

# CITIZENSHIP REVOCATION IN THE MAINSTREAM PRESS: A CASE OF RE-ETHNICIZATION?

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*Abstract.* Under the original version of the *Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act* (2014), dual citizens having committed high treason, terrorism or espionage could lose their Canadian citizenship. In this paper, we examine how the measure was discussed in Canada's mainstream newspapers. We ask: who/what is seen as the target of citizenship revocation? What does this tell us about the direction that Canadian citizenship is moving towards? Our findings show that Canadian newspapers were more often critical than supportive of the citizenship revocation provision. However, the press ignored the involvement of non-Muslim, white, Western-origin Canadians in terrorist acts and interpreted the measure as one that was mostly affecting Canadian Muslims. Thus, despite advocating for equal citizenship *in principle*, in their writing and reporting *practice*, Canadian newspapers constructed Canadian Muslims as suspicious and less Canadian nonetheless.

**Keywords:** Muslim Canadians; Citizenship; Terrorism; Canada; Revocation

*Résumé:* Au sein de la version originale de la *Loi renforçant la citoyenneté canadienne* (2014), les citoyens canadiens ayant une double citoyenneté et ayant été condamnés pour haute trahison, pour terrorisme ou pour espionnage, auraient pu se faire révoquer leur citoyenneté canadienne. Dans cet article, nous étudions comment ce projet de loi fut discuté au sein de la presse canadienne. Nous cherchons à répondre à deux questions: Qui/quoi est perçu comme pouvant faire l'objet d'une révocation de citoyenneté? En quoi cela nous informe-t-il sur les orientations futures de la citoyenneté canadienne? Nos résultats démontrent que les journaux canadiens sont plus critiques à l'égard de la révocation de la citoyenneté que positionnés en sa faveur. Toutefois, la presse omet l'implication des non-musulmans, des Blancs ainsi que des Canadiens d'origine occidentale au sein d'actes terroristes et considère que le projet de loi concerne principalement les Canadiens musulmans. Même si les journaux canadiens prônent, *en principe*, une citoyenneté égalitaire, dans leur *pratique* d'écriture et de reportage ils néanmoins construisent les Canadiens musulmans comme étant suspects et, par conséquent, moins canadiens.

**Mots clés:** les musulmans canadiens; citoyenneté; terrorisme; Canada; révocation

## INTRODUCTION

**B**y and large, citizenship rules in Western immigrant-receiving states have been liberalized. Both citizenship acquisition and citizenship loss have become increasingly “de-ethnicized”, i.e. decoupled from ethnocultural ascriptions. One astute observer (Joppke 2003) defines de-ethnicization as “the process of facilitating the access to citizenship, either [...] in terms of liberalized naturalization procedures, or through adding *jus soli* elements to [...] birth-attributed citizenship” (436). “A third element of de-ethnicized citizenship is an increasing toleration of dual citizenship” (441). De-ethnicization requires the decoupling of the state from illiberal forms of nation-building.

Nevertheless, instances of “re-ethnicization” still exist. Some are explicit, deliberate and inscribed in citizenship rules (e.g. Dumbrava 2014). The majority, however, are implicit and often occur by means of discourse and an increasing culturalization of national boundaries in religious terms (Bilge 2010; Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014; Triadafilopoulos 2011). The potential of re-ethnicization is grounded in the fact that “a state qua membership unit is a fundamentally ethnic institution because membership is usually ascribed at birth” (Joppke 2003: 435). Joppke (443) identifies two moments when the descent-based, ethnic quality of the state becomes visible: when non-members enter and are required to “naturalize”; and when members leave, even for extended periods of time, but do not thereby lose their membership. Furthermore, citizenship rules become re-ethnicized when citizenship loss (also denationalization) is based on ascribed ethnic attributes, such as skin colour, religion, place of birth, language, culture or dress.

The mainstream media have often been accused of being complicit in the (implicit) re-ethnicization of citizenship. Specifically, Muslims tend to be cast as outsiders and associated with terrorism, violence and security threats (e.g. Alsultany 2012; Bail 2012; Bleich et al 2015; Meer 2012; Petley and Richardson 2011). According to recent scholarship, the Canadian mainstream media do not seem to differ in this regard (Antonius 2013; Flatt 2013; Jasmine 2015; Kowalski 2013; Perigoe and Eid 2014). In this paper, we examine the way the media covered the new citizenship revocation rules for dual nationals. We are specifically interested in how the citizenship revocation clause was discussed in the mainstream press, and to what extent the latter contributed to the re-ethnicization of Canadian citizenship rules.

Over the past years, Canada has seen two attempts to facilitate the revocation of citizenship. First, in 2012, a private member’s bill proposed that dual Canadian citizens are “deemed to have made an application for

renunciation of their Canadian citizenship if they engage in an act of war against the Canadian Armed Forces” (Bill C-425, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (honouring the Canadian Armed Forces) 2012). This bill died on the order in the summer of 2013. A year later, the same content in slightly revised form was made law (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014). It allowed the Conservative government (2006-2015) to revoke the Canadian citizenship of dual citizens who have engaged in actions contrary to the national interests of Canada, such as high treason, terrorism, espionage (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2015). Ultimately, the only person to be stripped off Canadian citizenship was Zakaria Amara, imprisoned for his role in the plot to bomb Toronto’s downtown in 2006 (CBC 2015a)<sup>1</sup>.

In February 2016, four months after being elected to power, the new Liberal government started the process of repealing the legislation (CBC 2016). Nevertheless, at the time of writing, the 2014 Strengthening Citizenship Act remains the law of the land. Despite the fact that only one person has lost (and later regained, see below) Canadian citizenship, research shows that many Canadian Muslims have felt threatened, stigmatized and alienated by the legislation (Lenard and Nagra 2016).

Given its recency, as well as the many twists and turns, scholarship has yet to come to terms with the 2014 legislation and the public discourses which accompanied it. In this paper, we examine how the mainstream press reacted towards the government’s proposition to allow for the revocation of Canadian citizenship of certain dual nationals. We want to know which stance they took on citizenship revocation, and how they communicated this stipulation’s purpose and targets to the wider Canadian public. Ultimately, we aim to evaluate the extent to which the media contributed to the de-ethnicization or re-ethnicization of Canadian citizenship with respect to the loss of citizenship.

In the remainder of this paper, we first provide a brief overview of the recent Canadian political landscape. We then review recent scholarship on media-minority relations and discuss the role of the media for Canadian citizenship. Third, we outline our methodological approach. Fourth we summarize the main findings of how Bills C-425 and C-24 and their presumed targets were discussed in the mainstream Canadian press. Finally, we discuss these findings.

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1. Three other members of the group were informed that their citizenship would be revoked (2015b) and two of them challenged the move through the courts (2015c). Two other Muslim men convicted for terror conspiracy were also reported as challenging the move to revoke their citizenship claiming unconstitutionality and second-class citizenship (CBC 2015d; CBC 2015e). The process was halted when the new government came to power.

## CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP UNDER THE HARPER CONSERVATIVES

Canada is a multicultural country in both a factual and normative sense. Eighty-four percent of new immigrants are from places other than Europe, mostly Asia and the Middle East (Statistics Canada 2009). There are currently more than 6.2 million foreign-born residents from over 200 countries (Ibid). 3.2 percent of the Canadian population is Muslim (Statistics Canada 2011a). Canada allows unconditional *jus soli* since the first adoption of the Constitutional Act in 1867 (Weil 2004; Government of Canada 2014) and unconditional dual citizenship since 1977. The 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms explicitly opposes discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, skin colour, or mental or physical disability.

Under the government of Stephen Harper's Conservative Party (2006 - 2015), Canada witnessed numerous alterations of its citizenship rules. In 2009, citizenship was "de-ethnicized" by restricting citizenship acquisition to the first generation born abroad and "re-ethnicized" through the repatriation of so-called Lost Canadians (Harder 2010; Harder and Zhyznomirska 2012; Winter 2014b). In the following years (2009 - 2013), five major changes were made to the naturalization process: a new citizenship study guide and more difficult test, initiatives against the fraudulent acquisition of citizenship, the militarization of the citizenship ceremony, and the tightening of language requirements for prospective citizenship applicants (Winter 2014a). According to Winter and Sauvageau (2014), these changes have "re-nationalized" Canadian citizenship rules. Several of these changes have been interpreted as targeting (prospective) Muslim Canadians (Abu-Laban 2013; Amery 2013; Thompson 2013). For instance, the new citizenship guide uses the word "barbaric" to qualify "spousal abuse, 'honour killings', female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender-based violence" (Canada 2011). While few Canadians, Muslims included, would condone these practices, many take offence at a discourse which fails to shed a critical light on the ongoing gender inequality in the West and falsely identifies Muslims and their religion as un-Canadian. The same can be said of the 2011 banning of face coverings at citizenship ceremonies – a move that was unequivocally interpreted as targeting niqab-wearing Muslim women. Indeed, when in early 2015 a federal judge ruled that the niqab ban during citizenship ceremonies was unlawful, Prime Minister Steven Harper told the press in Quebec that this was "not how we do things here" (Quan 2015). In both these instances, an ethnicizing language was employed to invoke images of the civilized "us" against the barbaric (Muslim) "others".

With respect to citizenship revocation, on May 30, 2012, Conservative MP Devinder Shory introduced Bill C-425, *An Act to Amend the Citizenship Act (Honouring the Canadian Armed Forces)*. Among other changes, the Bill proposed that persons who have engaged in “an act of war” against the Canadian Forces be considered to have renounced their Canadian citizenship or, if they were permanent residents, to have withdrawn their application for citizenship. Bill C-425 died when Parliament was prorogued in August 2013. However, it gained new traction in early February 2013, when, in the wake of reports that Canadian citizens were involved in bomb attacks in Bulgaria and Algeria, the then Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, informed the media that the government was considering revoking the citizenship of dual nationals involved in acts of terrorism.

Bill C-24, known as the *Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act*, was tabled in February 2014, rushed through Parliament and granted Royal Assent without any amendments on June 19, 2014. Among other major changes, the Minister’s office can now revoke the citizenship of dual citizens who have engaged in actions contrary to the national interests of Canada (e.g. high treason, terrorism, espionage) and if they have been charged outside of Canada with a crime that, if committed in Canada, would be considered a serious criminal offence.

The new Liberal government promised during the election campaign it would repeal Bill C-24 (CBC 2015f). Indeed, shortly after the Liberals were voted into power in October 2015, the new Immigration Minister John McCallum introduced Bill C-6: *An Act to Amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act*. Bill C-6 proposes to reverse the citizenship revocation portion of the previous government’s citizenship legislation and to reduce barriers to citizenship, while retaining most of the “integrity-related” measures brought forward by the Conservatives (Griffith 2016). McCallum also announced that the Liberal government restored the citizenship of Zakaria Amara (CBC 2016). McCallum justified the move by arguing: “We do not need an additional set of rules that would create two classes of citizen...If one believes that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian...those principles must be applied universally” (Ibid). At the time of writing, Bill C-6 is at first reading in the Senate and the *Citizenship Act* of 2014 is still in effect.

Our aim in this paper is neither to challenge the existing legal provisions nor the proposed changes. Rather, our goal is to examine how the citizenship revocation clause was discussed in the Canadian mainstream press. Adopting an inductive approach, we ask: who/what is seen as being the target of the new citizenship revocation rules for dual nationals in

Canada? To what extent did the media contribute to the re-ethnicization of Canadian citizenship rules, pertaining specifically to the loss of citizenship?

### **MEDIA, MUSLIMS AND CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP: THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES**

The roles of the media for democratic citizenship are multiple and highly amorphous. The mainstream media are capitalist organizations, owned by “the white male corporate elite” (Henry and Tator 2002: 39; also Fleras 2011: Chapter 5). As such, they have a particular interest in information: they want to “sell” news, and they tend to portray the view of those in power. Sometimes the latter characteristic is mitigated by the first: in order to be consumed by the “masses”, the media is required to at least partially reflect their views and concerns. Furthermore, the media entertain an ambiguous role towards the governing class. On the one hand, the media (and especially media owners) are part of the establishment; as such, they are sometimes nothing more than mouthpieces of government actions. By disseminating information about policy and legislation, they are highly influential in forming public opinion (Fleras 2011; Vipond 2011). On the other hand, they are also responsible for holding the government accountable, for providing critical, alternative positions, and for promoting civic literacy. Milner (2001) underlines the important role of newspapers in this regard. In either case, due to their influence on public opinion, mainstream media discourses also have an important impact on politicians and policy-making (Ibrahim 2005; Li 2001).

Mahtani (2001) argues that the mainstream media not only produce discourses - they play a role in educating citizens about the role certain groups play in contributing to Canadian society and delineating between those who are “mainstream” and those who are “different”. The relationship between the media and minorities has, for the most part, been strained (Fleras and Kunz 2001). Moreover, since the beginning of the 21st century, Canadian media have tended to portray minorities as threats to Canadian liberal-democratic values and national security.

Canadian Muslims, increasingly, have become targets of media skepticism, false and misleading information, even outright xenophobia, often in media coverage of government policies or actions (Jiwani 2006; Karim 1996, but Astana 2014; Kazemipur 2014; Winter et al 2013). Overall, it is being argued that the media have been complicit in the stigmatization and racialization of Canadian Muslims via framing them predominantly in the context of terrorism, violence and security threats

(for counter-examples, see Dakroury 2008, 2012; Eid and Khan 2011; Hirji 2011). Most recent research includes Flatt's (2012) analysis of newspaper coverage of security certificates issued to non-citizens who were deemed to pose threat to national security. She finds that using the method only in Muslim and Arab communities, coupled with the media's framing of the detainees as a threat, contributed to the stigmatization and criminalization of the detainees and their communities alike. Kowalski (2013) argues that an Orientalist framing of the Toronto 18 arrests in the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*'s contributed to the mystification and discursive collective punishment of not only the "few marginal actors", but Canadian Muslims in general (153). Thomas's (2015) analysis of the representations of the niqab ban at citizenship ceremonies in Canadian dailies reveals that the media homogenized the diverse experiences of Muslim women who cover their faces by portraying them all as victims or as threats to the Canadian nation. Perigoe and Eid (2014) find that *Montreal Gazette*'s Orientalist and "racist" discourse in the coverage of the weeks following 9/11 contributed to the racialization of Muslims (249). It has also been argued that the intense and unjustifiable representations of banal stories of religious and cultural (dis)agreements as threats to the core values of Quebec society prompted the 2006-2007 "Reasonable Accommodation Crisis" in Quebec. For instance, Giasson et al. (2010) find that the press focused mostly on the perceived negative outcomes of immigration, thereby reinforcing the perception of a crisis. Antonius's (2013) analysis of the coverage of the "crisis" in *Le Journal de Montréal* finds that Muslims were overwhelmingly represented as threats to the Quebec society.

In sum, based on the scholarship reviewed above, we expect the Canadian mainstream media to endorse the proposed legislation of citizenship revocation. We do not expect them to be openly biased, but to express skepticism towards Muslims, Islam, and their loyalty towards Canada. As such, we also expect them to name Muslims as the (likely) perpetrators of the acts that are to be punished by denationalization, and thereby to contribute to the (implicit) re-ethnicization of Canadian citizenship.

## METHODS

In order to uncover the role of the mainstream press in framing the goals and targets of Bill C-425 and of Bill C-24' citizenship revocation provision, we surveyed the databases Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies and Eureka.cc. Combinations of the following key words were used: for



English-language articles: Bill C-24, Bill C-425, citizen\*, citizenship, revocation, revoke, terror\*, Shory; for French-language articles: projet de loi C-24, Projet de loi c-425, citoyenneté, révocation, terror\*, Shory. The analysis was subsequently narrowed down to the following newspapers: *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Sun*, *24 Hours*, *La Presse*, *Le Devoir* and *Le Journal de Montréal*.

The time period covered stretched from 7 February 2013 – when Bill C-425 made its first appearance in the media – until 7 July 2014, i.e. after Bill C-24 had become law and the media debates gradually tapered off. Only those articles that addressed citizenship revocation were included in the analysis, which brought the number of articles to 88 in English and only 8 in French<sup>2</sup>. The collected data includes news articles, editorials, columns and letters.

We combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer our research questions. Using inductive content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005), we first identified and categorized references to groups, individuals, geographic places and events that were meaningfully linked to the implementation of the citizenship revocation provision. Based on the initial findings, we conducted word searches and word counts in order to capture all instances of these references. Additionally, we coded the articles for arguments supporting or opposing the measure. We then identified discursive and journalistic strategies used to point to those likely to have their citizenship revoked. These are described in combination with our findings in the section below.

## FINDINGS I: THE “OBVIOUS”

As expected, the newspaper coverage of Bill C-425's and of Bill C-24's citizenship revocation provision revolved primarily around terrorism and Muslims. However, our findings do not support the reproach of explicit anti-Muslim bias that the media are often accused of. Rather, for the most part, the media were critically alert to the fact that the legislation was mainly targeting Muslims. Unfortunately, while raising awareness about a presumed injustice, the newspapers were also reinforcing the impression that this legislation was only and could only be about one specific form of criminal activity, committed by and large by (some) members of one specific ethnocultural group of (dual) Canadians.

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2. Interestingly, the issue of citizenship revocation was not high on the radar of French-language newspapers. It is possible that it was overshadowed by the debates about the so-called Charter of values presented by the Parti Québécois which were occurring during the same time frame.



Our first major finding is that the mainstream press mostly took a critical position in debating the issue of citizenship revocation. We identified 238 arguments against, as opposed to 135 for the citizenship revocation for dual nationals. Those against the measure opposed second-class citizenship and questioned the bill's constitutionality. (Table 1).

**Table 1: Most Frequent Arguments Against the Measure**

	References	Articles
<b>Creates second class citizenship</b>	28	23
<b>May be unconstitutional</b>	22	18
<b>Gives power to politicians</b>	13	11
<b>Citizenship revocation is job for the courts</b>	12	9
<b>Knee-Jerk Reaction</b>	10	9
<b>Cannot target Canadian-born citizens</b>	10	8
<b>Devalues citizenship</b>	9	7

Our second finding is that, unsurprisingly – given the wording of the two bills – dual citizens were referenced as the main target of the measure (246 references in 71 articles). Some commentators were dismayed that even Canadian-born citizens could hypothetically lose their citizenship. This is a Janus-faced argument: on the one hand, it implies that all individuals born on Canadian soil hold the same (protected) status as Canadians (de-ethnicized citizenship); on the other it undermines the long-held claim that naturalized Canadians have the same right to citizenship and belonging as those who acquired this status at birth (re-ethnicized citizenship).

**Table 2. Media Coverage by Criminal Activity**

Criminal Activity	Acts of War	Espionage	Treason	Terrorism
Articles	41	23	51	82
References	82	32	104	486

Our third finding is that citizenship revocation was reported on and debated primarily in the context of “terrorism”, and to a much smaller extent in terms of “acts of war”, “high treason” or “espionage” (Table 2). Given today’s global context, this should also not come as a surprise. Fourth, “terrorism” tended to be framed as being committed by religious

fundamentalists, and – in broad terms – Muslims. In our sample, 59 of 96 articles (61%) make a reference to Muslim individuals, ethnic groups, nations, countries and regions inhabited predominantly by Muslims (e.g. the Middle East). Out of the 37 articles that do not mention Muslims, only 5 refer to non-Muslim individuals or national groups. The remaining 32 articles reported on or debated citizenship revocation without referring to any specific national, ethnic or religious entities. This confirms our main hypothesis that, within the Canadian context, the representation of citizenship revocation in the mainstream media was about terrorism and Muslims. While this may be considered unsurprising, given that individuals and groups associated with Islam and Muslims have been behind most recent terrorist attacks, it must be underlined again that Muslims were neither mentioned in the bills themselves, nor by members of the government who – despite employing re-ethnicizing language at other occasions (see above) – did not explicitly mention any specific ethnic or religious group in relation to citizenship revocation. The media did thus not simply repeat the government's arguments, nor did they subscribe to its framing of the case (see below).

We applied a more nuanced discourse analysis to the fourth finding. We identified discursive and journalistic strategies employed to portray a Muslim-terrorism nexus that was more often discarded than embraced, but nevertheless constructed. Specifically, we differentiated between two types of references to Muslim involvement linked to the implementation of the citizenship revocation measure: 1) specific, “real” cases and 2) hypothetical scenarios.

## FINDINGS II: VEILED ASSUMPTIONS

First, the analyzed newspapers marked those involved in past or present terrorism cases as potential targets of the bill. This includes Canadians with dual citizenship who have been, legitimately or falsely, suspected, accused, convicted, or acquitted of terrorism charges, either in Canada or abroad. As Table 3 shows, these interpretations dominated the coverage: 98 references were made to Muslim Canadians, and 4 to non-Muslim Canadians, namely Sri Lankan Canadians. The Lebanese Canadian involved in the 2012 Bulgaria attack<sup>3</sup>, Omar Khadr<sup>4</sup>, members of “Toronto

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3. In July 2013, Bulgarian authorities identified him as Hassan El Hajj Hassan (CBC 2013).

4. A Canadian-born, Muslim child soldier who was detained for 10 years (2002–2012) at Guantanamo Bay (e.g. Williamson 2012).

18” and “foreign fighters” in Muslim-majority countries<sup>5</sup> were among the Muslim Canadians who were reported as being “legitimately” suspected or convicted of terrorism, and who would presumably be candidates for citizenship revocation. For instance, the *National Post*’s Chris Selley tackles the question who the measure targets by presenting his own family’s primarily Western European lineage as an example of the type of Canadians that would *not* be candidates for citizenship revocation. Then, he argues that the proposed bill “isn’t about people like me or you, or even the worst of our countrymen - neither Robert Pickton’s nor Paul Bernardo’s Canadian citizenship would be at risk if they held another” (Selley 2014). While the author recognizes that the government is not targeting “people like me or you”, he also assumes that his readers are of the same or similar background as him. Furthermore, not only is the bill *not* about the Western-European origin white men, it also does not target the citizenship of “our” criminals, e.g. Robert Pickton or Paul Bernardo. The bill is about “them” and “their” criminalities:

I’m not the first to notice how well those circumstances align with those of Canada’s least favourite 27-year-old, Omar Ahmed Khadr, whose father was born in Egypt...And say Omar Khadr does represent a serious terrorist threat. We should wish to deport him to Egypt...why? Do we really imagine he would be less of a threat to us and to our friends in the West there, as opposed to under surveillance in Canada? (Selley 2014)

Selley criticizes the measure as ineffective in terms of security objectives and argues that terrorism committed by Canadian citizens is *Canada’s*, not another country’s problem. He also exposes the government’s bias in targeting only the criminalities of non-Western, non-white men. Curiously, however, Selley also implicitly excludes non-Western-origin, non-white readers from his readership, inadvertently reinforcing the narrative that “they” are less Canadian.

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5. In marking a national group as a majority-Muslim or non-Muslim, we used official statistics on the religious composition of the state. For instance, whilst we refer to Lebanese or Egyptian Canadians as “Muslim”, we acknowledge the multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of their ancestral homelands. We also acknowledge that national groups marked as “non-Muslim”, e.g. China or the US, are populated by Muslim minorities.

Table 3: Media Coverage of “Real” Cases by Religious Background

Muslim			Non-Muslim		
Reference	Count	Number of Articles	Reference	Count	Number of Articles
The Khadrs	24	7	Sri Lankan Canadians	4	2
Fighters in the Middle East, Afghanistan or Bosnia	18	12			
Toronto 18	2	2			
Lebanese-Canadian Involved in the Bulgaria Attack	28	14			
“Jihadists”	9	3			
Fateh Kamel	4	2			
Abdullah Almalki	2	1			
Muayyed Nureddin	2	1			
Ahmed El-Maati	2	1			
Abousfian Abdelrazik	1	1			
Maher Arar	7	4			
Bashir Makhtal	3	1			
Mohamed Fahmy	22	5			
Total	98	54	Total	4	2

In an opinion piece supporting citizenship revocation, the *Sun* identified Canadian dual citizens involved in the Bulgaria and Algeria bombings, as well as Omar Khadr, as candidates for citizenship revocation. Their religion is identified as their only moral compass:

[Citizenship revocation] seems like a trivial sanction to apply to a murderer. To the terrorist himself, losing Canadian citizenship has no moral pain (sic) – jihadists do not acknowledge the sovereignty of a secular constitutional democracy. They only believe in a theocratic caliphate, whose constitution is the Qur’an. (Levant 2013)

Next, cases of those dual citizens, namely Muslim Canadians who have been falsely accused of terrorism in the years following 9/11, were discussed in terms of how citizenship revocation would have affected them had it been in place. For instance, Kanji (2014) writes for the *National Post* that “the inaccurate tarring and incarceration of Messrs. Arar, El-Maati, Almalki and Nureddin suggests that wrongful conviction of Canadian ‘terrorists’ is not such a remote possibility”, adding that “Yesterday’s terrorists may be today’s honorary Canadian citizens - as the case of Nelson Mandela demonstrates”. Finally, the cases of Bashir Makhtal and Mohamed Fahmy were also discussed in terms of how it could affect them if the measure becomes law. The *Globe and Mail*’s (2014) editorial team writes: “under the new law, for example, Al Jazeera journalist Mohamed Fahmy could be stripped of his Canadian citizenship because he was convicted of terrorism by an Egyptian court. Ottawa has said it would not apply the law in Mr. Fahmy’s case, but the mere fact that it has had to answer the question should give us all pause”.

The second type of references that were linked to the implementation of the citizenship revocation measure evoked hypothetical scenarios. In this instance, instead of pointing to specific terrorism offences, the newspapers used indirect discursive devices and journalistic techniques to indicate whom they thought the provision might affect. As Table 4 shows, hypothetical Muslims individuals and groups were implicitly pointed to as potential targets of citizenship revocation by employing the strategies of presupposition, exemplification and experiential interviews.

According to Baker and Ellece (2011: 103) presupposition reveals speakers’ or writers’ “commonsense assumptions, beliefs and attitudes that are taken as given”. For instance, while being critical of the bill, this reader of the *Globe and Mail* unambiguously interprets the measure as targeting those of Middle Eastern background: “the Mideast is full of shifting allegiances where today’s ally is tomorrow’s enemy. In that situation, a person motivated solely by considerations of justice and rights can easily be construed as a ‘terrorist’ and as ‘treasonous’ to Canadian interests” (Marlin 2014). There is no question here about *who* the measure is about. A reader to the *Sun* likewise presupposes Muslims to be the intended target of the provision: “Whereas those born to Islam can have their Canadian citizenship revoked - others cannot. But what of them?” (Smith 2013). Regardless of the position towards the measure, arguments are built on the assumption that it is in fact Muslims who are the intended recipients of the Bill.

Table 4: Hypothetical Scenarios by Religious Background

Presupposition			Examples		Experiential Interviews						
Muslim		Non-Muslim		Muslim		Non-Muslim		Muslim		Non-Muslim	
Mid-East	1	0	Egyptian Canadians	5	American Canadian	3	Pakistani	1	0		
“Born to Islam”	1		Lebanese Canadians	3	Italian Canadian	1	Iranian	1			
Muslims	1		Pakistani Canadians	3	Chinese Canadian	1					
			Syrian Canadians	3							
			Iranian Canadians	3							
			Saudi Canadians	1							
			Iraqi Canadians	1							
			Middle Eastern Canadians	1							
			Kuwaiti Canadian	1							
Total	3	0		21		5		2		0	

Next, in reporting on or arguing their position pro or against citizenship revocation, the newspapers used example-giving to indicate which ethnicities, nations, religious, countries or regions those targeted by the measure might come from. According to Oliver et al (2007), readers take greater notice of examples in news stories compared to other information. As a discursive strategy, exemplification takes typical, single cases to illustrate a general claim (Daschmann 2015) and provide reliable information about the group under investigation (Zillmann 1999). Our analysis shows that Muslim-majority nationalities, countries and regions dominated the examples of potential targets of citizenship revocation

(Table 4). For instance, in arguing against the measure, the *National Post* asks:

What if Egypt passed such a law? Or Pakistan or Saudi Arabia or Lebanon? Faced with the prospect of resettling Canada's terrorists and traitors on some dubious claim to citizenship, why wouldn't such countries pass such laws? Imagine Iraq uncitizenizing a terrorist and deporting him to Canada just because he was born here. Sauce for the goose, surely. (Selley 2014)

*La Presse* too tapped into the readers' imagination by asking to "Imaginons qu'un Canado-Iranien est accusé de vouloir semer la terreur en Iran. Et qu'un tribunal iranien le juge coupable de ce crime. Se fierait-on à ce verdict pour se débarrasser de ce citoyen encombrant?" (Gruda 2014).

Muslim-majority ethnic and national groups were also presented as examples of the targets of citizenship revocation alongside non-Muslim-majority groups. In an editorial, the *Toronto Star* (2013) argues that:

This is a knee-jerk reaction, nothing more, to embarrassing reports that a Canadian/Lebanese dual national with links to Hezbollah and few ties to Canada was involved in a terror attack on a bus in Bulgaria last year that killed the driver and five Israeli tourists...The Tories seem not to grasp that once we grant citizenship, the person is Canadian in the eyes of the law. Not Lebanese-Canadian, American-Canadian, Italian-Canadian. Just Canadian. It's our citizenship, and our problem. How would we react to Lebanon stripping Lebanese-Canadian terrorists of their Lebanese citizenship and telling us they are now exclusively our worry?

Here, Lebanese Canadians were placed alongside two predominantly non-Muslim ethnic and national groups. While the Lebanese population is estimated to be around 54% Muslim (US Department of State 2013), the majority of Canadian Lebanese are Christians (Statistics Canada 2007). It could be argued then that the reference cannot be interpreted as an example of a Muslim-majority nationality. However, in this particular quote, the "Muslimness" of the seemingly religiously neutral example was constructed by the prior mention of the Lebanese-Canadian Hassan El Hajj Hassan who was involved in the Bulgaria attack. While his name was not known at the time, phrases such as "links to Hezbollah", "terror" and attack on "Israeli tourists" signalled he was likely Muslim. In placing the three groups together, the editor's objective was to provide random examples of Canada's ethnicities in order to portray Canada's diversity. "The rule of three" (Richardson 2007: 173) was employed to achieve a sense of completeness. The strategy of "parataxis" – the placing of "linguistic items side by side so that they have (or appear to have)



equal status” (Baker and Ellece 2011: 86) – was used next in order to present the three examples as equal and collapsible under the umbrella of “Canadians”. Finally, the negation “not” served to erase any ethnic difference between them. This effort nonetheless, Lebanese Canadians dominated the article – they were mentioned five times as opposed to only once for Italian and American Canadians, and that alongside the Lebanese Canadians. Whilst disagreeing with the measure, the author reinforced the presupposition that it is Lebanese Canadians, and by extension Muslims, that would be targeted by citizenship revocation.

The *Toronto Star* also used example-giving to point to the targets of the measure:

Many native-born Canadians are dual nationals. Some, such as the Canadian-born children of American parents, carry two passports by choice. Others are dual nationals because they have no choice. Syria and China don’t easily allow their nationals to renounce the citizenship they were born with. Egypt treats the children of Egyptian-born fathers as its citizens, no matter where they are born. The list goes on. In short, more Canadians than one might think are dual nationals. (Walkom 2013)

Here, a predominantly non-Muslim nationality (American) was used as an example of groups that might be targeted. However, it was immediately followed by three more examples: two of predominantly Muslim countries (Syria and Egypt) and one of a predominantly non-Muslim country (China). Juxtaposition-parataxis was used, again, to attempt to equalize the examples. The author closed with an example of Egypt’s citizenship policies, the most frequently referred to country in all the analyzed articles. Elsewhere in the coverage, examples of Egypt’s citizenship policies were sometimes followed by a reference to Omar Khadr. In this instance, Omar Khadr was not mentioned, but we argue that he is alluded to. Allusion is a form of intertextuality (Baker and Ellece 2011: 64) and the author likely used the example of Egypt to interpret the measure, but also to enter into a conversation with other newspaper articles published in the days following the announcement of the measure that likewise interpreted it as directed, among others, towards Omar Khadr. Importantly, no non-Muslim-majority countries, ethnic or national groups were given as examples without *also* including Muslim-majority countries and groups. As noted earlier, providing and grouping *only* non-Muslim examples (e.g. Brazilian Canadians, Japanese Canadians and Finnish Canadians) would have violated the principle of exemplification which requires examples to be typical, relevant and “making sense”.

Table 5: Exemplification by Religious Background

Muslim	Examples	Non-Muslim	Examples
<b>Egyptian Canadians</b>	5	American Canadian	3
<b>Lebanese Canadians</b>	3	Italian Canadian	1
<b>Pakistani Canadians</b>	3	Chinese Canadian	1
<b>Syrian Canadians</b>	3		
<b>Iranian Canadians</b>	3		
<b>Saudi Canadians</b>	1		
<b>Iraqi Canadians</b>	1		
<b>Middle Eastern Canadians</b>	1		
<b>Kuwaiti Canadian</b>	1		
<b>Total</b>	21	<b>Total</b>	5

The final strategy used by the newspapers to point to potential recipients of the provision was their choice of members of the public to comment on the proposed measure (see Table 5). “Experiential interviews” of this type imply that the member of the public has had “some relevant personal experience” (Montgomery 2011: 34). The only two instances in which opinions of members of the public on the question of citizenship revocation were published involved two permanent residents – presumably future Canadian citizens – of Muslim backgrounds. The opinion of a Pakistani national on the proposed measure was made public by the *Toronto Star*: “How can you belong when you can’t establish your roots here and your hard work is not paying off, and you are constantly threatened that you will have your citizenship revoked and can be thrown out at any moment?” (Keung 2014a). A few weeks later, the *Toronto Star* reported that “The new provisions allowing officials to revoke Canadian citizenship from dual nationals with serious criminal convictions also bother the 32-year-old Iranian native...Canada is creating two classes of citizens. ‘Those born here come first, and the naturalized citizens come second’” (Keung 2014b). In the same article, two other Iranian citizens, as well as nationals of India, Russia and Pakistan were quoted on various other proposed changes in

Canada's citizenship legislation. In theory, any of these permanent residents could have been asked their opinion on the question of citizenship revocation for terrorism offences. In reality, however, reporting the opinion of the Russian national, for instance, would have probably been interpreted by readers as impertinent.

## DISCUSSION

In this paper, we asked a) who is seen as the target of the new citizenship revocation rules for dual nationals in Canada, and b) whether this can be interpreted as a re-ethnicization of Canadian citizenship as it pertains to the loss of citizenship. Before answering the second question in the conclusion to this paper, we present a nuanced discussion of the findings.

The answer to our first question is that Muslims, specifically Muslim men, were interpreted to be the targets of citizenship revocation. However, references to Muslim-majority groups and countries were made in the context of the newspapers being more critical than supportive of the measure. While the government attempted to frame the policy to be a question of loyalty and privilege, newspaper commentators countered the frames by invoking the principle of equal citizenship for all Canadians. As such, the mainstream press did not operate as a mouthpiece for the government. Furthermore, contrary to the racist and openly biased stance that the media are often accused of (e.g. Perigoe and Eid 2014), we interpret this finding as evidence of the newspapers not being "racist" in their coverage. A "racist" coverage would have been one overwhelmingly supportive of the measure. As such, this study confirms recent studies (Astana 2014; Kazemipour 2014; Winter et al 2013) that found that the mainstream media are moving closer to less stigmatizing representations of Muslim Canadians.

Despite these caveats and although sometimes sympathetic to Muslims being the perceived target of citizenship revocation, the newspapers did not paint a univocally positive image of Canadian Muslims. On the contrary, the second part of our analysis reveals biases that relate to the omnipresence of references to Muslims in relation to citizenship revocation, in both categories: "real" and hypothetical scenarios.

First, with respect to evoking "real" scenarios, we found that the newspapers interpreted the provision as likely to affect Muslim Canadian men, namely those who have been involved in specific ("real") cases of terrorism. Marking these individuals and groups as potential candidates for citizenship revocation was done in a relatively overt manner. On the one hand, it could be argued that in presenting the revocation question as a "Muslim question", the media were only objective in their coverage. Given the fact that the majority of recent terrorist attacks have been committed by

groups associated with Islam and Muslims, it is not surprising that Muslims accounted the majority of references to targets of citizenship revocation, even if they constitute only 3.2% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada 2011a). An argument can be made that the press had "no choice" but to represent the targets of the measure in the way they did.

On the other hand, while the coverage focused mostly on the post-9/11 period, the newspapers also occasionally ventured into the past (e.g. in discussions of past citizenship policies and the history of citizenship revocation). However, with the exception of Sri Lankan Canadians, the newspapers did not make references to past terrorism cases involving non-Muslim Canadians. Inderjit Singh Reyat, the bomb maker convicted in the 1985 Air India bombing, and the members of the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) convicted after the 1970 October Crisis were missing from the coverage. The newspapers also discussed only those recent cases that involved Muslim Canadians (e.g. Toronto 18, Bulgaria bombings, Omar Khadr), including cases in which the individuals in question were falsely accused or acquitted (e.g. Maher Arar and Mohamed Fahmy). Cases such as the 2008-2009 British Columbia pipeline bombings that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) labeled "domestic terrorism" (CBC 2010) were absent from the coverage. To be fair, the suspect for the bombings Wiebo Ludwig was released following arrest in 2010 and he passed away in 2012. It is unknown if him or any of the surviving FLQ members had dual citizenship or not. Making references to these cases would have been highly hypothetical then. And yet, the newspapers had no hesitation venturing into the realm of hypothetical scenarios, but only insofar as they involved Muslim regions and populations. Given the media attention the bills received, the coverage could have been more diverse. Involvement of white, non-Muslim Canadians in terrorism (labelled as such by the state), as exceptional as it may be, was omitted from the representations, unlike that of Muslims, even when they were wrongfully accused. It is possible that the white non-Muslim men were assumed to not have another citizenship – they were presupposed to be only Canadians – despite the fact that the majority of Canadians with multiple citizenships are dual nationals of the United States, the United Kingdom or France (Statistics Canada 2011b), and not Muslim-majority countries such as Egypt or Syria. At the same time, Muslims were simply assumed to be holders of multiple citizenships, despite the lack of evidence to corroborate this assumption. Thus, despite the critical position towards citizenship revocation (in principle), Muslims were constructed as less Canadian.

Furthermore, alternative media may have covered the story altogether differently. While not the focus of this paper, an opinion piece on the al-

ternative online news portal rabble.ca made a reference to Justin Bourque and the 2014 Moncton shootings of RCMP officers (Kanji 2015). The author questioned why this attack against the state was not labelled terrorism and why “those who successfully kill and are charged with murder remain Canadian, while those who attempt but fail to commit violence and are charged with terrorism may lose their citizenship” (Ibid). The Moncton shootings occurred in June 2014, around the time Bill C-24 became law and the debates around citizenship revocation had gradually tapered off. The shootings were therefore unlikely to be discussed in this context and timeframe. However, the issue of citizenship revocation was debated in the media after the time period included in this paper, first after having come into effect in May 2015, and then during the federal election campaign in fall 2015. A search through the Canadian Dailies database reveals that in 2015 Justin Bourque was discussed once in the context of terrorism (in a *Toronto Star* piece authored by the same rabble.ca contributor referenced above), but never as a candidate for citizenship revocation. On the one hand, it is possible Bourque is a mono-citizen. On the other hand, he could have been, like many Muslims were, included in the coverage, but he was not. In sum, the absence of references to non-Muslim terrorists is striking. It reveals a tension between the newspapers’ criticism of the measure as fostering inequality, and the inability - or unwillingness - to look beyond Muslims in looking for relevant examples.

Second, in addition to referring to specific cases of terrorism involving Muslims, the newspapers made implicit references to Muslims as the intended recipients of the measure. They invented “hypothetical” scenarios where Muslims were assumed to be candidates for citizenship revocation, Muslim national groups were mentioned as seemingly innocuous examples of targets of the provision and Muslims in general were portrayed as more relevant to speak on the issue. Providing “random” examples of non-Muslim-majority ethnic and national groups, as well as an opinion of a non-Muslim on this issue – would have appeared as “atypical”, irrelevant and probably lacking “common sense”. This confirms the “liminal state” of Muslims and Arab Canadians in Canadian society (Abu-Laban 2013). It also shows that the mainstream press failed to take strong intellectual leadership. By merely representing what is currently prevalent in public common-sense discourse in Canada and other Western countries, the mainstream press was more involved in producing “what sells” than in defending a group that they seemed to perceive as being unfairly targeted by government legislation. Applying the principle of equal citizenship -- which they claimed to adhere to *in principle* – to *all* Canadians should have led to a coverage that disrupted the stereotype that *only* Muslims can be terrorists. Instead, the coverage nourished precisely this stereotype.

When we combine the two findings (the “real” cases and the hypothetical scenarios), we find that the press contributed to the marking of Canadian Muslims – as a group – as being closer associated with terrorism than – to paraphrase Selley (2014) – me or you or everyone else. A Muslim-terrorism nexus was produced – or maybe simply reproduced – by the press when references to specific cases of terrorism (even when the individuals in question were falsely accused or acquitted) were collocated with the seemingly random and innocuous hypothetical examples of Muslim ethnic and national groups. This is what discourse analysts refer to as discursive prosody, i.e. the way that neutral words (and texts) acquire positive or negative connotations from emotionally charged words that they are collocated with (Baker and Ellece 2011). When in the same breath the *Toronto Star*’s (2013) editorial refers *specifically* to the “Canadian-Lebanese dual national with links to Hezbollah and few ties to Canada...involved in a terror attack on a bus in Bulgaria last year that killed the driver and five Israeli tourists” *and* then *hypothetically* to “Lebanese-Canadian, American-Canadian, Italian-Canadian” citizens *and* then asks “How would we react to Lebanon stripping Lebanese-Canadian terrorists of their Lebanese citizenship and telling us they are now exclusively our worry?”, the guilty, the suspected, the innocent, the acquitted and the hypothetical cognitively unite into the category of “Muslims”, where it becomes difficult to distinguish “the good” from “the bad”. Placing the “real” to the “hypothetical”, the newspapers inadvertently contributed to the association of Muslims in general with terrorism, even when the stance towards citizenship revocation was disapproving.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we examined the mainstream newspapers’ coverage of the government’s proposition to revoke the Canadian citizenship of certain dual nationals. We wanted to know who/what was interpreted as the target of the measure and to what extent the media contributed to the re-ethnicization of Canadian citizenship. To recall, de-ethnicization entails 1. easier access to citizenship through facilitated naturalization procedures or through the acceptance of the *jus soli* principle as a basis of citizenship acquisition, 2. support for multiple citizenship. Citizenship becomes re-ethnicized when ethno-cultural markers, such as religion, ethnicity or skin colour, play a role in the acquisition and – arguably – loss of citizenship.

On the one hand, not only was the principle of *jus soli* affirmed by most commentators – the Canadian-born status of potential candidates for citizenship revocation was often cited as the reason for which the measure should be rejected. Furthermore, most commentators did not question

whether Canada should allow multiple citizenship. It would appear then that the analyzed newspapers' coverage of citizenship revocation contributed to a de-ethnicizing understanding of Canadian citizenship. On the other hand, the press referred only to specific cases of terrorism involving Muslims and excluded (white, Western-origin) non-Muslims from their coverage and extended the association with terrorism to Muslims in general (via hypothetical scenarios). In producing an implicit link between Muslims and terrorism the newspapers constructed terrorism to be *only* a "Muslim affair". Based on this, we argue that the newspapers contributed to a re-ethnicization of Canadian citizenship.

The largely critical stance towards citizenship revocation, the support for *jus soli* and multiple citizenship on the one hand, *and* the readiness to associate predominantly Muslims with dual citizenship and terrorism on the other hand, highlights the ambiguous role of the mainstream Canadian press with respect to their treatment of minorities. Considering the global climate of fear of terrorism, the press should be given credit for applying general principles of democratic citizenship to *all* Canadians, as well for being critical of government policies. Canada prides itself to be a bastion of minority rights and this was reflected in the arguments in the newspapers to a considerable measure. However, while the principles of equality were represented as applicable to *all* Canadians, including Muslims, not *all* eligible Canadians were interpreted as being potential candidates for citizenship revocations. Specifically, white, non-Muslim men (and women), were erased from the equation. This may not be surprising, given that newspapers are owned *and* most newspaper articles are written *by* white, non-Muslim men. As such, it appears as if those who produce news were able to apply democratic principles to Muslims, but unable to fathom that those like themselves (white non-Muslim men) can be involved in terrorism, or, for that matter, be dual citizens.

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