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Diaspora Discontent: Canada and the Kosovo Crisis

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No nation like Canada can do what its citizens of Sri Lankan or Pakistani or Somali or Jewish or Muslim or Ukrainian origin want – all the time. No nation like Canada can do what its provinces, or founding peoples, or some of them may want – all the time. A nation must do what its national interests determine it must. And that requires that a nation like Canada know what its national interests are.

J.L. Granatstein, "Multiculturalism and Canadian Foreign Policy" in
The World in Canada: Diaspora, Demography, and Domestic Politics

Just as we have been in the forefront of creating a multicultural society, so too could we be at the forefront of thinking through how to create a foreign policy that can respond to that reality.

Jennifer M. Welsh, "Canada's Foreign Policy: Does the Public Have a Say?" quoted in *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada's Global Posture*

Diaspora politics therefore deserves a special place in any discussion on Canada's foreign policy because it occupies a kind of "grey zone" of political propriety.

David Carment and Joseph Landry "Diaspora and Canadian Foreign Policy: The World in Canada" in the edited collection *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada's Global Posture*

According to the most recent census, more than one in five Canadians are foreign-born.¹ A further two in five Canadian children have an immigrant background.² According to David Carment and Joseph Landry, the editors of *The World in Canada: Diaspora, Demography, and Domestic Politics*, members of diaspora communities in Canada can include "ethnic migrants, first-, second-, or even third-generation immigrants, as well as expatriates, students, guest workers, and refugees."³ Thus, presently more than half of Canadians belong to a diaspora community. Though the percentage of immigrants has varied throughout history, with the lowest percentage being between 14.7 to 16.1 percent, Canada has always been a country of immigrants.⁴ Canadians have always maintained ties to their homelands, starting with English and French citizens from what are considered the two founding nations and continuing to the present day with 260 nationalities represented.

In 1999, Canada participated in NATO's Operation Allied Force, a 78-day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia that was meant to end the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. Officially, humanitarian and regional stability considerations were the interests underlying Canada's foreign policy towards Kosovo. However, primary sources reveal that diaspora discontent was another strategic interest and concern of Canada during the Kosovo War. As Canada continued to accept immigrants, the

¹ Statistics Canada, "Immigration and Ethnocultural diversity: Key results from the 2016 Census," 25 December 2017.

² Ibid.

³ David Carment and Joseph Landry, *The World in Canada: Diaspora, Demography, and Domestic Politics* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), p. 7.

⁴ Statistics Canada, "Immigration and Ethnocultural diversity: Key results from the 2016 Census," 25 December 2017.

demographics of the country changed fostering a strategic interest in understanding the role cultural communities play in times of peace, and especially also in times of war. This article analyzes the role of the Serbian-Canadian and Albanian-Canadian communities in Canada during the Kosovo War which is used as a case study for the importance of understanding the role of diaspora communities within Canada.

The reality that Canada is a country of immigrants has led to the diaspora communities' influence on Canadian foreign policy garnering an ever-increasing amount of scholarly attention. When scholars write about diaspora influences on Canadian foreign policy, the focus has mostly been on cases of successful lobbying efforts. This means that the bulk of the literature focuses on Chinese, Indian, Ukrainian, Jewish, and Armenian diasporas in Canada. Much of the scholarship focuses on the success of diaspora lobbying during the tenure of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's conservative government. With the bar set at successful attempts at influence, lobbying during the Kosovo War has been infrequently mentioned and has never thoroughly been studied by scholars. Even though neither the Albanian-Canadian nor the Serbian-Canadian diasporas were overly successful at lobbying the government during the Kosovo War, their efforts merit scholarly attention for a few crucial reasons. First, Canada's demographics and domestic pressure from diaspora groups during the Kosovo War differed drastically from its most important allies, specifically the United States. Therefore, a study of the Albanian-Canadian nor the Serbian-Canadian diasporas during the Kosovo War helps distinguish Canada from its NATO allies and illustrates the unique considerations Canada had in the creation of its foreign policy. Second, a study of Albanian-Canadian diaspora activity during the Kosovo War shows that not all diasporas are created equal. It exemplifies the economic, political, and social barriers newer diaspora groups have in establishing their influence. Third, there is consensus among the politicians and policy advisers closest to the Chrétien government that diaspora groups have impacted Canadian governments, regardless of political party. Politicians such as Bill Graham and Lloyd Axworthy specifically note the role of diaspora lobbying during the Kosovo War.⁵ Fourth, although the Serbian-Canadian diaspora was engaged in lobbying the government during multiple Yugoslav crises in the 1990s, the Kosovo War was different. As such, it deserves singular attention. Fifth,

⁵ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020. Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

the fact that Canada continued its actions in Kosovo, despite the size and impact of its Serbian-Canadian diaspora, demonstrates the depth of Canada's commitment to its human security agenda. Sixth, the Serbian-Canadian efforts to influence foreign policy during the Kosovo War took many forms, from petitions to protests to personal pleas. Seventh, the non-diaspora Canadian reaction to Serbian protests during the Kosovo War was harsh and critical of multi-culturalism. A study of the Kosovo War illustrates the limits of multi-cultural values among Canadians. Finally, although neither diaspora group active during the Kosovo War impacted foreign policy to the extent they would have liked to, diaspora lobbying did have an impact on top-level decision-making during the Kosovo War. In summation, a study of the actions of the Albanian-Canadian and the Serbian-Canadian diasporas in Canada during the Kosovo War exemplifies the close relationship between domestic issues and foreign policy. It also provides crucial insight into the advantages, disadvantages, and challenges associated with being a nation of immigrants.

Canada and the US: Contrasting Demographics

David L. Phillips' *Liberating Kosovo: Coercive Diplomacy and U.S. Intervention* is, at its core, a history of statecraft and US politics in Kosovo. The third chapter of *Liberating Kosovo* is called "Diaspora Politics" and includes an in-depth explanation of the role the Albanian diaspora played in US politics during the Kosovo War.⁶ The chapter opens with the pronouncement that, "Albanian émigrés have always played a critical role in Albanian politics."⁷ According to Phillips, throughout history, the Albanian diaspora has been involved in the politics of their homeland more so than other diaspora communities. The influence of the Albanian diaspora in the United States cannot be understated. First started in 1882, Phillips contends that "The Albanian-American diaspora became a force in U.S. politics, raising funds and mobilizing political support for Kosovo's pro-independence movement. The community was well-known and influential in Washington circles."⁸ The depth of commitment to Albanian issues was

⁶ David L. Phillips, *Liberating Kosovo: Coercive Diplomacy and U.S. Intervention* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012), pp. 31-46.

⁷ Ibid., p. 31

⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

exemplified in the 1990s when Albanian-Americans, sometimes third generation, paid taxes to the shadow government being run out of houses in Kosovo.⁹ This depth of commitment was only heightened as the crisis in Kosovo reached its boiling point. When the KLA formed in Kosovo, Albanian-Americans raised funds to support the efforts. In one case, at a meeting at Bruno's Restaurant in New York, a table was covered in \$1.6 million in cash to buy weapons for the KLA.¹⁰ Albanian-Americans were, however, willing to give more than cash. Some of them gave up their lives. In 1999, the "Atlantic Brigade" formed, consisting of firefighters from the Bronx who went to Kosovo to fight for the KLA.¹¹

Albanian-Americans not only influenced the politics of their homeland: they were well organized and influenced the politics of the United States as well. Ever the pragmatists, this meant forming connections with both Democrats and Republicans over the years. Some leading Albanian-Americans would make equally large donations to both parties during campaigns to achieve this end.¹² The 1990s saw a concerted effort by Albanian-Americans to put Kosovo on the U.S. policy agenda, with the creation of numerous lobby groups and organizations including the Albanian American Civil League (AACL), the Albanian Youth of Kosovo in the Free World, the Albanian American Public Affairs Committee (AAPAC), and the Albanian American Foundation.¹³ Their efforts were aided by the fact that Albanians had been in America long enough that there were members of congress who traced their roots back to Albania. For example, Congressman Joseph J. DioGuardi, who became instrumental in bringing attention to Kosovo during both the Bush and the Clinton administrations, was the son of an Italian immigrant, who identified as Arberesh, meaning he (DioGuardi's father) had come from a village in Italy where Albanians had lived for hundreds of years. The resounding scope and success of the influence of Albanian-Americans has been well documented in numerous books, including *Be Not Afraid, For*

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 33.

¹¹ Stacy Sullivan, *Be Not Afraid, For You Have Sons in America: How a Brooklyn Roofer Helped Lure the U.S. into the Kosovo War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).

¹² Ibid., p. 45.

¹³ Nadège Ragaru, Amilda Dymi. "The Albanian-American Community in the United States," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 31, no. 2 (2004): p. 32.

You Have Sons in America: How a Brooklyn Roofer Helped Lure the U.S. into the Kosovo War by Newsweek journalist Stacy Sullivan.¹⁴

The situation could not have been more different north of the 49th parallel. Whereas Richard Holbrooke was meeting with Albanian-Americans every six weeks in 1998, and then with increasing frequency while the Kosovo crisis escalated,¹⁵ neither Lloyd Axworthy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Canada, nor Bill Graham, the chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT), recall hearing Albanian-Canadian voices during the Kosovo crisis.¹⁶ This is unsurprising when one considers the difference in demographics between the United States and Canada. According to the 2000 United States Census, 113,661 Albanians lived in America.¹⁷ The accuracy of this tally is suspect, though, with scholars suggesting that the number could have been closer to 500,000.^{18,19} In sharp contrast, in 1996, 4140 Albanians were living in Canada.²⁰ As with the case of Albanian-Americans, the actual number is likely higher. However, even the highest estimates only place between five and eight thousand Albanians in Canada at the time, which still pales in comparison to the number in the U.S.²¹ Whether one trusts the official census data or the higher numbers, what is clear is that Canada and the United States had drastically different demographics when it came to the number of Albanians in their respective countries.²²

¹⁴ Stacy Sullivan, *Be Not Afraid, For You Have Sons in America: How a Brooklyn Roofer Helped Lure the U.S. into the Kosovo War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Phillips, *Liberating Kosovo*, p. 86.

¹⁶ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.; Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

¹⁷ United States Census Bureau. Census 2000 Brief – Ancestry.

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2000/briefs/c2kbr-35.pdf>

¹⁸ Ragaru and Dymi, "The Albanian-American Community," p. 7.

¹⁹ There are various historical and political reasons people who identify as "Albanian-Americans" would not be reflected in the Census data. A full explanation can be found in Nadège Ragaru, Amilda Dymi. "The Albanian-American Community."

²⁰ Statistics Canada. *1996 Census of Population – Ethnic Origin and Population Group*. Statistics Canada, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 93F0026XDB96001.

²¹ Kerry Gillespie, "Albanian community says 'it's about time'; But many worried about safety of relatives," *Toronto Star*, 26 March 1999.

²² Canada's 1996 census was used instead of the 2001 census. This is because the 2001 census would reflect the influx of 7000 Albanian refugees to Canada. This influx of refugees significantly changed the Albanian demographics in Canada. However, the author made the decision to use the 2000 census for the United States because the census from a decade prior would not reflect the large influx of Albanians to

Canada was not unique in comparison to the US, as Judah points out that other NATO countries, namely Germany, Greece, Turkey, and Italy, also had large populations of Albanians.²³

One might assume that since Canada had significantly fewer Albanians, it would also have fewer Serbians. Thus, Canada's demography would mirror that of the United States, albeit on a smaller scale. That assumption is false. According to the 1996 census, Canada had 40,200 Serbians. Another, 66,940 identified as Yugoslav.²⁴ By 1996, Macedonia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia had left Yugoslavia, and Albanians were unlikely to willingly identify with Yugoslavia. This suggests that respondents who identified as Yugoslav were likely from Serbia or Montenegro. Furthermore, the majority of people from Montenegro, who would identify as "Yugoslav", would likely have been Serbian. Thus, an accurate estimate of Canada's Serbian population, based on the 1996 census, was approximately 107,140. Again, the numbers are likely higher. By the time of the Kosovo War in 1999, the Serbian National Shield Society in Canada estimated about 250,000 Serbians lived in Canada.²⁵ Thus, using the highest estimates from 1999, Canada had 8000 Albanians and 250,000 Serbians, a stark difference. In comparison, and again using the highest estimate from 1999, the United States had a roughly equal number of Albanians and Serbians, around 500,000 each.²⁶ Despite having roughly equal numbers, the Albanian and Serbian American communities did not have equal advocacy power and ability to influence foreign policy in the United States. Albanian-Americans had much more advocacy power. Former American Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, put it plainly when he stated that, "Serbian-Americans were not particularly influential."²⁷ Thus, the relevant demographic makeup of the United States and Canada differed drastically during the

the United States in the 1990s. In addition, the numbers 113,661 and 500,000 used in other scholarship when discussing Albanian lobbying during the Kosovo War. For reference, the 1990 U.S. census identifies 47,710 Albanians. However, the number was more likely between 250,000 and 500,000.

²³ Tim Judah, *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7.

²⁴ Census 1996.

²⁵ Sarah Lambert, "Canadian Serbs outraged, Albanians relieved [NATO air strikes]" *Canadian Press News Wire*, 24 March 1999.

²⁶ This is the number most often cited by scholars. As in the calculation of the amount of Serbians in Canada, this number combines the number of people in the US who identified as Serbian (140,337) and the number who identified as Yugoslav (328,547) totalling 468,884.

²⁷ Ragaru and Dymi, "The Albanian-American Community," p. 36.

Kosovo War. This shows that Canada did have unique considerations when making decisions and considering their alliance obligations during the Kosovo War. Canada's unique domestic considerations, such as the imbalance between diaspora advocacy, have received little to no attention in the previous literature. This is especially surprising given that the literature on Canada's role in the Kosovo crisis is strongly pre-occupied with distinguishing Canada from its allies during the Kosovo War.

Easily Forgotten: The Albanian-Canadian Diaspora in 1999

The only mention of the Canadian-Albanian diaspora in the literature is in political scientist Michael Manulak's *Canada and the Kosovo Crisis: An Agenda for Intervention*, in which he states, "[t]he Albanian Canadian diaspora community only numbered about 5000 and was not an important advocacy force."²⁸ This sentiment is shared by Axworthy and Graham as well. Both Axworthy and Graham include the role of the Serbian diaspora during the Kosovo War in their political memoirs. Neither of them mentions the Albanian diaspora. This, however, does not mean that Albanians in Canada did not attempt to influence Canadian foreign policy. The few Albanians who did reside in Canada formed smaller and less effective organizations than those in the U.S. For example, the underground shadow government run by Kosovo Albanians in Kosovo had a Canadian branch in Toronto called the "Democratic Union of Kosovo."²⁹ In March 1998, the leader of the Canadian branch of the Kosovo Albanian government-in-exile, Agim Hadri, together with Ferzi Bekiri of the Albanian-Canadian Community Association, sent impassioned letters and petitions to Axworthy pleading for Canadian action on the Kosovo issue. One letter stated that: "Every day there are more accounts of atrocities the Serbs are inflicting on our families and friends. Every day the newspapers are filled with new horror stories and of more deaths. We are certain you share our fear that . . . the torture and the massacres are but the beginning of another ethnic cleansing in the Balkans."³⁰ This was part of a campaign by Albanian-Canadians

²⁸ Michael W. Manulak, *Canada and the Kosovo Crisis: An Agenda for Intervention* (Kingston: Queen's University Press, 2011), p. 50.

²⁹ Haroon Siddiqui, "Kosovo's Canadian connections," *Toronto Star*, 18 June 1998.

³⁰ Ibid.

to urge Canada to bring “an immediate, internationally enforced end to the conflict.”³¹ Three months after the letter was sent, Axworthy responded in a letter in which he denounced both sides, Milošević and the Kosovo separatists who he says were engaging in “terrorism.” According to *Toronto Star* journalist, Haroon Siddiqui, in this response Axworthy “makes the same mistake as the Europeans: draw a moral equivalency between the Serbs and their victims. That’s what Gen. Lewis MacKenzie also did in Bosnia, and landed Canada on the wrong side of history.”³² Axworthy’s letter, along with the attempts by Albanian-Canadians which were notably limited in their size and scope, was not impactful enough for Axworthy to recall any Albanian activity when interviewed.³³ This is because the Albanian-Canadian community lacked the advocacy power to truly influence the Canadian political process, especially in foreign policy. The type of advocacy power needed for influence is described by Manulak as the “intensity of opinion, often from the frequency and vigour of communications. In addition to the intensity of expression, officials evaluate the relative advocacy power of actors based on political resources, group cohesion, electoral mobilization, and economic clout.”³⁴ The Albanian-Canadian community in the 1990s did not have the power, as outlined by Manulak, to influence Canadian foreign policy.

There is another important factor worth assessing not listed by Manulak: media attention. To its credit, the media did, in time, try to represent Albanian-Canadian voices. This was especially true when the NATO bombing campaign started, and journalists clamored to find Albanian-Canadians with family members in Kosovo to interview. One *Toronto Star* story titled, “Brother killed by Serbs, Ontario man says: ‘They shot them, and left them to die by the wall.’” interviewed an Albanian-Canadian with family in Kosovo and then discusses the Albanian-Canadian community in Canada more generally. The article specifically mentions a fundraiser hosted by the Albanian-Canadian community to support refugees fleeing Kosovo at which thirty thousand dollars was collected in the first hour. The impact of diasporas in Canada sending money to their homeland should not be understated. Axworthy explains, “a lot

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020; Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

³⁴ Manulak, *Canada and the Kosovo Crisis: An Agenda for Intervention*, p. 44.

of the new communities provide very substantial reparations back to their home regions. I mean it's larger than our overseas development assistance programs."³⁵ The Albanian Canadian Association members were appointed to canvass homes across the Greater Toronto Area to bring awareness to the cause.³⁶ However, as explained by Robert C. Austin of the University of Toronto, the media's efforts were not without fault. Austin was a research associate with the Titan Group for Public Policy Analysis and the Albania analyst for CBC News. He was one of the leading experts in Canada in the 1990s on Albanian issues. Austin distinctly remembers one news interview that he describes as proof that, "the Serbs had a huge advantage in this diaspora politics."³⁷ Austin recalls being struck by an interview in which "they show this Serb diaspora guy and he's in his library with books lining the walls ... and then they interview this Albanian guy and he was in a fish restaurant, like he was the cook, he had an apron on. I always thought - wow - was that purposeful?"³⁸ Austin recognizes that "the Albanian diaspora was relatively new [and] didn't have the financial resources" but maintains this type of media portrayal did not do them any favours.³⁹ This assessment is similar to Manulak's assertion that advocacy power depends on "political resources, group cohesion, electoral mobilization, and economic clout." The Albanian community in Canada may not have been large enough, nor economically or politically powerful enough, to meet the threshold required to have advocacy power in Canadian politics. However, as evidenced above, they understood the importance of the diaspora in advocating for policy in their host countries and attempted to pool their limited resources to do so.

Foreign Policy Potential: Consensus Among Experts

³⁵ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

³⁶ Tanya Ho, "Brother killed by Serbs, Ontario man says; 'They shot them, and left them to die by the wall,'" *Toronto Star*, 31 March 1999.

³⁷ Author interview with Dr. Robert C. Austin, 9 September 2020.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Similarly, the importance of diaspora communities in Canadian politics and foreign policy is well-recognized by those most familiar with then Prime Minister Chrétien's foreign policy such as Lloyd Axworthy, Bill Graham, Paul Heinbecker, and Eddie Goldenberg. Lloyd Axworthy served as Minister of Employment and Immigration in Chrétien's cabinet from 1993 to 1996 when he was made the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Chrétien chose Axworthy as one of the "shooting stars" in his cabinet.⁴⁰ These were experienced politicians who had previously shown their mettle and could be trusted in the most important positions.⁴¹ Axworthy served as the Minister of Employment and Immigration in Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's Cabinet. Axworthy later held two portfolios in Chrétien's cabinet, first as Minister of Immigration then as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Axworthy's cabinet positions gave him important insight into the importance of immigrants and diaspora communities in Canadian politics. In *Navigating a New World: Canada's Global Future*, Axworthy writes about the critical importance of diaspora communities in Canada to foreign policy. In a discussion of the power of NGOs in lobbying the government, he notes, "Often these groups are organized among the diaspora of the cultural group in question, taking on the cause of their homeland in their new surroundings."⁴² Axworthy explains what he calls "the phenomenon of dual loyalty," where, "a group takes on the rights issue of its native soil and applies pressure through Canadian institutions."⁴³ He asserts that, "Canada's cultural interest groups and NGOs have come to be *key influences* in making foreign trouble spots and human crises part and parcel of domestic political scene. Given the increasing pluralism of our society, they are a *major factor* in setting our foreign policy. [emphasis added]"⁴⁴ By recognizing cultural interest groups as a "key influence," Axworthy underscores two crucial points. The first is that domestic issues and foreign policy are inextricably linked. The second is the potential for influence that cultural groups have in Canada. He argues that there is an unrealized foreign policy potential that the Canadian government should capitalize on, saying Canada should "take full

⁴⁰ Eddie Goldenberg, *The Way it Works: Inside Ottawa* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2007), p. 61.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Lloyd Axworthy, *Navigating a New World: Canada's Global Future* (Toronto: A.A. Knopf Canada, 2003), p. 66.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

advantage of the influence and resources of our diaspora communities and their communication networks around the world.”⁴⁵

Axworthy’s beliefs about the unrealized foreign policy potential of diaspora communities in Canada are shared by others, such as Eddie Goldenberg, who are knowledgeable about foreign policy. Eddie Goldenberg was a senior policy advisor to Prime Minister Chrétien, who has been described as Chrétien’s “right hand man” and as the “ultimate insider” in Ottawa.⁴⁶ In his book, *The Way It Works: Inside Ottawa*, Goldenberg discusses the importance of ethnic diversity to Canadian politics. Goldenberg specifically addresses why Canada’s cultural diversity should be reflected at the highest level of politics, such as in the Prime Minister’s Cabinet. Goldenberg expresses that, “a Cabinet whose composition reflects the diversity of the country also brings a perspective to decision making that unfortunately is still not present enough in the ranks of the senior public service.”⁴⁷ Like Axworthy, Goldenberg contends that ethnic diversity (in this case in cabinet) has unrealized foreign policy potential. He says, “They [ethnically diverse cabinet ministers] serve another purpose that is little known but is becoming more and more important. In an era of globalization, the ethnic diversity of its governments can provide Canada with an advantage on the international stage.”⁴⁸ Thus, both Axworthy, an elected politician, and Goldenberg, a political advisor, recognize the importance of Canada’s diversity and lament the unrealized foreign policy possibilities.

Like Axworthy and Goldenberg, Paul Heinbecker realizes the centrality of Canadian diversity to contemporary Canadian politics, especially in foreign affairs. Heinbecker was Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s chief foreign policy adviser until 1992 when he became Canada’s ambassador to Germany, where he focused on NATO’s response to the Bosnian War. In 1996, he became Assistant Deputy Minister for global and security policy. Heinbecker was crucial to the creation of Canada’s human security agenda, which was invoked during the Kosovo War. Heinbecker headed the interdepartmental task force which met daily to review Canada’s participation, both military and diplomatic, during the Kosovo War. Consequently, Heinbecker is well

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Goldenberg, Back Cover.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

acquainted with Canada's foreign policy priorities, issues in the Balkans, and Kosovo. In his book, *Getting Back in the Game: A Foreign Policy Handbook for Canada*, Heinbecker presents his vision for the future of Canadian foreign policy and assesses past Canadian foreign policy matters. It is evident in *Getting Back in the Game* that Heinbecker, like Axworthy and Goldenberg, believes in the central role Canadian diversity plays in Canadian politics and foreign policy. He advocates the benefits of diverse politicians and diplomats representing Canada on the world stage. The importance Heinbecker places on ethnic diversity and Canadian foreign policy is evidenced in the second of five principles that he presents to guide Canada's foreign policy: "serve Canadian unity, respect the diversity of our population, and privilege neither founding nation nor any province, ethnic group, economic interest, or religion."⁴⁹ Heinbecker is wary of the Canadian government "tailoring foreign policy to suit the desires of diasporas."⁵⁰ He argues that "the Liberals, especially, had scarcely been indifferent to the international interests of Canada's many ethnic groups."⁵¹ Heinbecker realizes Canadian foreign policy should advance Canada's interests while also reflecting its values, including those of its diaspora. However, he strongly advocates that the Canadian foreign policy agenda "has to be much more than the sum of departmental interests, provincial ambitions, and diasporas' aspirations."⁵² Thus, Heinbecker, Axworthy, and Goldenberg all recognize the centrality of diaspora groups to Canadian foreign policy, a view also shared by Bill Graham.

Bill Graham was an international lawyer who became a Liberal Member of Parliament in 1993. During the Kosovo War, he was the chair of the SCFAIT. He served as Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Liberals from 2002 to 2003. Much of his book, *Call of the World: A Political Memoir*, reflects how deeply related international and domestic politics are, as evidenced by his chapter "All Geopolitics is Local."⁵³ The central role immigrants play in Canadian politics is recognized by Graham when he states that,

⁴⁹ Paul Heinbecker, *Getting Back in the Game: A Foreign Policy Handbook for Canada* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2010), p. 193.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁵³ Bill Graham, *The Call of the World: A Political Memoir* (Vancouver: On Point Press/UBC Press, 2016), p. 193.

“many immigrants saw every issue from an international dimension.”⁵⁴ Graham discusses what he calls diaspora politics in *Call of the World*. What it comes down to, according to Graham, is that those who migrate to Canada become voting citizens and “import the debates that are current in their homelands.”⁵⁵ According to Graham, the diversity of Canada and his constituents' personal knowledge and experiences affected him deeply in politics, law, and his personal life.

As evidenced above, the importance of Canada's diaspora communities to Canadian foreign policy is recognized by both politicians, policy experts, and international lawyers. Axworthy, Goldenberg, Heinbecker, and Graham all praise Canada's diversity as one of its distinctive features, with the potential to help advance Canada's foreign policy interest. However, they all caution that the influence of diaspora communities and Canada's growing multi-cultural makeup also has disadvantages. Axworthy explains that diaspora groups are strategic when it comes to politics: “they often align themselves with members of Parliament from the constituencies where they are strongly represented, and increasingly use the political party nominating systems to gain access and influence.”⁵⁶ Whereas Axworthy discusses diaspora groups aligning themselves with political parties, Heinbecker discusses what happens when political parties align themselves with diaspora groups. He warns that courtship of diaspora communities for political gain can turn into pandering “undermining some of the basic tenets of our foreign policy in the process and damaging our international reputation.”⁵⁷

Another drawback of the increasing advocacy of diaspora communities is that there are instances when Canadian politicians mistakenly believe that the diaspora concerns reflect those of their countries of origin. For example, the Canadian government passed a resolution to recognize the Armenian genocide, supported by Armenian-Canadians and opposed by Turkish-Canadians. Graham recalls this event in his book and asked: “What jurisdictional concern did Canada have about something that happened in present-day Turkey in 1915? None, but a large group of Armenians who had migrated to Canada were now voting citizens, and they wanted their MPs to

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

⁵⁶ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 67.

⁵⁷ Heinbecker, *Getting Back in the Game*, p. 203.

acknowledge this tragedy from their past.”⁵⁸ Axworthy recalled meeting the Foreign Minister from Armenia a few weeks after passing the resolution and telling him what Canada had done. Axworthy remembered that the Armenian Foreign Minister looked at him “quizzically and said that was nice, but Armenia was more interested in immediate support from Canada in its struggle to survive as a newly independent state.”⁵⁹ Another example of the greater passion within diaspora communities than within those in their homeland can be seen in the case of Ukrainian-Canadians. As Axworthy describes, “the Ukrainians in Canada tend to be a lot more hawkish than the Ukrainians in Ukraine. In terms of being anti-Russian ... they reflect a mindset that they or their family brought with them.”⁶⁰ Thus, diaspora communities in Canada play both advantageous and disadvantageous roles when it comes to influencing foreign policy and their motives must be treated with caution. As will be further explored, this was certainly the case with the Serbian-Canadian diaspora during the Kosovo War. The Serbian-Canadian diaspora brought with them to Canada extremely strong opinions and the mindset of their homeland. This had advantages and disadvantages during the Kosovo War.

What is evident, from the consensus of these former politicians and policy experts, is the deep connection between domestic issues and Canadian foreign policy decision-making. The domestic issue, the ethnic makeup of constituencies in Canada, is recognized by Axworthy, Goldenberg, Heinbecker, and Graham as being influential enough to impact foreign policy. The dynamics of the relationship between diaspora communities and their influence are complicated. On the one hand, there is the potential for worthy causes to be brought to Canada’s attention that otherwise might have been overlooked. The personal knowledge and experience of diverse Canadians, both as constituents and as personal representatives, can advance Canada’s image and position on the world stage. On the other hand, some diaspora communities, such as the Albanian-Canadian community in 1999, are not big enough to make an impression on Canadian politicians and, consequently, on Canadian foreign policy. In addition, when Canada has conflicts, especially armed conflicts, with another country, domestic politics become complicated if diaspora communities have uncompromising attitudes.

⁵⁸ Graham, *The Call of the World*, p. 95.

⁵⁹ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Diaspora communities know their potential for influence and court political parties. This can lead to political parties pandering to diaspora communities. What is even more complicated is when courting political parties to influence foreign policy does not work. Despite the strength of influence, sometimes Canada's interests and a diaspora communities' interests do not line up. This is all to say, the influence of diaspora communities on Canadian foreign policy is unquestionable. However, the dynamics are complicated. By 1999, Canada had plenty of experience juggling diaspora communities and foreign policy. By the Kosovo War, Canada even had plenty of experience handling the Serbian-Canadian diaspora specifically. However, when the Kosovo War started, all of these dynamics of diaspora relations came to a head in a unique way.

Different this time around: Serbian-Canadian Diaspora in 1999

The close ties between Yugoslavia and Canada as a result of diaspora communities became shockingly apparent during the Kosovo War. Serbians in Canada did not only have ideological, historic, and familial ties to their homelands; rather, some of them were directly tied to politicians as well. This was the case for Bogoljub Karic, a Serbian billionaire, who, along with his three brothers, was in the process of getting his Canadian citizenship in 1999. Bogoljub was the son of a minister in Milošević's war cabinet. A *Maclean's* article titled "Knocking on the Door: Ottawa opposes citizenship for a Milosevic crony" recaps an interview with Karic at his mansion in Toronto.⁶¹ The article describes the telephone ringing steadily during the interview and says many of the phone calls were from Karic's father in Belgrade. They were permanent residents of Canada since 1993; however, the Kosovo War complicated their plans for citizenship.⁶² The day after *Maclean's* published their article on Bogoljub, the issue came up in the House of Commons when Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament, Daniel Turp, expressed frustration at Chrétien's refusal to freeze the Canadian assets of close collaborators of Milošević. Turp stated: "I would therefore like to submit a very concrete case, that of Bogoljub Karic, a Serbian minister, who owns a television station

⁶¹ Tom Fennel, "Knocking on the Door: Ottawa opposes citizenship for a Milosevic crony," *Maclean's* 112, no. 18, 3 May 1999, pp. 34.

⁶² *Ibid.*

in Yugoslavia, three companies in Canada, and a luxurious home in Toronto.”⁶³ Turp then asked: “Does the Prime Minister not think that, by freezing the assets of this man, who is propagandizing for Milosevic and against NATO, Canada would be taking concrete action to step up the pressure on the Milosevic government?”⁶⁴ The Karic brothers were not the only Serbians in Canada with direct ties to the political system in Yugoslavia. Graham recalls that one of his constituents that contacted him regularly to furiously complain about Canada’s involvement in Kosovo was the daughter of a former Prime Minister of Serbia.⁶⁵ Graham did not say whether this constituent still had familial political ties in 1999. Regardless, the actions of family members of Serbian politicians living in Canada shows how complicated diaspora communities make the political process, especially during times of war.

By the time Kosovo was on Canada’s agenda in the 1990s, protesting was already old hat for the Serbian-Canadian community. In the previous decade, Serbian-Canadians had protested Canada’s foreign policy towards (and especially their recognition of the independence of) Macedonia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia. The Serbian-Canadian reaction to Kosovo was different for a few closely related reasons. First, during the previous Yugoslav wars, there was a voice to counter the Serbian-Canadian advocacy. In the words of Austin, during the previous Yugoslav wars, “there were all kinds of struggles, they weren’t violent struggles, but there were two communities who were on opposite sides of the war in Bosnia.”⁶⁶ A similar point was made by Graham, who “has no recollection” of Albanian advocacy during the Kosovo War.⁶⁷ He observed that when the Canadian House of Commons passed a resolution in favour of recognizing the Armenian genocide it enraged the Turkish community but was strongly supported by the Armenian community.⁶⁸ According to Graham, the Canadian government had to balance the opinions of two very strongly opinionated communities. During the Kosovo crisis, there was only one side. However, as reflected by Graham, Axworthy, and the primary sources this one side was intensely passionate.

⁶³ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 14673.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

⁶⁶ Author interview with Dr. Robert C. Austin, 9 September 2020.

⁶⁷ Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

The second reason the Serbian-Canadian reaction to Kosovo was different is because Kosovo played an integral role in the creation of the Serbian national narrative. US diplomat James Pardew, who had negotiated with Milošević during multiple Yugoslav crises commented, “Kosovo was different. Milosevic was not the manipulative leader looking for a solution as he had been at Dayton. He knew that Kosovo was rapidly leading to war with NATO and seemed resigned.”⁶⁹ ⁷⁰ The role of Kosovo in the Serbian national narrative, and Milošević’s unwavering commitment to Kosovo, influenced Serbian Canadian attitudes towards Kosovo. The 5 April 1999 issue of *Maclean’s* was largely dedicated to covering the Kosovo War. One of the articles quotes a taxi driver in Serbia saying, “I don't like Milosevic very much ... but when it comes to Kosovo, we are united.”⁷¹ The same article describes a couple in Serbia who “firmly refuse to blame the bombing on Milosevic” and quotes the mother passionately asserting, “the greatest thing for Serbs is to have a son, but I will be happy if he goes to fight in Kosovo, even if we become a second Vietnam.”⁷² These quotes clearly illustrate the central role Kosovo played in Serbian nationalism, and that as Pardew notes, “Kosovo was different.” This type of rhetoric was mirrored by the Serbian community in Canada. In another article, a Serbian Canadian in Vancouver asked journalist Peter C. Newman, “Don't you remember June 28, 1389?”⁷³ The man went on to explain to Newman The Battle of Kosovo and said, “To us, it’s holy ground. To bomb and machine-gun Serb soldiers won’t make much difference.⁷⁴ Their places will be taken by their grandfathers and their teenage children. Ours is that strong a culture. We shall never surrender.”⁷⁵ This is a pertinent example of one of the defining qualities of a

⁶⁹ Phillips, *Liberating Kosovo*, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁰ In 1995, twenty-one days of talks between the leaders of Yugoslavia took place in Dayton, Ohio. The meetings were meant to resolve the crisis in Bosnia. Despite lobbying and protests, there was no Albanian representation. The resulting Dayton Peace Accord made no mention of Kosovo.

⁷¹ Tom Fennell, “United in Rage”, *Maclean’s* 112, no. 14, 5 April 1999, p. 32.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷³ Peter C. Newman, “Horrorific reminders of my days as a refugee,” *Maclean’s* 112, no. 16, 19 April 1999, p. 52.

⁷⁴ The Battle of Kosovo took place on 28 June 1389. In this battle, Serbian Prince Lazar and his forces were defeated by the Ottoman army at Fushë Kosovë / Kosovo Polje, on the outskirts of Prishtina / Priština. The Battle of Kosovo not only initiated five hundred years of Ottoman rule, it also initiated six hundred years of nationalist myth-making by both Albanians and Serbians. Throughout the Kosovo Crisis references to the Battle of Kosovo came up repeatedly in Canadian media and the House of Commons.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

country of immigrants. Immigrants become fully-fledged citizens and bring many things with them to Canada, including their national identity, national narratives, and national myths. The Kosovo War was different for the Serbian-Canadian community because of the central role Kosovo played in the national narrative of their homeland.

The third reason that the Serbian-Canadian reaction to Kosovo was different, was the effectiveness of Serbian propaganda from overseas. A common theme in the literature on the Kosovo War is discussing the astounding ability of Milošević's propaganda to influence the west. According to Axworthy, "he understood much better that in this kind of conflict soft power could be an invaluable tool, while the rest of us had to learn on the job."⁷⁶ The propaganda was deemed so important that one of the main objectives for NATO, for which a special task force was created, was "[n]eutralizing the internal media and other components of the Milosevic propaganda machines."⁷⁷ Neutralizing the propaganda coming from Belgrade would be an uphill battle as they were already running a successful campaign in the west. Axworthy comments in his book: "I recall my distress at watching an extensive CNN interview with Arkan, a Serb paramilitary leader who was denouncing NATO attacks against civilians. The report never mentioned that he had already been indicted as a war criminal for his notorious killing of civilians in Bosnia [...] the openness of Western media was not reciprocated."⁷⁸ It was not only CNN, Canadian news media company CTV also aired a long interview with Arkan.⁷⁹ Axworthy was right to be shocked that Arkan, an accused war criminal and military leader of a country Canada was at war against, was given airtime on Canadian and American television. Additionally, the Yugoslav government had perfected a system that would distribute a constant stream of reports highlighting NATO bombing indiscretions in Canada. According to Axworthy, "they were a staple for consumption by the people of Serbia."⁸⁰ Civilians were targeted in a Yugoslav campaign that sent emotional emails calling for an end to the bombing to ten thousand Canadian inboxes.⁸¹ The concerns over Yugoslav propaganda infiltrating Canada were well-founded. Nowhere is this more obvious than

⁷⁶ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 184.

⁷⁷ Sean M. Maloney, *Operation Kinetic: Stabilizing Kosovo* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 2018), p. 90.

⁷⁸ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 184.

⁷⁹ Anthony Wilson-Smith, "Why Canadian eyes matter," *Maclean's* 112, no. 16, 19 April 1999, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 184.

⁸¹ Anthony Wilson-Smith, "Why Canadian eyes matter," p. 9.

in the 19 April 1999 issue of *Maclean's*. In the same issue where there is an article warning of the effectiveness of Yugoslavia's cyber warfare tactics, there is a section that presents six emails from Serbians in Yugoslavia. The emails are prefaced with a note that states, "These emails, though unconfirmed factually, vividly demonstrates how individuals are increasingly using the Internet to bypass traditional sources of information [emphasis added]." ⁸² Publishing emails that are unconfirmed factually, even with a warning, during a *cyberwar* with rampant propaganda was a questionable decision on the part of *Maclean's*. In his book, *Virtual War*, Canadian journalist Michael Ignatieff argues that Milošević's propaganda was so effective it could even turn the opinion of Canadians against their government:

Milosevic could afford to lose military assets because he was not fighting NATO in the air, he fought NATO on the airwaves. Propaganda has been central to war since the dawn of democracy, but it took an authoritarian populist from the Balkans to understand the awesome potential for influencing the opinion base of an enemy, by manipulating real time news to his own advantage.⁸³

What can be understood from Ignatieff and Axworthy's explanation of the effectiveness of Serbian propaganda is that the west was specifically targeted. If, as Ignatieff says, the propaganda was so effective it was capable of "influencing the opinion base of an enemy," in this case, Canada, it would most definitely have influenced Serbian-Canadians.

The final, and related, reason Kosovo was different for the Serbian-Canadian community compared to previous Yugoslav wars was that western involvement during Kosovo was more intense. Serbian-Canadians were unhappy with Canada's participation in an unarmed peacekeeping force in Bosnia, and with the subsequent recognition of Bosnian independence. However, they were livid at Canada's participation in the bombing of their homeland, often due to fears for the wellbeing of their loved ones. In one newspaper article, a Serbian-Canadian is quoted saying that, "I love Canada. But now I hate being here and watching the Canadian military bomb my

⁸² "The internet weapon," *Maclean's* 112, no. 16, 19 April 1999, p. 6.

⁸³ Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (Toronto: Viking, 2000), p. xxx.

brothers and sisters who are still in Serbia.”⁸⁴ Substantial media coverage in Canada focussed on Serbian-Canadians who felt similar fears and told stories of trying to ensure the safety of their families overseas. Axworthy and Graham were sympathetic to the concerns of the Serbian-Canadians. Axworthy notes: “I did not take a lot of umbrage at the protestors, I thought that they had a point of view.”⁸⁵ Graham explains: “they [Serbian-Canadians] were very raw about it ... they are Canadians and they had a right to have their point of view, so I respected that.”⁸⁶ Despite their sympathy over the concerns of Serbian-Canadians, they were steadfast in their conviction that the Kosovo War was justified for humanitarian reasons.” What happened in Rwanda led me inexorably to my decision to support military intervention in Kosovo launched to stop what had become a massive case of ethnic cleansing of the majority Muslim population,” says Axworthy.⁸⁷ In the House of Commons, the Minister of National Defence, Art Eggleton, made an impassioned speech in which he stated: “We are there because we are trying to stop a humanitarian disaster. We simply cannot allow evil to take over and good people do nothing. We must in fact ensure that this genocide comes to an end.”⁸⁸

Convicted: Canadian Government Response

The raw emotions and the fears of Serbian-Canadians were not enough to convince Axworthy or Graham of the Serbian-Canadian point of view. Conversely, Serbian-Canadians were not convinced of the other side’s point of view. For Serbian-Canadians, either the humanitarian concerns were not enough to relieve them of their personal concerns for their homeland, or they simply did not believe that there were humanitarian concerns in the first place. This is clearly illustrated in a TVO debate between a representative from the Serbian National Shield Society in Canada, Daniel Dostanić and an Albanian-Canadian, Ahmet Jakupi, not affiliated with any organization. In this interview, the Serbian-Canadian repeatedly denied any wrong

⁸⁴ Jennifer Quinn, “Local Serbs pray for their families; ‘I’m crying for my people,’ tearful woman says,” *Toronto Star*, 29 March 1999.

⁸⁵ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

⁸⁶ Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

⁸⁷ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 162.

⁸⁸ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 13504.

doing by Milošević or the Yugoslav government. The journalist read a report of Kosovo Albanians being gunned down by Serbian paramilitaries and asked Dostanić, “when you hear reports like that, what do you think?” to which Dostanić replies emphatically, “I think they’re false!” The interviewer said in exasperation, “we have absolutely divergent views on what’s going on” before wrapping up the interview.⁸⁹ Frustration over Serbian-Canadian denial of the facts is expressed by Axworthy when he comments that, “What was most distressful was a general unwillingness amongst Serbian Canadians to face the fact of the Milosevic government’s campaign to ethnically cleanse Kosovo.”⁹⁰

The reason neither Graham nor Axworthy ever questioned the Canadian position on Kosovo, despite the adamant protesting of their Serbian constituents, is because of the high quality of intelligence Canada had. Graham had firsthand knowledge because he had been sent by Chrétien to assess the situation early on. After visiting the refugee camps in Macedonia, seeing burnt and bombed buildings in Kosovo, and talking to humanitarian aid workers on the ground, Graham returned and reported to Caucus that something had to be done.⁹¹ Graham reflects on his visit and remembered that “I reported back to caucus of my conclusion and I don’t like to use the word genocide because of the legal import that it has under the genocide convention, but it was. It certainly was a form of ethnic cleansing.”⁹² Other members of parliament also went to survey the region on their own accord. Graham remembers being surprised when he ran into NDP MP Svend Robinson at a refugee camp in Macedonia.⁹³ Axworthy says that, although he was sympathetic to the outcry from Serbian-Canadians, he trusted the quality of Canada’s intelligence. He recalls that “we had a lot of sources of quite verifiable information.”⁹⁴ According to Axworthy, this included intelligence sharing networks such as the Five Eyes Alliance and Canadian sources intelligence. “We had a very active effort, on our own, in terms of getting intelligence

⁸⁹ Paula Todd, “Studio 2” Show 1113, 29 March 1999. Accessed directly through TVO Ontario through media footage archival request. Public access is restricted by third party footage and The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists rights.

⁹⁰ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 185.

⁹¹ Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

out of Serbia," Axworthy asserts.⁹⁵ The Canadian government and its Serbian citizens were at a stalemate on the issue of Kosovo. Despite the Canadian government's clear commitment on Kosovo, a combination of a lack of Albanians, Serbian nationalism, Yugoslav propaganda, and fear for loved ones emboldened the Serbian diaspora in their protests. More so than during the previous Yugoslav wars.

Petitions, Personal Pleas & Protests: Serbian-Canadian Reaction

Both Graham and Axworthy had adverse experiences with Serbian protestors. Axworthy writes in his memoir that there were "personal attacks and allegations against many of us in the government about our motives, suggesting this was a plot against the Serbian people."⁹⁶ In some cases, things escalated drastically. Axworthy tells of one incident when he recalls that, "I was out on a bicycle ride with my family when a number of Serb Canadians who had been demonstrating on Parliament Hill turned ugly with both verbal abuse and physical threats."⁹⁷ Although he understood the depth of their feelings and their loyalty to their homeland, "it was not the kind of experience you want to share with your wife and son" Axworthy says.⁹⁸ Axworthy was particularly frustrated that the Serbian-Canadian demonstrators protested outside his home in Ottawa.⁹⁹ Graham's memoir details a strikingly similar incident when he recalls that, "during the bombing of Kosovo, I was threatened by a group of angry Serbs who showed up at my annual MP's picnic in a Cabbage town park."¹⁰⁰ Graham had to get used to being called all sorts of names instead of what he preferred which was "a back-and-forth gentlemanly debate."¹⁰¹ Graham understood part of politics meant dealing with opposing views; however, he emphasizes that, "one thing I did not like was being grabbed and abused by irate constituents."¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 185.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

¹⁰⁰ Graham, *The Call of the World* p. 209.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Axworthy's residence was not the only house at which Serbian-Canadians were making their voices heard: they were making their voices heard in the House of Commons as well. One of the ways Serbian-Canadians were garnering attention was through petitions sent to their Members of Parliament. On 25 May 1998, the Member of Parliament for Kitchener-Centre presented a petition signed by 114 "constituents of Serbian descent" asking the government to "take action in reaching a peaceful solution to the Kosovo crisis."¹⁰³ Another petition, presented on 10 June 1998, by the Member of Parliament for Kitchener-Waterloo, on behalf of constituents of "Serbian descent," called upon the government to "take all necessary action to stop all forms of armament into Kosovo and Metohija."^{104,105} This petition presumably meant the arming of the KLA. The next day, on 11 June 1998, the Member of Parliament for Ottawa West-Nepean presented a petition on behalf of Canadians of Serbian descent "calling attention that the actions of the Canadian government with regard to Serbia are in their view non-democratic."¹⁰⁶ The petitioners asked that, "the House of Commons consider the best interests of all citizens of Serbia for peace and democracy in the Kosovo region."¹⁰⁷ This petition is important because it represents the turn from petitioners advocating action on Kosovo to becoming critical of the Canadian government. On this same day, the Member of Parliament for Toronto Centre-Rosedale presented a petition regarding Kosovo.¹⁰⁸ On 28 October 1998, the Member of Parliament for Niagara Falls presented a petition that was given to him at the celebration, in his riding, for the 53rd Serbian Day. According to Hansard, "the petitioners, a large number for Niagara falls, are calling upon this House to consider very carefully the situation that is developing presently in Kosovo."¹⁰⁹ The circumstances surrounding this petition highlight the realities of diaspora communities in Canada, as analysed above. On Serbian Day, a day that commemorates The Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and which is extremely important to Serbian nationalism, a Canadian politician was handed a petition regarding Canada's involvement in then present-day Kosovo. This illustrates how diaspora communities

¹⁰³ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 7125.

¹⁰⁴ "Kosovo and Metohija" is the full term used by Serbians to reference Kosovo.

¹⁰⁵ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 7935.

¹⁰⁶ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 8006.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 8005.

¹⁰⁹ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 9522.

merge beliefs and nationalism from their homelands along with their pasts, and the political system in Canada in the present, in an attempt to ultimately influence foreign policy. When petitions proved ineffective, Serbian-Canadians' political intervention progressed to personal pleas.

When Canada's commitment in Kosovo progressed to participation in the 78-day NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, Serbian-Canadians' commitment to having their voices heard in Parliament progressed as well. Canadian Members of Parliament across the country were inundated with phone calls and personal visits from Serbian-Canadian constituents. Often these phone calls and visits were accompanied by harrowing stories and passionate pleas. On 12 April 1999, the Member of Parliament for Burnaby-Douglas, Svend Robinson, spoke to the House of Commons about the effect hearing from both Serbian-Canadians and Albanian-Canadians had on him and stated, "It was brought home to me when a Serbian constituent phoned. He said 'How do I explain to my daughter that her government, the Government of Canada, is bombing her grandmother's home?'"¹¹⁰ Robinson said that, within hours, he heard from a "Kosovar Albanian living in Canada who said that he was unable to contact his parents. Silence. He has no idea. There is fear and uncertainty in not knowing what is happening to them."¹¹¹ The first notable thing about the experience Robinson described is that he heard from both sides. The vast majority of Members of Parliament, who mention hearing from constituents in their office, only mention hearing from Serbian-Canadians. It is also worth noting the terminology Robinson uses. When discussing Serbian-Canadians, he says "Serbian constituent." Whereas, when discussing a phone call from the Albanian, Robinson uses the term "Kosovar Albanian in Canada." This could imply that the Serbian caller was a Canadian citizen and the Albanian caller was not. In that case, the weight and concerns of citizens have more potential to influence politicians and consequently foreign policy (more so than that of non-citizens). Robinson ends by asking: "We have to ask the question: What do we do now? How do we answer these anguished questions of our constituents and, indeed, of Canadians?"¹¹² On the same day, Jean Augustine, the Member of Parliament for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, asked, "how do I respond to so many of my constituents who in the main are eastern European,

¹¹⁰ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 13616.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

many of them from Serbia? How do I speak to them about this issue at present?"¹¹³ Members of Parliament who supported Canada's involvement in Kosovo for humanitarian reasons were increasingly concerned with how to respond to Serbian-Canadian constituents in their ridings.

How did Members of Parliament respond to desperate pleas from their constituents that their families were in danger and that they were ashamed of being Canadian? According to Axworthy, with understanding, transparency, and firmness. First, Axworthy was understanding of Serbian-Canadians and empathized with them. He goes so far as to say that, "legitimate questions were raised by representatives of the Serbian community," but does not specify which questions to which he is referring.¹¹⁴ Axworthy's understanding that Serbian-Canadians had legitimate questions and concerns convinced him of the need for transparency on the part of the Canadian government. This meant that Axworthy, with Members of Parliament with large Serbian-Canadian communities in their constituencies (such as cabinet minister Sheila Copps), consistently met with groups of Serbian-Canadians to hear their concerns and explain Canada's position.¹¹⁵ According to Graham, other than meetings, nightly televised hearings with the Chief of Defence Staff, General Ray Henault, and Jim Wright, the Director-General for Central, East, and South Europe at DFAIT, were held for the sake of transparency.¹¹⁶ The policy of transparency that the government adopted was the direct result of the Serbian-Canadian community. Axworthy explains that the decision to hold a daily press briefing was to "counter the criticisms coming via Yugoslav media or from critics inside Canada, especially the Serb-Canadian community, who opposed Canadian intervention."¹¹⁷ Therefore, the government of Canada went to great lengths to respond to Serbian-Canadian concerns with both understanding and transparency. The voice of Serbian-Canadians was heard loudly enough that it influenced what the Canadian government's media policy was during the Kosovo War. However, in addition to understanding and transparency, the government responded with firmness. According to Axworthy: "we made an effort to

¹¹³ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 13626.

¹¹⁴ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 185.

¹¹⁵ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

¹¹⁶ Author interview with Bill Graham, 25 August 2020.

¹¹⁷ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 185.

reach out and connect but at the same time we had to say look we're trying to establish a principle that you have to intervene at certain periods in order to protect the human beings who are being risked."¹¹⁸

However, not all Members of Parliament were as firm as Axworthy and Graham. Some, like the Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Agincourt, Jim Karygiannis, passionately defended the Serbian-Canadian position and admonished his colleagues. In a lengthy reproach on 12 April 1999, he stated:

A lot of members came here today pretending that they know the history of Bosnia. Well, to my honourable colleagues who pretend that they know the history of Bosnia, to my honourable colleagues who have travelled to Yugoslavia and to Kosovo and who say they know the Balkan history, I say to them that they have another thing coming. That part of the world has been in turmoil not for the last 50 years and not for the last 100 years, but we should say for the last millennium. Since history has been recorded, that part of the world has had atrocities done on both sides by all kinds of people. The atrocities happening there have been by both sides. It is not something new. I can quote text and verse from 50 years ago, from 100 years ago, from 200 years ago, the history of what has happened in that part of the world. It was the Ottoman empire. Before that there was the Byzantine empire. Before that was the Roman empire. For my honourable colleagues who say that they know about Balkan history because they have visited Bosnia, I say go read the history and do not be ignorant.¹¹⁹

What is important to note is that Karygiannis references the same historic conflicts that the Serbian-Canadian diaspora reference when claiming sovereignty over Kosovo. These events are shrouded in so much nationalist mythology, by both Albanians and Serbians, that little can be factually confirmed about the events. For Axworthy and the government of Canada, ancient, ethnic hatred could have no part in the conversation in the face of present human rights abuses. However, history continued to come up in the House of Commons, as constituents continued to bring it up in phone calls with their Members of Parliament. For example, on the same day that Karygiannis lectured his colleagues on history, Paul Szabo, the Member of Parliament

¹¹⁸ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

¹¹⁹ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): pp. 13627-13628.

for Mississauga South, told the story of “a Serbian gentleman [who] came to my office and gave me quite a lecture about the centuries of history of the area. His basic conclusion was that it was their turn, that many Serbians had died over the years and that they had to get even. It was as bald as that. It was their turn to kill somebody.”¹²⁰ The reality of diaspora politics in Canada meant that debates over history going back further than Canada had even existed continued to come up in discussion in the House of Commons.

After admonishing his colleagues on the shortcomings of their historical knowledge, Karygiannis then read multiple emails he received from Serbian-Canadian and Russian-Canadian constituents opposing Canada’s involvement in Yugoslavia. This illustrates an important aspect of diaspora politics; that is, like countries, diaspora groups also have allies. During the Kosovo War, the majority of the opposition was coming from the Serbian-Canadian community; however, they were also aided by the Russian-Canadian and Greek-Canadian communities. The Russian and Greek communities were connected to the Serbian community by their shared Orthodox faith. Karygiannis himself came to Canada as an immigrant from Greece. It is impossible to say for certain whether this influenced how he approached the issues in Kosovo. That said, it is worth noting that, as previously discussed, foreign policy experts such as Goldenberg emphasize how diverse cabinet members are influenced, for better or for worse, by their homeland communities. The same could be said for Members of Parliament. Canada’s approach to Kosovo was not only complicated by the Serbian-Canadian, Greek-Canadian, and Russian-Canadian cultural communities: other communities also capitalized on the events to further the interest of their homeland communities. For example, the Tamil community used Canada’s involvement to protect Kosovo-Albanians as an opportunity to request Canada’s protection of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils sent a letter for Foreign Minister Axworthy that says, “that the civil war in Sri Lanka not only predates the Kosovo conflict by more than a decade, but also has claimed many more lives, more than 75 000.” They argued that “just like the Albanians fleeing the Serbian onslaught, over 700 Tamils fled when the Sinhalese army, after a bloody military campaign,

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 13677.

occupied the Jaffna peninsula.”¹²¹ Thus, when Canada makes foreign policy decisions, it must consider both the diaspora communities that will be directly affected and the diaspora communities that will not, but will argue for the precedents being set to be extended to their homelands.

A part of Karygiannis’ lengthy address to the House of Commons on 12 April, 1999 was reading the content of a petition with 15,000 signatures he said he had received:

We the undersigned residents of Canada draw to the attention of the House the following: that the Canadian government is blindly following the careless and dangerous U.S.-NATO policy of bombing the sovereign country of Yugoslavia and the Serbian people; that such policy sets dangerous precedents and could only open the door for foreign intervention in internal affairs of nations of minorities; and, that violence will not resolve the Kosovar problem but rather it facilitates the further entrenchment of the forces on both sides. We do not want to see the residents of Kosovo live in peace and harmony.¹²²

The text of this petition illustrates a few important factors in the Serbian-Canadian diaspora’s attempts to influence Canadian foreign policy. The phone calls and emails contained personal anecdotes and references to historical events. The petitions, in contrast, focussed on making arguments around foreign policy and potential precedents, as well as warning Canada of the consequences of their actions. It is worth noting that this petition was never formerly presented to the House of Commons. In his address to the House of Commons, Karygiannis, mentions that he “seem[s] to be the focus for e-mails and have received over 8,000 in the last week or so” and even received an email from somebody in New York.¹²³ Members of Parliament quoting Canadians who directly called or visited their constituency offices is completely valid. Those Members of Parliament were elected to represent and voice the concerns of their constituents and were doing so. However, quoting from 9000 emails received without verifying the content (or that they were even from Canadian citizens) is problematic. This is especially so when it was well-established that the Yugoslav government was

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 13628.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 13629.

conducting a cyberwar by spamming the email inboxes of journalists, citizens, and politicians in NATO countries, as noted by Ignatieff and Axworthy earlier. This is not to say that none of the emails Karygiannis received were from Canadians. It does, however, illustrate how the presence of diaspora communities complicates foreign relations, especially during a cyberwar. It also raises the question of why Karygiannis, in his own words, “seem[s] to be the focus for emails.” As Axworthy warns: “they [diaspora groups] often align themselves with members of Parliament from the constituencies where they are strongly represented.”¹²⁴ With all of this said, Jim Karygiannis, a Liberal Member of Parliament, never voted against Canada’s actions in Kosovo.¹²⁵ The lobbying of Members of Parliament by diaspora communities had both notable successes and limitations.

Public Reaction

It is also important to understand the successes and limitations of the lobbying of Canadian public opinion by diaspora communities. On 27 April 1999, Reform Member of Parliament for North Vancouver, Ted White, said in his address to the House of Commons that other than from Serbian-Canadians he has heard very few opinions, “despite the serious nature of the issue.”¹²⁶ White describes being surprised that when monitoring a radio talk show they did not pick up a single call regarding Kosovo and concluded that, “it would seem that the average person on the street considers it too far away and something that is not important enough to worry about. I receive more letters about the taxes families are paying and the difficulties with the immigration system or justice issues than I receive about the situation in Kosovo.”¹²⁷ Polling at the time challenges White’s concerns that the lack of radio phone-ins from Canadians equates to apathy or ignorance to what was happening. In an Environics poll conducted in May 1999, a sizeable majority of Canadians claimed to have followed the conflict

¹²⁴ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 66.

¹²⁵ Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 14420.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

attentively.¹²⁸ What more likely explains the lack of feedback from non-diaspora Canadians is the overwhelming support for the mission. Constituents are more likely to write when they disagree with something than when they agree with it. In early April 1999, a Compass poll showed that 79 percent of Canadians supported NATO's actions and 72 percent approved Canada's involvement.¹²⁹ Even more significantly, over half, 57 percent of Canadians favoured sending ground troops, something that politicians were very hesitant to do.¹³⁰ Other polls, such as a survey by Angus Reid, support the accuracy of these results. The Angus Reid survey shows that two-thirds approved NATO's actions and Canada's participation and 60 percent would approve the use of ground troops, if necessary.¹³¹ As the war progressed, public support fell slightly, but public approval continued to be in the majority at 57 percent.¹³² In addition to petitioning the government directly, influencing public opinion was integral to Serbian-Canadian's attempts to influence foreign policy during the Kosovo War.

Serbian-Canadians tried to influence public opinion through media and public protests. The *Toronto Star's* "Letter of the Week," for 3 April 1999, was written by a Serbian-Canadian who asked, "[h]ow is my mother to blame for the policies of [Slobodan Milosevic]?"¹³³ The author stressed that not all Serbians agreed with Milošević. However, other letters to the editor, such as the one found in *Maclean's* 12 April issue, illustrate that many did. The letter to the editor is from a Serbian-Canadian and reads: "I am deeply ashamed that the Canadian government sent its military forces to Yugoslavia [...] To me, it is mind-boggling that NATO attacked my country without a UN Security Council resolution. My heart goes to my family and friends and I completely understand Milosevic's rejection of an agreement that nobody has seen."¹³⁴

These letters to the editor were published alongside articles about passionate protests by Serbian-Canadians in Canada and around the world. On 28 February 1999,

¹²⁸ Pierre Martin and Michel Fortmann, "Public Opinion: Obstacle, Partner or Scapegoat?" *Policy Options* 22, no. 1 (2001): p. 71.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Mariana Masic, "Letter Of The Week: How Will Bombing Innocents Remove Slobodan Milosevic?: 1 Edition." *Toronto Star*, 3 April 1999.

¹³⁴ Tanya Benic, "The Mail: Responses to War is Hell," *Maclean's* 112, no. 15, 12 April 1999, p. 4.

Serbian-Canadians gathered in front of the US consulate in Toronto to protest the peace initiatives at Rambouillet. The protestors held up U.S. flags with swastikas and signs that said, "US Policy Cleanses Serbs."¹³⁵ Three weeks later, on 23 March 1999, when Canada announced its participation in Operation Allied Force, Serbian-Canadian protests erupted around the country. The protests took place in cities across Canada, but the one in Toronto was especially noteworthy. The second night of protests turned violent when demonstrators hurled rocks and eggs at the US consulate in Toronto. According to one *Toronto Star* article, "more than 1,000 people -- many of them Serbs with young children in tow -- gathered in front of the consulate, shutting down University Ave."¹³⁶ At this protest, a police officer, a police horse, and several other first responders were hit by rocks. Four protestors were arrested. The crowds sang Serbia's national anthem while chanting "Hey, hey USA, how many Serbs have you killed today?"¹³⁷ The article describes how hard it was for first responders: "When fire officials tried to get through the crowd to put out a large fire created by [burning] flags and other debris, they were pelted with eggs."¹³⁸ Protestors called Canadians fascists, killers, and terrorists. One Serbian-Canadian is quoted as saying, "What's a little vandalism? Our (Canadian) forces are committing murder."¹³⁹ The next week's issue of *Macleans* included a photo of two heavily armed guards in front of the burning and vandalized US Consulate in Toronto.¹⁴⁰ The week after that, *Macleans* included a photo of protestors burning a Canadian flag with a swastika drawn on it.¹⁴¹ In response to these protests, the Member of Parliament for Verchères-Les-Patriotes, Stéphane Bergeron, expressed sympathy, "I would also say that a degree of sympathy can be felt for the Serbian demonstrators throughout the world, including here in Canada and Quebec [...] It is understandable that seeing their country attacked in this way may indeed awake in them a certain nationalistic pride..."¹⁴² However, his sympathy was not

¹³⁵ "Rick Madonik / Toronto Star / ANTI-U: 1 Edition." *Toronto Star*, 1 March 1999.

¹³⁶ Kerry Gillespie, "Local Protest Turns Violent ; Demonstrators Throw Rocks, Eggs, Burn Flags in Front of US Consulate Demonstrators Vow to Return Every Day Until NATO Ceases Its Air Strikes: 1 Edition," *Toronto Star*, 25 March 1999.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ *Macleans*'s 112, no. 14, 5 April 1999, p. 30.

¹⁴¹ *Macleans*'s 112, no. 15, 12 April 1999, p. 3.

¹⁴² Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Debates, 36th Parl., 1st sess., vol. 135 (1997-99): p. 13709.

enough to convince him: "While we can sympathize with these protesters, while we deeply care for peace, it is absolutely out of the question not to act, to stand idly by while terrible things are going on in Kosovo."¹⁴³

While Members of Parliament in the House of Commons expressed understanding, the court of public opinion was much less sympathetic. Many letters to the editor during the Kosovo War supported Canada's involvement. However, even in a letter to the editor where the writer does not support NATO's bombing, the writer expressed frustration at Serbian-Canadian protests and asked, "As for the protests of Serbs in Canada, where were they when their brethren were ethnically cleansing the Bosnian Muslims?"¹⁴⁴ In contrast to Axworthy, who admits there are drawbacks to the phenomenon of dual loyalty but emphasises the benefits instead, many Canadians were much less optimistic. The week after *Maclean's* published the letter mentioned previously, in which a Serbian Canadian says, "I am deeply ashamed that the Canadian government [...] NATO attacked my country [...]" *Maclean's* received a letter directly responding to this writer from another Canadian.¹⁴⁵ In her response, the author writes: "I have been amazed by the number of Serbian landed immigrants - and Canadian citizens - who feel so free to express their shame and discontent with a country they now call home. They chose to live here over their native land for a reason, but they refer to the NATO attacks taking place in their country. Which is it?"¹⁴⁶ The writer goes on to say that she does not, "think the Canadian people are as concerned with the reasons behind the attacks as much as they are with helping all those poor refugees. After all, they are the innocent victims in all this, no matter who wins or loses."¹⁴⁷ Requiring Canadians to choose where their loyalty lies during a time of turmoil and criticizing them for concerns over their homeland is unfair. However, legitimate questions were raised by those expressing anger at the Serbian-Canadian demonstrators. As Bergeron said, referring to Serbian-Canadians, it was "understandable that seeing their country attacked in this way may indeed awake in them a certain nationalistic pride." Similarly, seeing Canadian flags burnt, and the

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Maurice A. Rhodes, "The Mail: History Lessons," *Maclean's* 112, no. 17, 26 April 1999, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ Tanya Benic, "The Mail: Responses to War is Hell," *Maclean's* 112, no. 15, 12 April 1999, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ Kate Phillips, "In response to Tanja Benic," *Maclean's* 112, no. 17, 26 April 1999, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

suffering of Kosovo Albanian refugees was enough to awaken in Canadians nationalistic pride and humanitarian concern.

One letter to *Maclean's* particularly expressed the frustration Canadians felt with their Serbian co-citizens:

I am confused by Canadian-Serbs who are angry because of Canada's involvement in Kosovo. So what if Kosovo has been part of Serbia for 900 years? I thought human beings were beyond this petty state in their evolution. It angers me to see a picture of a protester burning a Canadian flag with a swastika inside the Maple Leaf ('Outrage in Kosovo, Cover, April 12). Who is involved in ethnic cleansing here? Is that not similar to what Hitler did to the Jews before and during the Second World War? It is time for Serbs to take a look in the mirror. Are they proud the Serbian military and police are responsible for killing thousands of ethnic Albanians?¹⁴⁸

This letter illustrates a few important aspects of the Canadian public's reaction. First, Serbian-Canadian protests angered the public instead of sparking sympathy for their cause. Second, the Canadian public was not interested in debates surrounding historic events, they were interested in contemporary suffering. Finally, like Axworthy and the Canadian government, the support of the Canadian public was motivated by the human rights abuses happening against Kosovo Albanians.

If the purpose of the protests was only to vent their frustrations, the Serbian-Canadians were successful. More likely, the purpose of the protests was also to influence public opinion and consequently influence foreign policy towards Canada. In this case, the protests were unsuccessful. One *Toronto Star* article opened with, "The growing rage of the Serbian diaspora, including Serb Canadians, against the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia is understandable. [...] However, a more pressing matter for the majority of the protesters is this: Have they ever paused to ponder what it is that they may be defending?"¹⁴⁹ The article continues, "Slobodan Milosevic? His ethnic cleansing?"¹⁵⁰ The author is critical of Serbian-Canadians "deafening silence on one of

¹⁴⁸ J.W. Hall, "The Mail: Canada and NATO" *Maclean's* 112, no. 18, 3 May 1999, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ "What are Serb Canadians Defending?" *Toronto Star*, Apr 01, 1999.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

the most moral issues of our time.”¹⁵¹ Following the protests, Canadians asked tough questions of their Serbian-Canadian counterparts. In an article titled, “Serb protests against Canada ring hollow,” the author criticized the sudden “concern” of Serbian-Canadians about peace in Kosovo saying, “Maybe had they started protesting their government's slaughtering of civilians in Kosovo, they may have had a positive impact on what Slobodan Milosevic was doing to the Kosovars.”¹⁵² Public opinion continued to favour Canada’s involvement even as Serbian-Canadians vented their frustrations.

The Albanian-Canadian community capitalized on the bad publicity and public frustration Canadians were expressing over Serbian-Canadian actions. Following the Serbian-Canadian protests, the president of the Albanian Canadian Community Association of Toronto, Halit Hoxha, said that Albanian-Canadians were planning their demonstration. Making obvious reference to the Serbian-Canadian protests, he emphasized: “We're not throwing stones or eggs. We'll be throwing flowers.”¹⁵³ On 3 April 1999, the Albanian-Canadian community held this gathering in front of Queen’s Park with the intention “to thank Canadians for their military, monetary and moral support of Kosovar refugees.”¹⁵⁴ As at the Serbian protests, there was a large police presence. Unlike at the Serbian-Canadian protests, there was no violence and the signs mostly thanked Canada. People held signs which read, “Stop the genocide,” “Thanks for your support NATO,” and “May sanity prevail,” as well as photos of Albanian-born Mother Theresa captioned “Kosovo needs your blessing.”¹⁵⁵ Demonstrators sang the Canadian national anthem and chanted “Free Kosovo.”¹⁵⁶ The demonstration was also much smaller, with roughly 300 people. Hours later, 1500 Serbian demonstrators began to gather for the eleventh day and were met by 250 members of the RCMP and the Toronto Police Services prepared for any escalation.¹⁵⁷ While the demonstrations missed each other by only a few hours, the communities clashed in different ways. For

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Paul Newton, “Serb protests against Canada ring hollow,” *Toronto Star*, 3 April 1999.

¹⁵³ Tanya Ho, “Brother killed by Serbs, Ontario man says; 'They shot them, and left them to die by the wall',” *Toronto Star*, 31 March 1999.

¹⁵⁴ Theresa Boyle and Phinjo Gombu, “Albanians demonstrate to say thanks to Canada; 300 Albanians hold their first demonstration at Queen's Park,” *Toronto Star*, 4 April 1999.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

example, after the previously mentioned TVO debate between a Serbian-Canadian and an Albanian-Canadian, the participants and their friends got into a confrontation behind the scenes. The *Toronto Star* described the confrontation this way: “behind the polite face of Canadian multiculturalism, emotions are running high...” and said that when the cameras turned off the confrontation was so intense security had to be called.¹⁵⁸ The clashes between the two cultural communities went beyond verbal confrontations. In some cases, there was violence. An apartment in Toronto, where multiple Albanian-Canadian families lived, was vandalized with ethnic slurs and the words “Serbia will never surrender, and Muslim Albanians die.”¹⁵⁹ A fire was also lit in the lobby of the building. The Albanian-Canadians interviewed in the news article describing these events said that they previously called the police when their children were threatened in school over the NATO bombing.¹⁶⁰ Of course, not all of the protests were violent, there were peaceful protests by Serbian-Canadian communities across Canada, including in Montreal, Ottawa, and Edmonton. However, the frustrations of the Serbian community and the perceived threats of violence were strong enough that they affected decisions the Canadian government made, especially those dealing with the Armed Forces.

Policy Impact & Strategic Interest

As previously mentioned, during the Kosovo War, the Canadian government prioritized transparency and held daily press briefings. According to Axworthy, the protests of the Serbian-Canadian community were one of the factors that led to transparency being a top priority, and consequently, the briefings were televised.¹⁶¹ However, the Canadian government’s transparency had its limits, which was also caused by the Serbian-Canadian community. During the Kosovo War, the Canadian Forces’ media policy prevented pilots, except in rare exceptions, from being interviewed, and banned the use of identifiable information. The 5 April 1999 issue of

¹⁵⁸ Sean Fine, "Neither time nor distance heals ancient hatred," *Toronto Star*, 1 April 1999.

¹⁵⁹ Mark Stevenson, "A west-end Toronto apartment where nine Albanian...," *CanWest News*, 26 March 1999.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Author interview with Lloyd Axworthy, 7 August 2020.

Maclean's was dedicated mostly to Canada's participation in the Kosovo War. According to one of the articles, pilots were banned from interviews. The reason for this was explained as being due to the fact "that the Canadian military authorities are worried about the possibility of reprisals back home, sparked by the same emotions that prompted Canadians of Serbian descent to mount angry demonstrations in Toronto last week."¹⁶² In the rare case, pilots were allowed to give interviews their backs were to the camera.¹⁶³ This policy was the cause of great consternation among the media; however, according to the Canadian government, it was necessary to keep the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families safe.¹⁶⁴ At the daily briefing on 20 April 1999, Brig. Gen. David Jurkowski explained the media policy banned the following: interviews, pictures, and any footage with the faces, names, and hometowns. Basically, nothing that could identify individual servicemen and women was allowed. Jurkowski explained:

We had learned some lessons during the Gulf War and some of those lessons relate to threats back to families back at home—telephone calls, harassing telephone calls, body bags on the lawns of wives and kiddies back home in Canada and of individuals who were found to be operating in the Gulf. We learned those lessons and until there is a proper moment to be more open with our pilots and ground crew, to a certain degree we're going to maintain this policy.¹⁶⁵

Canadian historian Bob Bergen is extremely critical of this media policy in his book *Scattering Chaff: Canadian Air Power and Censorship During the Kosovo War*. According to Bergen, there is no evidence that missions would have been compromised by such media access, and the policy was damaging to democracy and the pilots themselves. However, what is important to understand is that, at the time, the venting of frustrations by the Serbian-Canadians led policymakers to genuinely believe there was risk of reprisals in Canada. In effect, this meant that the diaspora community directly influenced foreign and military policy during the Kosovo War.

¹⁶² William Lowther, "GOING TO WAR: Canada joins NATO's high-stakes battle for Kosovo" *Maclean's* 112, no. 14, 5 April 1999, p. 30

¹⁶³ Bob Bergen, *Scattering Chaff: Canadian Air Power and Censorship during the Kosovo War* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2019), p. 185.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 211

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

If Canada had a larger Albanian-Canadian presence in the 1990s, would Canada have advocated for intervention in Kosovo sooner? Would Canada have advocated for the use of ground forces? It is impossible to say for certain. What is evident from an analysis of the primary sources is that, at the very least, diaspora communities' complicated decision-making during the Kosovo War. At the very most, they directly influenced foreign policy decisions. As time passes and documents from the Kosovo War become declassified, historians will get a clearer sense of the true extent to which diaspora communities impacted foreign policy. As Axworthy states, "The role of the ethnic diaspora, as I've said, increasingly influences Canadian foreign policy decisions, and *this was certainly the case in Kosovo*. [emphasis added]"¹⁶⁶ That said, the fact that Canada continued its actions in Kosovo, despite the size and impact of its Serbian-Canadian diaspora, proves the depth of Canada's conviction towards Kosovo. An analysis of the Kosovo War proves how domestic issues, such as the cultural makeup of the country, impact foreign policy decision-making. This study of Canada and the Kosovo War illustrates the inextricable ties between domestic and foreign issues, as well as the strategic importance of understanding the role of cultural communities within Canada.

¹⁶⁶ Axworthy, *Navigating a New World*, p. 185.