students’ Associations (MSAs) in Canada, even going as far to make spurious claims about MP Iqra Khalid’s involvement as president of the MSA at York University while a student there. Such unsubstantiated claims and fearmongering feed into the Islamophobic discourse of the Islamist Trojan horse and taqiyya (Muslim deception; see chapter 3).

Good Muslim / Bad Muslim. Quiggin demarcates the “good Muslim / bad Muslim” divide by classifying Muslims into two separate categories: “modernist, humanist, secular Muslims who are trying to take Islam, infuse it with democracy and science and drive it into the future” and “the Islamists: those people who seek an unceasing, violent struggle which essentially wants to drive Islam into the past.” By the logic of his reductive typology, all non-secular, religious Muslims are anti-democratic, unsuited for democracy, and irrational. By default, they would fall into the second category, which he depicts as Islamists hell bent on “unceasing violent struggle” and regressive ideals. This leaves little room for the 1.5 billion Muslims in the world, or one fifth of the world’s population, to find a place outside of Quiggin’s Islamophobic binary.

Great-Reset Conspiracy Theory. Quiggin supports the ideas behind the “Great Reset” conspiracy theory as outlined in his book The New Order of Fear: The GreatReset Trilogy (2021). He tweeted a quote from the book—a political fiction—that read, “Justin Trudeau is found dead in his bed, strangled with a pair of Halal socks, given to him by Cabinet Minister Omar Alghabra.”

De-Platformed. YouTube suspended Quiggin’s account for violation of community standards, leading his supporters to bemoan the suppression of his right to free speech. Quiggin denounced the move as a “double [standard],” stating that Muslim clerics like Yusuf Qaradawi, spiritual leader for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, had videos on YouTube, but he as a “free speech advocate” was being censored.

Connections

In 2017 Quiggin co-authored the book SUBMISSION: The Danger of Political Islam to Canada (With a Warning to America) along with Tahir Gora, Raheel Raza, and others. These co-authors demonstrate the existence of an alliance between Muslim dissidents and former military officers. Quiggin has been connected to the right-wing think tank, the Manning Centre (now known as the Canada Strong and Free Network). He was a speaker on Islamist extremism in Canada at their 2017 conference. The conference was held less than a month after the Quebec City mosque attack, and yet Quiggin and Raheel Raza raised unfounded red flags about the “Islamization” of Canadian schools. Such baseless rhetoric following a deadly attack by a White nationalist incites anti-Muslim racism by dog whistling propaganda about a civilizational jihad infiltrating Canadian schools.

In 2018, he co-published a book, titled: Lovers of Death: Factories of Islamist Terrorism, based on “research conducted quietly” in Canadian mosques and Islamic schools. The authors infiltrated Islamic schools and mosques, presumably through deceptive means (there is no mention that ethical research protocols involving consent and disclosure were respected). Speaking to the Toronto Star, Quiggin made the unsubstantiated claim that the libraries of these institutions contained nothing but extremist literature. He further asserted that these institutions promote “extremist teachings,” findings that are not corroborated by academic research on mosques or Islamic schools in Canada. On the contrary, scholarly research has demonstrated that Canadian Islamic schools encourage constructive civic engagement and do not promote violence (see also Zine 2008). Nevertheless, Quiggin’s book remains a resource archived within Public Safety Canada’s library. The 2016 Toronto Star article amplifying Quiggin’s study was posted on MEF’s IslamWatch.

In 2018, Act! For Canada (see chapter 6) supported Quiggin’s conspiracy-theory campaign against the Canadian Muslim charity Islamic Relief (as noted above) and published a letter Quiggin had written to the RCMP accusing the prime minister and members of the cabinet as well as prominent Muslim MPs of supporting terror funding. Act! For Canada’s endorsement stated,

“This is a request from terrorism expert Tom Quiggin for the RCMP to investigate The Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, the Honourable Marie Claude Bibeau, the Honourable Omar
Alghabra and the Honourable Iqra Khalid for terrorism funding based on their financial support for Islamic Relief. Mr. Quiggin previously worked for the RCMP on related issues and first became a court expert witness on terrorism while working as an intelligence contractor for them.

The letter was endorsed by Tahir Gora, Raheel Raza, and others.

Canadian Citizens for Charter Rights and Freedom's (C3RF; see chapter 6) posted and amplified Quiggin’s 2018 report, The Government of Canada Is Funding Terrorism with Taxpayers’ Money, on their website. As discussed above, the report alleged that Muslim charities are sites of terrorist funding. Soft-power groups like C3RF and Canadians for the Rule of Law (see chapter 6) have a symbiotic relationship with anti-Muslim think thanks and their designated security experts, who share their affinity for promoting Islamist-bogeyman conspiracy theories (see chapter 3).

From 2016 to 2018, Quiggin published numerous articles with the Gatestone Institute (See chapter 1.4 “Monetizing Hate”).

Quiggin was part of the leadership team for the 2022 Freedom Convoy trucker protests, which gathered masses of anti–vaccine mandate demonstrators in Ottawa, including people with Nazi and Confederate flags. The key organizer for these demonstrations was identified as a QAnon conspiracy theorist who believed that the COVID-19 pandemic was a hoax.

8.3.2

David B. Harris

Overview. David B. Harris is a Canadian lawyer and director of INSIGNIS Strategic Research. He is a frequent media commentator on national security and terrorism. Harris’s public commentary reinforces the demonization of Muslim under the banner of public safety and national security.

Background. Harris’s Huffington Post profile stated that he had over three decades of work in the field of intelligence and international security and was a lawyer involved in criminal and national-security issues. Previously he had acted as chief of strategic planning for the Canadian Intelligence and Security Service (CSIS) from 1988 to 1990.

Harris has promoted himself as director of the International and Terrorist Intelligence Program at INSIGNIS Strategic Research. However, the organization does not maintain a website and, aside from a physical address, cannot be located using internet searches.

Harris has stated his affiliation with the Canadian Coalition for Democracies (CCD) as a senior fellow for terrorism and national security. The organization appears to be defunct and does not have a presence on the internet.

Harris has penned numerous articles and provided testimony on the Islamist extremist threat in Canada. His biography states that Maclean’s has dubbed him as “one of Canada’s leading experts on terrorism” and acknowledges “his almost unique willingness to speak publicly and fearlessly about Islamic extremism.”

Fortifying this claim to fame, the bio included with his 2011 statement on immigrant integration, national security, and public safety to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology boasted that

David Harris has been honoured by the International Council of the Islamic Supremo Ordine Salomonico dei Principi di Shekal, Italy, for his role “in Canada and North America as a counterterrorism expert and security analyst committed to the defence of moderate Muslims and in the safeguard of their constitutional rights; [as well as] for his role in unmasking fanaticism and making reasoned moderation prevail... [translation].”

Yet, upon closer examination, the International Council of the Islamic Supremo Ordine Salomonico dei Principi di Shekal does not appear to exist outside of a passing reference in an obscure blog that speaks of Muslim Zionists and shadowy conspiracy theories involving Opus Dei.

In 2015 Harris was faced with a defamation lawsuit for his characterization of Dr. Ingrid Mattson, the former president of the Islamic Society of North America, as a “radical.” According to an article about the lawsuit by the Investigative Project on Terrorism, Harris referred to Mattson and other “prominent Islamists” as “radicals” and “problematic figures in the battle against terrorism.” Despite the reputational damage to Dr. Mattson, the suit was later dropped (for unknown reasons), which led the pro-Israel Lawfare Project (see chapter 6) to speculate and cast unfounded aspersions that Mattson had pulled back, “likely fearing what a full legal-disclosure process would reveal.” The McCarthyist campaigns to malign prominent Muslim scholars using “free speech” as an alibi is a key part of the Islamophobia-industry toolkit.

Views

Demographic Fears. In a 2012 interview for the New English Review, Harris connected “Islamic radicalism” with lax Canadian immigration policies, stating that “the situation in Canada, especially Islamic radicalism, cannot be understood without registering the fact that Canadian immigration inflows are the biggest per capita of all 193 countries on the planet.”
Islamist Bogeyman. In the same interview, Harris promoted conspiracy theories that claim the Muslim Brotherhood is seeking to infiltrate our “open, liberal, democratic, pluralist society” and “an attempt [is] under way to play on the good will of the mass of the Canadian population.”

His dystopic conspiracy theory further contended: that “if current trends persist, wholesale infiltration of Canada by radical and extremist Islamic ideologies and people, will continue apace, and the country’s future will be one of division, upheaval, and tragedy.”

In a 2012 interview, Harris named the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Canada, the Muslim Association of Canada, the Canadian Arab Federation, and Canadian Islamic Congress as “Muslim Brotherhood front organizations.” He has characterized Canada as “Islamism’s happy hunting ground.”

Taqiyya / Muslim Deception. Harris has outlined what he terms the “double discourse” of Muslims, which he argues

refers to an Islamist tendency or technique that has been successful in the West. The technique finds the so-called three-piece-suited jihadis speaking in charming, open and acceptable terms when dealing with a general mass audience largely consisting of non Muslims; but, in contrast, speaking in rather more vigorous and perhaps jihad-oriented terms when speaking privately.

Unsubstantiated and inflammatory narratives of Muslim deception (allegedly masquerading as “three-piece-suited jihadis”) in order to initiate a “stealth jihad” sow fear and distrust toward Canadian Muslims, which creates a poisoned and unsafe environment.

In a 2012 interview, when asked “How deep is the infiltration of Islamists in Canada's national and provincial governments’ law enforcement and military?” Harris warned that an “individual from Iran” had infiltrated an RCMP community roundtable to promote a peace conference, which in his words “gave off an odor of an Iranian government strategic intelligence deception operation.”

Gendered Islamophobia. He has been quoted as describing Omar Khadr’s mother as being “inevitably bound up in a black burqqa [sic] hiding all but a pair of raging eyes.” As distasteful as some of Maha Elsamnah’s views were, the derogatory reliance upon Orientalist narratives of covert Muslim rage “behind the veil” furthered an essentialized image of a haunting Muslim peril embodied by Muslim women.

Dangerous Muslims. Harris has supported securitization through contested policies like security certificates, which fall under the Immigration, Refugee Protection Act and allow for non-citizens to be indefinitely detained through secret trials and secret evidence for undisclosed reasons of national security. Security certificates have been challenged by legal experts like Audrey Macklin (2009, 1) for “sacrificing human rights at the altar of the war on terror.” The Canadian Council for Refugees has condemned the application of security certificates for being discriminatory, since they have disproportionately targeted Arab/Muslim men. Five Muslim men, dubbed the “Secret Trial Five,” were held on security certificates from as far back as 2000. Some of their cases have since been appealed based on arguments that Security Certificates are unconstitutional. Nonetheless, Harris has upheld the security-certificate regime, insisting that “foreign enemies, such as Islamic extremists, have successfully used immigration and refugee streams to penetrate Canada.”

Connections

In 2016, the Lawfare Project (see chapter 5) supported Harris in the defamation suit brought by Dr. Ingrid Mattson (see above). This revealed Harris's connection to pro-Israel organizations.

Articles on the Mattson defamation suit against Harris have been republished by the Mackenzie Institute as well as Campus Watch, the Middle East Forum, and Investigative Project on Terrorism (headed by American Islamophobia kingpin Steve Emerson), demonstrating the transnational circuits through which defamation of Muslims become shared and amplified.

Salim Mansur (see chapter 7) was a Canadian Coalition for Democracies (CCD) senior fellow along with Harris.

This chapter has outlined how security narratives are shaped and informed by anti-Muslim tropes that serve to fortify the efforts of security agencies in the surveillance and racial profiling of Muslims. When Muslims are cast as potential radicals, extremists, and jihadists, these stereotypes authorize security policies that unduly target Muslim communities and affect how Muslims at large are viewed and come to be feared and demonized.
Chapter 9:

Conclusion

This report has comprehensively outlined the machinations of Canada’s Islamophobia industry, its players, their views, and their connections, and has highlighted the social, political, and ideological breeding ground for anti-Muslim bigotry that has primed the ground for this industry to thrive and gain traction. As noted in the introduction, the process of mapping these networks and their agents, influencers, and donors is like a game of whack-a-mole. As some of the players in the Islamophobia ecosystem are identified, others pop up elsewhere. The cycle will continue so long as anti-Muslim hate is allowed to proliferate and can be monetized and leveraged for political ends.

This study has shed light on the orchestrated ways that Islamophobia is instrumentalized and on the myriad groups and individuals that operate in concerted ways to foment controversies and spread disinformation, scare stories, and outlandish conspiracy theories. This phenomenon is unique to Islamophobia. Other forms of racism and oppression do not have coordinated networks and industries behind their propagation. And yet, Islamophobia is a form of discrimination, prejudice, and racism that operates with impunity despite its deadly consequences in Canada and globally. In spite of the violent and fatal attacks against Muslims in Canada in 2017 and 2021 and, in the global context, the genocide and ethnic cleansing targeting Muslims in Myanmar and China; Islamophobic ethnonationalism and state repression in India and Kashmir; the oppression suffered by Palestinians; and policies promoting systemic Islamophobia in many Western nations, there is yet to be a watershed moment that could stem the planetary tide of anti-Muslim hate, violence, and bigotry.

This report is dedicated to the victims of deadly Islamophobic violence in Canada. The tragedy of their deaths is a call to action for government, policy-makers, educators, media, and all people of conscience to find ways to amplify the concerns raised here and to seek tangible and sustaining solutions to challenge this global scourge. The Muslim community and its allies must work to engender social movements and to enact dedicated advocacy and powerful lobbies to combat the formidable and lucrative business of Islamophobia, its industry and purveyors, and the underlying conditions that allow its ecosystem to thrive before more tragedies arise.
Bibliography

Please note that all media sources including articles, websites, and social media sources cited in this report were too numerous to include here and are archived separately along with non-academic books. For the media and non-academic sources consulted in this report, see The Canadian Islamophobia Industry: Mapping Islamophobia’s Ecosystem in the Great White North: Compendium of Media and Non-Academic Sources. https://scholars.wlu.ca/soci_faculty/14/

Chapter 1


Chapter 2


Chapter 3


Chapter 4


Chapter 6


Chapter 7


Chapter 8


Hennebry, Jenna, and Bessma Momani, eds. 2013. Targeted Transnationals: The State, the Media, and Arab Canadians. Vancouver: UBC Press.


