# TARGETED
# TRANSNATIONALS

## THE STATE, THE MEDIA, AND ARAB CANADIANS

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# Introduction

## Arab Canadians as Targeted Transnationals

JENNA HENNEBRY AND BESSMA MOMANI

Canadians increasingly live in a globalized world that brings a stream of people, images, and realities to the Canadian social milieu. Canadian policy-makers have long relied on multiculturalism policy as a means of promoting the integration of Canadians of diverse backgrounds and identities, yet concerns over ethnic segregation, "parallel lives," racial discrimination, and social cohesion continue to emerge in scholarly and public debates. In addition, public media sources have circulated numerous stories regarding the failure of Canadian multiculturalism with respect to Muslim Canadians. Consider, for example, the following headlines: "Multiculturalism Policy Falling behind the Times" (*Toronto Star* 2007) and "Multiculturalism and the Muslim Backlash" (CBC 2006). However, regardless of its debated outcomes and shortfalls, the idea of multiculturalism is meant to produce a tolerant, open, and cohesive Canadian mosaic. The Canadian approach to integration and diversity, as it is typically differentiated from that of our southern neighbour, has often been celebrated, arguably to the detriment of sufficient public debate about the realities faced by minority groups in Canada. For some, Canadian multiculturalism policy is more a myth than a reality, serving merely to aggrandize Canada's national self-worth, while stifling sufficient criticism of the policies, practices, and realities of multi-culturalism on the ground. For many communities, below the surface of this idealized Canada lies a darker reality of ghettoized labour markets,

racialized security policies, discrimination, and negative media representations. While many minority groups in Canada have historically suffered from the effects of racialization, *Targeted Transnationals* seeks to examine one group that has been front and centre in the current media limelight yet remains understudied: Canadians of Arab descent.

For Canadians of Arab descent, the securitization of state practices and policies has challenged the multicultural ideal, which, at times in the post-9/11 era, has seemed more imaginary than real. The countless post-9/11 bills that began to chip away at the citizenship and personal rights of all Canadians in the name of national security have made Arab Canadians particularly vulnerable. Building on decades of misunderstanding of, and discrimination towards, Arab Canadians, the tipping point has arguably been state practices and policies enacted in the name of the "war on terror." These began with the wrongful 2002 arrest and extradition of Canadian Maher Arar, during which Arar's Canadian citizenship was brushed aside for bureaucratic and foreign policy convenience. Many other cases remain pending. Many Canadians of Arab descent question the Canadian state's commitment to them as equal citizens, and this has resulted in an erosion of their sense of belonging.

Not only have Arab Canadians been in the limelight of state security policies, but their loyalty to Canada and its values has also been questioned (either implicitly or explicitly) in media representation and discourse, often with reference to their migration status or to their transnationalism. Some have even argued that maintaining strong transnational ties, following news and cultural trends from countries of origin, and engaging in frequent international travel are indications of a lack of attachment to Canadian society. Some academic research points to these issues as indicators of belonging (Hiebert and Ley 2006). It seems that, while transnationalism for some is seen as simply sojourning as a global citizen, for others it is a source of suspicion and an indicator of disloyalty or lack of attachment to the Canadian state. In the summer of 2006, Canadian Lebanese, who were seeking Ottawa's assistance in Canada's largest evacuation of its citizens from the onslaught of a sudden war, were put under public scrutiny as "less than Canadian" because they held dual nationalities. For many Canadians of Arab descent, this case further reiterated the perception that their Canadian citizenship was less valued than that of other Canadians. Implicit in these cases is the assumption that Canadians of Arab descent are somehow less loyal to Canada than other citizens because they may have (what some

Canadians wrongly perceive to be) different values and identities from Canadians, along with stronger transnational ties.

Connecting transnationalism with disloyalty is not a new phenomenon. As Sugiman (2006) reminds us in her study of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, there is a "menacing side" of transnationalism that may surface as perceptions of it feed into racist stereotypes about who does and does not constitute a loyal citizen. The policy and legal frameworks employed by the Canadian government – such as the Anti-Terrorism Act (Canada 2001) and the subsequent bills to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), Canada's Criminal Code (Bill S-3), the use of security certificates, the Passenger Protect Program (commonly known as the "no-fly list"), and the increased role of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) – have significantly altered the political climate in Canada with respect to transnationalism, mobility, and human rights. Moreover, these national realities have emerged within the larger context of North American and international policy environments and in conjunction with the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), the Smart Border Action Plan, the Safe Third Country Agreement with the United States, the UN "no-fly lists," and so on. These policy and legal frameworks have significant impacts on the mobility of Canadians and have disproportionately affected Canadians of Arab descent, who find themselves on no-fly lists or subjected to "random" checks at airport security. In fact, all the security certificates (which clearly constitute the most restrictive measure) that have been issued since 1999 have gone to Canadian permanent residents of Arab descent (Doyle 2007). Since 1991, twenty of the twenty-seven security certificates issued were to individuals who can be characterized as of Arab descent.[1]

Other policy and state practices, such as Canada's foreign policies, are also likely to affect Arab Canadians' sense of belonging – not to mention Canada's reputation in Arab countries. Historically, Canada's Pearsonian foreign policy towards the Middle East has generally been viewed as fair and balanced, if not benign, and this has afforded Canada a relatively positive reputation in the Middle East and fostered the perception that it is a welcoming destination for Arab immigrants. However, some have argued that this positive reputation might soon change (see Heinbecker and Momani 2007). Academics and former Canadian ambassadors serving in the region have warned that changes in Canada's foreign policy under Prime Ministers Paul Martin and Stephen Harper, particularly with regard

to UN voting with respect to Israel, could undermine the positive reputation Canada has held in the Middle East (ibid.). This change in foreign policy may result in immigrants from the Arab world arriving in Canada with the idea that Canada discriminates against Arabs. At the same time, government action in the region no doubt has a significant influence on how the larger Canadian population views Arabs, as people watch their government's actions abroad and see their soldiers return from Afghanistan wounded or worse.

Obviously, Canada's security and foreign policies have not come about in a vacuum. Media representation of, and political discourses on, Arab Canadians have emerged in conjunction with these state policies and have served to further conflate ideas of security, mobility, and citizenship. In the globalized war on terror, questioning the loyalty of Canadians of Arab descent has become a common, if implicit, feature of media representation and public debate. As Arat-Koc (2006) notes, there is a significant irony in the fact that the political and media discourses that emerged post-9/11 questioned the loyalties of suspect "ethnics" who engaged in transnationalism while, at the same time, celebrating a "Canadian identity" that was increasingly defined in terms of transnationalism. Feelings of insecurity were highlighted when the question of "reasonable accommodation" was raised in Quebec. While the debate over reasonable accommodation targeted a number of minorities, it was focused most prominently on Canadians of Arab descent, specifically those of Muslim faith, who were questioned regarding their loyalty to their country. In a further blow to the Arab-Canadian community, many argue that the arrest of eighteen Toronto youths (who were allegedly involved in a homegrown terrorist plot) appeared to collectively punish Arab-Canadian youth in general. The media's implicit role in creating and nurturing negative images and stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims is a concern for many in the Arab-Canadian community. The fear that the war on terror will be used to further institutionalize racism and thus further discriminate against Muslims and Canadians of Arab descent is widespread among Arab Canadians. The question of whether the securitization of Canadian government policy will trump respect for minority rights is important and has serious consequences for Arab Canadians. Media questioning regarding the loyalty of Arab Canadians has saturated national news, while media discourses surrounding Canada's role in the Middle East have both furthered popular suspicion of the loyalty of Arab Canadians and put additional strain on new immigrants who

are attempting to integrate while watching Canadian foreign policy play out in their homelands.

As Western involvement in the wider Middle East – be it Iraq, Libya, or Afghanistan – continues to dominate the news, Canadians of Arab descent are particularly concerned with events occurring in the region. For many Arab-Canadian immigrants, this can be further complicated as what occurs in the Middle East and North Africa is viewed in real time. Due to global expansions in communication technologies and systems, migrants can more readily participate in multiple transnational communities and engage with media sources from around the globe (e.g., CBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, Al Arabia, Al Manar, etc.). In surveys of Arab Canadians, an overwhelming number indicated their daily consumption of news occurring in the Arab world (see CAF 2002, 22). Overwhelmingly, they also noted that Canadian media reporting of events in the Arab world, particularly on the subject of the Arab-Israeli conflict, has an anti-Arab slant (CAF 2002, 34). Moreover, Arab Canadians are often frustrated by discrepancies between Canadian media reporting of events in the Arab world and regional reporting of events available on satellite Arabic news channels (which are consumed by many Arab Canadians). The discrepancies in the reporting of events (e.g., in Canadian media skirmishes in Iraq are portrayed as sectarian conflicts, while in Arab media they are portrayed as a reaction to US intervention) can have significant consequences for Arab Canadians' sense of identity and sense of belonging in Canada.

The potential blowback of Canadian state policies and practices, and the turning of the media lens on Arab Canadians as suspected for being transnational, have not significantly affected the flow of Arab migration to Canada (see Chapter 1), but Arab Canadians' sense of Canada as a welcoming country is under threat. Given the interconnected nature of political and media environments, Arab Canadians have not been able to leave behind the political, social, and economic circumstances of their home countries. With an increasing proportion of immigrants and refugees coming from the Middle East and North Africa, the unresolved political, economic, and security issues they leave behind are likely to be of concern to them in their new communities. Consequently, Canadian state policies and practices, and the global media environment in which these issues – and the discourses of multiculturalism, human rights, and citizenship – play out, affect the lives of Canada's transnational communities. Moreover, the national and international media environment can pose significant challenges

to creating and fostering welcoming communities in Canada as, through their daily dose of the six o'clock news, non-Arab Canadians are saturated with racialized discourses of fear.

*Targeted Transnationals* examines how state practices and policies intertwine with media representations and popular discourse to take aim at Arab Canadians. It demonstrates how, in a securitized global context and through racialized immigration and security policies, Arab Canadians have become "targeted transnationals." This view of Arab Canadians is fed by a media lens that serves to legitimize the homogenization, racialization, and dehumanization of this group. With an eye to the implications for human rights, multiculturalism, and integration, the chapters in this volume draw on qualitative interviews, policy, and media analysis to examine state practices towards, and media representations of, Arab Canadians. Finally, *Targeted Transnationals* presents voices that counter the dominant discourse and trace forms of community resistance to the racialization of Arab Canadians. It concludes with reflections on the challenges to integration and the relevance of multiculturalism in the context of globalization and transnationalism.

Given the global war on terror, and given the debates on the future role of multiculturalism in Canada (and its implications for Canadians of Arab descent), the timing of *Targeted Transnationals* is particularly pertinent. We have brought together a network of Canadian scholars from a range of disciplines, and each of these people applies his or her expertise to the task of providing critical and informed discussions of important and timely issues. We hope that this volume will speak to Canadian policy-makers and, in so doing, be of use in informing policy decisions that directly affect the lives of Arab Canadians.

In Part 1, we examine state practices and policies and illustrate how the Canadian government has repeatedly targeted Arab Canadians. In Chapter 1, Jenna Hennebry and Zainab Amery challenge readers with regard to how they conceptualize Arab Canadians, indicating that the community lacks a monolithic identity. They argue that the flow of Arab migrants to Canada has produced a diverse population of Arab Canadians that can be distinguished according to various political, cultural, and ideological perspectives and that, for this reason, "Arab" cannot be seen as a single, monolithic cultural identity. In Chapter 4, Yasmine Abu-Laban builds on this dialogue and finds that, despite the heterogeneity of Arab Canadians as a group, there is a tendency to conflate "Arabs" and "Muslims" and, further, to equate "Islam" with "fundamentalism" and "terrorism." With reference to the

official data collected and used by Statistics Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Hennebry and Amery indicate how state policies and categorization practices, in combination with prevalent media representations, have further racialized Muslims and Arabs, slotting them into a single Arab identity. This point is reiterated in Chapter 2 by Zainab Amery, who, based on a careful historical analysis, chronicles how Canadian immigration policies (especially after 9/11) have emphasized securitization, which, in turn, has led to a new form of racialization that has contributed to exclusionary immigration practices that disproportionately target Arabs and/or Muslims and reinforce negative stereotypes of these two groups.

One of the main findings of *Targeted Transnationals* is that Canadian legislation has created state-sanctioned discourses and practices that target Arab immigrant groups. Once securitization measures are implemented, racialization becomes legally entrenched, made normal and morally acceptable as a necessary tool to protect the nation and its citizens from potential "terrorists," criminals, and/or "undesirables." In Chapter 3, Andrew S. Thompson contextualizes the arguments brought forward by Amery by examining the difficulties and tensions that Canadian policy-makers have experienced in the post-9/11 era when trying to balance individual human rights and civil liberties, on the one hand, with domestic security considerations, on the other. He also looks at the impact that various federal anti-terror policies have had on Arab-Canadian immigrants specifically and on non-citizens residing in Canada generally. Through a historical analysis of official government documents, Thompson notes precedents in which the rights and liberties of particular ethnic and racial minority groups were curtailed for reasons of national security; the human rights implications of Canada's current anti-terror legislation, with a special focus on the national security certificate system; the effects of reforms to Canadian border and refugee policies on refugees coming to Canada; and the degree to which the judicial branch of the Canadian government has been willing to act as a check on executive authority on questions relating to national security. Using a similar methodological approach, in Chapter 4 Yasmeen Abu-Laban draws on government documents, select English-language print media accounts, and secondary accounts to consider the evolution of multiculturalism discourse in Canada and its specific interface with Arab Canadians in the post-9/11 period. She draws on a conceptual framework used in international relations literature that pays attention to different levels (local, national, regional, and global) of policy and governance. Using this

approach, she demonstrates how attention to the global and international context is misread and used to racialize Arab Canadians. Further, she argues that the same factors that have led to a liminal state of being for Arabs and Muslims at the transnational level have implications for Arab Canadians at the domestic level.

The authors of Part 1 all concur that, in the post-9/11 context, the Canadian government has been preoccupied with trying to find a balance between security and human rights and that, as a result of this, it has compromised its human rights agenda through the implementation of coercive immigration and security policies. At the level of state practices and policies, it is often difficult to see security and human rights as mutually reinforcing rather than as mutually exclusive. Moreover, the authors demonstrate the fragility of Canada's rights culture and show how rights and norms can be used as vehicles to include or exclude groups during times of uncertainty and fear. While this has led to questions about the validity of multiculturalism, the authors argue that the empirical evidence shows that multiculturalism policy can foster the symbolic and even substantive equality of all citizens when it is linked to anti-racism and equity.

In Part 2, we examine how these changing policy frameworks have intersected with representations of, and public discourses on, Arab Canadians. In Chapter 5, Rachad Antonius, Micheline Labelle, and François Rocher look at how diversity and openness have been seriously challenged. Using a qualitative approach based on interviews conducted in 2005-06 with representatives of Arab and Muslim organizations, they analyze the demands put forward by some of the leaders of Arab and Muslim communities in Quebec and Canada, their means of intervention, and their relationship with the state. The importance of recognizing the legitimizing role of the state is further pointed out by Rachad Antonius in Chapter 6. He shows that the misrepresentation of Arab Canadians is constructed in places of power that have the legitimacy to ensure that what they present is seen as truthful. Both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 offer insights into the various ways in which debates are politically framed in Canada and Quebec. With respect to Quebec's hostility towards the religious accommodation of Muslims, the authors see this as a reflection of the province's unresolved conflict between majority and minority groups versus the impact of the actual demands that Muslims are placing on its political system. Both chapters point out how Canadian and Québécois policies have been implemented and have produced different effects on the meaning of citizenship among these communities as well as on the feeling of belonging to the

broader political community. Antonius, Labelle, and Rocher find that organized cultural groups do not distinguish between notions of multiculturalism and interculturalism and that religious-based organizations tend to favour multiculturalism over secular-based organizations. This is particularly interesting given the current debate in Quebec regarding multiculturalism versus interculturalism. There is consensus among both secular- and religious-based organizations on the social and economic barriers faced by Arab Muslims with respect to integration. They both also stress the importance of civic and political participation among this minority group. With respect to religious space, religious-based organizations have a tendency to speak in favour of recognizing Sharia-based arbitration, wearing hijab in schools, and so on, whereas the more secular-based organizations stress the need to focus on civil rights and racial profiling rather than on matters of religious accommodation.

Taking an in-depth case study approach, both Rachad Antonius, in Chapter 6, and Jeremy D. Kowalski, in Chapter 7, compare the representation of Arabs and Muslims in leading Canadian and Québécois newspapers during two highly publicized events in Canadian history: the 2007 Québécois religious accommodation debate and the 2008 case of alleged "homegrown terrorists" in Toronto. Both Antonius and Kowalski employ qualitative content analysis of secondary media reports and offer similar findings and analyses. Antonius argues that, while local issues determined what was at stake, the images and the words with which they were discussed were provided by the international context. He argues that the interaction between these two logics best explains the representations of Arabs and Muslims and their dominant stereotypes. Antonius identifies how the notions of "irrationality" and "hatred" are used to explain the behaviour of Arab Canadian and Muslim political actors, paving the way for what has been called "respectable" racism. This is further echoed by Kowalski, who finds a "common-sense" construction of the perceived "us"-versus-"them" argument in Canadian public perception. Using a (neo-)Orientalist perspective, Kowalski demonstrates how mainstream news media and government experts interpreted and evaluated the case of the Toronto 18 and how this contributed to the further mystification of the diverse Arab community in Canada. Kowalski argues that news media and government experts have contributed to the construction of a Canadian *homo islamicus* that is situated on the margins of Canadian society and is not a part of an integrated whole. In his analysis, Antonius points out that the media's depiction of Arabs and Muslims is flawed, that it misrepresents their culture,

their history, and their struggles. The chapters in Part 2 demonstrate how the news media play an integral role in shaping and influencing public discourses on Arabs and Muslims, and they emphasize the imperative of disseminating informed, balanced, and comprehensive information that is sensitive to the broader Arab-Canadian community.

Part 3 examines the voices behind the resistance to the racialization of the Arab-Canadian community. It offers a case study of the workings of a formal media complaints body, a critical discussion of the development of Al Jazeera as an alternative voice for Arab Canadians, and an examination of the role of an advocacy group in challenging Canadian government policies with respect to Arab Canadians. In Chapter 8, Dina Salha analyzes the process through which the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) administers broadcasting codes of ethics and deals with complaints from the public, with particular emphasis on Arab and Muslim communities. Historically, the CBSC's codes of ethics were used to integrate ethnic minorities by denouncing stereotypes; yet, increasingly, there is a tendency to enshrine cultural differences and to police their satisfactory representation. The racialization of Arab Canadians in the local media is one of the reasons that Arab Canadians have sought alternative media sources like Al Jazeera. In Chapter 9, Aliaa Dakroury examines how Al Jazeera allows immigrants to better integrate into Canada while maintaining their cultural identities. It is able to do this because, for Arab Canadians, access to it can limit both the cultural alienation and the political frustration associated with being dependent upon mainstream media representations. Finally, in Chapter 10, using oral histories and personal interviews with key actors, Wafaa Hasan provides a unique and important glimpse into both how the policy and media environment has affected Arab-Canadian communities and what organizations and individuals are doing to fight back.

Both Salha and Dakroury point to the at times conflicting objectives of wanting to promote integration as well as to preserve a free and liberal media landscape. In the case of the CBSC, Salha notes an interesting combination: (1) a public calling for responsible and culturally sensitive content (according to the myth and tradition of Canadian society) and (2) a mediated public sphere that functions as a self-regulated "agent provocateur." Salha argues that the CBSC is a socially responsible self-regulating body whose aim is to achieve a balance between freedom of speech and the media's responsibility to foster societal stability and equality. Using the case study of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) deliberations over the distribution of Al Jazeera to

Canadian audiences, Dakroury finds that the mainstream Canadian media landscape still fails to meet the needs and aspirations of Arab Canadians. By contextualizing the meaning of integration based on Canadian legal tradition, Dakroury discusses a key policy dilemma that was played out in the CRTC decision. Where Al Jazeera might be seen as creating "segregated" Arab communities in Canada that rely on "non-Canadian" broadcasters, the alternative is the increased alienation and racialization of Arab Canadians due to the non-balanced depictions presented by the mainstream media. Dakroury concludes that the integration of Al Jazeera into Canadian mainstream media is crucial to dissipating a sense of *Al-Ghorba* (estrangement and alienation) among Arab Canadians as it would allow them to maintain a cultural link to their home countries.

The difficulties and challenges of advocating for policy changes are the focus of Hasan's chapter, which demonstrates the complexities involved in organizing such a diverse group as "Arab Canadians." Hasan shows that the CAF has had to shift from nation-centred and integrationist advocacy to more transnational and confrontational advocacy in order to be heard at the government level. She finds that CAF leaders are more engaged in debates on strategies to garner sympathy and support for Arab Canadians than on political positions. In many ways, CAF leaders have to spend more time finding ways to make themselves heard and dispelling stereotypes about Arabs than on larger structural issues. Like Kowalski and Antonius, Hasan concludes that there is an urgent need to dismantle the Islamophobic and racist ideology that is undermining the multiculturalism agenda.

Jenna Hennebry provides the final chapter of *Targeted Transnationals*, in which she reflects on Canada's long multicultural history and examines the current state of affairs, which sees Arab Canadians living with the realities of securitization, suspect transnationalism, and eroding human rights. What are the consequences of Canada's security policies for mobility, migration, multiculturalism, and integration? How can Canada reconcile its multicultural identity with the changing security environment, transnationalism, and the contemporary realities of migration? Hennebry argues that traditional patterns of immigration and settlement have changed and that contemporary immigration is not a linear, one-way process characterized by immigrating, settling, and integrating into a new cultural environment (leaving behind prior cultural ties and identities). Previously, transnational identities were difficult to maintain. But now, with developments in international communication and transportation, contemporary (im)migration is fluid, with most migrants holding transnational identities

as members of transnational families and communities within a global media environment. Hennebry discusses the transnational context in which migration and integration occur in contemporary society and asks whether the Canadian multicultural model works for these contemporary realities. Further, she asks how the global media environment, and the role of media in representing Arab Canadians, influences the integration process, social cohesion, and the Canadian mosaic. Hennebry discusses these timely issues, challenges our assumptions about the migration and integration process, and theorizes about the role of multiculturalism in these contemporary conditions.