Threatening the Body Politic:

Negotiating the boundaries of national belonging for Canadian foreign fighters

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ABSTRACT

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Entrenched by borders, citizenship is more than an affiliation with a nation denoted by birth or documentation – it can be an indication of belonging, identity and value. Nowhere is the nebulousness of citizenship more apparent than in the case of returning foreign ISIS fighters. This thesis undertakes analyses of the discussion of foreign fighters across three distinct, but closely related arenas, namely: Canadian news articles on foreign fighters between the years 2000-2016, two video clips featuring debates between the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament on the topic, and comments posted in response to two CBC News articles. This thesis explores how these different permutations of news media become sites of contestation, wherein key players - journalists, politicians and the Canadian public - negotiate, oppose or align with the discourse of rehabilitation and reassimilation. Framing the act of leaving and re-entering Canada's borders as treason, some propose solutions that are diametrically opposed to rehabilitation, namely, containment (via imprisonment), expulsion (via deportation) or annihilation. Ultimately, this thesis uncovers how the mediatization of returning foreign fighters sparks discussions that reignite nationalistic moral panic, whereby the boundaries of national belonging become tightened when Canada's body politic is threatened.

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Introduction

Despite living in a media climate in which cycles of news move at an unprecedented speed, few news items consistently arrest audiences' attention on a global scale as much as the topic of terrorism. As of 2015, the ascent of an ideologically-based terrorist organization ubiquitously known as ISIS, ISIL or DAESH has aroused visceral reactions from a global majority while also eliciting fascination among a radicalized minority. The minority of predominantly young men who support ISIS comprises an even smaller minority of individuals who enact their support and prove their allegiance by leaving their homes, flying to Syria and partaking in ISIS' activities. Dubbed "foreign fighters" or less commonly, "foreign terrorist fighters," this small minority of (predominantly) men are drawn to the promise of the restoration of a global caliphate, and come from an estimated 110 states around the world. Among these numbers, approximately 180 Canadians are known to have left the terrorist organization and at least 60 have allegedly returned to Canada following recent reports of ISIS losing ground, manpower and territorial control. Although the proportion of Canadian fighters pales in comparison to those flocking from Europe, their return has ignited a spate of discussions on how to best deal with them on multiple levels – criminally, socially and morally. As such, foreign fighters attempting to return to Canada are attributed with nebulous legal, criminal and societal status.

As a first-generation Canadian growing up in the thick of the post-9/11 climate, my interest in the media framing of issues concerning terrorism predates ISIS' presence in the media. The incessant broadcast news coverage of the collapse of the Twin Towers and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were historically monumental events that shaped the belief that the U.S. - and by extension, Canada - is at war against terror, conditioning Western citizens to believe in the narrative that at the heart of these interconnected events, lies a clash between fundamental values. Being increasingly conscious and critical of this myth, I developed an interest in the role that ideology - either conveyed by mainstream news or extremist propaganda - plays in influencing one's sense of national identity and belonging. In light of the mediatized rise and fall of the Islamic State and its fallouts, I asked questions that were already raised by other concerned Canadians in response to news coverage of Canadian ISIS returnees, which are explored throughout this thesis: how will the de-radicalization or rehabilitation process for returning foreign fighters who are (ex)members of ISIS play out? And what are the moral

implications of attempting to reintegrate individuals who have once (and may continue to) align with ISIS, an organization responsible for innumerable deaths, particularly in the regions in which they have claimed control? These questions yield complicated answers that this thesis alone does not – and cannot – attempt to cogently answer. As such, I recognize the sensitivity of this subject matter and approach it with the knowledge that the reality of remaining/returning fighters in the regions most hard-hit by the Islamic State's active presence is considerably more politically complex and logistically demanding, due to the sheer number of fighters, as well as their families, who are left behind. Some states, such as Iraq, address the issue of remaining fighters by swiftly prosecuting them and sentencing them to death, while the Syrian Democratic Forces militia (S.D.F.) on the other hand, is left to grapple with how to proceed with captured fighters, the majority of whom remain in makeshift prisons in Syria and await their uncertain fates. Given that Canada is one of few nations to have agreed to repatriate fighters who successfully return, the consequences that await Canadian fighters are, according to global human rights standards, considerably more humane by comparison. Accordingly, questions pertaining to their return that are raised in Canadian news media emerged as a crucial and timely topic to explore, particularly as it concerns prospects of social reintegration whereby questions of national belonging invariably arise.

This thesis project is particularly concerned with select permutations of public discussion concerning the return of foreign fighters in Canada in three different areas: 1) written news articles in print or online form 2) news videos and 3) online news articles and their public comments. The significance of examining the conception of foreign fighters in Canadian news media as well as their reception by Canadian readers of online news is particularly salient given the gradual collapse of ISIS' stronghold in parts of Syria. Those who choose to return to Canada after having left provoke pressing discussions about national security (the most obvious concern) but also border control, immigration and assimilation in the midst of a historical paradox - namely, that despite our progression into an increasingly globalized village, people around the world understand and define themselves as national entities.

In the section that follows, I begin with the very definition of the term "foreign fighter" found in the literature and show how its links and genealogy within the mediated discourses that emanate from the war on terror are ultimately grounded in notions of national identity. I then proceed to outline the trajectory of my analysis in the subsequent chapters. Throughout this thesis, I draw attention to the role of the media as a site of contestation where audiences are permitted to

negotiate, oppose and/or align with dominant discourses surrounding the return of foreign fighters.

Defining Foreign Fighters - A contemporary context

In their examination of fighters in Chechnya, Moore and Tumelty (2008) propose one of the first concrete definitions of foreign fighters, describing them as "non-indigenous, non-territorialized combatants who, motivated by religion, kinship, and/or ideology rather than pecuniary reward, enter a conflict zone to participate in hostilities" (p. 412). Others in more recent scholarship, such as Lindekilde, Bertelsen and Stohl (2016), are more precise in their distinction of foreign fighters "as an individual who travels from a Western society to a non-Western country embroiled in conflict by engaging in "combat action, combat training, or logistic support to combat actions" (p. 859). According to Borum and Fein's (2017) more contemporary and broad understanding of the term, the term describes "insurgent combatants who fight beyond the borders of their home" (p. 249). They observe that the term only began appearing in Western news outlets as of the late 1980s, adding that while the term's frequency of mention has declined in subsequent decades, it spiked immediately following 9/11 (2017, p. 249). While this thesis narrows its lens to contemporary Muslim foreign fighters who have traveled to join ISIS, it is imperative to note that as broad as the term's definition may be, its current popular usage often excludes groups of individuals who abide by these definitions, such as mercenaries or non-Muslim fighters including international volunteers fighting alongside the Kurdish People's Protection Units *against* ISIS fighters.

The semantic implications of "foreign fighter" or "foreign terrorist fighter" are not lost on those who employ them for scholarly or legislative purposes. Given that definitions for what constitutes *terrorism* or *foreigner* vary across nations, developing a cohesive and consistent definition for foreign fighters - a phenomenon that has achieved global reach - becomes challenging. More precisely, there are ambiguities that emerge in the elaboration of the term "foreign terrorist fighter" provided by the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2178, which was released in 2014, titled *Addressing the growing issue of foreign terrorist fighters*. One such ambiguity was raised by Krahenmann (2016), who observes that in isolation, the word "foreign" becomes misleading given than many of the fighters travelling to their final destination have personal, ancestral or ethno-religious ties to the region, in relation to which they arguably should not be considered "foreigners." Furthermore, many such "fighters" for ISIS do not

participate in armed combat but partake in other responsibilities that nonetheless support the group's activities. For these reasons, one can argue that the term "foreign fighter" is a misnomer given that it does not accurately describe the range of individuals whom it is used to designate. However, in spite of its incongruity, the term "foreign fighter(s)" will be used throughout this thesis due to its widely-accepted usage among the scholarly, legal, international and news media arenas, who generally employ it in accordance with the definition provided by the United Nations Security Council, who describe them as:

> ...individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict. (Resolution 2178, 2014).

As this definition (as well as the ones above) illustrates, the process of deliberately uprooting oneself to travel to, and live amidst a zone of conflict within which a terrorist organization is armed and active, is a crucial component in becoming a foreign fighter.

Moore and Tumelty (2008) highlight the degree of agency that distinguishes foreign fighters from other types of travelling combatants, stressing that agency is a distinguishing factor given that foreign fighters often volunteer to participate. As such, the current issue of returning foreign fighters emerges from an extended history of combatants travelling to distant regions to fight. Historically, men have been joining conflicts abroad as combatants motivated by a number of reasons including ideological or religious affinity, financial reward or a combination of these. Prominent examples in history include the Crusades in the 13th and 14th centuries; the hundreds of young men who joined the International Brigades; as well as Afghan-Arabs from neighbouring countries who joined al Qaeda out of ethno-religious kinship during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. The current foreign fighter phenomenon as we know it originally rose to prominence through the coverage of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Moore and Tumelty (2008) add that although they make up a small fraction of the insurgency in Iraq, foreign fighters' influence and involvement in the war has been impactful in shaping its progression via the means of "Web-centered information operations," with the purpose of commanding the attention of a global audience, including potential recruits (2008, p. 413).

Our conception of terrorism has been informed by an understanding that it is localized

elsewhere, and that although it can result in attacks in developed societies, it does so from *afar*, from whence it originates. However, the phenomenon of returning foreign fighters disrupts this narrative, leaving Western governments and the public at large to confront the reality that, out of a complex concoction of factors, terrorism can also emanate from within – a process that is now widely discussed as "homegrown" radicalization. Moreover, upon returning to their countries of residence, these foreign fighters are then perceived as re-importing a terror that has origins at the cross-sections of multiple geographical spaces but that unfolds at "home".

War and the Narrative of the Nation - Terrorism and the legacy of the war on terror

Understanding the circumstances leading up to instances of radicalization and eventually, homegrown terrorism in Western societies necessitates a cursory overview of contemporary terrorism. Moreover, uncovering the appeal of terrorist propaganda begins with an understanding of terrorism itself, particularly noting how the aftermath of the "War on Terror" has led to an uptick of radicalization in developed societies. Despite the general consensus that terrorist groups and their subsequent attacks spring out of a specific context, most scholars agree on a close set of definitions of terrorism in which they distinguish between terrorist violence and other forms of mass-scale violence. Garrison (2004) views terrorism as a tool employed to achieve an outcome, usually from authority or state figures. Along with others (Schmid, 2004; Wilkinson, 1997), Garrison distinguishes terrorist violence as an activity involving the use of excessive force and threats as well as the inculcation of fear in a larger society for the purpose of inciting change within that society (p. 260). In spite of ideological differences, he insists that most, if not all, terrorists understand and maximize the utility and effectiveness of terror to achieve their ideological and political goals. Regardless of difference in issue or ideological cause, terrorist groups, according to Parry (1976), adhere to one of three fundamental tenets about society and their role in it:

1) Society is sick and cannot be cured by half measures of reform.
2) The state is itself violence and can be countered and overcome only by violence.
3) The truth of the terrorist cause justifies any action that supports it. While some terrorists recognize no moral law [they] have their own 'higher' morality.

(Parry, 1976, as quoted by Garrison, p. 261)

Terrorists' conviction in the restorative functions of violence to cure societal illness confirms Garrison's salient observation that terrorism is itself a form of propaganda (p. 265). In essence, where words fail, actions don't. In reference to three late 19th-century Italian anarchists who originally brought the idea of *Propaganda by Deed* to life, he attributes the emergence of this new form of propaganda as being unique to the last two decades of the 20th century (p. 272), highlighting that cause or ideology may explain the terrorist, but it does not define him – rather, it is the deed of employing terror that defines the terrorist (Garrison, 2004, p. 272). Although the idea of *Propaganda by Deed* has since been adopted by various anarchists to suit different purposes, on the whole, it espouses the belief that traditional forms of propaganda (via verbal and written means) are insufficient in maximizing one's attempt at spreading their message. With the aim of destabilizing the political status quo, *Propaganda by Deed* embodies the maxim that "actions speak louder than words."

Canada as an Imagined Community and a Self-Contained Utopia: Benedict Anderson

Nations are predicated on and maintained by a people's shared consciousness of belonging to a clearly demarcated space. The widespread ramifications of the major technological revolutions, including the printing press, facilitated the growth of nations. This basic understanding of nationhood was advanced by Benedict Anderson (2006) in "Imagined Communities." Anderson's conception of the nation as a socially-constructed political realm demarcated by finite space and limited membership is encapsulated in the following passage: "The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations." (Anderson, 1991, p. 7, original emphasis). To add to Benedict's observation, a nation's geographic boundaries – its borders – are not only finite but protected as well. The need to protect borders translates into a collective value that is reified by the availability of mass-consumed information in the form of novels and newspapers, Anderson argues.

One of Benedict's most poignant observations on the nation lies in his distinguishing it as a community where he claims that in spite of social disparities, "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). It is this patriotic fraternity and solidarity that mobilizes a nation's members to risk their lives "for such limited imaginings" (Anderson,

1991, p. 7). Anderson's conceptions of the nation are crucial to this thesis' exploration of the ways in which comments from the public addressing an incendiary topic can inculcate a sense of shared values on the basis of national identity, which in turn breeds a micro version of an "Imagined Community" with an added 2.0 twist. Anderson observed that despite the reality that all members of a nation will never be acquainted with one another other, "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991, p. 49). While an image of this communion can reap many benefits, including a shared sense of belonging and "rootedness" to a geographically demarcated place, it can also give rise to discourses that encourage identity politics as well as position the leaders of a nation as custodians of its society's "shared values." Such a role is subject to exploitation as evident in the many politicians who have been accused of promoting nationalist propaganda and fanning the flames of xenophobia under the guise of advocating for Canadian values, as will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Nationalism and citizenship are inextricably linked. The conceptual definition of citizenship has a long, complex history predating the current legal understanding that is widely circulated. Some such as Oldfield (1990) divides citizenship according to two streams, denoting either "status" or "practice" whereby the former stresses the importance of individual rights while the latter prioritizes the collective interests of a society as a whole. However, many attribute the contemporary understanding of citizenship to T. H. Marshall (1950), whose definition of the term was informed by postwar circumstances. Marshall described citizenship as a status resulting in membership to a community, fundamental rights that protect one's freedom, obligations citizens are expected to fulfill, and equality. Examining citizenship from the standpoint of feminist critique, Lister (1997) observes how discourses concerning citizenship in the twenty-first century has increasingly shifted to prioritize "work obligations" for inhabitants to be considered model citizens. On that account, the chapters that follow explore the tension that exists between the two dominant models of citizenship – citizenship as rights versus citizenship as obligations – which are articulated in the media texts analyzed in each chapter.

Razack (2007) demonstrates the ways in which nationalist public discourse has had real-life repercussions on those tried as terrorists by the Canadian legal system, whereby the notion of "the force of the law without the law" comes into practice. Expanding on Anderson's articulations, Razack adds that a kin group belonging to a political community is fundamental to upholding this notion of the state as sovereign force. Because we can identify those who are not part of this kin group (at times, not solely based on what they do, but rather who they are), many racialized men

have been subject to a suspension of the rule of law via convictions or expulsions despite a lack of incriminating evidence (p. 28). In response to national emergencies such as threats of terror attacks, Razack argues that the state advances the belief and practice of itself as a necessary force to protect the nation against terrorism (Razack, 2007, p. 28). However, this begs the question as to why measures of preventing - and subsequently, "treating" - radicalization are not considered as viable solutions, within a government's mandate to protect its citizens?

Possible Motivations for Becoming a Foreign Fighter

While scholarly work on the motivations fueling young men to join distant conflicts are numerous, discerning the personal reasons as to why individuals choose to join insurgent or terrorist organizations has proven to be challenging, resulting in little consensus among researchers who examine the topic of radicalization from various disciplinary lenses. It is thus beyond the scope of this thesis to address the complex set of individual and psychological reasons that lead up to radicalization. However, through their examination of 22 returning Danish ISIS-fighters, Lindekilde, Bertelsen and Stohl (2016) introduce and elaborate on key contributing factors – namely, a lack of "life embeddedness" and self-certainty - that may prove to be crucial to ensuring effective deradicalization and rehabilitation initiatives in the future. Specifically, the authors argue that a desire for life-embeddedness and self-certainty would compel most individuals to seek out ways to re-establish these by either forming new relationships, forging self-knowledge about one's identity in relation to socio-political circumstances, or acquiring new skills and competencies through education, training or counselling (p. 862).

However, in rare instances, one's desire to re-establish life embeddedness and self-certainty can lead to radicalization which arises from an attraction and immersion into "pure groups" which the authors define as "groups that are relatively closed, bounded, unambiguous in terms of action, instructions, and moral directions, and whose members resemble each other and have a shared destiny" (Lindekilde, Bertelsen and Stohl, 2016, p. 862). Their observations establish a point that other scholars examining radicalization and terrorism would agree on: namely, that although the driving factors motivating (predominantly) young men to enact political violence are complex and difficult to pin down, the actual process of becoming a foreign fighter is largely social. In other words, foreign fighters do not act alone but, rather, belong to a network of actors who partake in underground operations in retaliation to what they perceive as Western encroachment of Islamic territory, people and customs.

Still, what happens when the pursuit for life-embeddedness and self-certainty is unsuccessful and is, once again, *lost,* compelling re-migration to one's previous place of residence, as is the case for Canadian foreign fighters? This question leads to additional enquiries about the level of danger that these returnees pose, whereby we are prompted to ask whether their sense of loss will extinguish their radicalization or reinvigorate it? While concrete answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this thesis, they are vital to consider as we shape effective present and future deradicalization initiatives which are led and instituted by the state but ultimately maintained by society. To add to this, it must be noted that while the legal ramifications (or lack thereof) of returning to Canada as a foreign fighter has yet to be fully determined, considering a foreign fighter's state of radicalization is important regardless of whether we imprison them or not - because while people can be locked up and contained, ideas cannot.

The lure of being swept into a social movement that is gaining fringe momentum is appealing to a select few. In attempting to apprehend the complex reasons as to why young Western individuals would abandon the relative comforts of their home, social and professional lives to engage in combat elsewhere, Bruce Hoffman (2010) states the following:

> The reasons why someone picks up a gun or throws a bomb represents an ineluctably personal choice born variously of grievance and frustration; religious piety or the desire for systemic socioeconomic change; irredentist conviction or commitment to revolution. Joining an organization in pursuit of these aims is meant to give collective meaning and equally importantly cumulative power to this commitment. The forces that impel individuals to become terrorists and insurgents are thus timeless. (quoted in Borum and Fein, 2017, p. 248)

Observations on these foreign fighters' motivations made by scholars such as Lindekilde et al., Talbot and Hoffman are crucial in understanding how states will be left to grapple with their return, whereby many of them return feeling either disillusioned or remaining radical in their beliefs. Moreover, if incriminating evidence is insufficient in leading to imprisonment, then strategies for social reintegration would be the most viable recourse. However, given how ordinary Canadians are as vehemently resistant to reintegration as they claim to be in online platforms – namely, in the comments sections of the CBC articles that this thesis examines –

questions on how to best address the impending possibility of increased radicalization and homegrown terrorism inevitably arise.

Concluding Note and Outline of Chapters

Exploring the tension between national belonging and exclusion is at the crux of this thesis project, which examines the ways in which three distinct but related entities - namely, 1) prominent politicians, 2) news organizations and 3) Canadian netizens - come to understand this tension. The first chapter of this thesis offers a scan of written news representation containing the collocated term "foreign fighter(s)," followed by a lexical collocation analysis of the term modelled on Richardson's (2009) method. The following two chapters center on the multi-platform content in two online news articles reporting on the contemporary issue of foreign fighters by the Canadian Broadcast Channel (CBC), a prominent federally-funded news organization possessing institutional clout. The multi-platform content at hand includes two flashpoint videos, each featuring Prime Minister Trudeau's statements on returning foreign fighters which will be explored in Chapter 2, and a sample of readers' comments in response to each CBC article. The primary theoretical frameworks that are utilized to explore the portrayal and audience reception of post-ISIS foreign fighters draw upon the following concepts: Richardson's (2006) methodological conception of Critical Discourse Analysis as it pertains to analyzing newspapers for Chapter 1; Georgio Agamben's (1998) theory of *Homo Sacer* in analyzing Canadian users' comments to the two articles for Chapter 3; as well as Benedict Anderson's continually relevant description of the "Imagined Community" to help us understand the workings of nationalism through communications technologies, for Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

Chapter 1: From Military Threat to Social Problem: Examining the representation of foreign fighters in Canadian news articles

Introduction

In response to mainstream news organizations' active role in bolstering public support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, criticism from a growing number of journalists, scholars and media pundits have begun to surface and disrupt the widely accepted discourse validating the necessity of a war on terror. As the U.S.' neighbor and closest ally, Canadian news reporting of 9/11 and its subsequent conflicts in the Middle East has perpetuated such rhetoric supporting hawkish foreign policies, under the leaderships of two former prime ministers namely, the Liberal Party's Jean Chretien as well as the Conservative Party's Stephen Harper. While Canadian scholars have contributed to building a robust body of works examining Canadian news media's role in supporting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, few closely examine the discussion and symbolic positioning of foreign fighters specifically within Canadian news in the post-9/11 era. This lack of interest in foreign fighters post 9/11 is at once surprising and understandable. It is surprising given that al Qaeda insurgents who have subsequently travelled to Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight on behalf of the terrorist group make up a sizeable portion of their total members. Moreover, it is especially surprising given that, as a few researchers at the forefront of terrorist studies observe (Crenshaw, 1981; Coolsaet, 2016; Hegghammer, 2010), transnational fighters have been crossing borders to join conflicts well before the geopolitical conflicts that erupted at the turn of the twenty-first century. However, in spite of this well-established awareness of the existence of foreign fighters, the low interest in covering the subject appears to stem primarily from the fact that the vast majority of foreign fighters involved in both the 2001 Afghanistan war and the 2003 Iraq war led by the Bush presidency, originate from neighboring countries rather than developed Western nations. As a result, this chapter addresses, among other things, whether or not interest in foreign fighters by Canadian news media increases as a result of ISIS' involvement in the Syrian Civil War, looking at how this newfound interest is articulated.

Public information on foreign fighters, particularly in terms of who they are and what they do, is largely sourced, produced and disseminated by news media. Richardson's (2006) fundamental assumptions about language - that it is social, it enacts identity, it is always active, that using it can constitute an act of power, and that it is political - ultimately reveal that the

language employed in news text does more than relay information - it also produces it. News language's unique ability of curating facts in select ways so as to produce its own information is further echoed by scholars who reveal the countless ways in which mainstream news sources are complicit in manufacturing consent in favor of Western military intervention (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Kellner, 2007).

By tracking the appearance of the term "foreign fighter" in Canadian news articles between the years 2000 to 2016, this chapter unpacks and delves into the saliency of the topic of foreign fighters spanning a period of 16 years. The research questions that have fueled this investigation are the following: 1) How many news articles have been published covering the subject of foreign fighters since the year 2000? 2) How often does the term "foreign fighter" appear? 3) How is the contemporary foreign fighter phenomenon framed across this period? And, 4) Is this framing consistent or does it shift according to geopolitical context? In attempting to address these questions, it must be noted that the sample of texts I have uncovered is limited in many respects given that I restrict my findings to articles published by Canadian outlets within a narrow time-frame, excluding results from a much larger historical timespan of conflicts involving foreign fighters.

Charting out the significance as well as the explicit and implicit meanings attributed to the term "foreign fighter" within Canadian news articles may be beneficial in understanding how its framing may have led up to the current political valence of returning foreign fighters. Central to this stage will be an exploration of the collocated term "foreign fighter," modeled on Richardson's methods of lexical collocation (2009) and Critical Discourse Analysis (2006), with the purpose of addressing the following questions: *who does the term "foreign fighter" designate? What conflicts are foreign fighters predominantly associated with?*

Unpacking the Origins and Usage of the Term 'Foreign Fighters'

David Malet is a political scientist and one of the earliest leading researchers on the topic of foreign fighters within transnational conflicts. Although other terms can and occasionally have been used to describe individuals who join conflicts abroad as insurgent fighters, Malet (2010) justifies widespread usage of the term "foreign fighter" because it is widely employed in popular media reports, primarily concerning *jihadis*, and generates greater recognition of the concept it describes than do alternative jargon-laden terms (e.g. transnational insurgent)" (p. 107).

In an effort to track the origins, occurrence and significance of the term "foreign fighter"

in English news reports, Malet (2010) divides its emergence between two periods, preceding and following the attacks on September 11th, 2001. By conducting a Lexis-Nexus search for the term, Malet discovered that its very first usage emerged in a headline for an article published on March 21, 1988 for *The Times*, titled "Khost Outpost Falls to Mujahidin Led by Foreign Fighters," covering a story of victory by the Afghan mujahideen against Soviet troops. Following this appearance, he discovered that from 1992, the term "foreign fighter" was used within the context of various conflicts including: the Afghan mujahideen's struggle against pro-Soviet forces, South Africa's 32 Battalion, Croatian separatist forces for the Yugoslavian civil war, the rise of "Black Legions," as well as the conflict in Kashmir and Bosnia.

According to Malet's extensive analysis, one can easily characterize the prevalence of the term prior to 9/11 as a trickle, followed by an upsurge in frequency in response to 9/11 and subsequent wars initiated under the Bush regime. More precisely, Malet notes that the term "foreign fighter" rose in popularity following the battle of Kunduz, during the US-led war in Afghanistan, on November 27, 2001. His search further indicates that the first appearance of the term following 9/11 emerges in an article by the *Associated Press* published on the same day, in which the US military makes a clear distinction between local Afghan Taliban fighters, who were permitted to escape punishment or conviction, and foreign fighters, who were jailed and subjected to an investigation for their links with Osama bin Laden. However, according to Malet, it was the invasion of Iraq that led to an additional uptick in the recurrence of the term, which ultimately entrenched it as a substantially newsworthy phenomenon within news discourse covering terrorist events. Following the launch of the first assault by U.S. coalition forces in Iraq on March 10 2003, the term appeared close to 700 times by the end of the year 2003. Malet adds that "foreign fighter" appears more than 1000 times each subsequent year. Having charted out the frequency of the term in English news articles, Malet confirms other scholars' observations that the events surrounding 9/11 have been instrumental in shaping the discursive prevalence of foreign fighters in present-day geopolitical conflicts and the resulting news.

Based on our contemporary understanding of foreign fighters, Noonan and Khalil (2014) observe that the foreign fighter phenomenon resurged to prominence during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 in which fighters, mainly from countries with Muslim majority populations, travelled to Soviet-occupied regions including the Balkans, Chechnya, Dagestan and Tajikistan (p. 66). Following 9/11, conflicts in the Middle East, including the ongoing war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, and particularly the current conflict in Syria, all attracted an unprecedented number of

people crossing borders to fight on behalf of dissident extremist groups. Roughly 15,000 people, mostly men, from 80 different countries are recorded to have travelled to fight. Noonan and Khalil (2014) also note that while a majority of fighters involved in the Syrian conflict originate from neighbouring countries, a significant portion of them travel from Western countries, a figure unmatched in previous conflicts (p. 68). Although records of the movement of foreign fighters throughout historical conflicts are extensive, in-depth knowledge on their whereabouts and life circumstances after their participation as insurgents is lacking in recent scholarship. By examining news articles from the recent past which discuss foreign fighters, as Malet has done, this chapter uncovers the vocabulary employed to relay information about an elusive group of individuals within a specific set of recent conflicts concentrated mainly in the Middle East, determining whether or not this vocabulary replicates the dominant discourse exerted to frame contemporary terrorism.

Methods and Methodology

The foreign fighter phenomenon is part and parcel of contemporary war reporting. Accordingly, multiple scholars (McChesney, 2002; Pintak, 2006; Steuter and Willis, 2009), have noted the substantial shift in war reporting by mainstream journalists in response to 9/11. Pintak (2006) for instance, contends that post-9/11 war reporting in American news constitutes a form of "jihad journalism" that is partial to American interests which, according to McChesney, includes the need to "root out the global terrorist cancer" (2002, p. 43). This journalistic shift becomes evident in my analysis of sentences containing the term "foreign fighter(s)," which is why I have delimited my sample of articles to the period between the years 2000 to 2016.

The primary purpose of tracing Canadian news coverage of foreign fighters between 2000 to 2016 is to uncover how Canadian news media has been framing the issue of ISIS-affiliated returning fighters as a topic of public concern. As per Malet's foregrounding observations, the term foreign fighter may not have been widely circulating in news media prior to the Syrian war but it was not a foreign concept either. However, following ISIS' emergence as a global antagonist, the term's newfound valence as a collocated term (Richardson, 2009) can now potentially have significant impact on policies pertaining to immigration, domestic terrorism and foreign affairs. Here, I am using collocation as a method to identify words that are most closely associated with the term 'foreign fighters.' In other words, what words lie in close proximity to the term and how do they then colour the term or weigh it with connotations that reinforces a

common-sense understanding?

In this chapter, I conduct a form of lexical analysis, namely, a lexical collocation modelled on Richardson's (2009) method in which he examines words with which the terms "Islam" and "Muslim" were collocated within a sample of British newspaper articles he had selected during three general elections in the UK. Richardson defines collocations as "patterns or consistencies in language use that create an expectancy that a word or phrase will be accompanied by other specific words" (2009, p. 360). According to Richardson, identifying the words preceding and following the terms "Islam" and "Muslim" allowed him to uncover how these words "act as a broad but illuminating quantitative measure of the ideational contents of the sampled texts" (2009, p. 360). Similarly, applying a lexical collocation analysis to sentences extracted in my investigation reveals the ideational subtext of the foreign fighter phenomenon while also indicating how it has evolved in its contextualization through the years. Ultimately, tracing the use of the term throughout sentences in Canadian articles reveals how the foreign fighter concept has shifted from being framed as a series of distant, contained and controlled situations to eventually erupting as an imminent threat to Canadian national security.

The methods in this chapter have been divided into three distinct sections: Phase 1 comprises the research phase, which began with an online search for Canadian articles containing the terms "foreign fighter" and "Canada," as well as a preliminary organization and paring down of the articles' full texts, to ultimately identify sentences containing the term "foreign fighter(s);"; Once the results were amassed, I proceeded with Phase 2, in which I categorized the sentences chronologically and proceeded to identify their adjoining "collocate" words; During Phase 3, I conducted a Lexical Collocation Analysis, drawing on Richardson's model, followed by a discussion and analysis of the results.

Phase 1: Finding and Categorizing Canadian News Articles Containing the Term "Foreign Fighter(s)" Published Between 2000-2016

Using ProQuest's Canadian Newsstream database[1], I began by conducting a search of articles by entering the search terms "foreign fighter" and "Canada" whereby I limited my search results to articles published in Canadian news sources between 2000-01-01 and 2016-12-31.

[1] According to the ProQuest website, the Canadian Newsstream database provides "access to the full text of over 190 Canadian newspapers from Canada's leading publishers… [which]... includes the complete available electronic backfile for most newspapers, providing full access to the articles, columns, editorials and features published in each."

Although the final analysis is restricted to sentences containing the term "foreign fighter(s)," my search for these articles also include the term "Canada" as a search term for two reasons: 1) to narrow down articles originally published by Canadian news sources, and 2) to limit my investigation to articles that discuss, in varying detail, how foreign fighters tie into Canada's role in geopolitical conflicts. Availing myself of archived web articles within Canadian Newsstream, my search criteria generated a total of 524 results. These results were exported and sent to my email account. The full texts of all 524 articles were then copy-pasted into a Word document.

For the purpose of this chapter's investigations, I have restricted my analysis to the sentences in articles that contain the term "foreign fighter" only in the body of the articles, excluding its appearance in abstracts and headlines. Headlines were excluded to maintain consistency across the articles examined, for the reason that a sizeable portion of the headlines that did contain the term "foreign fighter(s) are repeated verbatim in the body of their articles. Within this initial total of 524 results, several articles appeared multiple times verbatim from different news sources. These were omitted from the final count of articles. Moreover, several results also included articles appearing multiple times that were irrelevant to the subject of this thesis, as for example, stories categorized as "entertainment," listing "foreign fighter" to describe a film or television show. All in all, these and the other articles appearing in multiples were omitted from my final dataset. Thus, in total, my corpus consisted of 203 sentences in which the term "foreign fighter(s)" appeared, excluding headlines. Working from the same Word document and using the basic function of Ctrl+F, I proceeded to select all sentences containing the term "foreign fighter(s)" and highlighted them.

Phase 2: Grouping the Sentences, Identifying Key "Context" Terms, and Identifying Collocated Words/Terms for Each Sentence

Once the sentences containing the term "foreign fighter(s)" were isolated and highlighted in the Word doc, they were copied into an excel sheet, where the context and adjoining "collocate" words for each sentence were identified and recorded separately. Moreover, the sentences were grouped according to year, which resulted in a final tally of: 0 sentences for 2000; 14 for 2001; 3 for 2002; 7 for 2003; 11 for 2004; 8 for 2005; 7 for 2006; 7 for 2007; 6 for 2008; 5 for 2009; 5 for 2010; 0 for 2011; 1 for 2012; 8 for 2013; 42 for 2014; 45 for 2015; and 34 for 2016. Combined, these amount to a total of 203 sentences. With the sentences grouped according to year, keywords indicating or alluding to a given geographical location (i.e.: Taliban) were parsed out

for each year, with their total frequency tallied (below). Then, the sentences for each year were further unpacked to uncover the collocated terms that indicate two key elements: 1) *who* the foreign fighters are described as being and 2) *what* they are described as *doing*. For the first of these, the focus lies primarily on detecting nouns, adjectives and adverbs that specifically describe foreign fighters, as a group or as individuals (significantly less common). The second of these elements identifies verbs in relation to foreign fighters, which include verbs that denote their own actions or actions being committed to them by other forces.

Phase 3: Conducting Lexical Collocation Analysis

Conducting a deeper reading of the sentences containing the term "foreign fighter(s)" by identifying keywords is crucial to deciphering how ideological constructions of the term have progressed from the turn of the century, leading up to the present-day issue of returning foreign fighters to Canada. In his analysis of a sample of British news articles, Richardson (2009) employs an interpretive lexical collocation as a form of quantitative analysis to discern what meaning (screening for positive or negative connotations) arises from the words "Islam" and "Muslim" based on their surrounding words. To avoid a high incidence of neutral transition words such as articles, possessives and conjunctions, Richardson's version of this analysis involves examining not just immediately adjacent words, but also neighboring words that are coded with meaning and linked to the terms "Islam" and "Muslim" as direct attributes. As a result, he teases out both the lexical and ideational characteristics of these words to ultimately discern the types of ideas and representations they construct. For the analysis of the term "foreign fighter(s)" in Canadian news articles, this chapter draws on Richardson's model to identify whether or not a pattern emerges from a common set of collocates, with the purpose of uncovering two key pieces of information:

1) description: *who* foreign fighters are described as *being* (or being associated with) by identifying descriptive adjectives or nouns; and 2) action: *what* foreign fighters are described as *doing* by identifying verbs.

Results

Evolution of the foreign fighter concept

The following timeline chronologically breaks down how the framing of the foreign fighter concept evolved, based on key patterns found within the sentences of my sample of articles:

2000-2002: The majority of sentences concentrate on the Taliban, Afghanistan and al Qaeda.

2003-2010: In addition to the above keywords, Iraq and Pakistan appear as sites affected by foreign fighters.

2010 and 2013 (0 for 2011 and 1 unrelated sentence from 2012): The repercussions of returning foreign fighters begins to be discussed on a macro scale. Sentences from these two years discuss the foreign fighter topic as a global phenomenon, particularly as it affects Western nations including Canada.

2013: The first reference to foreign fighters returning from Syria appears in one sentence.

2014-2016: References to foreign fighters' involvement in the Syrian civil war become frequent. Additionally, the foreign fighter phenomenon is discussed in terms that affect Canada.

2014: 19 out of the 42 sentences (45%) explicitly discuss Canada's involvement or stake in the issue.

2015: 23 out of 45 sentences (51%) explicitly discuss Canada's involvement or stake in the issue.

2016: 19 out of 34 sentences (55.8%) explicitly discuss Canada's involvement or stake in the issue.

Aside from keywords denoting geographical location, one of the most prominent group of keywords consists of terms pertaining to state authority, namely American and Canadian governments. References to American authorities appear for a total of 46 times, including: U.S. (29 times), American (9 times), Bush (5 times) and Obama (3 times). References to Canadian authorities appear for a total of 72 times including Canad(a)(ian) (52 times), RCMP (11 times), CBSA (5 times), CSIS (4 times). Other prominent terms like security (23 times), official(s) (23) terror(ist) (22 times), government (20 times), border (13), military (12 times), conflict (10 times), phenomen(a) (on) (7 times), issue (6 times), problem (6 times), safety (6 times).

Discussion and Analysis

Recurring words denoting context: from foreign fighter to *returning* foreign fighter

Prior to conducting a deep analytical reading to uncover the actions and descriptions of foreign fighters, it is essential to ascertain the context within which they are situated. Having grouped the sentences according to year, I determined each year's dominant geopolitical context within which foreign fighters were situated by uncovering a consistent pattern of keywords that denote countries, conflicts, governments and insurgent/terrorist organizations spanning the period of 2000-2016. In order of frequency, these words include: Iraq (45), Afghan(i)(stan) (20), Pakistan (14), Syria(n) (40), al-Qaida/al-Qaeda (20), ISIS (9), ISIL (25), DAESH (5), and Islamic State

(14).

In addition to the previously listed terms concerning American and Canadian authority, these geographical terms ultimately reveal that the foreign fighter phenomenon is primarily understood as a political issue, neglecting the other dimensions through which we can deepen our understanding of the phenomenon, namely, ideologically, socially and psychologically. The tendency of focusing exclusively on the political urgency of this phenomenon is evidenced more and more frequently in statements such as the following:

> The RCMP and CSIS have redeployed investigators to track nearly 100 foreign fighters and would-be terrorists as part of the government's attempts to crack down on supporters of such groups as Islamic State in Canada and abroad, federal officials said. (Leblanc and Freeze, 2014)

> National security officials in Canada and other western nations are increasingly fearful about "bleed out," the threat that some returning foreign fighters will turn their knowledge and skills about combat, guns, bombs, training and recruiting against their home countries. (MacLeod, 2015)

> Scott Bardsley, spokesman for Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, said the government used a number of tools to deal with foreign fighters, including revoking passports, the no-fly list and criminal charges. (Bell, 2016)

The recurrence of these words reveals the extent to which the contemporary foreign fighter issue emerges from a series of post-9/11 conflicts primarily concentrated in the region encompassing Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, as well as their ties to Canada and the United States.

Based on my observations, the sentences between the years 2000 and 2013 reveal that not only is the foreign fighter phenomenon physically situated in this region of the Middle East, but it is also portrayed as being *contained* there, which is demonstrated by the absence of any indication of them returning to their native countries. The first such indication of return only begins to appear in a sentence in 2010: “While some so-called Western "foreign fighters" may take up arms in conflict zones, such as the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, others may be sent home following training, said the study by George Washington University and the Swedish National Defence

College" (*The Vancouver Sun*, 2010). With the exception of this sentence, discussion of the fighters' origins and outcomes are nonexistent prior to 2010 and only reappear with frequency as of 2013.

It is only in 2013 that the term's pairing with words indicating a concern for foreign fighters returning to Canada or any other Western country, begins to peak. Namely, seven of the eight sentences from 2013 specifically discuss *returning* foreign fighters, while all of the sentences from the subsequent years - 2014, 2015 and 2016 - do the same. What is noteworthy about these sentences from the latter four years is the shift in framing that occurs, with keywords positioning the foreign fighter phenomenon as an urgent social problem whereas the language employed in sentences from the previous years - namely, 2000-2012 - position it as a military problem contained within the region of the conflicts. This shift in framing illustrates how the fighters' return was amplified because of its ramifications for Canadians. As such, the foreign fighter phenomenon becomes reframed as a social issue requiring state intervention in collaboration with the local communities from which these returning fighters originate. The following sentences illustrate this:

> Asked how the RCMP was preparing for the return of foreign fighters in light of the Mosul offensive, Staff Sgt. Julie Gagnon said the police force was "taking active measures through its criminal investigations." (Bell, 2016)

> Foreseeing a possible "flood of foreign fighters" from Syria, the RCMP has circulated a strategy that involves trying to understand the returning fighters' intentions and working with communities. (Bell, 2016)

Voices of Authority: How sources of knowledge become explicit

A significant pattern that emerges in the sentences containing the term "foreign fighter" is the common appearance of terms relating to state authorities. A recurring pattern of relating the foreign fighter context to the U.S. appears for a total of 52 times. Instances that denote a clear tie to the U.S include explicit terms such as "U.S, U.S.-Iraqi, American(s), Bush, Obama, Pentagon and 9/11" and well as implicit terms that nonetheless clearly refer to the American government such as "the administration" or names of American institutions (e.g. George Washington University), and political or military representatives such as "Marine commanders."

What is also noteworthy is the recurrence of sentences containing information provided by

American government or military sources. Among this pool of 52 references to America, roughly half (25) contain information sourced from American authorities. Examples include: "The U.S. National Counterterrorism Center *estimates* there are about 20,000 foreign fighters there now" (Curtis, 2015); "The Obama administration also *named* 11 individuals and one supposed charity as global terrorists for allegedly recruiting foreign fighters, shipping weapons and raising millions of dollars for Islamic State and several affiliated groups" ("Militant-controlled refineries in Syria bombed," 2015); "Islamic extremists in Iraq and Syria may pose a serious threat to Canadians and Americans through foreign fighters who return to North America to launch attacks, *warns* the top U.S. official on the file" (Kennedy, 2014) (my italics).

Primary definers

As these examples illustrate, words that indicate a communication of information include *estimates*, *named* and *warns* as well as *said, believed and suspected*. While one can argue that these examples showcase journalists' frank revelation of citing such sources - as opposed to omitting them altogether and presenting what American authorities claim as incontestable facts - these sentences nonetheless reveal journalists' trust in these authorities' claims. In other words, citing sources with institutional clout including The U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, the Obama administration or the "top U.S. official on file" attributes legitimacy to the information relayed which consequently signals trust from (predominantly Canadian) readers. This reliance on authoritative figures and its far-reaching effects has been well-documented in the literature on news theory. For instance, Hall et al. (1978) argue how existing structures of power embedded within our institutions become reinforced through elite figures' "*over-accessing"* (their italics, p. 58) of the media to relay information about a news event. Becker (1967) contends that this results in a "hierarchy of credibility" whereby the information or opinions on a controversial issue of those occupying powerful positions will often be taken for granted as factual, due to the public's belief in their exposure to otherwise sensitive or classified first-hand knowledge. In other words, figures of authority function as information gateways to bridge the gap between the public's ignorance on an event, and the known details of the event. Hall et al. add that due to the media's "structured preference" (p. 58) of the opinions of influential spokespeople, they become "*primary definers"* (p. 58) of topics whereby these spokespeople inadvertently come to define the "*primary interpretation"* of a given news event.

A primary interpretation is the foundational framework that becomes responsible for

determining whether a news event is a "social problem" or not, and which the authors argue is difficult to dismantle or challenge given that any alternative or critical interpretation that runs counter to the primary interpretation must engage with it to begin with. As a result, members of the political elite play a substantial role in constructing a social reality in which, often, their own class interests are conveyed as being the interests of all members of society. The extent of such powers has been amply demonstrated in the post 9/11 hysteria that has ensued, in which the complex geopolitical events that have led up to the destruction of the World Trade Center, have been simplified into a Manichean model of terrorists as enemy and the U.S. as savior. As such, the issue at hand isn't that the writers of the articles examined in this chapter are relying on U.S. authorities as bearers of first-hand knowledge – it is that they rely on them primarily, if not solely, on them as primary sources of facts. This demonstrates the extent to which these authorities embody the role of primary definers, as Hall et al. conceptualize it, while the media consists of a player of secondary value, useful in "*reproducing* the definitions of those who have privileged access, as of right, to the media as 'accredited sources'" (1978, p. 59). In other words, news media does not produce, but rather, *re*-produces the public's understanding of a topic characterized as elusive and controversial.

Moreover, as articles published in Canadian news organizations demonstrate, the sentences also reveal a reliance on information provided by Canadian state authorities, references of which appeared a total of 26 times. These consisted of claims made by the RCMP, Canada's intelligence community (CSIS), Public Safety Canada, Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, the Canada Border Services Agency (including Border agents), among others. Combining references to American and Canadian state authorities for the purpose of acquiring information on the foreign fighter phenomenon, my data reveals that the journalists rely on them for a total of 78 times - which comprises 37.6% of the 207 sentences containing the term "foreign fighter(s)."

Collocated Words for "Foreign Fighter(s): *Who* are they and *what* do they do?

Recurring words denoting *who* foreign fighters *are* – qualities and quantities

To uncover information revealing who foreign fighters are said to be, I sought out descriptive words, particularly adjectives, adverbs and nouns that denote qualities attributed to them as foreign fighters. Under the umbrella of "qualities," I also include countries and terrorist organizations with which fighters are associated as it provides information on where they are believed to originate from as well as where they were headed. It must be noted that not every

sentence contains words denoting a quality. Moreover, the years 2000 and 2011 generated no sentences containing the term “foreign fighter(s).” Table 1 lists words found in the sentences denoting qualities that describe foreign fighters, organized chronologically.

Table 1

Words denoting who foreign fighters are, in chronological order

2001	Mysterious, Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, hundreds, men, suspected, wounded, injured, dogged, Arabs, loyal, hardened, enemies, Pakistani
2002	Suspected, Taliban, al Qaeda, Afghani
2003	Saddam loyalist, Ansar members, rat line, uglier, guerrilla fighters, al Qaeda, Ansar al-Islam, Taliban
2004	rebels, guerilla leader, horrific, dozens, suspected militants, insurgents, Iraqi militants, 1 Afghan, 99, terrorist, 20, Jordanian militant
2005	Islamic militants, suicide bombers, recruits, al Qaeda, al-Qaida-led insurgents, insurgents, militants, terrorists
2006	Pakistanis, Taliban, Tribal, despised, security problem, Islamic council
2007	Trend, insurgents, al Qaeda, Taliban, increase, not huge number, being resisted, disliked, AQ, brought to justice
2008	six, people, insurgents, Uzbeks, Chechens, Turks, Arabs, Pakistani, promises of financial reward, al Qaeda
2009	Terrorist, hundreds, thousands, al Qaeda, mass influx, 2000, AQ, al-Shabaab
2010	Western, Western host nation, jihadist, mujahedeen, growing threat, insurgents, influx, Taliban
2012	Shabab, David the Moroccan
2013	from 74 countries, Canadian, armed opposition, difficulty tracking, range, jump, sectarian conflict, recruitment, security threat, paramilitary training, combat experience, extremist ideological beliefs, international contacts, Western European, French, British, German, 10% of the opposition forces, problem, Canadian youngsters

2014	lone wolf, phenomena, threats, phenomenon, urgency, concern, issue, phrase, extremist traveller, extremist forces, social media recruitment, 100, would-be terrorists, supporters Islamic State, terrorist groups, 80, Canada, hard-fighters, Canadian supporters, Canada, problem, small, people, numbers, concern, Canadians, Islamic extremists, serious threat, threat, 12,000, around the world, people, flow, list, danger, problem, issue, 15,000 citizens, global terrorists, Canadian jihadists, several Canadians, spokesmen against extremism, influx, British, thousands, returnees, martyrs, returnees, 190 Western and European, growing concern, terrorist group, Western, phenomenon, individuals, radicalized, ISIS
2015	people, individuals, tourists, business people, radicalized Canadians, 50, 14, extremist travellers, Canadian, 25,000, 30,000, 100 countries, neighboring countries, Europe, Turkey, Canada, small, traumatized, residents of Canada, individuals, returnees, suspected, disillusioned, Western, 100 disillusioned, foreign recruits, disgruntled, Europe, conundrum, bewildering numbers, dozens, thousands, Canada, US, Europe, bounty, captured, spy, disappointed, flow, returning, bleed out, threat, 25,000, 100 countries, surge, foreign terrorist fighter, Canadians, Khorasan recruits, Canadian Khorasan members, citizens of visa-exempt countries in Europe, individuals, 20,000, turned jihadist, 30 to 40, Abu Turab, two, friends, concerns, phenomenon
2016	Radicalized, 30,000, strongholds, return, suspected, 20, phenomenon, Western, disillusioned, Canadian, Kurdish forces, issue, ex-foreign fighters, high levels of education, low incomes, feeling of exclusion, flood, returning, communities, radicalized,
	exodus, scenario, security challenge, return, legal situation, anti-ISIS, anti-ISIS, foreigners, Islamist extremists, 300 anti-ISIL combatants, problem, innocent, new generation, sheer number, Daesh, Generation 9/11, Daesh

Upon examining the progression of words, what is evident in the years between 2001 and 2007 is the extent to which the foreign fighter issue is portrayed as being contained within the conflict-ridden region comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Moreover, what is predominantly revealed about *who* foreign fighters are relates to their purpose for becoming fighters, namely their affiliation with terrorist or US-opposed groups based in these countries such

as al Qaeda, the Taliban, Saddam loyalists and Ansar al-Islam. Their association with these groups confirms their positioning as enemies of the West, which is reinforced by the presence of words such as *guerrilla, militants, insurgents and terrorists.* Little is revealed about their origins, demographics or motivations, while their involvement and impact in the US-led wars in these countries is not described as being significant given the small numbers they represent, as evident in instances when their numbers are counted, namely, as *hundreds, 99* or *20* or being described as "not huge a number." Such limited information on foreign fighters in the years between 2001-2007 reveals its relative insignificance within Canadian news media's reporting of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

From 2008-2012, words denoting national origins begin to emerge, indicating foreign fighters from neighboring countries such as *Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Turkey, Pakistan and Morocco.* An association with al Qaeda remains predominant as well as a few mentions of membership to al-Shabab, an al Qaeda-affiliated group based in East Africa. Moreover, words indicating their growth in numbers appear more frequently, as they are now said to number in the *thousands,* as well as being described as a *mass influx* and a *growing threat.* Words such as *jihadist* and *mujahideen* begin to appear in sentences from 2010, signaling the increased severity of their goals as being primarily religious, as opposed to earlier descriptions that rooted them in ideo-political conflicts by associating them with organized groups such as al Qaeda and Saddam loyalism.

In the final three years of this sample, namely, from 2013-2016, words denoting foreign fighters' qualities broaden not only in quantity, but quality as well. The breadth of terms revealing the complexity with which foreign fighters are treated indicates how representations of foreign fighters have shifted from a byproduct of post 9/11 transnational wars to a multifaceted phenomenon with considerably graver consequences, mainly due to their return. In other words, discussion of their return - which is non-existent in sentences from the previous years - emerge in abundance here, demonstrating how the foreign fighter issue begins to be framed as a full-fledged global phenomenon given its social and legal impact on the Western nations that receive them back. Its re-framing as a phenomenon is relayed in the terms that denote quantity (*from 74 countries, 12,000, 15,000, 25,000, 30,000, 100 countries*), which depict the foreign fighter movement as being considerably more robust than previous years. Moreover, the origins of the fighters appear with more frequency. More significantly, this period contains the highest concentration of the words *Canada/Canadian(s)* and *Western,* as well as nominal indications of

the fighters' European origins (*Western European, French, British, German)*. However, the use of the more general term "Western" functions primarily as a reference point to indicate that Canada is among other Western nations having to grapple with this issue, whereby the majority of these "origin" words refer to foreign fighters as Canadians.

A salient observation to be made regarding these "qualities" words is an emphasis on the foreign fighter movement as a macro issue of a socio-political nature. This is evidenced in the frequency of terms indicating more multi-worded identity markers, such as: *extremist traveller, residents of Canada, foreign recruits, Islamic extremists, global terrorists, Canadian jihadists, foreign terrorist fighter, Canadian Khorasan members* or *citizens of visa-exempt countries in Europe.* The incidence of such terms containing two or more adjectives and nouns indicates a growing interest in exploring two key dimensions of the foreign fighter phenomenon, namely: their repercussion on a systemic level (seen in words such as *lone wolf, serious threat, security challenge, legal situation* and *conundrum*); as well as a concern for the conditions that have shaped their roles as foreign fighters (seen in words describing their psychological states, such as *traumatized, disillusioned, disappointed, feeling of exclusion, radicalized* and *Generation 9/11*).

Recurring words denoting *what* foreign fighters are *doing*

For the second stage of lexical collocation analysis, I initially sought out words indicating actions committed by foreign fighters to uncover what they are described as doing. As such, the majority of the words screened consisted of verbs. Surprisingly, however, words describing acts specifically committed by fighters were not as numerous as verbs describing authorities' actions *to* or *in response to* foreign fighters. This is, to a large degree, to be expected given that Canadian journalists who report on events are relying on third-party sources to inform them of foreign fighters' involvement in conflicts. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the prevalence of terms related to state authorities confirms the trend in describing how state leaders address the foreign fighter issue. For this reason, my original criteria of analysis was broadened to include verbs describing acts in reaction to foreign fighters, which ultimately provided a richer set of answers to the larger question of how foreign fighters are described by Canadian news media. The table below lists words found in the sentences denoting such words of "action," organized chronologically.

Table 2

Words denoting what foreign fighters do, in chronological order

2001	buried, killed or taken alive, fighting, attacked, met, pushed back, trapped, surrender, escape, wounded, appearing, brought in, arriving, resisting, show up, attracted, endured
2002	Encountered, qualify, seeking refuge, to be eliminated
2003	being searched, believed bombing, blamed for blasts, intent on targeting, harboured, supported, coming in, joined, entering, seek to install, coordinating, launch deadly attacks
2004	to be handed over, blamed, suicide missions, car bombs, captured, rounded up, blamed for bombing, held, killed, suspected violence, plotting attacks, sparking war
2005	using, consolidate, expanding, training, fortifying alliances, infiltrating, sneaking, smuggled, to be rooted out, crossing, entering, waging, split
2006	fighting, retreating, using, organize themselves, training against, not being let to come, infiltrating, recruited
2007	turned over
2008	flocked, fight, killed, smuggled, filled, lured
2009	arriving, joined al-Shabaab, harboured
2010	might take up arms, may be sent home, returning, armed, orchestrate domestic attacks, holed up, seeking to fight
2013	joined, continue, return from Syria, make up, took part, commit act of terror, thinking, prosecuted

2014	put under surveillance, being recruited, being tracked, returned, punished, been to, join, return, launch attacks, join, travelled, join, recruited, lead external attacks, tracked, prevent from being fooled, killed, to die, aligning, lured, pose, overwhelmed, suspected, fighting, being recruited, to be clamped down, took to, signalling, had survived, flee, attempt to return, not yet left, intended to travel, enlist as, returning, be allowed, come home, be monitored, placed in, used as, going to, joining, behead, flocking to, return home, wreak havoc, renounce violence, prevented from returning, want to contribute, prefer to stay, die, becoming, return, are affiliated, end up, allied, to invade, occupy, has become, stoking fears, could return, left
2015	have become, have travelled, suspected, intent on going, developing, using, disguise, being monitored, returned home, being identified, being studied, flowed into, originating, been taking part, may be trying to slip back, joined, attempting to flee, return, be encountered, joined, be encountered, may grow, flee, complaining, being treated, be executed, had attempted to leave, did not report, attempting to flee, have left, deciding, had expected, leaving, join, be received, be delivered, join, be brought in, being stopped, turn against, be contained, be contained, travelling, engage in, being helped, get into, being tracked, being recruited, trained and tasked, conduct, being talent-spot, arriving, being identified, being trained, being deployed back, take part in, travelled to, strike, be encountered, trained, joining, being gone forward on, be investigated, have left, being trained, to be stopped from joining, been killed, had been killed, identified himself, using that name, confirmed
2016	believed to have joined, being encountered, been prosecuted, returning from, return to, able to leave, to prosecute, have returned, being monitored, contained, be rehabilitated, prove useful, preventing others, able to talk, being stopped, being studied, gone to,
	joining, being foreseen, being understood, intent on committing crimes, believed to be based in, being braced for, trigger, being prepared for, being dealt with, being researched, being investigated, facing dangers, being examined, being addressed, being punished, being driven, delivering, being interviewed, being responded to, taking of land, holding of cities, being studied

In attempting to trace a pattern, one can observe a clear distinction between verbs from the years before and following the year 2010. Verbs appearing in sentences from the years 2001-2009 contain no mention of *returning* foreign fighters, but instead reveal instances of foreign fighters arriving to conflict-ridden regions, as seen in terms such as *brought in, arrival, show up, entering* as well as less neutral words connoting prohibited entrance such as *infiltrating* and *sneaking.* Moreover, through the progression of years from 2001 to 2009, foreign fighters are positioned as an increasing cause for concern, growing as a threat as the years go by. This is illustrated by the shift from early terms such as *buried, killed or taken alive, attacked, pushed back, trapped, surrender, escape, wounded, resisting, endured, seeking refuge* to terms such as *launch deadly attacks, sparking war, waging, organize themselves* and *joined al-Shabaab*. As such, terms from the years 2001 to 2009 reveal that foreign fighters are undoubtedly attributed with enemy status, whereby descriptions of their acts are conflated with terrorist activity. This observation is consistent with the earlier discovery of *who foreign fighters are* from early sentences in which they are described interchangeably with terrorist groups such as al Qaeda and the Taliban.

A prominent shift in discussion emerges in the verbs or action terms found in sentences from the year 2010, in which mentions of return begin to appear. As such, 2010 marks the year in which the thread of discussions concerning foreign fighters begins to shift to concerns raised by their return. Between the years 2010 to 2014, their imminent threat is articulated in numerous instances such as: *orchestrate domestic attacks, put under surveillance, lead external attacks, be monitored, wreak havoc.* As of 2015, however, the number and variety of terms begins increasing to include descriptions of acts that are considerably more nuanced in their portrayal of the foreign fighters. It is worth nothing that this level of nuance is consistent with the pattern observed of words describing who foreign fighters are, which also begins at the 2014-2015 mark. Particularly in 2015 and 2016, terms of action are largely devoid of violence. Rather, returning foreign fighters are described in terms that connote escape, failure and ultimately, powerlessness. This is seen in the following few examples of many: *being talent-spot, being trained, being tracked, being recruited, being monitored.* As evidenced by these examples, a noteworthy pattern that emerges from these last two years is the preponderance of verbs indicating acts committed *to* foreign fighters, - describing things being done *to them* - which portrays them as passive recipients of external factors, in contrast to verbs/action terms from the previous years in which they are attributed with terrorist violence. In deciphering what foreign fighters are described as doing, we can surmise that usage of the term "foreign fighter" has

evolved in its contextualization in recent years. Namely, it becomes framed as an issue that merits considerably more attention urgent public deliberation than it has been granted in previous years, precisely due to their return to Western societies and the risk they likely pose.

Framing: Detecting Bias and Slant within News Language

Entman (2007) contests the commonly-held notion spearheaded by Cohen (1963) that the media is considerably more influential in its ability to convince people what to think *about,* rather than *what to think* (my italics). Instead, Entman argues that the media does play a significant role in shaping a public's opinions on the topics it prioritizes where, either in deference or resistance to powerful political actors, media organizations implement framing tactics to produce texts that sway in favor of a given political stance. In other words, "'telling people what to think about' is how one exerts political influence in non-coercive political systems" (Entman, 2007, p. 165). Entman identifies two key ways in which the media achieves this, namely through bias and slant. He distinguishes them by identifying slant as "*framing* [that] *favors one side over the other in a current or potential dispute"* (original italics, p. 165) whereas bias - less explicit in its manifestation- is defined as "*consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication that promote the influence of one side in conflicts over the use of government power*" (original italics, p. 166).

Drawing from my examination of how foreign fighters are framed by Canadian news from the years 2000 to 2016, one can detect bias in the pattern of words uncovered; a bias that reveals a favorable stance on solutions that are carceral in nature, prioritizing surveillance, containment and prosecution. The absence of terms indicating rehabilitation as well as the curious scarcity of terms denoting radicalization (with a mere total of 4 mentions in the category of terms denoting who foreign fighters are) raises the question as to why the psychological process involved in becoming a foreign fighter is largely neglected within these sentences' explicit description of foreign fighters - particularly in coverage in the later years, between 2014-2016 - when foreign fighters are already depicted as powerless but potentially dangerous entities.

Radicalization, as multiple scholars affirm, involves a slow process of careful grooming in favor of extreme views, which reaffirms the extent to which external factors shape an individual in the midst of being brainwashed. These external factors, however, are hardly - if at all - accounted for in the collocated words surrounding the term "foreign fighter." Instead, words that prevail include those that pertain to what Watts (2009) calls the Global Foreign Fighter "production

pipeline" (p. 1-2), which comprise stages that foreign fighters cross through to reach their penultimate goals, namely: 1) Recruitment of potential members in what he dubs "flashpoint cities;" 2) Travel to "safe haven" locations for additional indoctrination and training; and 3) Travel to a final destination to plot attacks (p. 2-3). Accordingly, the most recurrent examples of words that appear in this chapter's analysis involve words denoting recruitment, training, travel and plotting attacks. In their framing of foreign fighters, journalists disproportionately focus on qualities and verbs that pertain to these stages, whereby in doing so, they reveal what Watts has identified as Western states' insufficient approach to thwarting terrorist attacks. While Watts soundly argues in favor of counter-terrorism strategies that focus significantly more on the recruitment phase, I argue that as much - if not more - attention must be also be spent on the processes leading up to recruitment, where radicalization begins.

As the observations of this chapter illustrate, concerns over the circumstantial factors leading up to a foreign fighter's journey are largely left unexplored, in favor of descriptions that vaguely convey their impact and involvement in violent events as well as state authorities' handling of them after the fact. Key information on their demographics including countries of origin are largely nonexistent until the later years of news coverage, in which focus shifts substantially to the discussion of returning Western - particularly Canadian - foreign fighters. The chapter that follows will uncover how the discussion of foreign fighters unravels in the subsequent year, through an analysis of two video clips featured in two online news articles on the Canadian Broadcast Channel (CBC). The videos in question feature some of the most prominent Canadian politicians - including the leaders from the two major parties - engaging in a rhetorical match in the House of Commons on the most pressing subject in response to the return of foreign fighters - namely, what to do with them?

Chapter 2: Flashpoint Events

Introduction

Examining and contextualizing two video-recorded flash point events that have provoked public outcry on the issue of returning foreign fighters is essential to understanding how their return to Canada initiated a dialogue on national interests and a collective consciousness of borders. Throughout this chapter, these videos are understood and referred to as flash points - namely, as events that have sparked volatile reactions amidst politicians, media representatives and members of the public. Their reference as flash points is due to their role as a starting point into the larger, public and publicized debate of appropriate measures to address the return of foreign fighters. Among the media elements examined in this chapter, these two videos - which feature two of the most publicly prominent politicians in Canada advancing their opposing stances on the matter - constitute the first of such elements. In other words, the videos introduce the return of foreign fighters as a media-worthy event deserving of public scrutiny, provoking responses in the form of the two CBC articles in which each video is embedded and discussed, and the public comments they elicited from readers (a topic I turn to in Chapter 3).

The videos unpacked in this chapter consist of two short clips of separate, longer events that have sparked incendiary reactions among Canadians who express an overwhelming skepticism of the merits of rehabilitation. Each video is featured in an article published online by the Canadian Broadcast Channel (CBC), with the first video embedded in Evan Dyer's article, "'Canada does not engage in death squads,' while allies actively hunt down their own foreign fighters:' Government estimates more than 200 Canadians have been 'terrorist travellers,'" published on November 17, 2017. The second video is embedded in Peter Zimonjic's article "Justin Trudeau tells Hamilton town hall Canadians can feel safe despite returning ISIS fighters," published on January 10, 2018. Both video clips capture snapshots (under 4 minutes) of larger formal conversations between the leaders of the two major parties in Canada, and between the Prime Minister and the Canadian public. The first video featuring the clip of Scheer and Trudeau arguing about returning ISIS fighters at the House of Commons has received roughly 122,000 views on YouTube and is the first result that appears when entering the keywords "trudeau scheer isis" (in any order) on YouTube's search tab, which indicates that it is the most popular video-recorded event to capture the politicians' conflicting views on the issue of returning ISIS fighters. Moreover,

the video is titled “Scheer Hammers Trudeau’s Welcoming of ISIS to Canada” and has been uploaded by a personal YouTube user. The second video clip in question, which specifically captures Trudeau’s discussion of returning fighters at the Town Hall meeting in Hamilton, is part of a larger video of the entire event streamed live and uploaded by CBC News’ official YouTube channel.

When entering the search terms “trudeau town hall isis,” there is another video uploaded by a user that contains this segment as well, titled “Justin Trudeau Cavalierly Calls Returning ISIS Fighters “Foreign Travellers” and “Folks.” As is evident, both video titles are loaded with a predetermined disdain for Trudeau and his implied lenient approach to foreign fighters by claiming that he is “welcoming of ISIS” and through his casual reference to returning fighters as “travellers” and “folks,” omitting any reference to their criminality. Given the limited scope of this thesis, this chapter will not examine the ostensible conservative (or simply anti-liberal or anti-Trudeau) bias evident in the lists of video titles that appear when entering the search terms “trudeau scheer isis” and “trudeau town hall isis,” to find the pertinent clips.

As mentioned previously, the first of these two videos showcases a debate between Conservative party leader Andrew Scheer and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the pressing issue of Canadian ISIS fighters returning from Syria, Iraq or Turkey, which took place at the House of Commons on November 28th, 2017. This video contains an excerpt of the longer, complete exchange between members of the Government (the Liberal Party of Canada) - and members of the Opposition (the Conservative Party of Canada). In tune with the subject of the article, the two minutes and seven seconds-long video clip captures the discussion concerning returning foreign fighters, featuring party leaders Andrew Scheer and Justin Trudeau addressing the Speaker of the House of Commons. In addition to the leaders, MPs seen briefly addressing the Speaker include Conservative Michelle Rempel and Ralph Goodale, the Liberal Government’s Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Clad in formal business attire, the MPs and party leaders are framed in medium-shots, facing the Speaker, with their backs to the other seated MPs affiliated with their respective party. The entire clip is edited in the following order: Scheer speaks; Trudeau retorts; Rempel speaks; and Goodale speaks.

The second video contains the caption “The Prime Minister held his second town hall of the year in Hamilton” and also captures a snippet of a longer exchange between Trudeau and attendees of a town hall meeting in Hamilton. Here, Trudeau is seen pacing back and forth with a

microphone in hand, answering town hall audience members' questions. Unlike the first video, Trudeau's apparel reflects the relaxed and more casual atmosphere of the exchange - with no suit coat in sight, his white dress-shirt sleeves are rolled up to his elbows. The faces of what appears to be a fairly young audience - the town hall was on McMaster University's campus grounds – are visible in the background.

The first of the two videos is significant for two primary reasons: 1) it reignited panic surrounding the threat of potential terrorist attacks following a string of recent incidents that are related to ISIS and that resulted in the death of Canadians, namely: the 2014 St-Jean-sur-Richelieu attack where Martin Couture-Rouleau drove his car into two Canadian Armed Forces soldiers; the 2014 Parliament Hill shooting in Ottawa where Michael Zehaf-Bibeau initiated a shooting spree beginning at the National War Memorial and ending at Parliament Hill; the 2016 Aaron Driver attack in which Driver was shot to death by the police after a failed bomb detonation in London, Ontario; the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting, where Alexandre Bissonnette stormed into the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City on a shooting spree targeting worshipping Muslims; and the 2017 Edmonton attack in which Adbulahi Sharif rammed two separate vehicles into a police constable and four pedestrians; and 2) it encapsulates a symbolic tension between a Conservative approach to counter-terrorism that is more punitive in nature, as opposed to a Liberal approach that is tailored to prevention and disengagement of violence. The second of the two video clips features Trudeau at a Town Hall Meeting in Hamilton, on January 9th, 2018, and captures him addressing an audience member's question about Canadian security pertaining to returning fighters. This clip is essential in that it features the added dimension of a dynamic exchange between a vocal audience and their leader, providing us with a glimpse of Canadians' perspective on the government's handling of national security. Both of these video clips merit close examination due to their revelation of how politicians draw on - or contest - a legacy of post 9/11 paranoia around national security and Islamic terrorism.

Canada's Involvement in the War on Terror

What these two video-recorded flash points share in common is that they both feature Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau responding to the controversial impending return of foreign fighters from Syria. Notably, both of these videos reveal Trudeau reassuring Canadians that they are safe in spite of the fighters' return due to two primary reasons: 1) the number of these returning fighters is manageable, and 2) they are being subject to surveillance. These two

justifications emerge out of a post-9/11 context, which constitutes the bedrock shaping the way in which the flash points in question have unfolded. In other words, although on opposite ends of the debate, both Trudeau and Scheer's responses are informed by the Canadian government's hawkish response to terrorism. This is reified by the Public Safety Canada website, outlining the nation's response under its publication titled "Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada's Counter-terrorism Strategy" where the very first sentence of the foreword explicitly references the far-reaching consequences of 9/11, stating: "The events of September 11, 2001 changed the way the world viewed terrorism."

These videos thus reveal the extent to which Canada draws on a post-9/11 legacy characterized by a rhetoric of concern for national security and a widespread sentiment of fear elicited by the threat of terrorism. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, since the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a growing body of scholars (Kellner, 2004; Mann, 2006; Gadarian, 2010) have exposed American broadcast media's complicity in playing into the hand of the Bush administration's construction of a War on Terror. As its closest geographical ally, Canada has accepted and abetted this narrative. Wilner (2013) observes that in spite of being an economic leader in the world, Canada has never really expressed independent views or developed policies regarding the political turmoil that has unfolded in the Middle East North Africa region unless a particular event threatens to undermine Canadian interests or that of our closest ally. Wilner further argues that although political Islam has a long and complex history that predates the early 21st century, 9/11 was the event that catalyzed Canadians' familiarity with it, where Canada could no longer merely observe what subsequently unfolded in the Middle East, but came at the crosshairs of their political affairs (Wilner, 2013, p. 56).

Canada's first such geopolitical implication manifested itself in the war in Afghanistan, where the Canadian government drafted 2,500 members of the Canadian Armed Forces with the primary aim of "combatting Taliban, destroying al Qaeda, and establishing a viable and indigenous democratic system that could effectively inoculate Afghans against militant Islamist ideologies" (Wilner, 2013, p. 59). Although there have been multiple public attacks of a terrorist nature affecting Canadians prior to 9/11, the first potential attack related to Islamic extremism that likely inspired a widespread awareness of domestic terrorism was the "Toronto 18" terrorist plot, which was thwarted by authorities in 2006 and led to 11 members being prosecuted (Miller and Sack, 2010). There have since been multiple high-profile attacks across the country perpetrated by

radicalized Muslims and an anti-Muslim, to date.

To address its own concerns for national security, the Canadian Government has since drafted multiple policies, acts and regulations in the name of protecting Canadians. However, none of these have been as controversial as the *Anti-terrorism Act 2015,* - commonly known as Bill C-51 - proposed and implemented by Harper's conservative government on February of 2015, a law put in place to facilitate the sharing of Canadians' private information between government institutions and agencies for the purpose of detecting and thwarting potential terrorist threats. More specifically, this act grants the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) additional surveillance powers, allowing them to "monitor, track and even pre-emptively disrupt the activities of suspected terrorists and terrorist sympathizers" which ultimately lowers the threshold of proof for arrests or detainment of potential suspects (McGregor and O'Malley, 2015). Many journalists, academics and lawmakers have criticized the act for its erosion of Canadians' privacy, for undermining Canadians' freedom of religious or ideological expression, for its vague definition of what constitutes "suspected terrorists" (which may include activists legitimately criticizing institutional or state abuses such as environmentalists or members of Indigenous groups protesting pipelines), as well as for potentially targeting members possessing specific demographic traits particularly Muslim men.

The Anti-terrorism Act 2015 has purportedly been drafted in response to homegrown terrorist attacks, specifically in response to the Martin Couture-Rouleau attack, and two days later in a separate incident, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau's shooting spree in Parliament Hill. Then Prime Minister Stephen Harper tied this attack to the larger threat elicited by ISIS, characterizing it as a manifestation of "violent jihadism." The main motivations of these attacks, he adds, consist of "no other reason than that we are Canadians. They want to harm us because they hate our society and the values it represents" (McGregor and O'Malley, 2015). However, as journalist Glenn Greenwald observes, whether or not these incidents fall under the commonly understood definition of terrorism is questionable given that their perpetrators don't target innocent civilians in a public space but rather single out targets that explicitly convey allegiance to the Canadian military (Greenwald, 2014). Moreover, Harper's statements and the immediate consensus of labelling these attacks as being of a "terrorist nature" reinforces the notion that the violence is unequivocally rooted in jihadist ideology, which detracts from the perpetrators' declining mental health conditions leading up to their attacks as an equally plausible explanation.

Framing Canadian foreign fighters' allegiance to ISIS as an affront to Canadian values has

been cemented into Bill C-51. Given that ISIS has taken credit for both Couture-Rouleau and Bibeau's attacks, it is fair to observe that Bill C-51 was a response to ISIS-inspired homegrown terrorism lurking within Canada, and that in its aim to protect Canadians' security *and* values, it has set the tone for Canadians' views on returning foreign fighters, namely, that these returnees are compromising these two issues for Canadians. The video-recorded flash point events that are examined in this chapter bring the current Prime Minister's unpopular alternative position - and, by extension, that of the current Liberal Party of Canada's - into sharp relief.

To elaborate, the Trudeau government's stance on returning foreign fighters involves plans of close monitoring and rehabilitation to prevent them from reoffending and to allow them to reintegrate into society, a position which is in stark opposition to the views of the vast majority of Canadians polled by a Nanos survey[2] who believe that prosecution is the best recourse. The support for prosecution is also supported by some members of the academic community who are vocal about the larger implications of holding returning fighters accountable. For instance, Kyle Matthews from the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University, insists on Canada's responsibility to abide by internationally-sanctioned humans rights conventions that call for the punishment of criminals for their participation in crimes against humanity including genocide, which ISIS has been accused of committing against Yazidis (Matthews, 2018). Moreover, Matthews expresses doubt in the returnees' potential for rehabilitation and reintegration, stating that policies and laws that address this return should not be complacent about their affiliation with ISIS, but rather seek to bring them to justice.

Decoding the Videos

While the first of the videos reveals Conservative party and opposition leader Andrew Scheer echoing Matthews' points, we can also observe the extent to which Scheer draws on a "civilized versus barbaric" binary that is reminiscent of Harper's strait-laced response to the threat of terrorism. This 2 minute and 32 second clip, which took place in a House of Commons meeting, reveals a heated exchange between Conservative party leader Andrew Scheer and Prime Minister Trudeau, on the topic of returning Canadian ISIS fighters where the former accuses the latter of being "so focused on reintegration and not putting these people in jail." This accusation of prioritizing reintegration over incarceration comprises the essence of the entire exchange, with

[2] A majority of Canadians prioritize prosecution over rehabilitation for individuals suspected of jihadist involvement, National survey released December, 2017, Project 2017-1113C

Trudeau addressing Scheer's questions on the nature and motivations of his government's proposed "reintegration services."

Throughout their exchange on the matter of returning fighters, Scheer and Trudeau directly face and address the Speaker. In this respect, the Speaker symbolically substitutes the presence of all Canadians as each party leader seeks to make their case either for surveillance and rehabilitation or prosecution and incarceration. The transcript of this exchange is as follows:

Conservative leader Andrew Scheer:

> Mr. Speaker ISIS terrorists are criminals who fought against our country but they are now being welcomed back to Canada by the Prime Minister with the promise of reintegration services to help them. Now Canadians are shocked and alarmed that their government is not taking any steps to protect them. This is the number one job of any government. So will the Prime Minister standing today tell us exactly how many ISIS fighters have returned to Canada and how many of those are currently in jail or under government surveillance.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau:

> Mr. Speaker one of the top priorities of any government is to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. and we ensure that everyday. Our national security agencies are combating the phenomenon of Canadians participating in terrorist activities overseas. We use a number of tools to address the threat posed by these individuals including the Passenger Protect program, cancelling, revoking or refusing passports and laying criminal charges. Our national security agencies are carefully monitoring these individuals and our law enforcement agencies do the difficult work of collecting evidence required for convictions in Canadian courts.

Scheer:

> Mr. Speaker these are people who got on a plane to fight for ISIS and watched as our allied soldiers were burned to death in a cage. These are people who got on a plane to go fight for an organization that sells women and girls into slavery. These are people who left Canada to go and fight for a group of people who push homosexuals off of buildings just for being gay. So can the prime minister explain to the House exactly what kind of a

program of reintegration service would look like for the people who commit these kinds of atrocities?

Trudeau:

Mr. Speaker we take very seriously the protection of Canadians and will continue to. We also continue to carefully monitor trends in extremist travel and in our national security agencies work together to ensure our response reflects the current threat environment. We recognize the return of even one individual may have serious national security implications but we have launched the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence which helps ensure resources are in place to facilitate disengagement from violent ideologies in particular children who return from conflict zones require tailored support.

What this exchange reveals is a tension between Trudeau listing existing measures that address the threat of radicalization and terrorism on the one hand, and Scheer describing acts that pander to a predefined sense of morality, on the other. While the former provides information to reassure, the latter resorts to examples that elicit shock, with the purpose of galvanizing support for the hasty prosecution of returning fighters. The contrast between the two arguments embodies what Chapnick (2005) describes as key differences between liberal and conservative values. According to Chapnick, what he dubs "small-c conservatives" are:

> ...less confident in humankind's potential. They believe that emotion and irrational impulses are powerful and potentially destructive forces in society. Consequently, they feel comfortable granting states significant powers of intervention into the lives of their citizens. To conservatives, society must be understood as a collective whole, as opposed to the liberal "aggregation of individuals." They believe strongly in interdependence: all persons work and live together within a "natural hierarchy" which must remain relatively stable and controlled. (p. 638)

Chapnick's salient observations on the values that underpin contemporary conservatives' approach to social issues, are echoed here by Scheer in his rebuttals to the prime minister. Within what Chapnick calls the "natural hierarchy" of citizens, returning fighters belong to the bottom tier of the echelon and are a threat to the "collective whole" of society for their support of "acts of

atrocities." Such a conservative model of understanding human behavior is sustained by solutions focused on retributive justice, with the understanding that the "irrational impulses" leading up to criminality must be suppressed via incarceration. Moreover, Scheer's mention of pushing "homosexuals off of buildings just for being gay" invokes Puar's concept of homonationalism, in which queer bodies function as "ammunition" to bolster support for nationalist projects (p. 39), wherein acceptance of queerness functions as a barometer to determine a society's degree of progressiveness.

A cursory glance at the various titles of news articles featuring and/or discussing the video of this exchange or its critiques appears to indicate that it has been widely circulated in a manner that frames Scheer as striking a verbal offensive at Trudeau, and positioning him as advancing the more reasonable argument in a polarized debate. This is illustrated in titles such as "Scheer blasts Liberals [sic] plan for Canada's returning ISIS fighters" (Global News, October 15, 2018) or "COMMENTARY: On returning ISIS fighters Trudeau has a script. But he doesn't have a clue" (Charles Adler, Global News, November 23, 2017). As these headlines may provide a glimpse into many, if not most, Canadians' feelings on the matter, Trudeau's tools to address the threat of homegrown terrorism and returning foreign fighters appear undermined. These tools and measures include the following, in order of mention: The Passenger Protect Program; cancelling, revoking or refusing passports; surveillance; collecting sufficient evidence for prosecution and conviction; and rehabilitation through the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence.

The Caveats of Prosecution: What is left out of the debate

While Scheer and his party members reserve their support exclusively for prosecution and conviction, it is the most difficult avenue to seek out due to the challenge of collecting sufficient incriminating evidence beyond indications of radicalization[3]. The disavowal of this condition for conviction is later displayed by another Conservative MP, Michelle Rempel, who, weeks later, during a debate in the House of Commons on December 11, 2018, accuses Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale and the Liberal Government of falling short on their responsibility of protecting Canadians from returning fighters by stating that "It's their job to keep Canadians safe, not to respect the feelings or poetry lessons of ISIS terrorists. When will this government get serious and

[3] United Nations, Guidance to States: On Human-Rights Compliant Responses to the Threat Posed by Foreign Fighters, p. 38

lock up these genocidal maniacs?" (Tunney, 2018). During this debate, Rempel's suggestions for keeping Canadians safe involves loosening legislation to allow law enforcement to "get these people behind bars where they belong." Locking up these "genocidal maniacs," however, doesn't prove to be an easy task, as reported by the latest public terrorist report released by the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in December 2018, which explains that the lack of any new court proceedings for prosecution is hindered by the arduous process of collecting admissible evidence from overseas.

Moreover, a question that politicians, both Conservative and otherwise, often fail to address is the question of what would ensue once accused terrorists *do* find themselves behind bars? To what extent does serving time extinguish one's radicalization and prevent additional cases from developing? Ultimately, Rempel's statements ring hollow and feign ignorance at previous instances in which Canadian security officials' lowered standards of admissible evidence resulted in gross miscarriages of justice targeting Muslim and/or Arab men. A prominent example lies in the cases of Muayyed Nureddin, Abdullah Almalki and Ahmad Elmaati, who - only a year prior to Rempel's comments - were compensated close to $31.3 million in settlements over wrongful accusation of links to al-Qaeda following travels to their native countries in the Middle East, leading to their torture and detainment in Syrian jails with the knowledge and indirect involvement of CSIS and the RCMP ("Ottawa pays $31.3M to Canadian men tortured in Syria Social Sharing," 2017). In tandem with what Mahrouse (2009) argues about the racial hierarchy that is inherent in Canadian citizenship, this instance of grave injustice (among the others mentioned below) indicates how the *Canadianness* of these men dissolves into oblivion in light of their Arabo-Muslim identities made explicit through their personal links to conflict zones (see also, Dhamoon and Abu-Laban, 2009). Canada is often positioned as a relatively progressive Western nation for operating a carceral system that abides by more humanistic modes of punishment. Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) argue, however, that politicians have merely paid lip service to implementing rehabilitation while punishment has been the dominant model for imprisonment. Monaghan (2013) affirms this, arguing that Canada's newly adopted "tough on crime" approach ironically justifies the use of surveillance and inhumane modes of discipline (such as employing solitary confinement or supporting torture to extract information) as a "civilizing process" in the name of eradicating pre-modern barbarism (p. 6).

Moreover, the more egregious options that other Western states such as Australia, the UK

and France have resorted to, such as keeping fighters outside of borders (via expulsion or denial of entry) as well as the revocation of citizenship, violate International Human Rights laws established by The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights), to ultimately protect against statelessness. Among other states, the Canadian Government had also asserted - under Bill C-24 - that individuals convicted of terrorism may be subject to having their Canadian citizenship revoked should they be dual citizens. Due to extensive criticism highlighting the hypocrisy of distinguishing between two different types of citizenship and its violation of the *Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* (Forcese, 2014, p. 553), this provision has since been repealed on June 19, 2017, resulting in Bill C-6, which states that "Dual citizens living in Canada who are convicted of these crimes will face the Canadian justice system, like other Canadian citizens who break the law.[4]" As Scheer insists on the Liberal Government revealing "how many ISIS fighters have returned to Canada and how many of those are currently in jail or under government surveillance," his support for heightened surveillance or incarceration is in line with the amendment to Bill C-24, which now decrees that returning fighters face legal consequences.

Employing Nationalist Rhetoric to Dismiss Rehabilitation

Of the solutions Trudeau proposes in this debate, the most contentious proposition consists of rehabilitation. The first federally-sanctioned attempt at such an initiative was seen in the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence, which was launched in 2017. Housed under Public Safety Canada, its website outlines several mandates that the Centre aims to fulfill, including: strategizing the federal government's involvement in preventing radicalization, funding intervention programs, supporting local, community-based efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate those who wish to abandon extremism, and developing a catalogue of "action-oriented" research[5]. However, a careful perusal of the Canada Centre's website reveals that its objectives as well as the bulk of its resources are geared towards *prevention* of radicalization leading to violence, and eventually terrorist attacks. Contrary to what Trudeau implies in his counterarguments concerning the purpose of the Centre, there are, in fact, vague - if any - mentions of rehabilitative resources for returning fighters who have *already* been radicalized. Moreover, Trudeau's claim that rehabilitation programs are also tailored to "children who return from conflict zones" is

[4] Changes to the *Citizenship Act* as a Result of Bill C-6, Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2018/02/changes_to_the_citizenshipactasaresultofbillc-6.html
[5] Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence, Public Safety Canada

incongruous with the current reality of radicalized returning fighters, where most of them are presumed to be adults.

Setting aside discussions on the legal interventions to address the issue, the symbolic debate that is at the crux of this exchange reveals how politicians, particularly from the Conservative party, bring up national values to pander to Canadians' emotions. What is telling about this exchange, however, is that brief as it may be, both political leaders reiterate the need to protect quintessential Canadian values. In his first talking point for instance, Scheer begins by establishing that ISIS fighters of Canadian origin are symbolically stripped of their national identity by stating that "ISIS terrorists are criminals who fought against our country." The fighters' acts of treason is defined by their "getting on a plane" to join a terrorist organization that espouses and executes acts of barbarity, particularly against vulnerable members of society namely women and "homosexuals." Their return, he adds, is a source of anxiety and concern for Canadians on whose designated land returning fighters are (re)entering into. Scheer's two-part arguments implies the following: For one, his claims immediately construct these Canadian ISIS recruits as belonging to a discrete category of criminality of the lowest order, distinct from the rest of Canadians, as he omits any reference to their Canadian nationality, which undermines their being subjected to a fair trial under the Canadian justice system.

Smolash (2009) observes how Canada's reputation as a pacifist multicultural haven is belied by security authorities' unconstitutional handling of suspected terrorist threats, such as the Project Thread operation (2003) (see Odartey-Wellington, 2009) and the Toronto 18 plot (2006), on the basis of either dubious or outright false accusations of ties to terrorism. This myth, according to Smolash, positions Canada as an "innocent, rational-liberal national space that can then be threatened by a sense of incursion by 'irrational' and 'violent' others'" (2006, p. 749). Scheer advances this myth in his deliberate choice of mentioning ISIS' employment of violent misogyny and homophobia, by suggesting that those who support ISIS also align with them ideologically. However, Scheer's central argument - that the individuals drawn to such depravity are deserving of containment and isolation - doesn't account for the reality that the very process of radicalization, being as complex and multi-faceted as it has proven to be, has taken place within this very innocent and rational-liberal nation that espouses progressive values. In other words, the quintessential conservative position on homegrown terrorism has been steadfast in punishing its outcomes without expressing interest in understanding and thwarting its development.

In response to the impending threat of terrorism, another common tactic employed by

Conservative politicians and legitimated by the media consists of stoking fears and instilling a sense of paranoia about safety (Smolash, 2009). According to Jeffrees (2009), while the narrative of Canada as a peacekeeper-nation has persisted for a long time, this narrative has been maintained at the cost of burying other less-than palatable facts that cast a shadow on Canada, such as the fact that it is among the top fifteen weapons exporter in the world or that it has supported sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s (p. 711). Jeffrees adds, however, that this peacekeeping role took a sharp turn when the Canadian government (led by Prime Ministers from both major parties) mirrored the hardline rhetoric and outlook of the US-led War on Terror. This rhetoric cemented the divide between a rational-liberal West and violent Jihadis "who hate our society and the values it represents," as Harper had once announced, to bolster his party's ideological mandate for "strong national defence" (Foley, 2018, p. 212). This consequently mired many Canadians in a sense of paranoia in fear of impending terrorist attacks, despite the reality that the majority of the last series of (successfully executed) attacks in recent years was either not directed at the public, nor perpetrated by a radicalized ISIS recruit. Such a pressing need for a "strong national defence" is echoed by an audience member in the second video analyzed in this chapter, showcasing Trudeau answering questions at a Town Hall Meeting at McMaster University in Hamilton. The audience member in question, who identifies himself as Tim Gavin, asked the Prime Minister the following:

> My name is Tim Gavin. I've lived here in Hamilton off and on for all my life. I'm wondering, you say that you're concerned about the safety of Canadian citizens yet at the same time, you're trying to reintegrate all these ISIS fighters that have left and have taken part in horrible, horrible acts overseas. You want to bring them back to this country and reintegrate them into our Canadian society. You say you're concerned about our safety. I worked security a couple weeks ago at a Pamela Geller event and before anybody got into the building, their car was searched inside underneath, there was [sic] metal detectors, people were patted down as they came in the door. Nobody searched anyone as they were coming through the door here. Everybody's jackets were checked but nobody was patted down, no metal detectors were passed over anyone. Anybody could have brought anything in here, absolutely anything and you say that you're concerned and you have the best interests of Canadian security at heart but you can't even run half-decent security for this event here. How are you going to make sure we're all safe in your vision of Canada?

Trudeau answered his questions with the following response:

> On security, I take advice from the security experts. From the members of the RCMP, who are in charge of the Prime Minister's security and by extension, of the security of everyone in this room with me. On the issues of foreign travelers, I take advice from our intelligence agencies and security agencies who are very, very alert to the challenges of returning - of folks returning - returning terrorists, potential terrorists from the Middle East. To put things into perspective, cause you might sort of be under the impression that things have changed since the government has changed. The number of returning ISIS fighters or potential ISIS fighters that the previous government was aware of and monitoring numbered about 60 or so. There are currently about 60 folks that our intelligence and security services are keeping tabs on across this country. We are very alert and responsible about keeping Canadians safe, keeping our communities safe, and it's something that we will never compromise on and I can assure you sir you are very safe here in this room right now as everyone is, because I have tremendous confidence not just in the RCMP and our security services but I feel pretty good about being in a room full of Canadians.

Tim's concern for inadequate security measures at this town hall meeting reveals several things. For one, he is drawing a comparison between a niche event catering to those with extreme right-wing xenophobic views, featuring a provocative speaker – Pamela Geller, who is notorious for her anti- Muslim political activism – and a town hall meeting, open to members of the Canadian public. His main critique lies not only in the lack of additional measures taken to ensure security ("Nobody searched anyone as they were coming through the door here...nobody was patted down, no metal detectors were passed over anyone") as opposed to the Pamela Geller event in which "before anybody got into the building, their car was searched inside underneath, there was [sic] metal detectors, people were patted down as they came in the door;" but also – and most importantly, the lack of heightened affect, which reveals traces of a moral panic ("You say that you're concerned and you have the best interests of Canadian security at heart but you can't even run half- decent security for this event here"). In other words, Tim's concerns can translate into a request for a better performance of security, in which additional equipment and

invasive physical search entail "optimal security" to filter out low-key terrorists. The expectation for "better performed security" emanates from what Odartey-Wellington (2009) describes as a uniquely post-9/11 paranoia with a new form of "Muslim terrorism" - one that has shifted from an abstract conflict *elsewhere* into "a palpable threat that has the potential to infiltrate Western communities, a threat that the 9/11 Commission framed in its report as 'a new kind of terrorism'" (p. 28). In response to Tim's security concerns, Trudeau's assurance of "feel[ing] pretty good about being in a room full of Canadians" endorses the belief that Canadians are peaceful and level-headed, glossing over the issue that is at the forefront of this exchange: namely that some Canadians, particularly returning ISIS fighters of Canadian nationality, defy this paradigm.

Discourses of Public Security and Nation: How One Defines the Other

By drawing a connection between the prospect of reintegrating returning fighters and enforcing rigid security measures at public political events, this audience member intimates at the possibility that returning fighters may blend into such events - as well as into society at large - under the guise of re-assimilation with the intent of importing their propensity for violence in Canada. In connecting this larger issue to a local event, he not only seeks to expose Trudeau's ostensibly lax stance on dealing with returning ISIS fighters but is also implying disapproval at the anonymity of these fighters who, rather than being contained and isolated from the larger population, are free to roam about. Although expressed by a single individual, Tim's fears over the perceived anonymity and freedom of movement exercised by these fighters emanates from a broader emotional plane occupied by many Canadians who support - or simply refrain from contesting - legislation that justifies surveillance and limiting travel through measures such as the Passenger Protect Program for suspected terrorists. To be clear, the question at hand isn't whether or not returning fighters should be monitored or restricting from flying, leading up to either prosecution or rehabilitation; rather, the question that emerges is why the most vocal subset of Canadians online feel as though these measures are insufficient. What do their responses to these measures reveal about the public's evolving conception of security and how do politicians pander to their expectations?

Brodie (2009) discusses the way in which a word such as "security" is not only coded with multiple meanings, but also diffuses affect or its own "feel," whereby she argues that this feel has shifted at the turn of the 21st century, from capturing a concern with maintaining *social* security (in response to economic and social needs), to a concern that became "de-socialized and attached

to public safety and international geopolitical concerns" (p. 703). She draws attention to the ultimate function of security discourses among politicians as well as between them and the public:

> In particular, security discourses appear not as episodic responses to threats 'out there' but instead as integral to the processes of state formation, the cultivation of the idea of a national community, and the articulation and re-articulation of national subjectivities. (p. 692)

In other words, rhetorically speaking, an enunciation of security is foundational to the formation and strengthening of a nation-state. Brodie illustrates that a society's imagined conception of security has shifted from the postwar decades to the turn of the millennial as seen, for instance, in our climbing military spending that is currently at an all-time high[6]. Both the allocation of our tax dollars as well as the publicly enunciated priorities of fighting external threats demonstrate that Canada's security framework is peppered with paranoia and a naive understanding of criminality as comprising a "state of being" that can be locked up and contained from contagion, without acknowledging the multifaceted process and effects of radicalization.

This chapter has demonstrated how the expressed views of both Conservative party leader Andrew Scheer and the Town Hall audience member draw on populist reactions that seem reasonable at the outset (*if foreign fighters are capable of taking their radicalization one step further in allegiance to a group known for not only committing atrocities, but dramatizing them as well, then what is revealed about these foreign fighters, as citizens and moral beings?*) but which nonetheless perpetuate a moral panic over the Liberal government's inadequate performance of security. This chapter sparks the following additional questions: what government measures are considered adequate for Canadians to *feel* safe? How may this exchange incite Canadians to (re)conceptualize their overarching sense of justice, in which they negotiate the merits of either a rehabilitative or punitive approach? These lines of enquiry will be assessed in the following chapter, which unpacks how a number of online news readers take to two articles' comments section to convey their disagreement on the topic of rehabilitating returning Canadian fighters.

[6] Canada Military Expenditure, Trading Economics: https://tradingeconomics.com/canada/military-expenditure

CHAPTER 3: Decoding Public Outrage: An Assessment of Online Comments

Introduction

Assessing Canadian news media's framing of foreign fighters is essential to our understanding of the returning foreign fighter phenomenon, as it comprises a key facet of the public discourse surrounding the issue. However, an equally important facet worthy of examination consists of readers' reactions in response to such news articles. This chapter delves into everyday Canadians' expressed viewpoints on the topic of returning foreign fighters, narrowing its focus to the comments sections of two previously mentioned articles published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC): Evan Dyer's "'Canada does not engage in death squads,' while allies actively hunt down their own foreign fighters" published on November 17, 2017; and Peter Zimonjic's "Justin Trudeau tells Hamilton town hall Canadians can feel safe despite returning ISIS fighters" published on January 10, 2018. Out of numerous others, these articles were selected for three key reasons, among others: their timing, having been published shortly after official announcements of returning fighters were made; their content, in which they unpack whether or not rehabilitation is a viable solution for these returnees; and the abundance of responses that they have elicited from readers and viewers that number in the thousands. Examining the articles and their corresponding comments are essential in teasing out how members of the Canadian public articulate their conception of Canadian national identity. Accordingly, this chapter uncovers the connection between news construction and audience response, in which the comments are treated as a way of assessing general public opinion on the topic of returning foreign fighters.

Given that Chapter 1 of this thesis examines Canadian news articles published between the years 2000 and 2016, selecting articles following this time period allows us to discern the "cumulative effects" of Canadian readers' perceptions of the foreign fighter issue up until the following two years. Moreover, these two articles were published soon after news of the collapse of the Islamic State's occupation of parts of Syria and Iraq emerged so that each addresses the increasingly topical and incendiary subject of ISIS fighters returning to Canada. By exploring online users' responses to two news articles by the CBC pertaining to returning ISIS fighters on both the web and Twitter pages, this project critically analyzes audience responses to the return of "foreign fighters" to examine how the boundaries of national belonging are consolidated and secured when the Canadian body politic is threatened.

The CBC Articles

Dyer's article is titled "Canada does not engage in death squads,' while allies actively hunt down their own foreign fighters:' Government estimates more than 200 Canadians have been 'terrorist travellers.'" In its opening, Dyer informs readers of the UK's retributory approach to dealing with returning British foreign fighters by quoting the minister of international development, Rory Stewart who told a BBC journalist that "unfortunately the only way of dealing with them will be, in almost every case, to kill them." Dyer adds that several other countries, including the U.S., Australia and France, have followed suit with the exception of Canada, whose government has taken an approach involving "disengagement and reintegration support." The last third of Dyer's article hones in on what such disengagement and reintegration support may entail in a country with no prior history of such an initiative, as well as what its limitations may be.

The problematics that are proposed by the article are relatively straightforward, where the central argument unfolds as follows: Other governments are implementing draconian but necessary measures to eradicate foreign fighters to prevent the risk of "importing" jihadist threat; Canada is eschewing such measures as it dubs them "death squads;" the current Liberal government's focus lies instead on close surveillance, deradicalization and social reintegration; the success of such an approach, however, remains unclear and highly questionable because returning fighters are hardened "bitter-enders" and capable of outsmarting security forces. Dyer's line of argument, therefore, bolsters support for carrying out said "death squads." Moreover, framing Canada as the "odd one out" among a group of Western nations is reinforced in the article's headline, which positions Canada in opposition to its "allies [that] actively hunt down their own foreign fighters." Zimonjic's article is titled "Justin Trudeau tells Hamilton town hall Canadians can feel safe despite returning ISIS fighters: Trudeau earns standing ovation at McMaster University defending $10.5M payout to Omar Khadr." Although the discussion of returning fighters is but one topic among a few others, the article's headline (and subsequent comments) reveals that it is the most incendiary and contestable issue among the others brought up. In the article, Zimonjic provides an overview of Trudeau's town hall meeting on January 10, 2018 at McMaster University by summarizing Trudeau's responses to attendees' questions or comments. Topics of concern that are brought up include Omar Khadr's recent payout (Perkel, 2017), the deportation of Somali-Canadian Abdoul Abdi, and Canada-US relations.

Although the article is not suggestive of supporting alternative means of dealing with returning fighters, akin to Dyer's piece, it also opens with positioning Canada in contrast to its

allies with military presence in Iraq and Syria who are said to be "directly targeting their own ISIS fighters before they can return to their countries in the West." A noteworthy observation to be made is the sequence in which the issues appear, whereby the topic of returning fighters is followed by the Khadr payout, and then followed by the Abdi case - who, after coming to Canada as a child and living here for 18 years, is being deported to Somalia on the grounds of possessing a criminal record. This sequence is particularly telling precisely because these three issues were not brought up in that order during the town hall meeting (Zimonjic, 2018). For this reason, this sequence can be said to produce a thematic thread that links these wholly unrelated stories together - namely, one in which issues of Muslim men, criminality and border crossing (through permission of entry and compulsion to exit) become woven together. This thematic conflation manifests itself in a notable number of the comments examined in which displeasure over Khadr's payout is projected onto the issue of returning fighters, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The encoded meanings in each article

Hall's (1980) model of encoding/decoding communication becomes a useful tool to discern how the news construction of foreign fighters in these two articles informs public interpretations on the issue. Hall specifies that although encoding and decoding are two distinct phases within the production of media messages, they are intertwined within the circuit of news production. He adds that at the "'point of departure for the realization' of the message" (p. 165) - which in this case, lies in the process at which an article is being written and edited - messages need to be encoded in the form of "meaningful discourse" (p. 165) because the very consumption of news is predicated on its audience' ability to extract meaning. In other words, a "'raw' historical event" becomes a story "before it can become a *communicative event*" (original italics, p. 164). Drawing from what Hall proposes about encoding meaning, I ask, what meaningful discourse is constructed within each CBC News article, prompting them to be "meaningfully decoded" (p. 165) by the thousands of comments they provoked? Hall crucially adds that it is in this process of decoded meanings where news media's "effects" play out. Thus, this chapter uncovers how the comments decode Dyer's skepticism of rehabilitating foreign fighters and condoning "death squads," and Zimonjic's thematic sequence of stories centered on criminalized Muslim men.

The Emergence and Significance of Online Comments

The interactive, communal and democratic nature of comments sections has been well-documented throughout scholarship on netnography. Rosenberry (2005) reminds us how interactive features of the internet were largely devised to instill a newfound form of cyber-democracy where many early users wished to tap into its potential for challenging the political status quo. He adds that "Most of these ideas were based in the notion that the Internet can break down the barriers of physical distance and message "reach" that limit access to information dissemination, retrieval and exchange" (p. 63). Moreover, comments can bridge the gap between institutional news organizations and their readers by allowing the latter to "make their views known" at the convenience of a click, as opposed to mailing letters or emailing a journalist. Some such as Bergstrom and Wadbring (2015) have even noted that comments sections mimic the dwindling tradition of writing letters to the editor, albeit with an immediacy and level of interactivity that cannot be accommodated by print media.

Online comments have been described as consisting of a form of user generated content (Hughey and Daniels, 2013) allowing visitors the freedom to offer their views, observations and feelings on published content, which is subject to exposure to an unrestricted audience. Notably, the launch of Web 2.0 has paved the way for web pages that can host a large volume of comments, particularly through the now-common "reply" feature that allows readers to respond to others' comments in addition to leaving their own, not to mention the "like" feature that allows readers to "upvote" a comment to signal their agreement with its stated opinion or observation. The reply and like features thus add a new dimension to online commenting, making it so that comments sections engender an even greater degree of interactivity, which allows for multiple streams of discussion to take place at once, while also allowing one to discern popular opinions.

The first comments section to ever appear in web history can be traced back to on an online diary community called "Open Diary" on October 1998 (Erard, 2013, *The New York Times Magazine*). Open Diary, an early precursor to social networking sites, offered its users the innovative option to post comments on each other's diary entries with varying privacy options. Within the same year, commenting options on online newspapers began emerging with *The Rocky Mountain News* from Denver, Colorado being recognized as one of the first to offer a same-page commenting option for its readers (Santana, 2011). A substantial number of scholars observe these comments sections as being a revolutionary affordance that allows users to express themselves with ease and speed enabled by the efficiency of electronic interactivity. This, according to Singer

and Ashman (2009), renders the internet an increasingly "shared space" (p. 3) while also permitting a level of collaboration that is unparalleled (Reich, 2011) due to previous constraints relating to distance and time. In essence, commenting on a news article page can be understood as permitting conversations between commenting readers, while also welcoming feedback on a news item.

How Newsworthiness Affects the Output of Comments: Conducting a Content Analysis

It is of significance to assess the substance of what is being discussed among the comments examined in this chapter. Diakopoulos and Naaman (2011) frame a comment's substance as denoting "quality" which they define, in turn, as referring "to a degree of excellence in communicating knowledge or intelligence and normatively includes notions of accuracy, reliability, validity, currency, relevancy, comprehensiveness, and clarity" (p. 133). On the other hand, what they judge to be "low quality" comments possess characteristics that render them unproductive to the broader discussion elicited by the article. These include: "flaming" and "impulsive remarks" (p. 133), trolling, unrelated or comical remarks, and anonymity (made evident by a lack of an identifying profile photograph or a credible-sounding first and last name). Thus, in addition to teasing out the decoded meanings in the comments, this thesis also attempts to discern to what extent they comprise "low quality" comments that reflect emotive – as opposed to reflective – responses that can be likened to Scheer's quintessential "small-c Conservative" rhetoric, as examined in the previous chapter.

My close reading of the sample comments posted on the CBC articles is guided by Holsti's (1969) approach to content analysis, where the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods is appropriate in order to gain richer insight into the meanings that emerge from the data. The value and appropriateness of implementing content analysis lies in its requirements for "*objectivity, system,* and *generality"* (p. 3, original italics), criteria that are essential to yielding conclusions that are as accurate and unbiased as possible. Holsti elaborates on each as follows: 1) *objectivity* is dependent on clearly formulated rules, procedures and categories that the researcher must carve out and abide by in order to minimize results tainted by subjective preconceptions; 2) in remaining *systematic,* the content analyst does not pick and choose what to include in their data to support a predetermined hypothesis (i.e.: selective bias) but rather narrows down their research criteria, and according to these, sets out to "cast a net" over the pool of content that they wish to examine; Lastly, Holsti stresses that *generality* is crucial to content analysis as it involves

contextualizing the patterns uncovered in the data to discern their theoretical relevance, where *generality* addresses the *so what?* of the patterns one discovers in their sample and imbues it with a meaningfulness that is essential to any research undertaking. Finally, Holsti highlights the benefits of employing content analysis for cases in which the type of content to be examined is produced in such large volumes that it exceeds one's limitations (of time and resources), in which case it is recommended to analyze a sample out of which the researcher can then "make inferences about the larger universe from which it was selected" (p. 18). All of these elements render content analysis an optimal analytical tool to amass, categorize, assess and analyze the text found in a sample of hundreds of comments in response to two news articles.

Methods

This chapter undertakes a content analysis of a sample of the total comments posted on the above mentioned two CBC news articles. At the time that the comments were extracted, Dyer's article generated a total of 2,676 comments, while Zimonjic's article generated a total of 3,290 comments. For my sample, I chose to extract 10% of each set of comments which resulted in a dataset of 268 comments for Dyer's article and 328 comments for Zimonjic's article (one comment was omitted due to being posted twice). Selecting 10% of the total comments made the analysis feasible while still adequately representing the diversity of total comments. A CBC's article comments section can be filtered according to five criteria: *oldest, most liked, most replies, most active* and *editor's pick.* Given the purpose of my analysis, which is concerned with gauging how the Canadian public feels about the prospects of rehabilitating ISIS-affiliated returnees and teasing out the most prominent patterns of conversations that consequently emerge, I selected 10% of the *most liked* comments from each article. To discern how much a comment is "liked" by fellow readers, CBC's comments section includes "like" and "dislike" buttons for each comment submitted so that when this filter option is selected, those with the highest number of "likes" are displayed first. As a result, the 268 and the 328 comments for each article consist of the most popular comments submitted.

<u>Extracting and assessing the comments</u>

Once the comments in each article were filtered in an order of appearance displaying the most liked to the least liked, I extracted 10% of the most liked comments using the "Scraper" Google Chrome extension. I subsequently exported these comments into an excel sheet and

proceeded to manually categorize them according to the stance the commenter expressed in response to the Liberal party's objective of rehabilitation. For this stage, I divided the comments according to three categories: 1) expressing opposition to rehabilitation; 2) expressing neutrality, indifference or ambiguous views on rehabilitation; and 3) expressing support of rehabilitation. Assessing the comments' views on rehabilitation was a straightforward process given how explicit their authors were in stating their feelings on the matter. Ultimately, the findings confirm my initial impressions on online users' views: the prospect of rehabilitation is vehemently shut down by the vast majority of comments sampled.

In Dyer's article, 260 (97%) of the comments expressed opposition to the Canadian government's stance on returning fighters (with comments deriding either Trudeau or his party) whereas the remaining eight comments expressed either indifferent or ambiguous views. For Zimonjic's article, the disparity is equally as stark with 314 (96.3%) of the comments revealing opposition to rehabilitation whereas fourteen of the remaining comments expressed indifference or ambiguity. Among the 314 negative comments in Zimonjic's article, 180 of them (57.3%) make explicit reference to the issue of returning foreign fighters which indicates that returning fighters dominates as an issue of concern amidst the others that are discussed in Zimonjic's piece. Although the remaining 134 negative comments do not overtly refer to the coverage of returning fighters, many of the comments' criticism of Trudeau and/or his party is sparked by the topic.

Of the total sample of comments from both articles, there were none expressing support for rehabilitation of foreign fighters. Among the comments opposing rehabilitation and reintegration, there was no significant pattern of recurring words or terms used to either characterize foreign fighters, or reference their suspected religion, ethnicity, or race. Rather, what emerges are a few prominent themes relating to broader discussions of security, Canadianness, belonging and conditional citizenship. In Dyer's article, prominent themes include: suggestions for alternative solutions (60 comments), dismissing or ridiculing the Liberal party (51 comments), and overt references to Omar Khadr and/or his recent payout (33 comments). In Zimonjic's article, comments suggesting alternative solutions to rehabilitation were fewer (eight comments). However, the most prominent themes observed are similar in nature to Dyer's article. These include: dismissing or ridiculing the Liberal party (39 comments), and references to Omar Khadr, his recent payout and/or Khadr's ex-brother-in-law, Joshua Boyle (43 comments). In both sets of the sample comments, the remainder of the comments expressed

either discontent for Trudeau as Prime Minister, or disapproval at the prospect of fighters returning to Canada (manifested through outrage, sarcasm or disappointment). All in all, the comments skew heavily against proposed solutions to implement "disengagement and reintegration support" and they generally appear to do so for two key reasons: 1) deep-seated skepticism on the possibility of reforming returning fighters and 2) a strongly-held belief that returning fighters are not deserving of being "welcomed back," as many understand it.

Analysis and Discussion

Incapable of change or undeserving of pardon

As the two sets of sample comments illustrate, the most notable patterns observed reveal that readers' skepticism or resistance to reintegrating returning Canadian fighters is mainly fueled by beliefs that extremists are either 1) incapable of internal change, or that they are 2) undeserving of the liberty and resources that would be granted to realize the Liberal government's proposed efforts. Some examples of comments expressing the belief that returning fighters are incapable of change include the following comments which are reprinted here verbatim:

> There is little or no rehabilitation for these Jihadists and the risk is too great. They are traitors and need to be treated as such. (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

> Liberals. .... putting Canadian lives in danger. (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

> Wow, the 'Lets put our people at risk, develop a pool of mentally deficient folks skilled at forming a cult and turn them lose (sic) on Canadians' Liberal plan What could possibly go wrong with that. (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

> I urge you all to search, "i s.i.s atrocities" to see exactly who Trudeau has turned loose on our streets. (Comment in response to article by Zimonjic's, 2018)

> There is potential that Justin's approach will put Canadians in harms way. For that

> approach, I cannot respect this man who's primary mandate is the protection of Canada and Canadians. (Comment in response to article by Zimonjic, 2018)

Examples of comments expressing the belief that they are undeserving include the following:

> If you choose to fight with the enemy you are no longer Canadian and do not belong in our society.. Honestly, nothing this ridiculous government does anymore surprises me.. Shameful and embarrassing.. (Comment in response to Dyer's (2017) article)
> We cannot even give our veterans the help to assimilate back into society after fighting on our behalf or pay them the monies they a due. Our men and women are far more important. Why in hells name should we help these people? They need to have their Canadian passports stripped and they should be charged to the fullest extent of the law. Trudeau and his bleeding hearts have to start growing up. (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

> No intelligent Canadian can believe these ISIS animals deserve to live anywhere. (Comment in response to article by Zimonjic, 2018)

> All those returning daesh members have committed treason against Canada. (Comment in response to Zimonjic, 2018)

As these examples illustrate, essential beliefs prominently emerge. The first one being that a crucial element of one's identity - namely, nationality - can be annulled by virtue of one's affiliation with a terrorist organization such as ISIS. In other words, one's marker as an Islamic terrorist is incongruous with one's *Canadianness* because it shatters the myth and global reputation of the peace-loving Canadian, generally incapable of the level of violence publicly exhibited by ISIS. Commenting on Canada's branding on an international stage, Chapnick (2005) observes how Canadians' increased self-identification as "small-l" liberals (p. 636) entails a belief in quintessential liberal values including rationality, individual freedom, and personal self-

governance, whereby a conviction in these values minimizes the notion that systemic circumstances are contributing factors leading up to radicalization and extremism. Therefore, as "traitors, mentally deficient folks, ISIS animals and returning daesh members," returning foreign fighters defy these "small-l liberal" ideals, rupturing the carefully-constructed veneer of progressive values that hide what Chapnick and others (Porter, 1965; Lipset, 1990) argue to be a traditionally conservative stance on foreign policy measures. As such, the Canadian identity of returning foreign fighters in the comments examined becomes contested, omitted or ridiculed, revealing the Canadian public's inability to grasp the truth that these returnees are products of their exceptionally progressive society.

What the references to Omar Khadr's payout reveal

Among both sets of comments from Dyer and Zimonjic's articles, a discernible number of them (78 in total) make reference to Omar Khadr's payout. Khadr's unique case divided Canadians in regards to the government's passive response to Khadr's detainment in one of the most controversial military prisons in contemporary history. At the age of 15, Khadr was detained at Guantanamo Bay for a period of ten years, under the accusation of throwing a grenade at American soldiers, resulting in the death of a U.S. Army Sergeant. Following his 2013 civil suit against the government of Canada for violating his human rights, an apology and C$10.5 million compensation was issued to Khadr on July, 2017. As news of his settlement remains controversial, comments making reference to this settlement allude to the possibility of foreign fighters either suing the Canadian government - as Khadr had ("You gotta be kidding me? Next, they will sue us, live free here! Anyone supporting this lunacy is not complete in their mind." (Comment responding to Dyer, 2017)) - or receiving assistance through taxpayer dollars ("A good government could have easily held out on the payment to Khadr until the end of time without costing tax payers any money." (Comment responding to Zimonjic, 2018). The conflation of two wholly separate events – Canadian foreign fighters and Omar Zhadr's human rights violation – decode and perpetuate Zimonjic's narrative in which the distinct stories of returning foreign fighters, Abdi's deportation and Khadr's settlement become reduced and simplified to their lowest common denominator - namely, their markers as deviant Muslim males. As these comments illustrate, such a reduction can potentially distract readers from teasing out the unique circumstances of each event.

Alternative solutions: Containment, expulsion or annihilation

Given that the majority of comments skew heavily against rehabilitation of returning fighters, a noteworthy portion of them (68 comments) elaborate on their opposition by suggesting "alternative" solutions to these measures, where they call for the following courses of action, which I have thematized and illustrated (with verbatim quotes) below:

1) Having foreign fighters' citizenship or passport revoked, as seen in the following examples:

> I hope, if there is any hope still left for this country (which I've written off), Canadians will push back hard on this. There is completely no reason to think these people can be reintegrated into mainstream society. Having them in Canada only puts the rest of us at risk and further erodes our credibility with key allies. Revoke their citizenship, void their passports, and hope they go away. NOT OUR PROBLEM. (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

> Take up arms with the enemies of Canada, and you citizenship should be immediately and irrevocably null and void. Thus, you shouldn't be allowed back into Canada. This approach would have solved the Omar Khadr problem as well. (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

2) Being prosecuted, as seen in the following examples:

> If these "terrorist travellers" are not charged and prosecuted to the full extent of the law, Justin will not stand a chance in 2019... even his base supporters will not vote to have terrorists living among us… (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

> In the House Justin promised to prosecute returning ISIS fighters according to Canada's anti-terrorism laws. Its a criminal offence to join ISIS, with a minimum sentence. Why won't Justin do what he said he would do and prosecute them? (Comment in response to article by Zimonjic, 2018)

3) Being prevented from returning, as seen in the following examples:

> ISIS fighters should never be allowed to step foot into Canada again, they should be forced to stay in Syria and then let the Russian Military deal with them appropriately. (Comment in response to article by Zimonjic, 2018)

4) Being killed, as seen in the following examples:

> It's a no brainer, they all need to die. The idea of bringing them back to re integrate is insane and repulsive to anyone with a grain of sense. (Comment in response to article by Dyer)

> I don't have a problem with executing each and every one of them...there's more Canadians that feel the same way than you might think. (Comment in response to article by Dyer, 2017)

> If Justin want's to bring these "things" back to Canada, he should be putting them on death row, not giving them a hug and putting Canadians in harms way! (Comment in response to article by Zimonjic)

Among the comments that suggest alternatives to rehabilitation, more than half of them call for annihilation as the only just recourse, echoing Dyer's stance on Western nations' "death squads" against their own fighters. The irony of Canadians - often touted as one of the most progressive-minded citizens among developed nations - expressing solutions that overrule legal and moral boundaries reveals how the rhetoric of a "state of exception" as Agamben conceptualizes it, re-emerges in response to controversial news items involving terrorism.

A questionable humanity: Occupying a state of exception

These prominent patterns in the comments reveal a conception of foreign fighters as *homo sacer,* or 'bare life' - men who can be killed with impunity and who occupy a state of exception, as Agamben (1998) theorized it. These comments also provide insight into how public reactions to controversial issues often belie a society's claims of civility by reducing members of society to 'bare life.' Such public reactions are illustrated by the sizeable portion of the comments analyzed,

in which the annihilation of foreign fighters is either condoned, encouraged or simply *not* condemned. As such, returning Canadian foreign fighters embody Agamben's *homo sacer*, who consists of "an outcast, a banned man, tabooed, [and] dangerous" (p. 51). Furthermore, Agamben's homo sacer is a figure whose life can be terminated with impunity due to the suspension of the law that is applied to enable such killing. Such a metaphorical suspension of legal repercussions becomes articulated in a number of comments, particularly those that suggest alternative solutions that are legally and morally questionable. Accordingly, Agamben adds that the status of the *homo sacer* is distinct due to the violence to which they are subject to receiving: "This violence - the unsanctionable killing that, in his case, anyone may commit - is classifiable neither as sacrifice nor as homicide, neither as the execution of a condemnation to death nor as sacrilege." (p. 53)

Although, returning foreign fighters are not physically threatened by the violence Agamben describes, their symbolic position between bare life on the one hand, and productive members of society on the other, prompts questions about the limits of our understanding of what constitutes a "human," whereby these comments illustrate the extent to which such a seemingly universal and foundational notion is subject to negotiation. Navigating a space as homo sacer prompts us to ask how the criminal and *criminalized* returning foreign fighter becomes subject to social limitations whereby he is neither incarcerated, nor free from surveillance.

Accordingly, public discussions surrounding the fate of returning fighters is enmeshed in what Fassin (2007) calls the "politics of life" in which value and meaning are attributed unequally between different groups, which runs counter to the universal belief in the equal value of all human lives. However, Fassin makes the salient observation that our conception of human value has shifted and become grounded not in biology, but biography "(the life that is lived but that others narrate)," which Fassin further elaborates as being "More tenuous and less visible, it is nevertheless essential to what constitutes beings insofar as they are human" (p. 518). If human value, as articulated in the public space, is measured according to narrative privilege, then an unequal dynamic emerges between those controlling the narrative about foreign fighters and those being depicted by those narratives. First-hand accounts provided by returning fighters may prove to be essential in aiding various stakeholders - the state, the public, families concerned and others vulnerable to radicalization– to understand and thwart the process of radicalization that leads to terrorism.

Incivility in comments

Comments sections of such articles result in reaction rather than informed reflection, which results in an abundance of "low quality comments" that add little value to the broader discussion of curbing radicalization and extremism. Comments sections containing collective views that disproportionately lean towards one extreme view (namely, vehement opposition to rehabilitation options) can be problematic in potentially stifling alternative views and constructive discussion on a controversial topic, often leading to verbal expressions that occupy the realm of incivility. As Hwang (2008) observes, incivility in comments discourse can encourage defensiveness as opposed to deliberation, which Santana (2014) argues can have a "detrimental effect on open-mindedness compared to civil expression" (p. 21). In their examination of campaigns targeted at the electorate, Brooks and Geer (2007) describe incivility in political discourse as consisting of disrespectfully disagreeing with a differing opinion, seen in instances of mockery, aggression and name-calling. Their definition of incivility surrounding a sociopolitical issue is apt in describing the dynamic that emerges between the comments examined for this chapter and the articles they respond to. Adding to this, incivility encourages users to adopt extreme views that stifle debate (Santana, 2014) in favor of creating - and maintaining - an echo chamber. Accordingly, in her study of discussion threads in political newsgroups, Papacharissi (2004) assesses how the level of civility is conducive to productive discussion, whereby she defines *uncivil* behaviour as that which undermine principles of democracy or human rights, adding that "civility can be operationalized as the set of behaviors that threaten democracy, deny people their personal freedoms, and stereotype social groups" (p. 267). The recurrence of violence and expulsion as a reaction to returning fighters – as seen in the comments offering "alternative solutions" that violate fundamental human rights – solidify the conclusion that a significant portion of the CBC articles' comments examined in this chapter are uncivil.

Tying the comments back to the effects of a "high quality" comment as opposed to a "low quality" comment, the preponderance of these uncivil "low-quality" comments are testament to the dark underside of comments sections where users advance a rhetoric in which boundaries of civility and belonging are drawn through "uncivilized" language, so to speak, amidst a space of public deliberation. The conception of "public journalism" promotes the belief that news reporting should no longer maintain the unidirectional relationship journalists have with their audience but should instead comprise a "conversation" (Kunelius, 2001). However, this begs the question: what are the issues that arise when one side of the conversation is fueled by emotive reactions? Reactions

of outrage that dominate the comments sections of the two CBC articles reveal the extent to which returning fighters are constructed as occupying a rhetorical space outside of the bounds of the law - namely, through calls for punitive measures that cannot be legally implemented. However, a notable reality that is omitted from the comments' conversations is that returning fighters occupy a limbo state between freedom and surveillance, between the liberty from imprisonment and the watchful gaze of the state to contain the risk they pose.

This chapter uncovers how the Canadian public's hostile reactions to the issue of returning foreign fighters is channeled into comments that express their disdain for the prospect of rehabilitating them. This disdain is concentrated in a few key patterns of expression in the sample of comments examined: listing "alternative" measures of dealing with them that include expulsion, prosecution or annihilation, or tying the issue to the controversial case of Omar Khadr, referencing his ties to terrorism and his payout. Ultimately, these threads of conversations emerge to contest the Canadian identity of returning fighters, whereby *Canadian-ness* denotes one's human value, in line with Agamben's theory of the Homo Sacer who occupies the status of bare life.

CONCLUSION

Foreign Fighters and Human Value in the Media

My interest in returning foreign fighters stems from my broader fascination with extreme behaviors of an ideological nature. Given our natural inclination to conform to social codes out of the very primal desire to *belong*, what are the motivations explaining why some may veer in fundamentally different directions, seeking to *belong elsewhere*? Consequently, the research I have conducted on Canadian news representation of returning foreign fighters will ideally inform the emergence of other studies analyzing the implications of media representations on the public's understanding of "homegrown" terrorism. This thesis began with an awareness of how news stories pertaining to terrorism have had powerful effects on readers and viewers. These effects manifest themselves in belief systems centered on identity and belonging, where one's nationality – and how one enacts it - is an essential component of achieving a sense of collective belonging. Importantly, such identity markers are not only determined according to what one is, but also emerge from a contrast of what one *isn't.* News stories of terrorism have been vital in anchoring Canadians' public imaginary of the types of people and societies of which terrorist violence is borne out of. Consequently, a unified conception of *Canadianness* becomes more palpable.

This thesis has demonstrated the ways in which the discussions that play out within news discourse of returning foreign fighters bear explicit traces of a post-9/11 hysteria, a sentiment that has been crucial in defining our contemporary understanding of Canadian identity. This illustrates the extent to which, as Wardlaw (1981) had argued, media organizations have been complicit in positioning terrorist incidents within a society's value systems, which consequently provokes moral hysteria. Although news coverage of ISIS' atrocities continues the legacy of media-oriented terrorism, the depiction and framing of contemporary returning foreign fighters constitutes an interesting shift from the characteristically spectacular nature of terrorist violence. Unlike the carefully-choreographed spectacles staged by ISIS members (Jenkins, 1975), news stories of returning fighters elicit affect on a different plane. While news coverage of ISIS-led violence aroused a collective sense of unified outrage on a global scale, for returning Canadian fighters, the outrage is directed at the current Liberal government - as this thesis has uncovered - a party that embodies "small-l liberal" values but is largely accused of venturing too far left on this issue.

My examination of media representations of returning foreign fighters has revealed how the symbiotic relationship between terrorism and the media in which each strengthens the influence of the other, is shifting. This thesis has unpacked what happens when news media shifts its focus to those who no longer represent the glory of terrorism, but rather, its failures. Thus, as failed terrorists, foreign fighters likely embody this failure in the eyes of a few key actors: the terrorist group to whom they have promised their loyalty, the Canadian government, the Canadian public and their close circle of family and friends.

Representing Foreign Fighters in News Media and Public Commentary

Scanning sentences from news articles for a period of 16 years in Chapter One yielded a limited but noteworthy understanding of the evolution of the term's usage throughout different geopolitical issues. Descriptions of foreign fighters range in content and context, where they are initially understood as: insignificant in numbers, ambiguous in their origins and purpose, a by-product of local and transnational conflicts, low-impact terrorists, and lacking in influence and power. Depictions eventually shift to reflect more recent changes with ISIS' occupation of Iraq and Syria, in which the repercussions of foreign fighters *returning* to their country of residence begin to factor into news coverage. Accordingly, terms describing foreign fighters increasingly orient them as: a social issue, evidence of severe disillusionment and brainwashing, as well as criminals and - to some extent - victims of a perverse ideology, whose threat level requires careful assessment by the state security apparatus.

In Chapter Two, I proceeded to uncover how key political players draw out select elements from these wide-ranging depictions to propose solutions that adhere to their political and ideological interests. While Conservative MPs perpetuate a discourse in which carceral solutions are prioritized, Liberal politicians propose ambiguous plans of deradicalization and reassimilation, while maintaining surveillance as a means of preventing their extremism to erupt into violence.

Chapter Three offers a detailed examination of how a sample of comments respond to two CBC news articles expressing skepticism at the prospect of rehabilitating returning fighters, echoing this skepticism by disputing both their Canadian-ness and legal rights. This chapter unpacked how the resulting "low-quality" comments perpetuate discussions that skew heavily against the prospects of rehabilitation and social reintegration, in resistance to an issue that is increasingly being framed as a "social problem," as demonstrated by the findings in Chapter One.

Canadianness, Nationalism and the After-effects

Goodale's comments that "Canada does not engage in death squads," as well as the Liberal Government's rehabilitative approach reinforce Canada's reputation as a multicultural haven, with a progressive outlook on immigration and cultural differences. This image, however, belies the schism that exists in Canadians' conflicted outlook on immigration, assimilation and national belonging of those deemed too different to live among us. Canadians' overwhelmingly negative reactions to the foreign fighter phenomenon in Canada is worthy of examination precisely because it ruptures its utopic image as harboring a just and progressive society. To be clear, for many in the public, reactions opposing the return of foreign fighters are expected, grounded as they are in sentiments of fear, anxiety, anger or frustration of men and women retreating back to safety on Canadian soil following what is framed as an act of betrayal in supporting a globally notorious terrorist organization. However, Canadians' reactions reveal more than strong emotions - they reveal a pervasive attitude that reflects a heightened form of nationalism in which views about a fringe group of people bleed into broader discussions about national belonging, where these discussions affect the communities and networks which these fighters belong to, who may or may not be implicated in their radicalization. Canadians' reactions also provoke a discussion on how online incivility spurs a dismissal of legal proceedings for returning foreign fighters. As such, this thesis is not concerned with answering what the just and proper legal protocol should be in handling returning Canadian foreign fighters. Rather, each chapter in this thesis has sought to uncover how the topic of returning foreign fighters is perpetuating dominant discourses on terrorism. How may their individual and collective stories of radicalization shed light on homegrown terrorism, with an understanding that terrorism is a multi-factor phenomenon that some members of society are more vulnerable to than others?

Implications of this Study

Within the existing pool of research on foreign fighters, little has been found on the circumstances of those who return home from conflicts abroad, particularly Western fighters. Even fewer studies are available on the numbers, demographics and life circumstances of North American fighters given that the existing research focuses predominantly on European fighters. However, following a military defeat of ISIS in the cities of Mosul and Raqqa whereby many

fighters originating from Europe and North America are traveling back home or are detained in refugee camps, we can anticipate an increase in research examining the fate of foreign fighters in-depth. Accordingly, this thesis offers a preliminary contribution to the growing body of works that assess a state's response to returning fighters, from the unique perspective of news representation. Moreover, this thesis complements the existing studies that delve into the preliminary stages of the Western foreign fighter phenomenon, vis-à-vis the process of *becoming* one - namely, those examining the psychological motivations fueling their behavior or the steps leading up to travel and terrorist activity as Garrison has done - by adding to the growing literature that examines the later stages, following their return. Within these later stages, my research is unique in investigating how members of the public - in the form of news articles, politicians and Canadian netizens - conceptualize the issue of returning fighters. Probing into public perceptions of radicalization and foreign fighters may potentially help us better understand the public's knowledge, or lack thereof, on the topic. Such investigations may be key in forging messaging strategies to not only help identify signs of radicalization for those affected (networks of family, friends, co-workers, etc.), but to develop messages countering the appeal of extremist ideology for those vulnerable to its influence. One such strategy may consist of featuring news stories in which returned and/or reformed fighters detail their personal experiences in combat zones as members of terrorist organizations, with the aim of demystifying the experience for those drawn to its imagined appeal.

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