The al-Qaeda Sleeper Cell That Never Was:

The Canadian News Media, State Security Apparatus, and 'Operation Thread'

Felix Nii Lantei Odartey-Wellington

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ABSTRACT

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In late August of 2003, the Canadian and international media broke news of Operation Thread, executed by the Canadian state security apparatus to apprehend 24 Muslim members of a "possible al-Qaeda sleeper cell" in Toronto. After creating a moral panic and exposing the suspects to domestic and international opprobrium, the state security apparatus conceded that they had not been engaged in terrorism.

Treating Operation Thread as a discursive crisis in Canada, based on its links with the topical issues of immigration, terrorism, Islam, Arabs, and Muslims in the post-9/11 era, this thesis is an epistemological and analytical study of the operation by the Canadian state security apparatus and the news media. Using the contents of the two Canadian national dailies – the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* - as resources, it employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to deconstruct the signification of Operation Thread by the state apparatuses.

This research found that the news media privileged the dominant discourses of 'Islamic Terrorism' that the state security apparatus articulated regarding the 'operation.' The thesis however confirms that while news is an "ally of legitimated groups" (Tuchman 1978) and is both a resource and product of power; its contents are hegemonically determined and hence open to contestation. The latter point suggests that there is some room for intervention by civil society organizations advocating on behalf of marginalized and discriminated groups in Canadian society.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In late-August 2003, the Canadian and international mass media reported that nineteen individuals (later twenty-four, made up of twenty-three Pakistanis and one Indian) had been arrested and detained by Canadian state security agents as part of 'Operation Thread', targeting a "possible al-Qaeda sleeper cell" ("Bin Laden agents among 19, lawyers say," *The Globe and Mail*, 27 August 2003) in the Toronto area. While investigations continued into the actions of these individuals, they were regularly described in the official discourse (of the Canadian state security apparatus) disseminated by the mass media, as belonging to a 'group'. They were linked together by the circumstantial and equivocal fact that among them were several individuals who had registered with an institution known as the Ottawa Business College. It was discovered to have been providing foreigners with false academic credentials to stay in Canada as students. Some of them were accused of having shown an unhealthy interest in Canadian and United States landmarks and it was ominously insinuated that a number of them had visited the United States prior to the 11 September 2001 (hereinafter referred to as '9/11') attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States. Hinting that the race and religion of the suspects were vital factors in the Operation Thread takedown, the official document quoted by news media indicated, "the men are all from or have connections to the Punjab province in Pakistan that is noted for Sunni extremism" ("Immigration authorities name arrested Pakistanis," *National Post*, 26 August 2003).

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By the end of September 2003 however, some news media had begun questioning the validity of the operation, especially as several of the suspects had either been granted bail or deported for violating immigration regulations (not on the grounds of participating in terrorist activity, as previously announced). Other news outlets, on the other hand, appeared to offer justification for the actions of the state security apparatus in the matter, even as Operation Thread faded into obscurity.

In light of the above, this study assumes that the Canadian state security apparatus, informed by its guiding ideologies and in pursuit of organizational expediency, targeted the twenty-four individuals on the basis of their race, religion and cultural backgrounds. Further, through information about Operation Thread made public via the mass media, the state security apparatus sought to legitimate (and manufacture public consent for) its methods of combating terrorism in the post-9/11 era. More specifically, the state security apparatus through the news media, sought to influence members of society with its prevailing ideologies on state security through its discourses on immigration and terrorism.

This study also suggests that the news media largely facilitated this process because their own operational ideologies make them partners of dominant social institutions and control agencies such as the state security apparatus (Tuchman 1978; Hall et al. 1978; Ericson et al. 1990; van Dijk 1993; Karim 2002 and 2003). However, in view of the news media's treatment of Operation Thread, I will argue that the relationship between news media and dominant social institutions (and ultimately, the audiences of the mass media) is "hegemonic" (Ericson et al. 1990: 12). That is, the relationship is of a transactional nature characterized by discursive struggles to impose preferred meanings

on events such as Operation Thread. Thus news, as a product of the mass media should be regarded as a social power resource, liable to being acquired, consolidated and used by means of power struggles (van Dijk 1993: 43). The trajectory of this study is similar to the study by Hall et al. (1978) of the creation of a 'moral panic' by state security agencies, judiciary and press after a series of muggings in England.

Research Questions and Problematic

Operation Thread exemplifies a situation in contemporary times, and especially in the post-9/11 era, whereby Muslims, Arabs and persons whose backgrounds do not fit within the White, Western Christian and Eurocentric mold, have become susceptible to discriminatory treatment by Western state security apparatuses in particular, and dominant social groups in general. Given the consequences of Operation Thread, this research analyzes it as a 'discursive crisis' touching on race relations in Canada in the post-9/11 era. Henry and Tator explain discursive crises as: "The set of conditions of significant importance that has a profound impact upon society, and more specifically, the state of minority-majority relations...an occurrence that, as it progresses, reveals structural and attitudinal contradictions within the very values and norms of societal institutions" (2003:1). Within the context of my study, I argue that despite Canada's affirmation of multiculturalism and civil liberties enshrined in law (Fleras and Kuntz 2001), there continues to be a high incidence of racial criminal profiling of minorities (in this case, Muslims and Arabs), and that dominant discourses deployed in the news media to legitimize Operation Thread reveal this contradiction - hence the discursive crisis.

This analysis will revolve around the following research questions:

- What did the discourses of the Canadian state security apparatus on Operation Thread reveal about the dominant state control ideologies with regard to Muslims and Arabs as being potential public security risks?

- What does the news coverage of Operation Thread reveal about the nature of the relationship between the mass media and the Canadian state security apparatus?

It must be explained that the term 'Canadian state security apparatus' as used in this thesis refers mainly to the combined organ of the Police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Immigration Intelligence that executed Operation Thread. This organ, the multi-jurisdictional Public Security and Anti-Terrorism unit (PSAT) was formed in the wake of 9/11 ("'Van loads of evidence' in terror probe"; "How terror probe slowly unfolded," *Toronto Star*, 23 August and 6 September 2003). The term 'Canadian state security apparatus' is a derivative of Althusser's (1971) concept of "Repressive State Apparatuses" which will be discussed later in this work. This term is used in the sense that this coercive state organ purported to target the suspects so as to avert a potential compromise of the security and integrity of Canada.

In his book on elite discourse and racism, van Dijk admonishes future researchers that "the empirical basis of this book should also be broadened to include other elites and discourse genres, such as the discourses of the police, judiciary, the bureaucracy…and so on" (van Dijk 1993: 289). My intention is to take up this challenge within the context of this study.

The objective of my study is to further develop this area of scholarship, with a view to suggesting strategies for counteracting the influence of dominant discourses that shape the respective paradigms and representations of Muslims and Arabs as potential terrorists in Canada. A similar objective was stated by van Dijk as "merely one

contribution among others, to this form of academic dissent, in which scholars join forces with minority groups and others who oppose racism in view of fundamental changes toward a truly multicultural society" (van Dijk 1993: 7).

The overall goal of this study then is to analyze the discursive behaviors of the Canadian state security apparatus and mass media respectively vis-à-vis Operation Thread. Within a cyclical context, I will examine the extent to which "knowledges" (Foucault 1982) generated by the Canadian state security apparatus (in terms of what qualified as acts and profiles consistent with 'terrorist activity') were relayed by the Canadian print news media within paradigmatic frames that fed on dominant commonsense ideologies that associate Islam, Arabs and Muslims with terrorism (Said 1978; 1981; Karim 2002; 2003). I will also examine the extent to which some of these knowledges were challenged within the forum of the news media. The news media has been chosen for analysis because of "the status of news as the most prestigious of daily media genres, and its role at the centre of the exercise of power in modern societies" (Garret and Bell 1998: 4).

Literature Review

Studies of discursive events touching on race, crime and immigration are not novel in the domain of academic research. In 1978, Stuart Hall et al. analyzed the concept of 'mugging' in England as a 'moral panic' attributed to and stemming from the marginalization and subordination of blacks in that country. In a work that connected elite discourse with racism, van Dijk (1993) discursively analyzed issues relating to the subordination of minority immigrant populations in Europe and North America in the 1980's and early 90's. In terms of interrogating the dimension of racism that manifests itself in the criminal profiling of Muslims and Arabs in the post-9/11 era, Karim's *Islamic Peril* (2003) provides a foundation on which the study of Operation Thread will be

undertaken to deconstruct the cognitive and discursive processes by which certain meanings were constructed and mediated with regard to this event.

As previously suggested in this chapter, this study applies conceptual resources from various academic areas mainly, Media and Social Studies (Hall et al.1978; Tuchman 1978; Ericson et al.1991); Social and Political Theory (Foucault 1977 and 1982; Althusser 1971); Studies of Law and Race in Canada (Aylward 1999; Backhouse 1999); and Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk 1993 and 1998; Karim 2003).

Tuchman's ethnographic study of newswork and the role of news in society (1978) concludes that the organizational behavior of newsworkers vis-à-vis production constraints, privilege sources in positions of power, and cause journalists to construct the news with only 'strips' of reality, thus making news "a means not to know" (see also Shoemaker and Reese 1996, and Bennet 1996). Tuchman (1978) opines that in selectively constructing and mediating reality, news is an ally of legitimated or quasi-legitimated institutions that possess the means to have preferred strips and frames presented as news. Hall et al. (1978) are however more political in their critical analysis of the symbiotic relationship between the criminal justice system and mass media in the creation of a 'moral panic' in England. In structuralist terms, they view this relationship as one that enables dominant classes and institutions to set social agendas and define deviant/normal dichotomies, in a manner prejudicial to blacks in England. Like Tuchman (1978) and Hall et al. (1978), Ericson et al. (1991) posit that what constitutes 'order' in society is not automatic or unchallengeable, but rather that dominant social forces define order, with the state security apparatus and mass media being instruments used by dominant groups to achieve their goals. However while Tuchman's (1978) focus on various news media is mainly ethnographic, and while Hall et al. (1978) focus mainly on the print media, Ericson et al. examine print, television and radio news media, as well as the various markets targeted by these media to suggest that the news media is more

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pluralistic than acknowledged by Tuchman (1978) and Hall et al. (1978). Further, while Tuchman's (1978) research was mainly concerned with the news media in the United States, Ericson et al. (1990) examined Canadian news media, including *The Globe and Mail*, (one of the media resources used in this thesis) and therefore their work is even more relevant to my research.

These studies concur with Foucault's (1977 and 1982) development of the power/knowledge equation in social relations, which seeks to explain the privileging of dominant discourses in society, and how the latter impact on and inform the entire disciplinary and punishment regimes of societies. Althusser's (1971) seminal work on the function of ideology in social and political life has also influenced most studies in this area, as it makes linkages between the criminal justice system and the mass media as apparatuses within the state system. Though Althusser and Foucault have differing views on the centrality of state apparatuses in socio-political analysis, this project mainly draws on the linkages between the apparatuses and highlights the extent to which they are ideologically connected. Althusser's theories are however of an abstract and general nature, hence in this research, I follow previous researchers like Tuchman and Ericson et al. in tracing more distinct links between the mass media and the state security apparatus. Also, like Hall et al. (1978), Althusser relies heavily on Marxist theory that emphasize conflicts in respect to relations of production, though in my opinion it is debatable whether all forms of social conflict can be rationalized as economic class conflicts (see van Dijk 1993: 44).

Backhouse's (1999) record of the history of racism in Canada between 1900 and 1950 challenges the conception that the Canadian legal system has been 'raceless' and implicates the legal system in the history of racism in Canada. This study will add a more current dimension to her research. Backhouse's work complements Aylward's (1999) discussion of Canadian Critical Race Theory as a response to other legal theories, both

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mainstream and alternative. Just as critical media scholars like Tuchman (1978) and Hall et al. (1978) have questioned the perceived objectivity and neutrality of the media, Aylward (1999) defines Canadian Critical Race Theory as disputing the objectivity, neutrality and color-blindness of the existing legal regime in Canada and argues, using a Foucauldian framework, that, legal initiatives are politically driven. Though Canadian Critical Race Theory seems to have evolved in response to injustices meted out to Blacks and Natives within the Canadian justice system, I consider its key concepts to be applicable to all cases whereby the law and law enforcement agencies discriminate against ethnic minorities. These theoretical perspectives assist in analyzing the mass mediation of predominant ideologies about the legally sanctioned profiling of Muslims and Arabs - such as occurred in Operation Thread.

However, all discussions of the state security apparatus and mass media as partners mobilized against the interests of subordinated groups depend on understanding the discursive mediation of ideology as the connecting element of such mobilizations. In this regard, Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk have been credited with developing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research tool in terms of analyzing media discourse (Garret and Bell 1998: 6). van Dijk's work on elite discourse and racism (1993) discusses discourse as a mechanism for mediating and reproducing racist ideologies for the benefit of elite groups. Both *Elite Discourse and Racism* (1993) as well as his 1998 paper titled "Opinions and Ideologies in the Press" respond to that issue and explore the manifestations of ideology through models and discourses, connecting abstract ideological concepts to social and individual action. van Dijk is critical of Althusser's (1971) conflation of ideology with discourse. He accordingly offers a framework for media discourse analysis as a device for interpreting discourse as a medium of power-subordinate ideologies and relations. van Dijk argues that though the discourses of institutions such as the state security apparatus "have less, or less direct, influence on public discourse and opinion formation, they are crucial in the everyday lives of

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minorities, given the decisions and discriminatory - or oppositional - practices enacted or legitimated by such elites" (van Dijk 1993: 289). It can be said however that the discourses of these institutions, to the extent that they impact on public opinion formation and the ordering of social life, are even more important and thus require critical study.

Karim's *Islamic Peril* (2003), *inter alia* discusses how the dominant, Western media practices privilege frameworks for understanding Islam, Arabs and Muslims, based on age-old misrepresentations of Arabs and Muslims, and how these culminate in the branding of certain categories of people as potential terrorists. However in the post-9/11 era, it will be appropriate to go beyond his argument that Western intelligence agencies have focused on the so-called Islamic Threat only due to the decline of Marxism as a threat to the West after the fall of the Iron Curtain (Karim 2003: 1). In present times, 9/11 has re-defined what is deemed as being threatening to Western interests. This is even more so the case in Canada, given that the nation shares a common border and is extensively integrated with the United States, and is therefore compelled to show that it takes the common issues of security just as seriously.

It must be explained that the term 'West' as used in this thesis refers to the rich, industrialized, pre-dominantly white/ Judeo-Christian countries that are in a position of political and economic hegemonic dominance in the international community. Hence, this expands the definition of the West as "Western Europe, the United States, and other countries of European settlement...an ideal of secular and democratic liberalism and economic growth" (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics, 6th edition). It also differs from previous conceptualizations influenced purely by cold war dichotomies of East-West (Hughes 1994: 76), which were mainly politically driven (Liberal democracy versus Marxism). The concept of the 'West' as applied in this research is closer to the North-South categorization of international relations that the Non-Aligned Movement adopted in the 1970s (Thussu 2000: 39), which was influenced by economic, cultural and political

hegemonic considerations. The definition of 'West' as used in this thesis accounts for the fact that the marginalization of Muslims and Arabs may not be confined to the so-called Capitalist West, but may be encountered in a country like Russia which is currently engaged in hostilities with Muslim groups in Chechnya (see BBC profile on Chechnya), a conflict made even more evident by the hostage-taking crisis in Moscow's 'House of Culture' in October 2002 ("Bloody Drama," *Time*, 4 November 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Louis Althusser has observed, "It is the intermediation of the ruling ideology that ensures a (sometimes teeth-gritting) 'harmony' between the repressive state apparatus and the ideological state apparatus" (Althusser 1971: 150). This observation captures the foundational assumptions of this study, to the extent that the focus here is to interrogate the ideological links between the Canadian mass media and state security apparatus, as made evident in public mediations of Operation Thread. Althusser locates ideology within the context of social normative reproduction - requiring the socio-political system to reproduce itself to remain in existence. He identifies ideology as the galvanizing factor that defines a common purpose for various state institutions that he categorizes as 'repressive' and 'ideological'. This explains the function of the ideological state apparatuses as tools under the control of dominant groups, mediating the ideas that order the lives of subjects, and determining reality (Althusser 1971: 157 and 169).

This view is echoed by van Dijk (1993) who goes further by separating discourse from ideology, and suggests that, when properly formed, ideology makes its way into individual consciousnesses and social domains through discourse, contributing to models in the minds of members of society. These models in turn contribute to discourses on certain subjects (such as immigration and terrorism), thus reproducing and consolidating the ideologies from which they were formed. Van Dijk (1998: 26-27) suggests: "Models

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are the crucial interface between the social and the personal, between the general and the specific, and between social representation and their enactment, discourse and other social practices." Thus models become the synapse between ideologies and discourses, the sites where ideologies and socialization crystallize to inform discourses. This provides an understanding of the Canadian state security apparatus' discourse on Operation Thread as a product of a specific ideology that essentializes Muslims and Arabs as potential threats to public security. It is in this sense that van Dijk defines the main function of ideology as "a coordination of the social practices of group members for the effective realization of the goals of a social group and the protection of its interests" (van Dijk 1998: 24). To this effect, it can also be said that because of the peculiar relationship between the mass media and the state security apparatus as ideological and repressive state apparatuses respectively, the media for the most part privileged the preferred meanings placed on Operation Thread by the state security apparatus.

The concept of privilege underscored in Althusser's analysis is more pronounced in Foucault's theories on penal regimes (1977) and his theory of power and knowledge (1982). He suggests that power promotes certain knowledges over and above all others, resulting in a contestation between "erudite" and "disqualified" knowledges (Foucault 1982: 83). His model of power, right and truth problematizes sources that can be considered as competent to define what passes for 'truth', 'human rights', 'terrorism' etc. Foucault appears to concur with Althusser (1971) in observing that social relations are subject to dominant tendencies and that the "system of rights and the domain of law are permanent agents of these relations of domination" (Foucault 1982: 96). This dovetails with his theory of power and knowledge and what he describes as the "economy of punishment" (Foucault 1977: 7) that presupposes a connection between power and criminal justice administration, hence his exhortation that " we should rid ourselves of the illusion that penality is above all (if not exclusively) a means of reducing crime" (Foucault 1977: 24). This provides a theoretical approach to analyzing state security and mass media

discourses that privilege immigration 'crises' in Canada (and their consequent linkage to public security concerns, thus leading to quasi-arbitrary arrests and deportations over the past few years) over the security needs of visible minorities who face the threat of racial profiling and discrimination.

Altogether, these ideas mesh with the Instrumentalist theory of jurisprudence - "that law 'adapts' to social conditions according to deliberate efforts of special interests" and thus "the directive function of the law is not part of a benign evolutionary process but an instrument in the hands of the elite" (Walker 1997: 43). Indeed Foucault politicizes the entire criminal justice process, referring to it as a "political tactic" (Foucault 1977: 23). Critical race scholars like Aylward (1999) and Backhouse (1999) have therefore located the systemic character of racism in Canada within the legal system. Accordingly, it is possible to regard Operation Thread as a site of the manifestation of the racist tendencies of the Canadian legal system.

The concepts of power and privilege discussed by Althusser and Foucault have been interrogated and applied by media researchers like Hall et al. (1978), Tuchman (1978), and Ericson et al. (1991). Theoretically, they all conclude that due to the processes of news making, certain categories of people and social institutions have a greater access to (and influence over) the media, giving them the opportunity to construct or define reality. These sources are therefore regarded as "authorized knowers" (Tuchman 1978; Ericson et al. 1991). Falling within this privileged and powerful category are the "agencies of control" such as the state security apparatus (Tuchman 1978; Hall et al.1978; Ericson et al. 1991). In Althusserian terms, these researchers identify this phenomenon in news production as partly resulting from the role of the mass media in society of maintaining order and the status quo. I am, however, more inclined to embrace the theoretical position advanced by Ericson et al. (1991), that the relationship between the mass media and the so-called authorized knowers is not devoid of conflict,

for which reason I believe that there is room for intervention (and even infiltration) by oppositional or alternative groups.

In more recent times, Karim (2003) has applied these theories to mediations of discourses informed by an ideology of an 'Islamic Threat' to Western states. Karim describes the mainstream media as facilitating 'integration propagandists' to promote social consensus by mediating dominant definitions of social events. Like van Dijk (1993), he highlights the cognitive component in the reproduction of dominant ideologies. He thus refers regularly to 'cognitive scripts', 'models' and 'frames' ("cognitive structures") (Karim 2003) that provide newsworkers and the public with an understanding of social phenomena. It is instructive therefore that this study focuses on general trends of media reportage that sought to promote a public understanding of the Operation Thread that was favorable to the state security apparatus.

Methodological Framework

This thesis responds to the research questions stated above by critically analyzing the discourses of the state security apparatus in the news media with regard to Operation Thread, as well as the mass media's own treatment of the event. The usefulness of the news media as a research resource is underscored by Garret and Bell, who reiterate a previous observation by Bell to the effect that:

> Firstly, media are a rich source of readily accessible data for research and teaching. Secondly, media usage influences and represents people's use of and attitudes towards language in a speech community. Thirdly...media use can tell us a great deal about social meanings and stereotypes projected through language and communication...Fourthly, the media reflect and influence the formation and expression of culture, politics and social life. (Garret and Bell 1998: 4)

In other words, the news media provide material from which the discourses and functioning of prevailing ideologies in the nature of text and talk can be preserved,

observed, and analyzed. Further, the discourses of any era (for example what is defined as 'Islamic Terrorism') are perceptible in the contexts of their usage within the domain of the news media. Thirdly, news discourse is coded in such a way as to convey meanings and stereotypes with minimum expression. For example, stating that all the suspects were from a predominantly Sunni part of the world was sufficient to convey the meaning that they fitted the profile of 'Islamic Terrorists'. Finally, the news media are very active in shaping, reproducing, and evincing public cognitions of social phenomena.

This study focused on news of Operation Thread in the print media. This is due to the fact that the print media offer more discursive and extensive coverage of events, allow for the monitoring of the activities of social elite, and also have more permanent properties, making newspapers convenient resources for research (see Hall et al. 1978; Ericson et al. 1990). Indeed Ericson et al. point out that the potential of newspapers to make lasting impacts on audiences should not be underestimated. They observe that unlike other media, newspapers are "self- pacing", so that readers can engage with news content at their own rates of absorption, and also, readers engage with newspapers as a "primary activity", that is, they often do so exclusively at any given time, enhancing the capacity of the print media to convey information (Ericson et al. 1991: 29-30).

For the purposes of this study, I adopted a Critical Discourse Analytical (CDA) approach to news media analysis. CDA assumes that "media use can tell us a great deal about social meanings and stereotypes projected through language and communication" (Garret and Bell 1998: 3). More importantly, for the present purposes, "CDA has an explicit socio-political agenda, a concern to discover and bear witnesses to unequal relations of power, which underlie ways of talking in a society, and in particular, reveal

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the role of discourse in reproducing or challenging socio-political dominance" (Garret and Bell 1998: 6).

In critically studying the news media discourse to identify ways in which the Canadian state security apparatus and mass media negotiated and mediated Operation Thread, it is assumed that state security apparatus and mass media may be conceptualized as 'State Apparatuses' (following Althusser (1971)). The central assumption is that they are all instruments through which dominant groups in society maintain the status quo, either through repression (state security apparatus) or through ideology (mass media). This is because social consensus about meanings cannot entirely be sustained through coercion. Hence, elites or dominant groups seek to obtain consensus through ideology - mediated via discourse (Althusser 1971; Hall et al. 1978; Gitlin 1979; van Dijk 1993).

CDA is also a valuable research tool in this instance because, as van Dijk (1993) argues, in contemporary times racism is not necessarily expressed through physically overt acts. Rather, racist elites seek to influence public thinking by commandeering the mass media to discursively impose their preferred ideology about minority groups. In this form, racist discourse replaces physical acts and can be termed a "form of violence" (Jiwani 1999: 444). van Dijk points out "the public actions of the elites are predominantly discourse" (van Dijk 1993: 9). He assumes that "the social mind is essentially formed by public discourse, and public discourse is largely controlled by various elite groups" (1993: 11). Accordingly, he treats "discourse as data" (van Dijk 1993: 11-12). Like van Dijk, I assume that with regard to mass mediations of Operation Thread, the dominant ideologies of the state security apparatus were mediated to contribute to the general 'field of experience' of members of Canadian society, who could add it to their stock of knowledge (models) and thereby influence their understandings of social phenomena such as immigration and terrorism. Thus, the ideologies of the state security apparatus as mediated through discourses of immigration and terrorism in the Operation Thread case

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should be seen as being capable of influencing the mental models that the majority of society constructs about Muslims, Arabs, and Islam in Canada.

van Dijk (1993 and 1998) offers a functional a guide to conducting discourse analysis in the media by setting out in an un-complicated fashion, the methodology of deconstructing media text and talk. His concepts of implication, argumentation, and discursive moves and strategies (discussed in Chapter two of this thesis) enable researchers to identify, dissect, deconstruct, interpret, and categorize the meanings conveyed by mediated official discourses.

Fairclough characterizes CDA as being a combination of "interdisciplinary and critical commitments" (Fairclough 1998: 144). The interdisciplinary commitment allows for an analysis of a dynamic field such as the one under study. The critical dimension is essential for "understanding from a specifically discoursal and linguistic perspective, how people's lives are determined and limited by the social formations that we are blessed and cursed with" (Fairclough 1998: 144). More importantly, Fairclough, in Foucauldian terms foregrounds power distribution as a necessary factor in the equation of discourse analysis. Henry and Tator similarly express the function of CDA as providing a tool for deconstructing the ideologies of the mass media and elite groups, and for identifying and defining social, economic, and historical power relations between dominant and subordinate groups (Henry and Tator 2002: 72).

Although this study accessed various voices mediated by the press with regard to Operation Thread, statements made by the state security/judicial apparatus in the media concerning the operation were of special interest. Emphasizing the potential of juridical decisions as a research resource, Walker observes "judicial decisions can provide a fruitful research resource for the social history of Canada, especially for those groups or issues which are under-represented in the more standard sources" (Walker 1997: 7). It must be stated that this study looks at security, administrative and quasi-judicial decisions

that affected the Operation Thread suspects and not judicial decisions as such. However, these are similar in effect as they are also of a juridical nature.

The case of Operation Thread is just one event in the political and social life of Canada. It is therefore a 'singled out case' in the totality of the experience of the nation. However it provides a frame through which power/race relations within Canadian society can be studied. Writing about the case study approach, Walker (1997) notes that the tactical value of the singled out case lies in its explicatory potential, such that selected cases provide an understanding of the impact of structures at the human level. He puts it thus: "From a historical perspective, 'race relations' in Canada have not produced an abundance of personalized records or statistics for convenient analysis, so that some Canadians deny that there is any history of 'race' or 'racism' in this country. To employ the device of the 'singled out case' on the analysis of court cases, to listen to the voices made audible through the Supreme Court of Canada, therefore emerges not only as legitimate but especially appropriate in the circumstances" (Walker 1997: 49).

Method

In focusing directly on print news media coverage of Operation Thread, only those accounts that were immediately related to the various aspects of the Operation, from 23 August to 26 September 2003, were captured for analysis. This is the period within which media reportage of the event was most prolific.

The newspaper materials selected contain statements made by state security officials, government bureaucrats; individuals directly affected by the operation, oppositional groups within society, and authorized knowers. In all, thirty-five print news media items – twenty-five from *The Globe and Mail* and ten from the *National Post* - were analyzed. The coverage examined consists of different newspaper genres – news

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stories, features/comments, editorials and letters to the editor. *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* were chosen because they have nation-wide circulation and therefore have a greater potential in addressing a geographically wide readership with their stories. They are valuable for CDA purposes because they fall within the "quality" category defined by Ericson et al. (1991: 35) as having "longer items, features and continuing stories on complex matters affecting business and political elites on a national and international scale" and having "a concern with being a source of record both at the moment and historically". Though electronic versions of these papers exist, I relied on copies preserved on microfilm to capture the positioning and formatting of the stories, as these are meaning conveyors as well. Further when electronic copies vary from hard copies in terms of dating, hard copies can be better relied upon to reflect when particular information entered the public domain. Using van Dijk's semantic system of discursive implications, moves and strategies (as also applied by Henry and Tator (2002)), the voices of the state security apparatus and other actors in the Operation Thread saga were accessed and analyzed.

In my analysis, I assumed that like editorials, news stories represent the corporate position of any given news media organization. This is because a news media organization selects stories according to its editorial policy, and also publishes stories in a manner that conforms to such a policy (see Tuchman 1978: 31-38). Thus though journalists gather news reports, the final products are determined by the news organization as a corporate body. However I treated features, articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor as being input by individuals outside the news organizations proper, and for that reason provided their names as authors of their specific news input.

Chapter Breakdown

The subsequent chapters detail the analysis of the news coverage:

In the next chapter (2), I cover the theoretical/epistemological background and framework that informs this study, and outline the methodology applied. I begin this chapter with a definition of the concept of ideology as discussed by Althusser and van Dijk and as applied in this research, in terms of the ideologies of the Canadian security apparatus in the post-9/11 era. I then discuss how scholars like Tuchman, Hall et al., Ericson et al., and Karim have theorized about the relationship between state apparatuses and the news media, especially with regard to newswork. The general theme that underlies this discussion is Foucault's knowledge/power concept, and how the latter privileges certain meanings in the news. This chapter also discusses theories that conceptualize law and legal regimes as vehicles or sites of discrimination in Canada. Finally, I briefly discuss Critical Discourse Analysis as a research tool.

In the third chapter, I offer an analysis and discussion of the texts selected for the study from the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*, within the context of a theoretical and historical framework delineated in the previous chapter. I briefly discuss how the events of 9/11 contributed to and modified the label of 'Islamic Terrorism' that was imported into Canada and that significantly influenced the definitions applied to Operation Thread. This chapter also points to how the framing of 9/11 caused modifications in Canadian criminal and immigration jurisprudence (such as the passing of Bills C-36 and C-11) and how that resulted in cognitions of Operation Thread. This is followed by an analysis of the newspaper coverage in terms of the various discursive 'strategies' and 'moves' that were put forward by the Canadian state security apparatus and the two newspapers in their mediations of the operation.

In the fourth and final chapter, I summarize the main observations resulting from my study. I then discuss some of the ways in which oppositional groups might be able to intervene through media and legal advocacy to change the discursive parameters in situations where dominant groups subject minorities to discriminatory treatment.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Ideology as Used in this Research

On 28 May 2004, *The Globe and Mail* reported that Canadian security agencies

were apprehensive about the impending investigation into the recent arrest and detention

of Syrian-born Canadian Maher Arar in the United States, Jordan and Syria on suspicions

of terrorism. Under the headline "Spy reputation risked by probe, agencies say", the

newspaper reported that:

> Canadian security agencies say that next month's public inquiry into
> Maher Arar's detention could in effect doom this country's counter-
> terrorism efforts.
>
> In a new position paper, government lawyers say unless much of the
> proceedings is hidden, foreign governments could lose all confidence in
> the CSIS and the RCMP, especially if these agencies are forced to talk
> about their investigative techniques, ongoing probes and international
> information sharing agreements.
>
> They argue that Canada could find itself shut out of the global
> intelligence-gathering loop, or even face trade sanctions, if it gains a
> reputation as an intelligence blabbermouth.
> The paper's authors say that terrorist groups might try to watch portions of
> the proceedings to find out the identities of police officers, spies and
> confidential information.

The Globe and Mail's story provides readers with the rationale for the less than

transparent approach that Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the RCMP

have adopted towards the Arar case. The theme that cuts through the position paper

referred to in the report is that of national security. Canada officially projects itself as a

champion of liberal-democratic values and fundamental human rights and freedoms – a "democratic liberal state" as Henry and Tator (2002: 23) have described it. Incidents such as the Arar case are considered anathema, especially since he appears to have been effectively abducted and sent to be tortured in Jordan and Syria - countries with very questionable human rights records – all possibly with the approval of Canadian security officials. What the position paper suggests is that in matters of national security, regulations protecting civil liberties would have to be circumvented to achieve optimum results, and accountability regimes to which these security agencies ordinarily should be subjected, must be tempered.

The discourse in the position paper, taken together with the discourses of the Canadian security apparatus with respect to Operation Thread, represents a window into the ideological world of the Canadian security apparatus in the post-9/11 era. Together, these discourses provide a crucial insight into the factors that influence the approach of this apparatus to perceived threats to Canada from terrorist groups, such as the so-called al-Qaeda sleeper cell of which the Operation Thread suspects are supposed to have been a part. What I am suggesting is that the goals, objectives and *modus operandi* of the Canadian security apparatuses in Operation Thread seem to have been informed by certain key concepts including the following:

- That Canada is at risk from al-Qaeda and similar groups which employ terrorism in pursuit of their objectives;
- That invariably, these groups involve young Arab or Muslim men fitting the demographic of the men who carried out the 9/11 attacks in the United States;

- That *de rigueur* liberal rules of criminal procedure regulating surveillance, detection, arrest, and prosecution, are inadequate (or even restrictive) in dealing with contemporary terrorist threats, hence the need for more rigorous, less liberal approaches.

These key concepts represent the operating ideologies of the Canadian security apparatus vis-à-vis the threats to security posed to Canada and its international allies by terrorism. These ideologies are reflected in various pieces of legislation passed in Canada in the aftermath of 9/11 as part of the Government of Canada's Anti-Terrorism Plan ("Public Safety Act Receives Royal Assent," *Canada NewsWire*, 6 May 2004). These include the *Anti-Terrorism Act* (Bill C-36), the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Bill C-11), the *Public Safety Act* (Bill C-17), and the *Citizenship of Canada Act* (Bill C-18). As these laws show, the prevailing ideologies conflate immigration with terrorism, hence the collaboration between the RCMP and Immigration Intelligence in executing Operation Thread. At this juncture I will briefly discuss the definition of ideology as used in my thesis.

In his essay on the role and function of ideology in modern society, Althusser (1971: 162) expands Marxist-Lacanian definitions of ideology, and defines ideology in Freudian terms as "a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." These abstract representations (assumptions, concepts, beliefs) provide the framework through which individuals experience reality and phenomena in their social environments, and also dictate their response to such phenomena. Thus Althusser regards ideologies as the core guiding principles shared by individuals belonging to groups within society. Ideologies determine the "rituals" (*modus*

operandi) of an apparatus or group, and these "rituals" then determine the "practices" (actions, attitudes, discourses) of individuals in the apparatus (Althusser 1971: 170). Hence though ideologies may appear as illusionary constructs, they are manifested in reality (Althusser 1971:162-63), that is, ideological principles motivate and direct the real actions of individuals who have internalized them. By extension therefore, "Ideology interpolates individuals as subjects…ideology has the function of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects" (Althusser 1971: 170). In other words, the internalization of the ideologies of a specific group makes an individual a member or subject of that group. For example, by becoming a member of the state security apparatus, an individual will identify him or herself as such to the extent that one shares in the apparatus' ideologies.

Although Althusser appears to conflate political ideology ("the regime of parliamentary democracy combining universal suffrage and party struggle" (Althusser 1971: 152-53)) with structures through which ideology is disseminated ("schools" (Althusser 1971:152-53)), his definition of ideology is made palpable through his discussion of these social and political institutions or apparatuses. In Marxist and Gramscian terms, he describes the state as an "apparatus" (Althusser 1971: 137), served by "Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs)" and "Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs)."The repressive or coercive apparatus refers to the police, courts, prisons and other bodies through which the state ensures compliance with its rules and regulations. The ideological state apparatuses are those that instill certain values, norms and ideals in citizens to ensure, among other things, that even without coercion, they would abide by the common rules and dominant ideologies of the state.

Althusser's list of Ideological State Apparatuses includes "The religious ISA, educational ISA, the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio, television, etc.) and the cultural ISA" (Althusser 1971:143). He also maintains that some apparatuses might have overlapping characteristics. Hence, the law is both an RSA (to the extent that it encompasses coercive methods) and an ISA (to the extent that it is a vehicle for laying down rules and regulations of proper behavior). Thus, he suggests that all state apparatuses have both ideological and coercive elements (Althusser 1971:143-47). It is significant to note that this last point has found expression in some seminal media analytical works. For example, Ericson et al. have described the law and news media in Althusserian and Foucauldian terms as being "disciplinary and normalizing institutions" (Ericson et al. 1991: 6). In similar vein, Hall et al. (1978: 76) note that under certain circumstances, the media "effectively become an apparatus of the control process itself – 'an ideological state-apparatus'" (see also Hall 1990: 8-12 for an extensive discussion of race, media, and ideology).

Althusser foregrounds ideology as a basic element for the hegemonic functioning of the state wherein ideology consists of systems of ideas that ensure that citizens operate more or less in line with state regulations, with minimal coercion. Althusser's concept of ideology and the state are grounded in Gramsci's (1971) views on social consensus as a product of hegemony. Gramsci opined that coercion was not sufficient for the consolidation of power, hence the need to secure mass public consensus. He thus conceptualized "hegemony as a site of ideological struggle over common sense" (as quoted by Allan 1998: 109). The concepts of hegemony and consensus permeate most theories relating to the role of the media as an ideological apparatus.

Althusser's concept of "Practices" (1971) accounts for divergences that may be found within the state apparatus itself. He argues that ideology is made functional through practices – actions, conduct, and attitudes. He points out however, that as individuals we may be influenced by more than one given ideology at a time (in an environment of competing ideologies). In such instances, our practices would be determined by a combination of the various ideological principles to which we have been exposed, or we will privilege some ideologies over others. This explains why there is an absence of homogeneity in the state apparatus. For example, it is not uncommon to find leaks in the Canadian press to the effect that the intelligence community disagrees with Liberal government policies on security. It can be recalled for instance, that in 2000, there was some furor in the Canadian media after Paul Martin, then finance minister, and Maria Minna, then Minister for International Cooperation, attended a fundraiser by a Tamil organization despite the fact that CSIS had red-flagged the organization as a front for terrorism (Henry and Tator 2002: 123-28). Althusser's view (1971: 146) is that despite any divergences and contradictions especially in the ISA's, state apparatuses and their members function under a unified ruling ideology.

In more contemporary times, van Dijk has provided an even more accessible definition of ideology. Like Althusser (1971), he regards ideologies as "social representations" (van Dijk 1993: 40), effectively shared by individuals as members of social groups. He puts it thus:

> Ideologies feature fundamental social principles and building blocks such as norms and values, underlying the structures and formations of attitudes. That is, they represent the mental embodiment of fundamental social, economic, and/or cultural goals and interests of a group. If we may use a computer metaphor, we might say that together, these ideologies form the basic social operating system of a group or culture, whereas the respective

attitudes are the specific programs running under this system in order to perform specific socio-cognitive tasks. (van Dijk 1993: 40)

van Dijk hastens to differentiate his definition from Althusser's, pointing out that "ideologies do not encompass the social practices that control them" (van Dijk 1993: 41). In other words, he avoids conflating ideologies with socio-political institutions as Althusser (1971) does. Ideologies therefore are functional within these institutions, providing group members with fundamental perspectives of their social environment and its phenomena. This determines how group members react and relate to these phenomena. van Dijk summarizes his definition thus: "Ideologies are merely the most fundamental representations shared by a group, namely those representations that embody its overall interests and goals" (van Dijk 1993: 41). Ergo, it can be said that, the ideologies of the Canadian security apparatus to combat the threat of terrorism to Canada and its allies represents the core ideas and beliefs that inform the general strategies adopted by all composite security organs and their members.

Furthermore, van Dijk has sought to make his definition of ideology more complete by providing it with three components – social functions, cognitive structures, and discursive expression and reproduction (van Dijk 1998: 24). He views ideology as having a direct social function by "co-ordinating the social practices of group members for the effective realization of the goals of a social group and the protection of its interests" (van Dijk 1998: 24). Like Althusser (1971), he sees ideologies as conceptual blocks that are internalized by group members through socialization, hence the cognitive component. Thus ideologies become bodies of knowledge that group members draw upon in their day-to-day activities and decision-making. He puts it thus: "Ideologies are the axiomatic basis of the mental representations shared by the members of the social group.

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That is, they represent the basic principles that govern social judgment...in other words the main cognitive function of ideologies is to organize specific group attitudes" (van Dijk 1998: 24-25). In this sense ideologies become meaningful only if they effectively synchronize the actions of group members by ensuring that they share relatively similar views on specific issues. In a group like the state security apparatus, a common ideology on terrorism would enable its officers determine issues relating to "actions ('what do we do?'), and goals ('why do we do this')" (van Dijk 1998: 25). Sharing a common ideology on terrorism means individual members would share common definitions of terrorism and who personifies a potential terrorist.

It is in the area of cognition that van Dijk makes a thorough analysis similar to Althusser's (1971) discussion of how ideologies contribute to individual practices. van Dijk argues that when ideologies are internalized, they contribute to the general field of experience and knowledge that individual group members might have, thus forming a mental model (1998: 26-27). For example, while at the macro level, the state security apparatus might operate on the basis of a specific body of ideology, individual members in carrying out their duties, might slightly vary in how they rationalize and react to what may be regarded as potential terrorist phenomena. Indeed, van Dijk points out that some group members may have 'purer' versions of a given ideology than others, based on where they rank within the group. This theory provides some insight into divergent views that may be held by some of the key interlocutors of the Canadian security apparatus in Operation Thread.

Since ideologies, in their social function, require internalization and realization by individuals, there is a need for discursive expression through text and talk. Within a

group like the Canadian state security apparatus, officers would be exposed to such text and talk during training or briefing sessions, or through other sources related to their profession.

In the context of this study, however, I regard the discursive expression of the state security apparatus' ideology as being directed towards gaining public approval, consensus, solidarity and support for the state's anti-terrorism methods. Thus the discursive expression of the ideology of the state security apparatus with regard to Operation Thread was not purely for explicatory purposes; it also had the objective of legitimating (securing 'consent' (*a la* Gramsci) for) its actions with regard to terrorist threats in Canada. Thus my research accounts for the way in which this process was carried out through the news media, and further, how that reflects the relationship between the security apparatus and the news media.

Moral Panics and the Relationship between the Canadian State Security Apparatus and News Media

Between August and September 2003, both *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* extensively reported on Operation Thread. This coverage was in the form of news reports of the arrest and arraignment of the twenty-four suspects, as well as background information relating to either the suspects or the Operation itself. The theme common to the respective forms of coverage was national and international security; and the threats posed by terrorists. This theme was inherent in Operation Thread itself and thus was introduced into the public domain by the security apparatus when it disclosed details of the operation through the news media. It stands to reason that examining press reports

about the operation would provide some insight into the dominant definitions of the state security apparatus vis-à-vis threats to national and international security. Further it would shed light on how the security apparatus and news media relate to each other.

Hall et al. (1978) were faced with a similar task when they analyzed the phenomenon of mugging in England during the early 70s. They drew the conclusion that police personnel in England had profiled black youth as potential muggers and through the news media, sought public consensus and legitimation for their methods. Conceptualizing the situation whereby police take pre-emptive action based on ethnic or racial profiling, Hall et al. described it as: "Jumping the gap between...theoretical and empirical guilt...in the interests of administrative efficiency: what is sometimes called pre-emptive policy" (Hall et al.1978: 41). Further, Hall et al. point out that this kind of pre-emptive policy is invoked when a particular panic is created in society about a non-existent or overblown threat. They explain that: "When such discrepancies appear between threat and reaction, between what is perceived and what it is a perception of, we have good evidence to suggest we are in the presence of an ideological displacement. We call this displacement a moral panic" (Hall et al. 1978: 29).

For our current purposes, it is instructive to note that on 23 August 2003 when the story broke in the print media, *The Globe and Mail* quoted a spokesman for the Solicitor General of Canada as saying with regard to the operation: "There is currently no known threat to national security related to this investigation". Yet for an entire month, the news coverage suggested that the self-same security apparatus was intimating that the suspects had attempted to compromise the security of Canada. This exemplifies the displacement referred to by Hall et al. and the presence of a moral panic in Canada with regard to the

twenty-four suspects being perceived as threats to public safety. It is the participation of the news media in the production of moral panics that brings into sharp relief the nature of its relationship with the security apparatus.

Scholars like Hall et al. (1978), Tuchman (1978), Ericson et al (1991) and Karim (2002 and 2003) have studied the relationship between the news media and state institutions. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, there seems to be a general concurrence that media production practices make the media an "ally" (Tuchman 1978) of these institutions. News media have to work to abridge time and space in their efforts to bring information to audiences (Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 108-9). They are duty-bound to acquire information that audiences might deem relevant. The information gathered must also be deemed objective, authoritative and credible (Hall 1978: 58; Gitlin 1979: 28). This requires a close connection to decision makers and social institutions (such as the security apparatus) whose actions impact greatly on social life and who can be regarded as credible 'inside' sources. It is thus to be expected that there would be a degree of affinity between the media and these institutions.

Tuchman (1978), along with Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Bennett (1996), further believes that, because news organizations are bureaucracies, operating according to a bureaucratic logic, they relate better to other social organizations with similar characteristics. She is of the opinion that this affinity results in a situation whereby only "strips" of events make their way into the public domain because public institutions are often able to ensure the mass mediation of their preferred perspectives of social events. She, therefore, describes news as a "frame", in the sense that it provides incomplete insights into social events and phenomena. However, these frames organize strips of

information into discrete, comprehensible bodies of information and knowledge for public consumption. Thus "news imparts to occurrences their *public character* as it transforms mere happenings into publicly discussable events" (Tuchman 1978: 3; see also Gitlin 1979: 12). News organizations "both circulate and shape knowledge...and shape news consumers' opinions on topics over which they are ignorant" (Tuchman 1978: 2). Tuchman (1978: 2) further points out that in its public role, the news media sets the political agenda for the public. In other words, it influences what members of the public define as being topical and worthy of attention. This goes a long way in supporting Hall et al.'s (1978) thesis about the construction of moral panics. And indeed Hall et al. echo Tuchman's position thus: "The mass media are not the only, but are among the most powerful forces in the shaping of public consciousness about topical and controversial issues" (Hall et al. 1978: 220). Again, they observe, "The media define for the majority of the population *what* significant events are taking place, but, also, they offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events. Implicit in those interpretations are orientations towards the events and the people or groups involved in them" (Hall et al. 1978: 57; see also Fleras and Kunz 2001: 47-61). In its agenda setting function, Tuchman also sees the media as defining public descriptions. She gives the example that "Today, discussions of the anti-war movement still reflect the media's language. For instance young men who refused to serve in Vietnam are commonly referred to as draft 'evaders' (the media's term), rather than draft 'resisters', as they prefer to be called" (Tuchman 1978: 2).

For Tuchman, the sum of the news media's relationship with these public institutions and the process of striping and framing accounts of social reality is that news

becomes a means not to know, since it obscures vital information from the public gaze (see also Bennet 1996). However, the information mediated by news organizations constructs reality (Tuchman 1978), or as Gitlin (1979: 12) puts it, the media "certify reality as reality." Writing about televisual news, Allan (1998:105) concurs, stating, "Televisual news accounts encourage us to accept as *natural, obvious or commonsensical* certain preferred definitions of reality."

Hall et al. (1978) share Tuchman's view (1978) that news constructs social reality and is derived from the joint actions of the news media and the criminal justice system. In Althusserian terms, they view the media and what they describe as "control agencies" or "apparatuses of social control" working hand in hand in relaying dominant definitions of criminal phenomena. This is because a larger part of the public "has little direct experience of crime" (Hall et al. 1978: 29) and what they know about specific crimes is what the media and apparatuses of social control feed into the public domain.

Like Hall et al. (1978), Ericson et al. emphasize the affinities between the news media on the one hand, and the law and order apparatus in society. They point out that:

> The news institution focuses upon what is out of place: the deviant, equivocal, and unpredictable. News operatives attend to more calamitous happenings in other institutions that have proved difficult to classify or that contradict standard expectations in the social structure about rights and the distribution of power. The goal is to provide a set of classifications that are workable in that they establish the normal, reduce equivocality, and increase predictability – that is, to represent order. (Ericson et al. 1991: 4)

To them, apart from the expediency factor, crime is a naturally newsworthy topic and hence, news institutions are likely to gravitate towards the public security apparatus (Ericson et al. 1991: 239). Apart from that, like Hall et al. (1978), they see the role of the news media as intersecting with that of lawmakers and law enforcers. They describe this intersection as follows:

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> As they engage in discursive struggles in a particular institution, journalists become part of that institution, including its processes of social control.... Journalists are directly involved in the activities of lawmakers and law-enforcers, joining with them as agents of social control. The social control activity includes surveillance of deviant people and organizations, the identification of procedural strays, recommendations for controlling them and direct social control through the stigmatic effects of publicity.... The news-media institution intersects with the legal institution as part of the coercive apparatus as well as the ideological apparatus. (Ericson et al.1991: 12)

In this way the agenda setting function of the news media to which Tuchman (1978) refers can be see as resulting in social control as journalists join in the process of defining, stigmatizing and preventing deviancy, abnormality, terrorism etc. They keep the public in check by privileging certain preferred meanings of potentially criminal and harmful events. Ericson et al. therefore echo Foucault's (1977) theory that "Both the law and news media offer disciplinary and normalizing discourses" (quoted by Ericson et al. 1991: 6; see also Karim 2003: 18-23).

Ericson et al. also suggest that both the news media and the law enforcement agencies base their actions on public interest and therefore seek to legitimize their actions through publicity (Ericson et al. 1991: 7). They point out that: "The news media institution is pivotal to the ability of authorities to make convincing claims. It offers pervasive and persuasive means by which authorities from various institutions can attempt to obtain wider consent for moral preferences. Moral authority is always subject to consent, and legitimacy is always something that is granted" (Ericson et al.1991: 8). To them, the law provides a similar function, as authorities try to rationalize actions and decisions through legal discourse (Ericson et al. 1991: 8). For this reason, appeals to ideals such as the maintenance of national security reflect attempts by state officials to justify actions such as the arrest of the Operation Thread suspects.

The consensus-building (or as Karim puts it, "consensus engineering" (2003:6)) elements that motivate the relationship between the state security apparatus and the news

media is equally fleshed out in Hall et al.'s work (1978). They see the media as ideological disseminators for elite groups such as state institutions (Hall et al. 1978: 59). This ideological role is necessary because modern governments govern through consensus as well as coercion, hence the need to ensure that a greater part of the public is willing to toe the official line.

While all these scholars view news as a form of knowledge that invariably supports dominant official positions, they recognize that the consensual character of news is not automatically guaranteed to those in dominant positions. In other words, the relationship between newsworkers and the state security apparatus is not constantly a comfortable one. It is to this dimension of news media theory that I turn next.

Hegemony and the Process of News Production

In developing his theory of power and knowledge, Foucault (1982) problematizes knowledge as a power resource. He argues that at any given time, there is a contest as to which knowledges would prevail over others, and is therefore interested in processes whereby knowledges are pronounced as being legitimate. He sees these processes as being rooted within social institutions. Thus, for example, the power of academia would result in its mandate to define what can pass as genuine scientific knowledge.

As previously pointed out, media scholars like Hall et al. (1978), Tuchman (1978), Ericson et al. (1991) and Karim (2003) regard news as knowledge generated through power relations. These power relations are realized in newswork procedures that privilege certain sources over others. Being a news source means having access to the process of newswork and being able to place a definition on specific phenomena, hence the conceptualization of news as a power resource. Tuchman for example regards news as a power resource because through its dissemination, "it suppresses other ideas"

(Tuchman 1978: 215). Accordingly, sources are "situated actors" with varying power resources and equally varying abilities to influence news content and public knowledge (Tuchman 1978: 208). Thus, Karim (2003), who conducted a case study of the increasing prevalence of the conflation of Islam with terrorism, refers to Said (1981) and argues that this conflation is the result of the power of Western dominant groups to facilitate negative representations of the 'Orient'.

It is the character of news as a power resource that leads Ericson et al. to argue that the process of representing "is embedded in the micropolitics of power/knowledge struggles between sources and journalists" (Ericson et al. 1991: 11). Consequently meanings that are produced are not completely determined by sources but rather "discursive struggles or meaning contests" (Ericson et al. 1991: 11) may develop between journalists and their sources. They therefore regard the news as a "lived hegemony and not a finished article" (Ericson et al. 1991: 12). This is very evident in the trajectory of the reportage of Operation Thread, as will be seen in the next chapter where I analyze the individual events and stories that were reported.

Ericson et al. also point out that this hegemonic process characterizes news consumption, hence:

> The journalist does not simply reproduce the interpretations of his or her sources, he or she gives them a 'constructive interpretation'...That is, his or her interpretations pass judgment on the interpretations of his or her sources. Similarly news consumers engage in 'constructive interpretation', reading in an interpretation that contest and passes judgment on the interpretations of journalists.... Even the simplest facts are interpreted in different contexts. (Ericson et al. 1991: 33)

They therefore contradict Hall et al. (1978) and Tuchman (1978) in arguing that the news media are more pluralistic than given credit for. That is not to say that Tuchman (1978) does not point out elements of pluralism in her work. However she seems to afford newsworkers less agency in their duties. Similarly, while Hall et al. (1978) imply that in

their mediating role between the state and the public, the mass media wields a great deal of power, the thrust of their thesis is that the mainstream media invariably privilege the dominant political ideology.

Even more crucially, Ericson et al. (1991) point out that in their public function, the news media subject state institutions to scrutiny and surveillance, exposing corruption, inefficiencies, abuse of power etc. This would suggest that the media remains a viable channel for intervention against inimical state policies and actions. However, the general theme of their work is that the media ally themselves so closely to dominant groups that their power often serves the purposes of those groups, to the extent that they share similar perspectives. For example, in the wake of Operation Thread, it appeared that the mainstream domestic Canadian news media and their foreign counterparts did not contest the definition that the Canadian state apparatus affixed to it.

I subscribe more to the position adopted by Ericson et al. (1991) about the hegemonic character of the struggle to determine news content and interpretations. I also agree with Hall's view that media audiences are "heterogeneous and complexly structured, standing in their own relation to the unequal distribution of social, economic and cultural power, with their own connexions to and perspectives on the system of power as a whole" (Hall 1975: 118). Further, I agree with Karim (2002: 11) that "the media are not monolithic vehicles of only one discourse" but under certain conditions might "function as sites of contestation across various views" (see also Karim 2003: 192). Indeed the fact that the state often obtains interlocutory orders in court to prevent media access to information or trial proceedings is evidence of the fact that cooperation or mutuality does not always characterize its relationship with the media. I will go further to argue that, this struggle is rendered more problematic by the fact that even a social institution such as the state security apparatus is not homogenous or monolithic. Thus at every given time, there is the possibility that varied definitions, meanings and discourses

would emanate from that sector. This will be made evident in the next chapter when I point to the divergent views that were articulated by the RCMP alone about the ramifications of Operation Thread, as well as the differing views that were voiced by immigration authorities with regard to the culpability of the suspects. This also explains why some agents leak information about issues they are uncomfortable with, such as abuse of prisoners or under-funding of specific security projects.

That said, it cannot be denied that, when the Canadian security apparatus made available to the media documents explaining why the Operation Thread suspects had been arrested, the media delved into their store of existing knowledge to make sense of the information released. In her ethnographical study of newswork, Tuchman (1978: 58-59) observes that newsworkers attempt to objectify knowledge by placing idiosyncratic information within 'typification' frames. While this permits newsworkers to make sense of events expediently and expeditiously, it also results in stereotypes and errors, since typifications operate on the basis of homogeneity (see also Gitlin 1979: 25-27; Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 120). Thus, once newsworkers identified information about Operation Thread as falling within a specific typification, they processed the story in a way that projected the preferred meanings imposed by the state security apparatus – that there was a real likelihood that the suspects were a threat to national security and fell into the 'al-Qaeda' category of terrorists.

This in turn suggests that words or discourses involved in describing the so-called 'suspicious' activities of the suspects were rooted historically and contextually. For example, the equivocal fact that some of the suspects "lived together in groups of four or five in apartments furnished with only mattresses and computers, one apartment had airplane schematics and pictures of guns on the walls" ("Immigration authorities name arrested Pakistanis," *National Post*, 26 August 2003), had a definite meaning based on 9/11 - a meaning shared by both the state security apparatus and the media. This meaning

was generated by the security apparatus, which has exclusive jurisdiction in matters bordering on public safety. It was a meaning that had an implied assumption that Muslim/Arab youth who lived in that fashion had to be up to no good. Thus the state security apparatus, as a functional part of the state apparatus, and guided by relevant legislation, played the role of the primary definer of the 'Islamic Terrorist' for the news media and their audiences. Backhouse (1999) and Aylward (1999) have discussed and advanced the premise that legal and juridical discourses and processes have historically been used as vehicles to reproduce stereotypes in Canada. I will briefly turn my attention to that area of study next.

Legal Discourses of Discrimination

Backhouse's (1999) research supports her assertion that: "The Canadian legal system played a principal and dominant role in creating and preserving racial discrimination. Racism is a deeply embedded, archly defining characteristic of Canadian history. This is a legacy that has contributed in tenaciously rooted and fundamental ways to the current shape of Canadian society" (Backhouse 1999: 17).

Because of the historical and discursive character of her research, Backhouse is able to identify the seemingly innocuous and race-neutral legal discourses that have serious discriminatory ramifications. In Foucauldian terms, she argues that legislation and legal regimes are not neutral mechanisms of law and order but that they are often used as tools to further parochial interests, and that they are not value free. In other words, the legal process can aid the reproduction of discrimination and marginalization. As Foucault (1982: 96) had previously stated: "The system of right, the domain of the law, are permanent agents of these relations of domination, these polymorphous techniques of subjugation. Right should be viewed, I believe, not in terms of a legitimacy to be established, but in terms of the methods of subjugation that it instigates."

While not all pieces of legislation known to Canadian jurisprudence result in the marginalization of minority groups, the legal process is a politicized one and Backhouse's (1999) research points to the fact that legal discourses often mask the discriminatory intent underpinning it, thereby facilitating the prevalence of discrimination in liberal democratic societies. She states:

> It is essential to recognize that racism is located in the systems and structures that girded the legal system of Canada's past. Racism is not primarily manifest in isolated, idiosyncratic, and haphazard acts by individual actors who, from time to time, consciously intended to assert racial hierarchy over others. The roots of racialization run far deeper than individualized, intentional activities. Racism resonates through institutions, intellectual theory, popular culture, and law. Immigration laws shaped the very contours of Canadian society in ways that aggrandized the centrality of white power. (Backhouse 1999: 15)

Thus she focuses on the systemic character of racism (as a product of power and ideology), in this case, locating it within the legal apparatus. Like Althusser (1971), Backhouse thereby eschews Foucault's argument (1980: 103) that the products of power are best observed only at the micro level, that is, at the points where they are exercised. However, Backhouse' holistic approach enables researchers to examine juridical racism in macro terms (for example, legislation that promote discrimination) and at the micro level as well (for example, when legal functionaries interpret and enforce discriminatory legislation).

Apart from being critical and historical in direction, Backhouse emphasizes the value of the case study method. She suggests that such an approach is useful in highlighting the interconnections between "law and the wider social, economic and cultural surroundings" (Backhouse 1999: 16). It also shows "the impact of legal rules on real people at specific times" (Backhouse 1999: 15). This legitimizes analysis of Operation Thread as an event highlighting the negative impacts of dominant post-9/11 attitudes, policies and legislation on Muslims and Arabs in Canada.

In a similar vein, Critical Race Theory problematizes dominant legal regimes. While critical media scholars such as Hall et al. (1978), Tuchman (1978) and Karim (2002 and 2003) have questioned the so-called objectivity and neutrality of news, Critical Race theorists such as Aylward (1999) question the 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' of law and law enforcement, preferring to test legal procedures to determine the extent to which they may unduly be inimical to the interests of minority or subordinated groups (Aylward 1999: 34). According to Aylward, Canadian Critical Race Theory challenges the color-blindness of law, but unlike the Critical Legal Studies movement that preceded it, aims at the reconstruction and not just deconstruction ("trashing") of existing legal regimes (Aylward 1999: 34). Critical Race Theorists therefore believe that marginalized groups can develop strategies to "appropriate and transform" the legal system (Aylward 1999: 28).

This critical, historical, and yet reconstructive approach that is common to both Backhouse (1999) and Aylward's (1999) studies informs my research. It is one of my fundamental assumptions that to critically analyze the discourses of the news media and state security apparatus vis-à-vis Operation Thread, there is a need to place the relevant narratives within historical, political, economic and social contexts in order to glean the meanings they were supposed to convey. In the following section, I discuss and rationalize my choice of Critical Discourse Analysis as my primary methodology.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a Research Tool

When I speak of discourse in this research, I am looking at language and its use within social, political and cultural contexts, thereby combining both its sociological and linguistic definitions (Garret and Bell 1998: 2). Speaking of the properties of discourse, Henry and Tator state (2002: 25): "it challenges the concept of 'language' as an abstract system and relocates the whole process of making and using meanings from the

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abstracted structural system into particular historical, social and political conditions." Discourse analysis therefore attempts to identify the meanings of communication by going beyond language to contexts, parties, purposes and situations of communication (Garret and Bell 1998: 3). It is for this reason that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) evolved as a media research tool to deconstruct the meaning of media texts.

As Ericson et al. (1991) argue, the news media is a site of struggle to the extent that interested parties attempt to engage in a contestation over the preferred knowledges, ideologies and information that are mediated to the public. This is consonant with the view that the news is a power resource as well as a product of power. Garret and Bell concur on this view, stating that news is "the most prestigious of daily media genres" with a "role at the centre of the exercise of power in modern societies" (Garret and Bell 1998: 4). Over the years, scholars like van Dijk (1993; 1998), Fairclough (1998), and Henry and Tator (2002) have taken discourse analysis into the domain of media research in terms of projects aimed at identifying systemic racism and discrimination in modern western liberal democratic societies, especially in circumstances where issues of immigration and racial discrimination have become topical. Reviewing the development of CDA, Garret and Bell observe that critical media scholars have found CDA attractive because: "CDA has an explicit socio-political agenda, a concern to bear witness to unequal relations of power which underlies ways of talking in a society and in particular to reveal the role of discourse in reproducing or challenging sociopolitical dominance" (Garret and Bell1998: 6).

I have adopted van Dijk's view that "contemporary elite power and influence are often discursive and are implemented by preferential access to and control over public

discourse and its consequences for the manufacture of consent" (van Dijk 1993: ix-x).

The importance of manufacturing consent has been underscored by scholars like Hall et al. (1978) and Ericson et al. (1991) and discussed previously in this thesis. Equally important is the view that the process of manufacturing consent is discursive, in the sense that discourse may replace or equal action. In that vein, we can understand that discriminatory and racist actions can be replaced with discourses that structure social values and perspectives in a manner deleterious to the interests of ethnic minorities in Canada such as Arabs and Muslims. Indeed, van Dijk is of the opinion that given the complexities of modern Western society, "the public actions of elites are predominantly discursive" (van Dijk 1993: 9). However I disagree with his view that: "Ordinary people are more or less passive participants in the many discourse types and communicative events controlled by elites" (van Dijk 1993: 9). The latter view would render society monolithic, and would not account for the various ways in which different sections of society engage with the media. Further, the idea of a passive audience or readership does not account for resistance or change. Henry and Tator underscore this point, observing, "The audience is no longer conceptualized as a homogenous, uncritical passive receiver of messages. The audience is now understood as an active participant in defining the meaning of messages (Henry and Tator 2002: 29; see also Ericson et al. 1991).

CDA enables media researchers to bring seemingly extraneous factors to bear on public discourse – thus providing multiple contexts within which meanings may be inferred. It then becomes possible to reveal meanings made latent through a combination of "strategies of text and talk, the mental strategies of belief manipulation, and social strategies of communicative interaction" (van Dijk 1993: 35) as used by interlocutors to

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encode messages in a manner that allows for more favorable decodings by audiences.

One basic assumption of CDA is that the news media would be loath to overtly demonstrate racial bias. Consequently, van Dijk (1993) suggests a focus on the microstructures of news reports. These microstructures are the strategic and rhetorical arrangements or selections of words and sentences in news items so as to convey meanings that may otherwise have been considered objectionable. As van Dijk notes (1993: 259), right wing papers would naturally wish to project tolerant images - and for good reason. The concepts of objectivity, professionalism, and balance are crucial to the survival of any media institution (Gitlin 1979; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Hackett and Zhao 1998). Further media institutions are liable to regulatory sanctions if, for example, their news content is deemed to be tantamount to hate speech.

Accordingly, van Dijk (1993) proposes that the position of a newspaper on any given subject can be determined by its use of local semantics, that is, its production of meaning through implications and argumentation; as well as semantic moves and strategies, some of which are highlighted in this thesis. The category of implications includes discursive devices that enable journalists to convey ideas without being blatant. One such device is "overcompleteness" (van Dijk 1993: 258), which refers to the provision of irrelevant details in news narratives to trigger certain public cognitions. Thus, adding that the suspects were from a predominantly Sunni part of the world effectively transmits notions of the 'Islamic Terrorist' that a mainstream newspaper might not want to state explicitly. Because of the role of news as a tool of legitimation, van Dijk (1993: 255) mentions the device of "presupposition" as another device used in encoding communication. This involves the referencing of two propositions to each other

as if they were givens. Thus in a news story, the media may generate the 'fact' that a particular 'group' exists, and then later use this 'fact' to support other 'facts' manufactured by the media. In terms of Operation Thread, the state security apparatus and the news media frequently employed what van Dijk (1993: 107-109) and Henry and Tator (2002) describe as "the numbers game" in the framing of the operation. This strategy involves the manipulation of figures and statistics to support a particular position adopted either by dominant news sources or the news media. Further, as a de-legitimation exercise, the news media may trivialize or ridicule groups or persons with whom they do not ideologically concur.

Semantic moves and strategies are also applied to enable news media maintain face and credibility by appearing neutral when they in fact ideologically support one social group against another (van Dijk 1993). These strategies may be in the form of "denials" – such as the ubiquitous "We are not racist, but..." (van Dijk 1993: 258). They may also be "mitigations" (van Dijk 1993: 250) that play down the negative properties of a group. The news media may also engage in "apparent concessions" (van Dijk 1993: 261) that is, they may appear to admit the positive properties of a group to which they are ideologically opposed.

In my research, I discuss the discourses through which the Canadian news media and state security apparatus mediated Operation Thread, and how ideologies of terrorism and immigration informed these discourses thereby reproducing entrenched perspectives of Arabs and Muslims as potential terrorists. I also discuss the relationship between the news media and state security apparatus as manifested by the former's mediation of the operation.

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CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE MEDIATIONS OF OPERATION THREAD

Background

On 23 August 2003, both *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* carried

reports about the arrest of nineteen Pakistani men in Toronto on suspicions that they were

planning terror attacks in Canada. They reported that the Public Security and Anti-

Terrorism unit (PSAT), a federal national security task force comprising personnel from

the RCMP, Immigration, and other law enforcement agencies, had carried out the swoop.

With headlines like "Canadian Arrests Mirror 9/11" (*National Post*) and "19 terror

suspects arrested, fear grows of Canadian 9/11" (*The Globe and Mail*), these papers

placed the story in the frame of the terror attacks against the United States on September

11, 2001, and sought to rationalize the events in the story within that context. The more

detailed report in the *National Post* summarizes the information regarding the arrests

thus:

> Federal Investigators found an "alarming" network of immigrants tied to a
> Toronto diploma mill, whose activities include trying to get into a nuclear
> compound, gathering radioactive devices, moving house in the middle of
> the night and learning how to fly, according to a document summarizing
> the case presented at immigration detention hearings this week.

> "There is a pattern of fraudulent document use to obtain or maintain
> immigrant status," the document says. "To enter and/or remain in a
> country by misrepresentation is a known ruse used by persons of security
> concern."

> "The majority have not sought to regularize their status in Canada and
> though they have the ability to support themselves in Canada, they have
> no clear source of income."

The investigation was sparked by an immigration officer who grew suspicious about a student applying for permanent residence status. The Officer could not verify claims the person attended the Ottawa Business College or even confirm the school existed, according to the document. He also questioned a bank statement showing a $40,000 balance but no identifiable source of income.

A police search of records at the school turned up 31 people who appear to have fraudulently used the school to enter or stay in Canada; 19 were arrested.

Most are between 18 and 33 who, with one exception, have connections to Pakistan's Punjab province, noted for Sunni Muslim extremism, authorities say.

The majority entered Canada as students, starting in January, 1998. None have entered through this scheme since Sept. 5, 2001, shortly before the attacks on the US.

They have not actually studied or done so in a "dilatory" fashion. Federal authorities were alarmed that the group's associates have access to nuclear gauges, a device commonly used in construction. The theft of such a device is already linked to the group, authorities allege.

Cessium-137, a component of the gauges, is described as a likely source for construction of a so-called dirty bomb, a crude nuclear bomb.

The men lived simply and moved often.

"Generally, the only items reported in the residences are mattresses on the floor and a computer. One cluster left their apartment during the night and discarded all their belongings: mattresses, clothing and computer shells, apparently taking only the computer hard drives upon vacating an apartment," the document says.

"They appear to reside in clusters of four or five young males and appear to change residences in clusters and/or interchange addresses with other clusters."

One of the men's roommates provided a landlord with a letter of reference from Global Relief Foundation, Inc., which has been identified by the United Nations as a group that provides financial support to terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda.

As the above headlines and extract show, the arrests and the related information were deeply anchored into cognitions of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The references to 9/11 were explicit -"Canadian Arrests Mirror 9/11", "...a pattern of behaviour that...bears similarities to the hijackers involved in the 9/11 terror attacks on the United States" (*National Post*) and "19 terror suspects arrested, fear grows of Canadian 9/11", "Agents suggest that the pattern of the groups activities resemble that of the 19 hijackers who struck US targets on Sept. 11, 2001" (*The Globe and Mail*). Some the references to 9/11 were also implicit – mention of a suspect taking flight lessons and the spartan living conditions of the suspects. This referencing provided one of the main themes of Operation Thread and its reportage.

A discursive analysis must take cognizance of historical, political and social factors that make a particular piece of information or communication meaningful (Henry and Tator 2002: 25). Therefore in order to discursively analyze the operation as a discursive crisis with regard to Islam, terrorism and immigration, and identify the ideologies made manifest through its mediation, it is important to provide the political and historical framework within which any understanding of the operation can be constructed. Accordingly, I want to extend this analysis by briefly referring to the events of 9/11 and how they have affected Canada in terms of its dominant definitions of potential terrorists, related policies and legislation.

The 9/11 Hijackings in the United States

On 11 September 2001, nineteen men hijacked four passenger planes in the United States, crashing two into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York;

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and a third into the Pentagon, the United States defense headquarters. The hijackers in the fourth plane appear to have been thwarted by passengers and crashed the plane into the ground outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The attacks resulted in the death and injury of thousands of people, as well as the destruction of infrastructure and the heightening of security fears not only in the United States but also worldwide. Subsequent investigations determined the identities of the nineteen men and traced links to Osama Bin Laden's al Qaeda. Of the nineteen men, fifteen were from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, one was from Lebanon, another from Egypt and two were from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The ramifications of the 9/11 attacks are myriad, but for our current purposes, two are worth mentioning. The first concerns the dominant redefinitions of potential suicide bombers and their *modus operandi*. The second deals with the modification of Canadian domestic and international security policies in response to these events. I will discuss each of these in turn.

9/11 and the 'Islamic Terrorist' Label

Details that have emerged about the 9/11 hijackers have confounded dominant wisdom about the ethnographical make-up of potential suicide bombers. Indeed after the attacks, much commentary has been devoted to this issue. In an article under the heading "Sleepers living among us" by Shelly Page in the *Ottawa Citizen* on 24 September 2001, she discussed the identities of the hijackers and noted, *inter alia*:

> They were "sleepers," the Terrible Tuesday terrorists who moved among us. These men infiltrated North American culture. They shopped at the same corner stores as Americans, took the same public transit, their families played with our families; and still they hated.

> What the FBI investigation has gleaned so far is that the 19 men involved in the Sept. 11 attacks did not fit the stereotype of a suicide bomber: they

were not very young, nor did they wear their religious devotion on their sleeve. They had technical skills. Some had wives and children.

On Sept. 8, Mr. Atta and Mr. Al-Shehhi drank heavily at an oyster bar in Hollywood, Florida. Mr. Atta apparently drank vodka and orange juice, while Mr. Al-Shehhi downed rum and Cokes, a violation of the terrorists' manual prohibition on alcohol.

The suicide squads regularly used their own names, or consistent pseudonyms. They used cellphones regularly. They had home computers, or used public computers in municipal libraries. They lived seemingly quiet, unremarkable lives. They didn't wear religious garb, they didn't build relationships with Americans, and they didn't get into religious arguments. No one who had contact with them in the U.S. noted strong anti-American views. The only shared link appeared to be their desire to learn to fly airplanes.

Over time, the FBI will continue to build profiles of these hijackers and the other men, now in custody, who are believed to have aided them. So far, it's clear that they followed to the letter the order in the terrorists' manual: "When you're in the outer world, you have to act like them, dress like them, behave like them."

The foregoing represents the profile of what is known as the 'sleeper-agent', who immerses him or herself into the environment of a target country or community and strikes at an appointed time. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the suspects did not strictly observe the religious rules of their faith (for example, some drank alcohol) although they seem to have been motivated by religious reasons. Finally, the fact that the hijackers spent time acquiring piloting skills, and also executed a calamitous deed of such magnitude completes the view that the modern terrorist could be the Arab or Muslim next door, well behaved, but who would stop at nothing to inflict the greatest harm possible on Western society.

While the dominant paradigm of a suicide bomber might have been modified after 9/11, I argue that 9/11 further reinforced the ideological image of 'the Islamic Terrorist'

(see Karim 2003: 55-72). Writing on the theme of journalism after 9/11, Karim has also

argued that:

> There has emerged over the last three decades a set of journalistic
> narratives on 'Muslim terrorism', whose construction is dependent on
> basic cultural perceptions about the global system of nation-states,
> violence, and the relationship between Western and Muslim societies. The
> dominant discourses about these issues help shape cognitive scripts for
> reporting the acts of terrorism carried out by people claiming to act in the
> name of Islam. (Karim 2002: 102)

This view echoes Tuchman's (1978) observation that, in the event of novel

occurrences, newsworkers rely on institutionalized procedures of reportage, drawing on

prior-existing cognitions to make sense of such occurrences. Karim's analysis also

reflects Foucault's (1982) theory of power and knowledge, which conceptualizes the

competition of discourses, and the fact that dominant groups can impose their meanings

and representations on subordinated groups. Lastly, Karim's views are based on Said's

seminal thesis on Orientalism (1978). Said (1978: 4-5) argues that notions of the "Orient"

and "Occident" are all ideological constructs. He views the concept of the "Orientalism"

as a sign of "European – Atlantic power over the Orient" (Said 1978: 6), a consequence

of historical socio-economic dominance that has permitted dominant hegemonic

misrepresentations and othering of the so-called Oriental. Said (1981) extends this

viewpoint to dominant media coverage of Islam, regarding such reportage as being

characterized by essentialism and generalization.

In light of the above, Karim suggests that "Media portrayals of "Islamic violence"

are influenced by the dominant cultural meanings attached to both 'Islam' and 'violence'

(Karim 2002: 102) He has also observed that "The strong image of Muslims as innately

prone to violence ...allow[s] for the construction of 'Islamic Terrorism'" (Karim 2003:

77). He further notes: "Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Northern integration propagandists construct the most typical terrorists as those that have an adherence to Islam" (Karim 2003: 78). The fact that all the 9/11 hijackers were of Middle Eastern extraction, appear to have been Muslims, and been motivated by religion served as indicia to feed prevailing stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims as 'fundamentalists' and 'Jihadists' who are also cruel and barbaric. I suggest that the dominant redefinition of the modern terrorist morphed with previous definitions and became part of the framework through which Operation Thread was made meaningful by the Canadian mass media and state security apparatus. In an editorial titled "Profiles in prudence" (20 September 2001) the *National Post*, responding to complaints by a Muslim leader in Canada that Muslims were being subjected to racial profiling by Air Canada immediately after 9/11, opined:

> But if Air Canada is indeed using racial profiling in its security procedures, the airline has no reason to apologize. The 19 suicide terrorists who killed more than 5,000 people on Sept. 11 were all -- or mostly all - - Arabs. There are credible reports that more hijackings are planned by the same terrorist cells. Given this, it would be criminally negligent if Air Canada did not engage in racial profiling .

Post-9/11 Modifications to Canadian Criminal and Immigration Jurisprudence

Writing about the 'importation' of the mugging label from the United States to Britain in the early seventies, Hall et al. argue that this was made possible due to the:

> ...special relationship between the media in Britain and the United States. In general, this coverage is sustained by the continual search for parallels and prophecies: will what is happening in the United States happen here?...There is also what we might call a 'reservation of traditions'. Britain is, it is assumed, a more stable and traditional society, and this *might* provide some buttress or defense against American experiences being reproduced here – *provided* we take immediate and urgent steps. (Hall et al. 1978: 25)

Hall et al. seem to be pointing to historical, cultural, political, economic, and linguistic ties that place the United States and Britain in a particular relationship. This sounds uncannily like the situation pertaining to the historical and contemporary relationship between Canada and the United States in multiple sectors.

The two countries are crucial trade partners and neighbors. In terms of security, culture, communications and economics, they are strategically integrated. They share similar demographics, though Canada is far less populated. These ties were even more evident on 9/11, when an aircraft had to be diverted from the United States to Canada. Indeed, recent investigations into the United States' defense preparedness on 9/11 have roped in Canadian military officials. Both countries have a joint North American Aerospace Command (NORAD), which explains why there were Canadian officers serving at the NORAD headquarters in Colorado on the day of the attacks ("Norad, military caught flat-footed: 9/11 commission," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 17 June 2004). Despite these affinities, Canadians are anxious about projecting a unique identity and culture, summed as 'the Canadian way' to which Canadian politicians and interlocutors regularly refer. This projection naturally refers to the "prophecies and parallels" that Hall et al. (1978) mention. No doubt Canadians would point to their country's international image as a compassionate, welfare-oriented and disciplined country and as being antithetical to the image of United States in the international arena. Further, Canadian policy makers would be anxious to ensure that what happened in the United States should not happen here hence the need for 'urgent steps'.

Apart from national pride and the need for efficiency, Canadian policy-makers have another reason to be anxious about the need to re-evaluate Canadian policies vis-à-

vis threats of terrorism. In the aftermath of 9/11, there continue to be lingering suspicions that Canada's seemingly liberal immigration policies facilitated the entry of the 9/11 hijackers into the United States. This is despite the fact that none of the hijackers was found to have entered the United States through Canada. As at the time of writing this thesis, a Canadian permanent resident, Mohamedou Ould Slahi and a Canadian citizen, Al Rauf bin al Habib bin Yousef al-Jiddi, have been accused by United States investigators of being part of the 9/11 plot. In view of all the aforementioned links between the two countries, the suspicion that Canada's liberal immigration policies place the United States at risk must be particularly worrying for Canadian politicians, policy makers and elites. Already, the United States government has scrapped a protocol whereby Canadian permanent residents hailing from Commonwealth countries were accorded the same privileges as Canadian citizens if they wished to enter the United States. Commerce between the two countries has been inconvenienced by heightened security measures at their respective borders. Predictably, this has led to changes in Canadian criminal and immigration jurisprudence in an effort to show that Canada, as a partner in the so-called war on terrorism, is responding effectively to the threat of terror attacks (cf. Report by International Civil Liberties Groups, 2003).

In view of the foregoing, the Canadian Government has enacted a series of legislative measures including the *Anti-Terrorism Act* (Bill C-36) which aims at, *inter alia* "providing new investigative tools to law enforcement and national security agencies" in a bid to "identify, prosecute, convict and punish terrorist groups" (Department of Justice Canada press release, 15 October 2001; see also the Solicitor General of Canada's Annual Report (2002) on The Use of Arrest Without Warrant

Pursuant to the *Anti-Terrorism Act*). This bill expands the powers of security agencies in surveillance and detention with regard to investigations of terrorism.

In its report for 2001, the Canadian Human Rights Commission notes "the Act places significant restraints on civil liberties that prior to September 11 were unknown in Canada," The Commission further notes that the bill had defined terrorism in too broad and vague terms, and expanded the scope of the state in withholding evidence in the interests of security. In June 2002, Bill C-11 (*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*) followed on the heels of Bill C-36. In a news release in May 2002, under the heading "The Government of Canada Continues to Improve Border Security," the then Federal Minister for Citizenship and Immigration, Denis Coderre situated both Bills C-36 and C-11 in the following context: "The *Anti-Terrorism Act* and the new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* will enable us to more effectively combat terrorist activities in Canada and abroad, curb criminal abuse of Canada's immigration system and enhance border security."

From the above, it becomes clear that the jurisprudential discourse on terrorism involves an overlap of criminal and immigration jurisprudence, and this determined the execution and discourses of Operation Thread. Together with the typical conflation in the media of Islam and terrorism as discussed above, these discourses provided the dominant frameworks through which Operation Thread was made meaningful in a way that resonated with common sense and at the same time, privileged the dominant framework.

Reportage of Operation Thread: Discourses of Terrorism, Islam, and Immigration

News reports of Operation Thread in the Canadian print media began on 23 August 2003. Since there were differences and similarities in the coverage provided by the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*, I will, for the sake of convenience and clarity, treat them in a sequential manner.

The *National Post*'s Coverage of Operation Thread

In all, nine news stories and one editorial directly relating to Operation Thread in the *National Post* were accessed for this research. The first mention of Operation Thread in the *National Post* was on 23 August 2003 in a story with the headline "Canadian Arrests Mirror 9/11: Detainee Trained to Fly." Hall et al. (1978) and van Dijk (1998) have emphasized the significance of headlines in media analysis, especially their role in defining the information considered poignant by the newspaper, and as Karim (2003: 80) puts it, act as "signals for the reader to activate cognitive models" (in this case, about the similarities to the 9/11 attacks). As Hier and Greenberg (2002: 144) have stated, "headlines have the important function of summoning historically derived, culturally shared models and scripts about people and events." The headline also reflects the macrostructure of the article, and projects the theme that provides coherence for the article's contents (van Dijk1998: 38; Karim 2003: 80). Predictably therefore, the *National Post* bemoans the Federal government's failure to sufficiently address security concerns in the post 9/11 era and goes on to inform readers about Operation Thread and the "suspicious activities" of the suspects, especially the fact that they appeared to be in the country on fraudulently acquired students visas.

Very early in its narrative, the *National Post* quotes then Ontario Minister of Public Security Bob Runciman who complains that the event "raises serious concerns about the issue of people being in the country on false documentation and taking flight training." Given that only one of the suspects had really taken flight lessons, it is obvious that the Minister was using a discursive strategy to heighten fears that the suspects were really dangerous and in the same mold as those who had carried out the 9/11 attacks, thus coding his message to give it the greatest impact on his target audience. This discourse is a derivative of the ideology that there is a need for more drastic security efforts to combat terrorism, an ideology shared by the *National Post*, as can be determined from the story's lead and the paper's subsequent reportage of the Operation. Thus, by quoting the Minister (even before giving other protagonists a voice), the paper had bolstered the credence of its own views, and had also used the Minister as an interlocutor to emphasize its views – a news work strategy that Tuchman (1978: 95-97) has noted. It should be noted that at all material times, the province of Ontario was being governed by the Conservative Party and was thus ideologically opposed to the Liberal Party-led Federal government, especially on matters of security and immigration.

The *National Post* refers to a government document as its source for the story and virtually renders it verbatim, or paraphrases certain parts. At another point in the story, the paper raises the twin issue of immigration and security, this time purporting to reference not only Mr. Runciman but also "other provincial authorities":

> Mr. Runciman and other provincial authorities said the case required intensive action to reduce lapses in Canada's immigration and security systems. "We need to know how many student visas have been issued by the federal government; how many of these schools have had security or

background checks; how many students are still in Canada, even though their visa has expired," he said.

The issue of foreign nationals abusing student visas was a primary focus of the US government in the wake of the Sept 11 attacks

Of the 19 hijackers involved in the attacks, one came to the United States on a student's visa and two others applied for student status and were awaiting an answer.

Also the driver of the van used in the deadly 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center had entered the US on a student visa. He was able to remain for years there even after dropping out of school.

As evident, the "other provincial authorities" are not identified or quoted, though the paper had made it seem as if it had received information from them. Through this discursive strategy of attribution to the Ontario provincial government, the mutual view that drastic security measures are required especially with regard to illegal immigrants, are reinforced. Thereafter, the *National Post* accesses two more voices – that of Ontario's commissioner for public safety and a spokesman for the Nuclear Safety Commission respectively. Both of them communicate different views about the practicability of declaring Ontario's Pickering nuclear facility (a site over which one of the suspects is alleged to have flown over during flying lessons) a no-fly zone. Near the end of the story, an interlocutor for the suspects is finally (and briefly) referred to. A defense counsel for two of the suspects is reported as complaining that the arrests were racially motivated and had no substance. Immediately afterwards, an unidentified "counter-terrorism official" is reported as issuing a warning, arguing that the case needs to be taken seriously. The last two voices are those of a spokesman for the Federal immigration minister and Mr. Runciman respectively. While the spokesman is reported as pointing to the collaborative efforts of the security agencies, Mr. Runciman complains that Ontario's police agencies were not brought into the loop by their Federal counterparts. This final part reveals an

interesting phenomenon - although both Mr. Runciman and the spokesman for the Federal minister are theoretically representatives of the state apparatus, both appear to have divergent perspectives on the subject of the operation. While the spokesman tries to put a positive spin on the events to place the Federal sector department in a good light (i.e. show that it is well coordinated to respond to terrorist threats), Mr. Runciman points to the negative dimensions of the work that the spokesman speaks proudly of – by suggesting that the Federal department was not acting in consultation with provincial authorities.

In keeping with Hall et al.'s (1978: 69) observation that "the dominant definitions commanded the field of signification unchallenged," the *National Post*, in its very first account of the story, appears to have privileged the official voices. Firstly, the paper seems to have wholly adopted the contents of the government documents relating to the operation. Secondly, it treats Mr. Runciman, the various government officials, and to a lesser degree, the defense counsel as authorized knowers. Yet still it manages its information in such a manner that places a dominant meaning on the story, a meaning that inspires the belief that the suspects were really a threat, and that there was a need for the Federal government to be as concerned about terrorist threats as the Ontario government was, lest we have another 9/11 on our hands. As if to drive this last point home, the paper positions an aerial photograph of the Pickering nuclear plant above the story, with the caption: "One of the 19 Pakistani nationals arrested in the anti-terrorism probe trained to fly over the Pickering nuclear power plant, above, raising concerns about Canada's vulnerability to a terrorist attack." By referring to the nationality of the

suspects, the paper employs the discursive strategy of overcompleteness to convey the possible culpability of the suspects.

As stated in this chapter, the depiction of the modern al-Qaeda suicide bomber is one of the consequences of the 9/11 attacks and was imported into Canada as a 'label'. Hall et al. (1978) note that labels come with their own cognitive baggage. Thus for example, the mugger label came with the cognitive construct of deviant, violent, black men. The cognitive label of the al-Qaeda suicide bomber or terrorist comes with the cognitive trappings of Arabs or Muslims from the 'Orient'. It is for this reason that over-completeness is employed to effectively convey the newspaper's twin discourse on terrorism and immigration.

This story also reveals the social power situation inherent in the society. It is doubtful whether the *National Post* would have treated all press releases or documents as seriously as it did the government document. It is also revealing that despite the fact that there were nineteen suspects, counsel for only two of them was referred to. This story therefore underlines the orientation of the media to institutional sources and privileging the views of the latter. Its is also worth noting that once the paper had framed the story within a 9/11-style terrorism story, it arranged the information gathered in a manner that made the disparate pieces of information cohere into a discrete whole, thus coordinating the individual activities of the suspects as if they had been acting in concert.

The typification of a 9/11 terrorism story was the same frame in which the *National Post* continued with its reportage of Operation Thread on 26 August 2003. Under the headline "Immigration authorities name arrested Pakistanis," the paper

basically repeats the information it had previously given about the "suspicious behavior" of the suspects, adding that: "Most are between 18 and 33 and have connections to Pakistan's Punjab province, noted for its Sunni Muslim extremism, authorities say. They began arriving in January 1998. The last entered Canada a week before the attacks of September 11, 2001." Once more, the paper engages in overcompleteness but is quick to attribute the information to a government source. Further, the effect of the labeling device can again be observed. By drawing attention to the ages and origins of the suspects, and then also dropping in the date "September 11, 2001," the *National Post* was trying to trigger the cognition of its audience into comprehending the seriousness of the matter, and the increasing possibility that despite any protestations, these suspects were indeed involved in a 9/11 style terrorist plot, and were probably affiliated to the 9/11 hijackers. This is why Karim, quoting Allport (1958: 175), notes " 'Islam', 'Islamic', 'Muslim', 'Shi'ite' etc. have become 'labels of primary potency' that 'act like shrieking sirens deafening us to all finer discriminations that we might otherwise perceive'"(Karim 2002: 109).

To provide greater local coherence, the suspects are described in the second paragraph of the story as being members of a 'network.' Thereafter, the unlawful actions of any one of them are automatically made to represent all of the nineteen. This discursive device shores up the view that the suspects were acting in concert and is described by Henry and Tator as the 'group crime' mechanism, adding the explanation that in racist discourse, "the criminal activities of racialized minorities, although perpetrated by isolated individuals, are often interpreted as 'group crime'" (2002: 154). Illustrating the use of the group crime device to criminalize Chinese migrants in 1999,

Hier and Greenberg (2002: 154) narrate that "after items such as pens, safety pins, combs, and a dinner plate with a 'sharpened edge' were found among some of the migrants' belongings, news reports multiplied around the 'seizure of makeshift weapons from 123 *Chinese* refugee-claimants detained in Victoria, B.C.' Furthermore 'a *similar group of illegal Chinese* immigrants broke out of an Australian Jail'." The group crime device is also evident in a story titled "Investigators seize 'cheat' sheets: Men likely coached for interviews, officials told" (*National Post*, 25 September 2003). In this story, it is reported that immigration officials discovered documents containing instructions on how to answer questions before refugee panels in the apartment of Muhammad Imran, one of the suspects. After narrating the circumstances of the discovery, the paper mediates the security apparatus' suggestion that all the suspects had been undergoing similar coaching to gain refugee status. The state security apparatus and the paper are guilty of generalization, and unduly infer cheating. They also ignore the fact that appearing before any panel at all requires some preparation.

In its 26 August 2003 edition, the paper validated its position about the conduct of the suspects by referencing anti-terrorism experts as saying the Anti-Terrorism unit "determined that based upon the structure of the group, their associations and connected events, there is a reasonable suspicion that these people pose a threat to national security." As with its story on 23 August 2003, the *National Post* repeats the quote of the defense lawyer at the tail-end of the story and then discursively neutralizes the lawyer's protestations by making the following observation:

> Since the 9/11 attacks, Canadian authorities have arrested several suspected members of the Osama bin Laden network, which trained

thousands of radical Muslims and dispatched them around the world to become sleeper agents of terrorism.

Canadian intelligence documents relating to the arrest of one of them, Mohamed Harkat, claim that bin Laden "is trying to obtain chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Furthermore, evidence demonstrates that bin Laden has made significant progress in achieving this end."

In these last two paragraphs, the paper discursively plays a "numbers game"(van Dijk 1993: 107-109; Henry and Tator 2002: 115) – it talks about "several suspected members of Osama bin Laden's network" being arrested by Canadian authorities without specifying or quantifying what constitutes 'several'. In the next sentence it talks about "thousands of radical Muslims" being deployed worldwide by Mr. Bin Laden to wreak havoc. It presents no evidence of this particular assertion but yet projects it as fact to amplify the 'crisis'.

The theme that the suspects were part of an "al-Qaeda sleeper cell" was further developed in the *National Post*'s 29 August 2003 edition, which focused more on the individual suspects, again employing the group crime device. Under the headline "Police investigate 'sleeper cell' as two terrorist suspects released," a continuation of a front page story titled "Police hunt ringleader of alleged terror cell: CN Tower Plot Suspected," the *National Post* plays down the fact that despite the seemingly watertight arguments of the security apparatus that it had mediated thus far, two of the suspects had been granted bail, a matter that should have raised questions about the credence of the suspicions. It is worth noting that the front-page headline relating to the story privileges the preferred perspective of the security apparatus – that there was indeed a threat to national security and that the apparatus was responding accordingly. Buried in a less conspicuous section of the paper, the second headline on page A5 regarding the release of the two suspects is

rendered even less consequential by being placed underneath a sentence to the effect that the security apparatus was still investigating the "sleeper cell." The paper also plays down the information that the RCMP Commissioner, Giuliano Zaccardeli had intimated that "investigations... had so far turned up no terrorist threat," by discursively trivializing the actions of defense lawyers who had based arguments on Mr. Zaccardeli's statement. The paper also trivializes the commissioner's statement itself by quoting an Immigration and Refugee Board member as describing the statement as irrelevant since Mr. Zaccardeli was not "the one investigating and I have heard reports that the people who are investigating have a suspicion." To some extent, the apparent divergence of views between Mr. Zaccardeli and some of his subordinates and colleagues within the state security apparatus reflects my view that even individual state apparatuses are not homogenous. This affirms van Dijk's (1998) view that there are variations in the ideologies internalized by individuals within the same institution, and that cognitively, individuals act on models derived from shared ideologies, and not the 'raw' form of the ideologies.

Hence, while the commissioner might share a similar ideology about the threat of terrorism with colleagues as well as members of the Immigration and Refugee Board, there are likely to be variations with regard to specific cases and even the strategy to adopt. As the paper has shown however, under those circumstances, there is effectively a "discourse competition" (Karim 2003), and the media might exercise a 'casting vote' to privilege one meaning over all others. This 'casting vote' would be determined by the paper's own ideology – as could be seen in its tacit support for Mr. Runciman's views vis-à-vis the position for the Federal government, as well as its support for the more

'radical' strain of thought about the suspects. This further supports the theory that the media and the journalists they employ have some agency in the meaning production of newswork (Tuchman 1978; Ericson et al. 1991). However it is also an indication of the view of Hall et al. that "effectively then, the primary definition sets the limit for all subsequent discussion by framing what the problem is. This initial framework then provides the criteria by which all subsequent contributions are labeled 'relevant' to the debate or 'irrelevant'- beside the point" (Hall et al. 1978: 59). Here, the *National Post* can be seen as a secondary definer, distilling a purer strain of the security apparatus' ideology, thus boldly marking out the preferred parameters of the problem, discarding Mr. Zaccardeli's views as 'irrelevant'.

Yet that is not to say that the *National Post* did not mediate oppositional voices. In its reportage, it referred to Muslim groups or lawyers of the accused who were charging that the operation was indicative of racism. However, as Karim observes, even though the media might act as the site of contestation for various views and therefore mediates oppositional, alternative and populist perspectives, such narratives are often "subverted by the adjacent placing of the dominant discourse in more prominent parts of the article format such as the headline or an accompanying photograph" (2002:105). As can be seen from the *National Post*'s news stories considered, oppositional discourses from the Muslim communities and lawyers for the accused were often placed inconspicuously, buried between layers of dominant discourse, thus making those oppositional discourses inconsequential.

Further, while the paper discursively anchors the dominant discourses in historical and political premises, the oppositional discourses are left bare. For example, the paper

makes a point to constantly refer to 9/11 and intelligence community logic that the conduct and origins of the suspects suggest that they may be terrorists. It can also be observed that on 26 September 2003 when the *National Post* reported that Anwar-Ur-Rehman Mohammed, the suspect who had taken the flight lessons, had been released on bond due to the failure of the security apparatus to prove that he was a threat to security, that story was dwarfed by a report titled "'Clean Up' School Racket, Ottawa Told" castigating the Federal Liberal government for its failure to check the "unbridled growth" of so-called visa schools. By according the story of Mohammed's release less importance and significance, the paper appears to have mitigated the fact that the dominant ideology regarding Operation Thread was coming apart.

The *National Post* also makes the dominant discourse self-validating by linking the Operation Thread story to other stories that highlight the perspective it shares with Mr. Runciman with regard to immigration and public safety. In a news story titled "Ottawa Speeding Up Student Visas," the *National Post* on 22 September 2003 wondered why the Federal government would ease student visa application procedures despite evidence that the system was being breached, citing findings from Operation Thread to support this point. The paper then referred to Mr. Runciman who stated that the apparent dysfunctional nature of Federal policy-making with regard to immigration "reaffirms our view that there needs to be a better job done with respect to security," especially as "our American friends simply don't have confidence in our ability or willingness to do an appropriate job and as a result we're going to see a continuation of measures that will discourage investment and lose us jobs and have the potential to do significant damage to the Canadian economy." However when it comes to oppositional discourses, no reference

is made to the fact that there are occasions when the security apparatus had wrongfully fingered suspects.

Additionally, in the student visa story on 22 September 2003, the dominant narratives on Operation Thread are reproduced without any reference to the oppositional and alternative discourses that challenge the dominant perspective. The same pattern was repeated in a story on 25 September 2003 titled "Sham 'Visa' Schools on the rise: Memo" which again allies the paper to Mr. Runciman's ideology, adding that Diane Ablonczy, then immigration critic for the defunct Canadian Alliance in the Federal Parliament, had criticized the Liberal government for being so negligent with its policy on immigration to the extent that some foreign students were being defrauded by dubious schools in Canada, and forced into prostitution on arrival in Canada. Once again, the *National Post* rehashed the basic elements of the dominant narratives of Operation Thread and though it included discourses in opposition to the conservative ideology on immigration, it omitted the oppositional and alternative discourses specifically regarding Operation Thread. It is also worth noting that the excerpts discussed above reflect the expansion of discourses on Operation Thread to project the theme of a crisis involving Canada's immigration policy. This construction is not novel and has been previously documented by Hier and Greenberg (2002) in their work on news discourse and the Chinese migration to Canada in 1999.

The sum of the *National Post*'s discourse on Operation Thread is reflected in an editorial piece on 26 September 2003 titled "Watching who gets in." The paper notes:

> The events of 9/11 demonstrated that one method used by would-be terrorists to enter or remain in the United States is obtaining a student visa. There's no reason why they wouldn't try the same tactic here. But while the United States has sensibly enacted legislative changes to keep a closer

watch on foreign students and subject them to more rigorous admission procedures, our government seems to be moving in the other direction.

As evident from the above discussion of the *National Post*'s coverage of Operation Thread, the views rendered in this editorial resonate with those of Mr. Runciman, and the dominant strain of the security apparatus' ideology on the matter. The general theme of these shared views is that the origins and lifestyles of these suspects, against the background of 9/11, suggested a high possibility that they were part of a terrorist plot. The extension of this theme is that in the light of 9/11, there is a need for Canada to be more stringent in its immigration policy especially regarding people fitting the profile of the 'Islamic Terrorist,' and that Canada should not balk at taking pre-emptive steps to deal with suspected infringements of immigration law.

van Dijk (1998: 22) points out that "the ideologies and opinions of newspapers are usually not personal, but social, institutional or political." Developing that view further, Henry and Tator (2002: 93) translate it to imply that editorials "often express the broader ideological stance of the newspaper's owners and managers. They are evidence of the interlocking power structures of any given society; in fact, they are often addressed not only to the reading public but also to society's economic and power elites."

Henry and Tator's analysis of the *National Post*'s discourse on immigration (2002: 111-37), as well as the orientation of the paper's own editorials, suggest that it is an extremely right-leaning paper, subscribing to conservative values. It can therefore be said to be supportive of political right groups in Canada like the Conservative Party and the erstwhile Canadian Alliance with which it shares common values. Under those circumstances, its role can be seen as a legitimating, reinforcing and controlling one. This will explain why it uses what Hall et al. (1978: 62-63) call its "public idiom" (that is, its

own voice and style) to mobilize public support for conservative ideologies so as to bring pressure on the Federal government to make its policies on immigration and crime more stringent. Speaking of editorializing, Hall et al. see the function of the media as:

> ...providing a crucial mediating link between the apparatus of social control and the public. The press can legitimate and reinforce the actions of the controllers by bringing their own independent arguments to bear on public opinion in support of the actions proposed; or it can bring pressure to bear on the controllers by summoning up 'public opinion' in support of its own views that 'stronger measures are needed. (Hall et al.1978: 63)

It can be observed that the *National Post*'s editorial and slant of reportage reinforced the actions of the state security apparatus, supported and legitimated the ideologies it shared with the state security apparatus and the conservative political groups, and also brought pressure to bear on the Federal liberal government which therefore became what Ericson et al. call "an institutional field targeted for control" (Ericson et al. 1991). It effectively joined the state security apparatus in heightening concerns about the activities of the suspects, strongly suggesting that an al-Qaeda sleeper cell had been unearthed and that there was a need to move drastically to avoid terror attacks in Canada.

The Globe and Mail's Coverage of Operation Thread

For the purposes of this research, twenty-five accounts (articles, letters and editorials) directly relating to Operation Thread were accessed from *The Globe and Mail*. Out of the twenty-five items, sixteen were news stories, two were comments or feature articles, another six were letters to the editor, and one was an editorial piece.

Like the *National Post*, *The Globe and Mail* first reported on Operation Thread on 23 August 2003. Though less extensive than the first coverage afforded by the *National*

Post, *The Globe and Mail*'s first report on the operation provided similar strips to frame the information regarding the operation as 'Canada's answer to 9/11', a theme suggested by the headline "19 terror suspects arrested, fear grows of Canadian 9/11." The strips included the following:

- The suspects were members of a group;

- The suspects shared apartments in groups of four or five;

- A member of the group had taken flying lessons that had usually taken him over the Pickering Nuclear Plant;

- Some members had been intercepted walking at dawn on a beach near a power station;

- They were all students of the Ottawa Business College, a bogus institution which had provided fraudulent credentials for immigration purposes;

- They were all Pakistanis, aged between 18 and 33;

- They lived spartan lives in apartments furnished with just mattresses and computers;

- One group had an apartment with pictures of guns and airplane schematics on the walls;

- Two apartments occupied by some of the suspects had unexplained fires;

- After 9/11, the RCMP had received tips about the suspects.

Like the *National Post*, *The Globe and Mail* heavily relied on the government document that gave information about the operation, and also mediated similar but fewer voices. Mr. Runciman, the then Ontario Premier Ernie Eves, a counsel for two suspects, and a spokesperson for the Solicitor General of Canada were referred to. Though *The*

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Globe and Mail used a similar frame and typification to package and mediate the information as the *National Post* had done, its discourse was less accusing of the Federal government, as it dedicated less space to Mr. Runciman's views on the deficiency of Federal government policies vis-à-vis threats to national security. Though less dense in terms of accessed voices and insinuations, *The Globe and Mail* pointed out the irony that while the government was denying that the suspects were deemed a threat to national security, national security was being invoked to keep them in prison. Thus though the paper relied heavily on the institutional source of the state security apparatus, it problematized the state's approach to the matter.

The subsequent *The Globe and Mail* story of the operation on 26 August 2003 however departed from the initial framing schema. Titled "Terror allegations against 19 termed 'garbage'" the paper gave more prominence to oppositional voices such as different lawyers for the suspects, and aircraft training industry officials who had pointed out that the conduct and flight plan of the trainee-pilot suspect had not been unusual, and also that some trainees took several years to complete their courses. This structure of reportage could also be identified in much of the coverage *The Globe and Mail* gave to the Operation. As well, unlike the *National Post*, *The Globe and Mail* regularly referred to the suspects themselves.

The paper also assigned more agency to security officials - the fact that "Officials were drawing parallels between the suspect's behavior and that of the 9/11 hijackers...using such details to portray the men as potential threats to national security and keep them locked up" ("Terror allegations against 19 termed 'garbage',"26 August, 2003). It described one suspect's family as being "horrified when police burst into their

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apartment, guns drawn to arrest their son" ("Bin Laden agents among 19 arrested, lawyers say - Allegations bewilder suspects," 27 August, 2003). To some extent, this conveyed the notion that the paper was on the side of the 'little guy' at the mercy of the omnipotent state institution (cf. Tuchman 1978: 157 - 58). Furthermore, unlike the narrative structure adopted by the *National Post*, *The Globe and Mail* did not balk at giving the last word to the suspects or their interlocutors, so that they were positioned as debunking some of the allegations made against them. *The Globe and Mail* was also more discursive, providing information about the ramifications of the new pieces of legislation on terrorism and immigration in the post-9/11 era. Though in at least two stories, it attempted to bring into perspective the economic difficulties that cause migration from the third world to Canada, it failed to account for the historical and colonial factors that structure the relations between the West and the Third World.

All these taken together would make it appear that *The Globe and Mail* did not largely employ an "ideological square" (van Dijk 1998: 33) in support of the security apparatus in its reportage of Operation Thread. An ideological square refers to a process whereby a news media institution joins forces with one social institution or group against the other, creating an 'Us versus Them' dichotomy, and then in its reportage, undertakes to:

1. Emphasize 'our' good properties/actions

2. Emphasize 'their' bad properties/actions

3. Mitigate 'our' bad properties/actions

4. Mitigate 'their' good properties/actions

(van Dijk 1998: 33).

That said, unlike the *National Post*, which seems to have been explicit in its ideology and position with regard to Operation Thread, *The Globe and Mail* was more complex in its discursive strategizing to mediate information regarding the operation. When reporting on 28 August 2003, that one of the suspects had been freed, it gave the subject of the release more prominence than the *National Post* - assigning it a front page headline "Adjudicator frees suspect, disputes terrorist scenario," and as with its story on 26 August 2003, gave prominence to oppositional discourse - in both cases even assigning oppositional voices headline status.

However the paper also makes the adjudicator - Aina Martens the main subject of its reportage, noting that other adjudicators faced with similar facts had come to the conclusion that the accused should remain in custody, strategically ending the story by wondering whether Ms. Martens had been assigned to preside over any further cases. In this report, they attributed less agency to state officials, who were portrayed as being hapless in the face of Ms. Martens' seeming unreasonableness. This comes out when the paper reports that when a state counsel submitted that the adjudicator had erred in law by not considering the modified jurisprudence with regard to immigration, Ms. Martens retorted by asking the counsel to reserve such arguments for the Federal Court of Canada. Thus, it was made to seem that the suspect was granted bail not necessarily because the state had a bad case but because the 'opposition' benefited from a misapplication of the law. To bring this point home, the paper discursively ridicules Ms. Martens by choosing to report her opinion that "If the document is true, why would anyone call attention to themselves by firing a shotgun...and why would anyone go to a nuclear power station and ask to be admitted?" This suggests that Ms. Martens was just engaging in simplistic

rationalizations, and coupled with the hint that she might have misapplied the law (as all her fellow adjudicators had acted otherwise), there were question marks over her decision. The paper adds for good measure that Ms. Martens is "a civil servant with quasi-judicial powers," effectively questioning her competence as a judicial officer. Thus without 'showing its hand' *The Globe and Mail*, in that instance appears to have indirectly legitimated the perspective of the security apparatus.

In its stories between 23 and 29August 2003, *The Globe and Mail* provided information about the Operation as if its reporters were 'embedded' within the security agencies carrying it out. While the paper gave more than sufficient space to oppositional voices than the *National Post*, it presented many details about the alleged conduct of the suspects, sometimes by way of the argumentative device of repetition, and about the new legislative framework within which the Operation had been undertaken. This made the case of the state seem more convincing than the unabashedly partisan *National Post* had done.

The concurrence of ideologies between *The Globe and Mail* and the security apparatus was also made patent in an editorial on 29 August 2003, titled "The arguments made in protection's name." In the editorial, the paper starts with a paragraph arguing: "Democracies put an enormous value on fundamental freedoms, yet the very freedoms may make them vulnerable to attack. The difficulty is to protect a free society without undermining it in the process." Henry and Tator define the device of 'frontage' as "placing a key point, idea, or item at the very beginning of an article. The point is the most important to be made in the piece and the one the writer wants to impress on the reader immediately" (2002: 101). Thus, using the journalistic device of frontage, the

paper tries to impress readers with the core theme and concept of the editorial - to the effect that Canadian society is vulnerable to attack hence the need to rethink liberalist perspectives with regard to civil liberties as far as terrorist threats are concerned.

Unlike the *National Post* which has blatantly editorialized that the current situation calls for racial profiling of Arabs ("Profiles in prudence," 20 September 2001), *The Globe and Mail* editorial is more subtle, engaging in the "discourse of denial of racism" (Henry and Tator 2002) and argues *inter alia*: "That they are all Muslim, 18 of them from Pakistan (and one from India), was enough to prompt further questions. But they were arrested because of a pattern of behavior they engaged in, not because they were Muslims or Pakistanis." The paper tries to legitimate and normalize the actions of the security apparatus by drawing parallels between the actions of the Canadian security agencies and their counterparts in the United States to suggest that the former have been more humane and professional in their handling of the Operation Thread suspects (cf. Hall et al.1978: 25).

Further, after ridiculing a member of the Muslim Canadian Congress who had described the revised immigration law regime under which the suspects were being treated as being similar to the Nuremberg Laws that disenfranchised Jews in Germany in the 30s (her views were described "grotesque"), *The Globe and Mail* appears to adopt the ideology of the state security apparatus *in toto*, stating:

> Is the suspicion of a security risk reasonable? The thrust of the allegations is that a group of men, who appear to have gone to the same schools in Pakistan, have shared in their misrepresentation of their purpose in Canada, and have lived together here in suspicious ways - moving among bare apartments, having several unexplained fires in their apartments, in one apartment allegedly having airplane schematics and pictures of guns on the wall, and in one man's case taking flying lessons.

The Canadian government says it has three vanloads of evidence, including computer hard drives, passports and phone records, that it wants time scrutinize. It should be permitted time to do so - a month seems reasonable - to come back with a stronger case.

It should be noted that the concluding sentence has a populist slant, a resort to "*topoi* – the supposed 'commonsense' explanation of issues"(Henry and Tator 2002: 77), making it seem like commonsense to allow the security apparatus to operate without Muslim activists raising the specter of racism. Here, by becoming an agent of legitimation for the repressive apparatus, the paper itself becomes a repressive apparatus and an agent of social control (it warns that "All Canadians have a stake in the national resolve to fight terrorism" and therefore should eschew the sort of "verbal intimidation" of which the Muslim Congress representative was 'guilty').

Oddly however, a story about Operation Thread in that same edition of the paper ("Student pilot ordered to remain in custody") highlighted the fact that the government seemed to lack evidence that the suspects were a security threat. Indeed the slant of the report seemed to be aimed at diffusing fears that the suspects were a terrorist threat, and ended by pointing out that unlike what would be expected if there was a real security threat, proceedings the previous day had been "open and transparent." However, at the bottom of the story, readers are referred to the editorial, which, as I have mentioned above, has a more discursively pro-security apparatus tone. The effect is that it mitigates any force that the oppositional discourses in the news story in that edition might have had.

As Hall et al. (1978), Tuchman (1978), and Ericson et al. (1991) have observed, the news media set the parameters for the public debate of topical issues and a total of six letters to the editor published in *The Globe and Mail* on 28 and 29 August 2003, reflect

this. Like all letters to the editor, these letters are supposed to represent public discussions of current affairs. While the writers vary in their views, it is clear that the information on which they base their arguments, whether in support or opposition, are those mediated by the press. For example, on 29 August 2003, one Claude Gagnon of Markham, Ontario had this to say about Operation Thread:

> Members of the Muslim community are angry at the arrest of 19 Muslim men and call it racial profiling (Bin Laden Agents Among 19 Arrested, Lawyers say – Aug.27). After all, doesn't everybody enrolled in a bogus school take flying lessons?

In the same issue of *The Globe and Mail*, one Ken Sils of Hamilton, Ontario had a different (but equally sarcastic) view:

> Your story Adjudicator Disputes Terrorist Scenario (Aug.28) has alerted me to the fact that many of my university students would easily fit into the description of a suspect terrorist. Our many international students who have spent $50,000, have yet to receive a degree, are interested in Canadian monuments and have roommates now have one more thing to worry about.

It is for this reason that Hall et al. caution against accepting letters to the editor as true expressions of public opinion (1978:121) as they are composed and selected within the structured framework of the constructed knowledge that the news media publish. This phenomenon further emphasizes the power of the news media to determine and define public discourse, and to mediate what the public accepts as fact and knowledge.

The most interesting difference between the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* in their respective coverage of Operation Thread is that while the *National Post* consistently maintained a strident line in support of the security apparatus, *The Globe and Mail*, which at certain times seemed to legitimate and normalize the actions of the security apparatus, abruptly changed direction on 30 August 2003, after the publication of

the editorial discussed above. In a full-page news story titled "Case of 19 terrorists starts to unravel," the paper mediated the voices of some of the suspects and insinuated that they had suffered unduly and that the security apparatus seemed to be backing away from the security-risk allegations. It states that:

> After they were jailed on the grounds that they could pose a risk to Canada's national security, the case made headlines around the world as the news media quoted a government official's now infamous words: "I guess the easiest way of putting it is there is a suggestion they might in fact, perhaps be a sleeper cell for al-Qaeda."

> But the case of the terrorists among us began to unravel almost as soon as the detention reviews began, with the RCMP and Citizenship and Immigration Canada distancing themselves from the idea that the men posed a clear threat to society.

Here, *The Globe and Mail* makes the security apparatus look ridiculous, a strategy that is repeated in the 2 September 2003 issue of the paper in a story titled "Wanted man can't turn himself in." The story suggests that despite the turmoil made by the security apparatus about the risk posed by the suspects, it had failed or neglected to arrest one of them even though he was actually trying to turn himself in. Interestingly, in this story, the voice of security agencies consists of a single quote, made earlier.

A follow-up story the next day continued in the same vein of ridiculing the security apparatus - with the headline "Alleged terrorist has to wait to give up" (*The Globe and Mail*, 3 September 2003). It even includes a picture of suspect Muddasar Awan virtually knocking on the doors of the RCMP to be arrested. Once again, his voice and that of his lawyer almost dominate the story.

In another related story on 9 September 2003, ("College provided false letters: documents"), the paper describes the Operation as "controversial." A feature article on 4 September 2003, by regular columnist Christie Blatchford pokes fun at the security

apparatus and is titled "Kafka meets the Keystone Kops at Pakistani's detention review"(note the "strategies of ridicule, trivialization and mockery" (Henry and Tator 2002: 125) deployed through the title, as well as the alliterative repetition of KKK). After ridiculing the way the state handled one of the detention reviews for the suspects, she ends by saying:

> Oh, there's a third thing: The arrests are part of what is called Operation Thread, for the alleged common links among the suspects. Unless the feds soon come up with the goods, it may be that Operation Threadbare is a more fitting name.

In summary, I observed that *The Globe and Mail* gave a lengthier and more discursive treatment to Operation Thread. In its mediation, it afforded space not only to the voices of the state and its security apparatus, but also to the oppositional voices of the suspects, their lawyers, and social commentators. It also brought the personal lives of the suspects into relief, evoking sympathy for the suspects with a headline "All my dreams have been disturbed - I don't want to go back to Pakistan labeled as a terrorist." Yet, the paper exhibited some hypocrisy by castigating and ridiculing the state security apparatus after 29 August 2003, for having cried wolf, without accepting culpability for its part in the moral panic that was created.

From the inception of the case within the public domain, the security apparatus had grudgingly intimated that national security and terrorism were not *necessarily* implicated in the decision to arrest the suspects. Instead of demanding clarity and accountability from the security apparatus, the paper tagged along, privileging, legitimating, normalizing and seeking consensus for and on behalf of the security apparatus, until the latter categorically distanced itself from the allegation that the suspects were a security threat. *The Globe and Mail*, like the *National Post*, seemed to

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have acted as an ally of the state and its security apparatus and had deferred to the authorized knowers of the state. In the next and concluding chapter, I will summarize the ramifications of Operation Thread vis-à-vis the theories that informed my study. I will conclude with some recommendations regarding the counteraction of dominant discriminatory discourses.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION-OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I identified two questions to which my research was to respond. These are as follows:

- What did the discourses of the Canadian state security apparatus on Operation Thread reveal about the dominant state control ideologies with regard to Muslims and Arabs as being potential public security risks?

- What does the news coverage of Operation Thread reveal about the nature of the relationship between the mass media and the Canadian state security apparatus?

Epistemologically, I applied contemporary theories by media scholars such as Tuchman (1978), Hall et al. (1978) and Ericson et al. (1991) and Karim (2003) that conceptualize the notion that the news media and what Althusser (1971) describes as state apparatuses should be regarded as being more or less in a knowledge/ power relationship galvanized by an orientation towards common ideologies. In pursuit of my study, I treated Operation Thread as a discursive crisis that revealed a contradiction between Canada's professed ideological commitment to civil liberties, human rights, and multiculturalism; and its practices in the face of the moral panic about Islam, Arabs, and Muslims generated in the post-9/11 era (as exemplified by the Operation). I viewed this discursive crisis as having been generated against the background of redefinitions of the 'Islamic Terrorist' after 9/11, as well as a modified regime of Canadian criminal and immigration legislation that (in terms of Canadian Critical Race Theory), are not race-neutral but embedded with premises that are discriminatory of Muslims, Arabs, and other ethnic minorities. I commenced with an assumption that ideologies are realized in discursive practices, and

thus treated the discourses mediated about Operation Thread as data that would reveal the nature of dominant ideologies that link Islam, Arabs, and Muslims to terrorism. I also sought to find out the extent to which these ideologies were either challenged or adopted by *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* in their coverage of the operation. In this concluding chapter, I first address the issue of the dominant ideologies with regard to Muslims, Arabs, Islam and terrorism. I then turn my attention to the relationship between the news media and the Canadian security apparatus and its implications for considering the concept of news as veridical and factual knowledge. I will conclude with some recommendations regarding the counteraction of dominant discriminatory discourse.

Operation Thread and Dominant Ideologies
Linking Islam, Arabs and Muslims to Terrorism

In my research, it became clear that the main source of the information about Operation Thread from which the news media framed its stories, was the four-page document released by the Canadian security apparatus after apprehending nineteen of the twenty-four suspects. This document provided particulars of the conduct of the suspects that gave rise to their arrests. While it was made to seem in the document that the general thread connecting the suspects was their attendance at the Ottawa Business College, it appears that it was rather their profiles: "Most are between 18 and 33 who, with one exception, have connections to Pakistan's Punjab province, noted for its Sunni extremism" (*National Post*, 23 August 2003; *The Globe and Mail*, 23 August 2003). In other words, the suspects fitted the profile of potential terrorists because of their ages as well as origins and religious background. It is my argument that this placed the suspects in a context where their equivocal and disparate actions were interpreted to be preparatory acts of terrorism. The fact that two of the suspects were seen taking a stroll

close to a nuclear power station, was connected to flight training that another suspect was taking and which placed his flight path over the power plant. A number of unexplained fires were said to be suggestive of bomb making, especially as it was vaguely intimated that the theft of a construction device suitable for making crude nuclear bombs was linked to the suspects. The security apparatus and news media also made much of the fact that the suspects lived simply and that all were either not studying as they claimed to be or were doing so in a "dilatory fashion" (*National Post*, 23 August 2003). Moreover, the security agencies applied the semantic strategies of presupposition and legitimation to create the impression that indeed the suspects were a 'group'. Having achieved that aim, the security apparatus and the news media applied the group crime device to make all the suspects guilty by association.

My research also confirmed that in respect of Operation Thread, the ideologies that informed the actions and discourses of the state security apparatus as well as some interlocutors for the state, drew heavily on dominant ideologies of the 'Islamic Peril' that seem to have crystallized and been modified in the post-9/11 era. I concur with Karim (2002; 2003) that these ideologies are a result of age-old misrepresentations of the 'Orient' by the 'West'. Thus, the indicia of terrorism that the security apparatus deemed to prove the guilt of the suspects made sense only within the framework of post- 9/11 cognitions about Islam, Muslims, and Arabs, bolstered by prior-existing notions of the 'Islamic Threat'. The fact that the 9/11 hijackers had followed a novel *modus operandi* informed the dominant cognitive model that young Muslim men of Middle Eastern extraction who live in Canada on student visas and keep a spartan existence are potential terrorists.

Guided by previous research by Canadian Critical Race theorists like Backhouse (1999) and Aylward (1999), I took my analysis beyond the mass mediated discourses of the security apparatus, and factored in the legislation on which they based their actions. Legislation such as Bills C-36 and C-11, while *prima facie* race-neutral, are actually devised to enable the security apparatus to carry out its functions in a manner that might be inconsistent with the spirit of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While this has grave implications for all Canadians, Critical Race Theory places such legislation in a perspective where the inimical effects of certain laws would impact even more negatively on marginalized, subordinated and discriminated groups in society, as demonstrated by Backhouse (1999).

It can be noticed that state interlocutors who seek public consensus for these pieces of legislation constantly refer to the events of 9/11. While this should be expected, it suggests that the parameters within which the laws are or can be applied, and who their targets would be, are defined mainly by ideological models derived from the composite identities of the 9/11 hijackers in terms of their origins, religious persuasion, and personal living conditions. Indeed it is worth noting that though Luther Samuel, director of the Ottawa Business College, naturally came within the purview of investigations, he appears not to have been charged with any offense despite the centrality of the college within the scheme of events ("Ottawa must make amends," *Toronto Star*, 28 October 2003).

Therefore, although the framers of Bill C-36 engage in discourses of denial by stating in its preamble that they were cognizant of balancing security interests with civil liberties guaranteed under the law, invariably the guiding ideologies of the security apparatus with regard to terrorism creates a situation where young Muslim men and

women are likely to be targeted for surveillance. The role of the media as an auxiliary to the state security apparatus in representing order then causes an extension of the surveillance regime and creates a moral panic about young Muslims and Arabs. This point is underscored by a story in *The Globe and Mail* on 1 July 2004 ("Canadians tolerant - well mostly") which reported that a recent survey by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) showed that "...almost half of all Canadians - 45 per cent – think that anti-Muslim sentiment is increasing among people they know." Tellingly, the paper quotes Dr. Andrew Parkin, the director of research at CRIC as attributing this phenomenon to "...the persistence of security issues in the global media and political agendas."

The News Media, State Security Apparatus, and Operation Thread

As stated above, my research has shown that the Canadian news media and state security apparatus effectively generated a moral panic in the context of their misrepresentations of the threat posed by the Operation Thread suspects. To put this statement in its proper perspective, I find it necessary to render in full Hall et al.'s interpretation of a moral panic, which is as follows:

> When the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is *out of proportion* to the actual threat offered, when 'experts', in the form of police chiefs, the judiciary, politicians and editors *perceive* the threat in all but identical terms, and appear to talk 'with one voice' of rates, diagnoses, prognoses and solutions, when media representations universally stress 'sudden and dramatic' increases (in numbers involved or events) and 'novelty', above and beyond that which a sober, realistic appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to speak of the beginnings of a *moral panic*. (Hall et al.1978: 16)

As Hier and Greenberg (referencing Cohen 1972) note, every moral panic involves a 'folk devil' that serves as "the ideological embodiment of the moral panic" (Hier and Greenberg 2002: 140). Such a folk devil personifies the threat that society is deemed to face – hence the moral panic. Accordingly, the media and dominant sources are responsible for constructing folk devils with negative, stereotypical attributes, "stripped of all positive characteristics and endowed with pejorative evaluations" (Hier and Greenberg 2002: 140). As my research confirms, the twenty-four suspects (and young Muslims/Arabs, for that matter) represent the concept of the folk devil in this post-9/11 moral panic that Operation Thread manifested. Consequently, though the threat itself is ultimately the 'Islamic Peril', young Arabs and Muslims serve as the objects by which the threat can be mediated through, and recognized by the public; and controlled by the relevant state apparatuses.

Thus like a weather station warning of a non-existent tornado, the news media joined the state security apparatus in giving the impression that Toronto (and for that matter, Canada) was incubating the next batch of al-Qaeda suicide bombers. In assisting the enterprise to misrepresent the suspects as members of an 'al Qaeda sleeper-cell' (and the consequent generation of a moral panic), it is obvious that the news media privileged the statements released by the state security apparatus with regard to the Operation, relying on the four-page document and privileging its contents as facts. In turn, this allowed the state security apparatus to act as a primary definer, demarcating the discursive parameters within which any discussion of Operation Thread could take place, and constructing public perceptions of the reality of the situation. This confirms the theory held in common by the media scholars whose works I applied, that, in Foucauldian

terms, power projects and supports knowledge, and defines reality. Newswork routines made the news media reliant on the state security apparatus and state interlocutors once the story broke.

It should be noted that the story broke when the state security apparatus wanted it to – after a majority of suspects had been arrested, although the Operation had been going on for weeks before that. Since information about covert security operations are usually known only by security operatives on a 'need to know' basis ("the 'world' of the police is closed by deliberation and intent" (Hall et al. 1978: 38)), it stands to reason that the news media would rely on such persons or groups as authorized knowers, who could be depended upon to possess exclusive and crucial information. As Hall et al. note: "In the area of crime news, the media appear to be more heavily dependent on the institutions of social control for their news stories than in practically any other area" (Hall et al. 1978: 68). But then it also means the security apparatus could control the pace at which knowledge could be generated with regard to the Operation (see Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 128-29) – thus placing the apparatus in a position of power to which all others had to defer. It is also noteworthy that by referencing other dominant interlocutors within and without the state apparatus who projected knowledges validating what had been presented by the security apparatus, the news media reinforced the existing power structure of truth, which would have been subverted if oppositional or alternative knowledges were permitted to contest the official discourses on an even keel.

Ultimately, it can be said that both the state security apparatus and the media acted as definers of terrorism with respect to Operation Thread. They collectively "defined the situation, selected the targets, initiated and structured the campaign" (Hall et

al. 1978: 52) against the suspects. In the process, the state security apparatus and the media "amplified the deviancy" (Hall et al. 1978: 52) of the potential 'terrorists' that they had targeted for control. To paraphrase Hall et al. (1978: 52), the state security apparatus and mass media "formed part of the circle out of which the moral panic developed." They put a name and meaning to the disparate actions of the suspects, and discursively heightened concerns about a non-existent al-Qaeda sleeper cell. This is what Hier and Greenberg (2002: 147-51) describe as the process of "objectification and amplification."

Yet as Hall et al further suggest, the apparatuses of social control are not the only parties in the creation of moral panics. There are social factors that indirectly determine the "script" (Hall et al. 1978: 52) to which these actors play. Ingrained dominant racist notions of the 'Islamic threat' can be said to influence such 'scripts'. These dynamics support Fleras and Kunz' assertion that "Racist assumptions and discourses not only influence media standards and practices, but a racialized discourse framework also contributes to racism in Canada by articulating and transmitting powerful yet negative messages about minority women and men that unwittingly, perhaps intensifies their marginalization and denigration" (Fleras and Kunz 2001: 86).

This research also confirms the view that the news media sometimes legitimate, normalize and render into commonsense discourses of power such as legislation. The news data that I studied revealed that the news media did not seem to challenge or question the propriety of the post-9/11 legislation under which the suspects had been apprehended. Indeed, as *The Globe and Mail* editorial on 29 August 2003 shows, these pieces of legislation are considered essential for public security. And since the general

public mostly learns about legal issues through the news media (Hall et al. 1978), the state apparatus effectively used the news media to encourage consensus for its public security policies.

Thus, this research underscores the role of the news media as an ideological partner of the state, or an ideological state apparatus, embedded in the institutions of the state such as its security apparatus. As *The Globe and Mail* attack on the Muslim Congress shows, the media is indeed capable of repression through stigmatization and the suppression of counter discourses. At the same time, this thesis confirms the ideological functions of the coercive apparatus. The fact that the state security apparatus justifies its actions through the media shows that, especially in liberal democratic societies, the repressive apparatus is often compelled to manufacture the needed consensus, lest it lose public support and be subjected to opprobrium or criticism. To quote Gitlin, "No hard and fast line can be drawn between the mechanisms of hegemony and the mechanisms of coercion, just as the force of coercion over the dominated both presupposes and reinforces elements of hegemony. In any given society, hegemony and coercion are interwoven" (Gitlin 1979:15).

It must be noted also, that through media coverage of Operation Thread, journalism became implicated in the discursive transformation of immigration as a discourse of social control into a discourse of terror. This transformation afforded the state a fall-back option – if it failed to substantiate the terror allegations, the suspects could still be deported without much hindrance. It is unlikely that this would have happened had it not been for the cultural and religious backgrounds of the suspects. Yet, as Operation Thread has shown, the immigration; criminal; and terrorism legislation are

highly intertwined to enhance synergies in national security initiatives. It can therefore be said that the saga of the suspects represents the realization of the new anti-terrorism security and legislative enhancements that Mr. Coderre spoke about in the press release previously mentioned in this thesis ("The Government of Canada Continues to Improve Border Security," Press Release on 2 May 2002; see also "How terror probe slowly unfolded," *Toronto Star*, 6 September 2003).

In the light of my research, it would be erroneous to suggest that the news media handled Operation Thread in a homogenous fashion. While the *National Post* consistently privileged the knowledges of the state and its security apparatus, *The Globe and Mail* at a certain point became less supportive of the ideology of the state security apparatus and gave space to the voices of the suspects and their interlocutors. This is indicative of the view that the news media also have their own ideologies that influence news stories and further emphasizes the hegemonic nature of newswork. It can be said that the extent to which the news media privilege an ideology is affected by the extent to which that ideology is in concordance with the news organization's own. Since the *National Post* is known to have a right-of-center orientation (Henry and Tator 2002: 137) it is not surprising that it generally privileged the knowledges of right-of-center interlocutors with regard to the Operation. On the other hand, as the analysis of *The Globe and Mail* editorial on 29 August 2003, revealed, the paper tries to project a more centralist ideological stance than its counterpart but it too is oriented towards the right. However, as Ericson et al. (1991) have noted, the market orientation of a paper also influences its content. If *The Globe and Mail* sought to appeal to a broader audience, it might have

found it necessary to water down some of its prevailing ideologies and consequently make its content more palatable to the public.

As Gitlin (1979: 20) notes, the need for news organizations to project a semblance of objectivity for purposes of audience legitimation compels them to admit alternative and oppositional discourses into news content. Further, it must be remembered that news media institutions are allied to other powerful social institutions because of the premium that is placed on the credibility of these institutions, which in turn ensures that the news media meet a high standard of credibility in the public domain. The news media depend on their credibility and have a commitment to the public to be purveyors of verifiable facts, whether they concern weather forecasts or terrorist threats. The appearance of objectivity, impartiality and balance become strategic ploys by which such credibility is maintained (Shoemaker and Reese 1996). This point has been forcefully made by Hackett and Zhao (1998) in a historiographical analysis of the concept of objectivity in modern newswork especially in Canada. They argue that contemporary journalistic notions of objectivity are tactical contrivances to mask the commercial and ideological interests of media ownership by positioning the news media in the public domain as a "popular educator and people's tribune" (Hackett and Zhao 1998: 29). They observe that one consequence of this phenomenon is the marginalization of alternative discourses from radical social groups, which have to rely on the mainstream press for the mass mediation of their voices (Hackett and Zhao 1998: 532-33).

By relying on the establishment and authorized knowers, the news media are also able to indemnify themselves should information later prove incorrect, in which case they can legitimately pin the blame on the authorized knowers as *The Globe and Mail* sought

to do (curiously, a spokesperson for Immigration and Citizenship Canada later blamed the media for the terror "spin" it had placed on the operation ("Case of 19 terrorists starts to unravel," *The Globe and Mail*, 30 August 2003)). These factors taken together suggest *The Globe and Mail* might have altered its stance on Operation Thread simply because, in its words, even "the RCMP and Citizenship and Immigration Canada" had began "distancing themselves from the idea that the men posed a clear threat to security" ("Case of 19 terrorists starts to unravel," 30 August 2003). To erase its role in the creation of the moral panic of Operation Thread, the paper may have found it necessary to reposition itself as an advocate for civil liberties. Yet the complicity of *The Globe and Mail* in the creation of the moral panic is betrayed by the fact that it entertained the dominant discourses regarding the case even though from the very beginning, the state could not conclusively say that it had a case of terrorism on its hands.

As this research demonstrates, the discourses of the state security apparatus were not always and totally dominant, at least in *The Globe and Mail*. Not only were they disputed by the suspects, their interlocutors (both in the courtroom and in the media), and some Muslim groups, but also the media sometimes contested the truth claims of the security apparatus. This confirms the theory of the hegemonic nature of news articulated by Ericson et al. as follows:

> The 'hegemonic' (Williams 1977) is produced out of transactions between superordinates and subordinates, and entails enormous labour, meets resistance, gets deflected, needs revision, and is never complete. The hegemonic process is at the core of transactions between journalists and sources. A 'lived hegemony…is never either total or exclusive' (ibid 112-13), and is 'not so much the finished article itself, but the whole process of argument, exchange, debate, consultation and speculation by which it emerges' (Hall 1979: 342).(Ericson et al. 1991: 12)

Hier and Greenberg have also stated "news coverage acts as a 'discursive space' in which social agents struggle to penetrate the narratives around which news is constructed" (Hier and Greenberg 2002: 138). Thus though the media is allied to the security apparatus, the ability of the latter to continuously impose its meanings cannot be taken for granted.

The conduct of the state and its security apparatus concerning Operation Thread also problematizes the concept of a homogenous state apparatus. Clearly, such a concept would not account for situations whereby there is actually a dual state apparatus at play within the singular national entity. This condition obtains in Canada and other countries with federal systems of governance. Within Canada – there are provincial state apparatuses (for example, in the province of Ontario), and the state apparatus of the Federal Government of Canada. And within the apparatus of the state of Canada, various elements constituting its coercive apparatus can be identified being in disagreement with each other – as evident in the dispute between the state counsel and the immigration adjudicator over the possible culpability of Mohamad Akhtar ("Adjudicator frees suspect, disputes terrorist scenario," *The Globe and Mail*, 28 August 2003). And even within a singular component of the security apparatus, there may be divergences, as exemplified by the divergences of views between the commissioner of the RCMP on the one hand and the RCMP investigating officers on the other.

Like Tuchman's (1978) work, this thesis also challenges news as factual, veridical knowledge. It proves that news is a phenomenon that obfuscates social reality; a social power resource that can be manipulated and its content influenced by "situated actors" (Tuchman 1978: 208) who possess the means of power to do so. In addition, all this results in newsworkers framing events through strips of factual occurrences, making

news a means not to know. I draw this observation from the fact that though the news media sought to portray their stories of Operation Thread as factual, what they published could have just as well been fictive. This is because the body of knowledge that was represented as information was really a result of pieces of information that had been discursively arranged based not on factuality but on ideology. Thus, in line with the post-9/11 dominant wisdom about the 'Islamic Terrorist', the state security apparatus and news media selected and pieced together information such as the age of the suspects, their origins, the aircraft 'schematics' found on the walls of an apartment (these 'schematics' later turned out to be Lufthansa posters ("Terrorism investigation recalled," *Toronto Star*, 16 March 2004)), the two suspects seen walking close to the nuclear station etc., in effect 'cutting and pasting' disparate and unrelated pieces of information to construct a body of knowledge that was passed off as reality. This was made possible because of the hierarchical position of the security apparatus as a state apparatus with all the trappings of power that make it a primary definer. In this sense, both the news of Operation Thread and the resultant moral panic were what I term 'ideological outcomes'.

Yet these ideological outcomes resulted in real and material outcomes that negatively impacted the lives of the suspects. The *Toronto Star* reports that as of November 30 2003, thirteen of the suspects had been deported to Pakistan where, due to their peculiar circumstances, they had reportedly been subjected to further police investigations and vigilante attacks. Some of the freed suspects had complained about failed spousal engagements and marriages; loss of jobs and concern for future job prospects; estrangement from family and friends; and fear of the loss of freedom to travel ("They only arrested the Muhammads," 30 November 2003).

Recommendations

As previously stated, the results of my research confirm that news is indeed a power resource and the product of a contestation of discourses. This implies that subordinate groups in society are likely to be short-changed and marginalized because dominant groups have a better chance at parochially representing reality. Yet, as my research has shown, the ability of subordinated groups to make interventions exist. The fact that the news media are a site of contestation of discourses means that marginalized groups can indeed deploy oppositional and alternative discourses to counteract dominant discourses. As this research has confirmed, news is "embedded in relationships with other institutions" (Tuchman 1978: 5; see also Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 133-34) due to its own institutionalized character. Newswork places premium on legitimated institutionalized sources that can provide it with reliable information (and *"hard facts"* (Hall et al. 1978: 9)), and that have the power initiate actions that impact society. Thus as Tuchman observes (1978: 134) newsworkers would be more receptive and attentive to marginalized groups only if such groups evolve into complex pressure groups with lobbying power. Indeed, the fact that the Canadian Muslim Congress was even mentioned at all by *The Globe and Mail* reflects the importance news organizations give to institutionalized bodies. It is interesting to note that on occasions where *The Globe and Mail* reported on the concerns of Canadian Muslim organizations about the Operation, they referred to the Canadian Muslim Congress ("Bin Laden agents among 19 arrested, Lawyers say," 27 August 2003; "Case of 19 terrorists starts to unravel," 30 August 2003). This suggests that the paper had legitimated the Canadian Muslim Congress as a representative organ of Canadian Muslims.

The Globe and Mail also published an article by Raja Khouri, national president of the Canadian Arab Federation which, among other things, touched on the plight of the Operation Thread suspects within the context of post-9/11 civil rights concerns ("9/11:

Do you know what your civil rights are?" (11 September 2003). It is doubtful if Mr. Khouri's thought-provoking article would have been published had it not been for his institutionalized position and the recognition given to his organization. I also discovered that academics and civil rights activists have set up "Project Threadbare" at Toronto's York University in support of the suspects, and that interlocutors of this movement have been referenced by the media ("How the terror probe slowly unfolded"; "Ottawa must make amends," *Toronto Star*, 6 September and 28 October 2003). I am of the opinion that the membership and media advocacy methods of this group have contributed to the attention that the issue has received.

Gitlin (1979: 30) also observes that when movements achieve institutional status, journalists covering their activities become embedded in the processes of these groups and may unconsciously begin identifying with the latter's ideologies. In this sense, there are even possibilities of dissension by 'converted' media personnel, as well as opportunities for change-oriented journalists to infiltrate media organizations to promote favorable coverage of marginalized groups.

This necessitates the mobilization and organization of marginalized people into identifiable pressure groups that can be said to be representative of their cause. There is also a need for such pressure groups to build the capacity to discursively compete in the media domain by involving newsworkers and trained media persons in their activities. As Tuchman's analysis of media treatment of the early years of the women's movement in the United States (1978: 133-55) shows, such an approach has its attendant risks, including reducing the ability of such groups to achieve radical change. Yet when individuals like the Operation Thread suspects are confronted with discrimination and racial profiling, their only hope lies in the interventions that can be made by institutionalized groups, recognized as such, and who can be regarded as being capable of marshalling significant public opinion against people in public office. In the news

coverage I analyzed, Muslim community organizations reported to be voicing concern about the arrests were often not specified. On some occasions only one – the Canadian Muslim Congress was specifically mentioned. This was despite the fact that the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association appears to have made interventions as well ("'Van loads of evidence' in terror probe," *Toronto Star*, 23 August 2003). There is therefore a need for networking among civil society organizations, which might have to eschew narrow and parochial objectives and identify with the broader issues of discrimination and marginalization, and thus create a more formidable force for intervention. Finally civil society groups should endeavor to keep such issues topical in the public domain to avoid the effects of discontinuous, a-historical reportage (the treatment of "issues as events"- Tuchman 1978: 134; see also Hall et al. 1991:ix; and Bennet 1996: 40- 42) that characterize regular newswork.

I also subscribe to the basic principle of Canadian Critical Race Theory that though the existing legal regime is often skewed against marginalized people, it can still be used strategically as a mechanism for social change (Aylward 1999: 34). Though this theory was evolved as a means of combating racism against blacks in North America, in recent times it has been expanded to embrace the cause of Muslims and Aboriginals (Aylward 1999: 46) and its strategies are therefore relevant in this context. There is a need to deconstruct legal rules, principles and policies (such as post-9/11 criminal and immigration jurisprudence) that might unfairly target marginalized groups. Aylward states that the process of deconstruction is meant to "confront subtle forms of racism and to validate the experiences of people of colour, which are important bases for understanding laws that perpetuate their disenfranchisement" (1999: 35). Critical Race theorists suggest that advocates must question whether a legal rule or doctrine discriminates against people of color (or in this case, minorities or subordinate groups). If that happens to be the case, there is a need for litigation or some other strategy (Aylward 1999: 35). These strategies may include media interventions that de-construct topical

issues (such as Operation Thread) to make evident the patterns of discrimination and marginalization that result from the application of such laws, and which the media and other powerful social institutions obfuscate. By targeting discriminatory legislation, activists could succeed in preventing the consensus that may otherwise be achieved by the discourses of the state apparatus.

There is also the need for scholarly interventions, especially as academia is invested with the capital that makes it a legitimated institution, and also has tremendous ideological influence. Althusser's argument (1971: 145-49) maintains that "the School-family couple" is the most powerful ideological state apparatus, with the power to shape consciousness. The deconstruction and de-legitimation of dominant discriminatory discourses requires the construction and legitimation of oppositional and alternative discourses. This is the ideological process to which activists within the academy must devote themselves, especially in a country like Canada where the news media regularly rely on 'expert' sources within the academia as authorized knowers.

Finally, it is my hope that future researchers will also extensively and critically analyze the discourses of legislation such as those discussed in this thesis. Given the limitations and focus of my research, I was unable to address that particular area of study in as thorough a fashion as Backhouse (1999) adopts. Yet, such legal discourses often serve as the point of origin for the dominant discourses that appear in the news media and reveal the dominant ideologies that may otherwise be discursively obscured in the news discourse.

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Police hunt ringleader of alleged terror cell (Stewart Bell. 29 August 2003, A1)
Defunct school focus of Toronto terror probe (Adrian Humphreys. 30 August 2003, A1)
20th suspect arrested in probe of terrorist cell (Stewart Bell. 30 August 2003, A5)
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Terrorism a threat here, Ontarians say (Wallace Immen. 26 August 2003, A6)

Terror allegations termed 'garbage' (Colin Freeze.26 August 2003, A3)

Bin Laden agents among 19 arrested, lawyers say (Colin Freeze, and Marina Jimenez. 27 August 2003, A1)

Adjudicator frees suspect, disputes terrorist scenario (Colin Freeze, and Marina Jimenez. 28 August 2003, A1)

Plotters beware: Don't mess with the CN Tower (Luma Muhtadie. 28 August 2003, A1)

Student pilot ordered to remain in custody (Colin Freeze. 29 August 2003, A2)

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Wanted man can't turn himself in (Marina Jimenez. 2 September 2003, A1)

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Suspect's lawyer protests (Claire Gagne. 5 September 2003, A10)

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