

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Parliament and Canadian Foreign Policy

by

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Abstract

There are two schools of thought on Parliament's role in the making of Canadian foreign policy. The first school argues that Parliament has little influence on foreign policy because the executive dominates the policymaking process. The second school suggests Parliament has a greater role in external issues, but cannot identify precisely how parliamentary influence actually works.

This thesis addresses shortcomings in these perspectives by proposing a comprehensive framework that connects Parliament to the domestic political environment, in which public opinion and the media play primary roles. The framework is applied to a series of case studies that illustrate parliamentary influence: Biafra, foreign investment, the 2004 Ukrainian elections, and missile defence. The framework explains the underlying process that produces parliamentary influence and how this influence can impact foreign policy. It also shows that Parliament and parliamentarians may influence Canadian foreign policy even without a decision-making role in the policy process.

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CHAPTER 1: THE STATE OF DEBATE

It is widely believed that Canada's Parliament, like those in other Westminster style parliamentary systems, has "declined."¹ This view claims that the centralization of political power around prime ministers and their closest advisors has increasingly marginalized Parliament in the policymaking and legislative processes. Many observers believe parliamentarians are, at best, able to refine proposals brought forward by the government and, at worst, merely "voting machines" that blindly follow the party line and are unable to meaningfully participate in policy development or represent their constituents.

Although these criticisms are a central part of recent discussion about Canada's 'democratic deficit,' they have long been used to describe Parliament's involvement in the making of Canadian foreign policy. As Kim Nossal put it, Parliament's role in foreign policy process has not declined simply because "there can be no erosion of something that was not there to begin with."² This comment reflects views first articulated by James Eayrs in 1961. Eayrs concluded the political executive, not Parliament, is responsible for making Canadian foreign policy and that MPs had no interest and little involvement in international issues. These arguments established the basic assumptions for the 'executive dominance' model of foreign affairs.

The executive dominance model is the primary school of thought in the literature but some observers question its accuracy. In his introduction to *Parliament and*

¹ For an early discussion of this argument see Allan Kornberg and Colin Campbell, "Parliament in Canada: A Decade of Published Research," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 3:4 (November 1978), 555-580. In the Canadian context, see Donald Savoie *Governing from the Centre: The Centralization of Power in Canadian Politics*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

Canadian Foreign Policy, David Taras challenges conventional wisdom when suggesting that domestication – by fusing the domestic and international policy agendas – has increased parliamentary interest in external affairs. Taras also suggests that MPs have ‘assumed new roles and have had international contacts to a degree that was perhaps unimaginable’ since Eayrs wrote in 1961.³ However, he does not identify precisely how these developments affect parliamentary involvement in foreign policy decision-making.

Majority Report: The Executive Dominance Model

The executive dominance model points to structural factors that exclude Parliament from the foreign policy decision-making process. Most important, the Canadian constitution assigns responsibility to Cabinet, not Parliament, for deciding the country’s foreign policy. Eayrs noted that “Law and convention both prescribe that crucial steps in the foreign policy process are to be taken only by ministers of the Crown...a foreign policy decision is a cabinet decision.”⁴ Nossal explains this is because Cabinet assumes the Crown’s responsibilities, including those pertaining to foreign affairs, through constitutional convention. In his words, “Decisions of Canadian governments are taken in the name of the Crown, and thus ministers in cabinet have the ultimate authority for the decisions that define both Canada’s objectives in the international system and the means to achieve them.”⁵

² Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1985), 172.

³ David Taras, “From Bystander to Participant,” *Parliament and Canadian Foreign Policy*, David Taras, ed., (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1985), 16.

⁴ James Eayrs, *The Art of the Possible: Government and Foreign Policy in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 103.

⁵ Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1993), 175.

Parliament has no constitutionally based decision-making powers of its own to offset those granted to the executive. Unlike the U.S. Senate, neither chamber of the Canadian Parliament must approve senior appointments to the foreign policy bureaucracy or the government's decision to enter into international agreements. The executive must obtain parliamentary approval for departmental budgets and funding for specific initiatives but is under no obligation to have Parliament actually approve its foreign policies through votes in the House of Commons.

The paucity of legislation concerning foreign policy issues also limits the number of votes in Parliament. As Nossal puts it, 'the nature and substance of foreign policy is such that it provides MPs with few opportunities to engage in the task for which legislators are most noted – lawmaking.'⁶ There are occasions when legislation is required to implement international agreements, such as the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, but such examples are the exception rather than the rule.

Of course, the government must maintain the confidence of a majority of members in the House of Commons. Except during periods of minority parliaments, however, the strong party discipline that characterizes Canada's parliamentary system means governments seldom faced with the possibility of losing votes on any issue. This institutional norm, the cabinet's constitutional prerogative and the lack of votes on external issues leads some to conclude that Prime Minister Mackenzie King's declaration that "Parliament will decide" Canadian foreign policy has little practical meaning.⁷

⁶ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 265.

⁷ Nossal maintains '...when Prime Ministers say "Parliament will decide," they do not actually mean it; more commonly, they are using it as a refuge from uncomfortable foreign requests.' *Ibid.*, 266.

Without a formal decision-making role, the executive dominance model argues Parliament must “influence” foreign policy through its scrutiny of government policies. Eayrs claims the executive’s monopoly on decision-making means parliamentarians must influence policy through “interrogation and discussion.”⁸ Farrell believes that MPs are primarily concerned “with the control, limitation, and enforcement of responsibility in the policy-making process.”⁹ Byers explains that Parliament’s influence comes through the opposition’s ability to “to criticize, scrutinize, publicize, and in some cases refine the policy proposals of the executive.”¹⁰

Through its scrutiny of government policies, Michael Tucker believes that Parliament “at times even unknowingly, may have raised the consciousness of executive decision-makers about national and international problems.”¹¹ Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on how this process actually works. Nossal agrees with Tucker but adds little beyond saying that “because question period is so well covered by the media, it allows the Opposition to help set the foreign policy agenda.”¹²

Overall, observers of Canadian foreign policy agree with the wider literature which assumes that “Parliament is rarely able to assess and criticize government policy.”¹³ Donald Savoie believes the concentration of political power in Canada simply

⁸ Eayrs, *Art of the Possible*, 103.

⁹ R. B. Farrell, *The Making of Canadian Foreign Policy*, (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1969), 144.

¹⁰ R.B. Byers, “The Perceptions of Parliamentary Surveillance of the Executive: The Case of Canadian Defence Policy,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 5.2 (June 1972), 235.

¹¹ Michael Tucker, *Canadian Foreign Policy: Contemporary Themes and Issues*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), 52.

¹² Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 273.

¹³ W.A. Matheson, *The Prime Minister and Cabinet*, (Toronto: Methuen, 1976), 201.

means that “Parliament is no match for the government.”¹⁴ Applying this thinking to the foreign policy process, Roy Rempel concludes that:

Canada’s present political system, with its centralization of power and irrelevant legislature, has not served the country’s international position well. The decline of Canadian influence abroad can be linked, at least in part, to the absence of any serious parliamentary oversight. It has prevented any serious consideration of defence and foreign policy issues by Parliament.¹⁵

Peter Richards suggests this is the case because “Parliament’s consideration of foreign affairs must differ substantially from the manner in which it conducts other business.”¹⁶ This observation draws attention to certain features of foreign policy that limit the opportunities that MPs have to scrutinize government policy and reinforce executive control.

For example, Nossal points out there are “times when international negotiations will not wait and when decisions and tactics must be made quickly.”¹⁷ The speed at which some international issues develop may preclude MPs from engaging in extensive debate or undertaking time-consuming committee investigations. Michael Hawes adds that governments are inevitably required to make decisions between parliamentary sessions and even when the House is sitting “a response to external events cannot (and will not) wait for the slow grinding wheels of the parliamentary process.”¹⁸ A small

¹⁴ Donald Savoie, *Breaking the Bargain: Public Servants, Ministers and Parliament*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 178.

¹⁵ Roy Rempel, *The Chatter Box: An Insider’s Account of the Irrelevance of Parliament in the Making of Canadian Foreign and Defence Policy*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002), 205.

¹⁶ Peter G. Richards, *Parliament and Foreign Affairs*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), 13.

¹⁷ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 231.

¹⁸ Michael Hawes, *Principal Power, Middle Power, Or Satellite?*, (Toronto: Research Programme in Strategic Studies, 1984), 14.

body, like cabinet, is better structured for making quick decisions than a large and diverse Parliament where obstruction and delay are tactics favoured by the opposition.

The secrecy surrounding some foreign policy issues can hinder parliamentary oversight of foreign policy by restricting access to information and policy discussions. Commenting on Parliament's role in external issues, a former Foreign Minister, Paul Martin, claimed "overparticipation on the part of Parliament in [foreign policy] tends to hinder diplomacy. The public discussion of delicate international negotiations could well lead to detrimental consequences for the country."¹⁹ Others believe that Canadian reliance on "quiet diplomacy" accentuates the need to make foreign policy behind closed doors, not on the House floor in full view of the public and media.²⁰

In addition to challenges posed by the nature of international affairs, observers believe the opportunities MPs actually do have to scrutinize government policies are ineffective. Like general studies of the Canadian Parliament, the foreign policy literature is highly critical of parliamentary committees. Eayrs maintains the unwillingness of the foreign affairs committee to contradict existing government policies limits its influence. Nossal suggests that committees are increasingly willing to challenge the government but says they still have little influence on policy.²¹ Former Liberal MP John English (Kitchener, Ontario) argues that gaining the ability to conduct studies and call witnesses without government approval has done little to improve the situation. Before acquiring

¹⁹ Paul Martin Sr., "The Role of the Canadian Parliament in the Formulation of Foreign Policy," *The Parliamentarian* 50 (1969), 259.

²⁰ David Leyton-Brown and R.B. Byers, "Parliament and Foreign Policy," unpublished paper presented to the Legislative Studies in Canada Conference, York University, October 1977, 3.

²¹ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 279.

this ability, he notes that committee members proceeded on the assumption that their work would be taken seriously by the government since it had commissioned it.²²

Some suggest that governments use committees to legitimize their own policy preferences. For example, Tucker and Nossal agree that successive governments in 1970s and 1980s used the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND) to legitimize the renewal of Canada's participation in NORAD. Both authors maintain the Trudeau and Mulroney governments never had any intention of fundamentally recasting the country's longstanding commitment to this institution despite asking for SCEAND's advice. Rempel maintains such manipulation shows that committees are simply "another tool of the government."²³

A final assumption of the executive dominance model is that parliamentary involvement in foreign policy is limited because MPs and their parties have few reasons to focus on international issues. It is generally assumed that MPs are constituency-focused politicians who have little interest in foreign policy. Eayrs attributes this to the common conception of political representation in Canada. He argues the average MP "goes to Ottawa to speak for his own constituency and no other. That is what the member thinks he is sent to do; that is what the electors think he is sent to do." As such, "the member devotes no more time to foreign policy than he believes his constituents would wish him to, which in practice is very little indeed."²⁴ Nossal agrees that a root

²² John English, "The Member of Parliament and Foreign Policy," Fen Olser Hampson and Maureen Appel Molot eds., *Canada Among Nations 1998: Leadership and Dialogue*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), 76.

²³ Rempel, *The Chatter Box*, 192.

²⁴ Eayrs, *Art of the Possible*, 112.

cause of Parliament's irrelevance "lies in the attitudes of parliamentarians themselves. Some MPs appear to believe that their constituents are not interested in foreign affairs."²⁵

A disinterested public means that MPs are not subjected to grassroots political pressures that would push them to play a more active role in foreign policy issues. As Hawes argues, international policy rarely "generates the type of response that 'bread and butter' domestic issues do."²⁶ Even when an issue does capture public attention, Nossal believes Canadians seldom translate their concerns into political action and consequently involvement in external issues offers MPs few electoral rewards. In his words, "there will be a concomitant unwillingness to devote attention to foreign policy if it is believed to bring few rewards at the polls; responsiveness to parochial constituency concerns is believed to yield more tangible electoral rewards."²⁷ In sum, the domestic focus that Canadians share with their elected representatives creates a culture of indifference that gives MPs few political reasons to be interested in Canadian foreign policy.

In the absence of greater public pressures, Eayrs believes that "few members trouble to keep themselves really well informed on special problems of external policy."²⁸ Heavy workloads and limited staff mean that most MPs do not have the ability to stay informed about the complexities of external affairs. Members of Parliament instead focus on constituency matters and only when international issues attract widespread public attention do they take time to become better informed. The lack of foreign policy expertise amongst MPs hinders their ability to properly scrutinize

²⁵ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 285.

²⁶ Hawes, *Principal Power, Middle Power, Or Satellite?*, 14.

²⁷ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 285.

²⁸ Eayrs, *The Art of the Possible*, 116.

government policies. Having worked as a political staffer in the Canadian Alliance caucus, Rempel concludes these issues remain significant problems and notes “the lack of knowledge on the Hill is one of the most serious impediments to having a truly effective Parliament.”²⁹

Some believe the lack of clear partisan differences in the area of foreign policy limits Parliament’s role in the foreign policy process. For example, Canada’s commitment to multilateral institutions, such as the UN and NATO, has remained fundamentally unchanged under both Liberal and Conservative governments. Describing the emergence of this bipartisan consensus nurtured by the government in the 1940s and early 1950s, John Hilliker and Donald Barry wrote foreign policy was not a subject which the opposition “chose to take issue with the government. Indeed, they went out of their way to be cooperative. Nonpartisan support for Canadian foreign policy was thus established.”³⁰ Thordarson also notes there is a “traditionally a large measure of agreement on basic issues by both major political parties.”³¹

Without policies that are distinct from the government’s own, opposition parties are seen as having few reasons to scrutinize and criticize the government’s management of the country’s international affairs inside Parliament. As Leyton-Brown and Byers argue, “Parliament could be expected to be far more deeply involved in the foreign policy process, and thus more influential, if fundamentally opposing views were articulated by

²⁹ Rempel, *The Chatter Box*, 41.

³⁰ John Hilliker and Donald Barry, *Canada’s Department of External Affairs: Coming of Age, 1946-1968*, Vol. 2, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 6.

³¹ Bruce Thordarson, *Trudeau and Foreign Policy: A Study in Decision-Making*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972), 94.

the major parties.”³² These authors did, however, identify significant intra-party divisions in certain areas of foreign policy, such as Canada-US relations. In a subsequent study, Neil Nevitte and Roger Gibbons note that parliamentarians’ foreign policy views are organized by ideology, not partisan affiliation, and that philosophical overlap between Liberal and Conservative MPs accounts for intra-party differences.³³ These studies do not explore the ramifications of these internal differences, which have played a role in shaping Canadian policy on issues such as the Iraq War and missile defence.

Minority Report: The Taras Critique

Taras offers the most focused critique of the executive dominance model in the introduction to *Parliament and Canadian Foreign Policy*, a compilation of essays presented at 1985 conference on this topic. His primary argument is that the domesticated foreign policy agenda provides plenty of reasons for legislators to take an active interest in international affairs. As he puts it, globalization produces “issues that are simultaneously, profoundly and inseparably domestic and international,” such as food or textile exports and environmental protection.³⁴ Unlike the distant politico-strategic matters that previously dominated the foreign policy agenda, these issues can directly impact Canadians and generate considerable public concern. This increases the political importance of foreign policy to parliamentarians who are “aware that international developments can have a direct impact in their constituencies and this can affect local

³² Leyton-Brown and Byers, “Parliament and Foreign Policy,” 7.

³³ Neil Nevitte and Roger Gibbins, ‘Foreign Policy Debates and Sleeping Dogs: All Quiet on the Public Front,’ *Canadian Public Policy* 12.3 (1986), 401-412.

³⁴ Taras, “Bystander to Participant,” 7.

prosperity as well as their own chances for re-election.”³⁵ This view is shared by Denis Stairs who believes domestication of the foreign policy agenda means that external issues can “sometimes be politically significant, especially when they are concentrated in a few electoral ridings.”³⁶

Taras suggests that growing public interest in international affairs creates more contact between MPs and interest groups regarding foreign policy matters. As opposed to the public apathy described in earlier work, he contends that today’s MPs are subjected “to a flood of information, numerous petitions and occasionally tough pressure tactics on foreign policy issues.”³⁷ While admitting that cabinet and senior bureaucrats remain the primary targets of lobbyists, Taras suggests that interest groups see parliamentarians as potential cabinet ministers. Members of Parliament are willing to make time for these groups, viewing them as sources of campaign funds and links to important blocs of voters. Taras maintains that parliamentarians can enhance their influence by forming “issue alliances” with interest groups and other non-governmental organizations. In these groups, “statements from one source are supported by statements from another, each takes advantage of the access and influence enjoyed by its allies.”³⁸ In the end, the political significance of some foreign policy issues and public willingness to express concerns about them creates an environment in which parliamentarians are no longer the disinterested bystanders described by the executive dominance model. Instead, they are actively engaged in a range of issues.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8

³⁶ Denis Stairs, ‘Public opinion and external affairs: reflections on the domestication of Canadian foreign policy,’ *International Journal* 33.1 (1977-8), 146.

³⁷ Taras, “Bystander to Participant,” 9.

While not disputing the executive's decision-making authority, Taras contends that Parliament may influence government policy through its ability to shape the government's foreign policy agenda and priorities. Taras illustrates this argument by pointing to the Canadian policy towards the Nigerian Civil War 1968-9. In this instance, which Taras sees as a potential 'turning point' for Parliament's role in foreign affairs, "irresistible pressure" from MPs forced the government to modify its initial policy of non-intervention by offering humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict. But like Tucker and Nossal, he does not detail how this process actually works.

Taras sees parliamentary committees as the primary means that MPs have to participate in the foreign policy process. While admitting that committees operate under some restrictions, he insists they remain the "cutting edge" of Parliament's involvement in external issues and have played important roles in a number of issues. He points to hearings of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND) on North-South Relations and Canada's relations with Latin America in the early 1980s that allowed MPs to interact with interest groups and help shape the government's foreign policy agenda. Even critics acknowledge the role committees play in educating MPs about international issues. For example, Nossal believes that they provide an "opportunity, however limited, to enhance their knowledge of foreign policy [and] sharpen their views on international issues."³⁹

Taras also recognizes that MPs can make contributions through their work outside the House of Commons, particularly as members of inter-parliamentary associations. In

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

contrast to Eayrs, who believes these organizations merely allow an MP to “flatter his sense of self-importance,”⁴⁰ Taras suggests they allow MPs to gain practical international experience, develop overseas contacts, and enhance their understanding of important international issues. Farrell also believes that these increase “the knowledge and interests of the member of the House of Commons in foreign relations.”⁴¹

The State of Debate

Rising public interest in international affairs and growing parliamentary involvement in the foreign policy process lead Taras to conclude that Parliament’s role in the making of Canadian foreign policy may be at a “crucial point of transition.”⁴² Unfortunately, nothing has been done to elaborate on the factors that Taras believed were driving this transition. This lack of inquiry reflects a trend in the broader literature where general agreement on the notion of parliamentary decline has limited the amount of attention given to Parliament. The small body of recent work usually concludes that Parliament, and especially individual MPs, have been marginalized by the centralization of political power around the prime minister, their political staff, and senior bureaucrats. Working under this assumption, most observers focus on reforms that could be adopted to revitalize the House of Commons, committees and empower Members of Parliament. In such an environment, it is not surprising that there has been little interest in revisiting

³⁹ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 277.

⁴⁰ Eayrs, *Art of the Possible*, 115.

⁴¹ Farrell, *Making of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 135.

⁴² Taras, “Bystander to Participant,” 16.

Parliament's role in foreign policy, an area where it has long been assumed to have limited influence.

Despite the lack of study, the body of literature just described remains incomplete in two respects. First, a primary conceptual weakness in previous studies is their failure to connect Parliament to the broader domestic political environment, in which the public and media play critical roles. Eayrs acknowledges that public opinion can check executive power but he believes it operates "outside Parliament," and independently of proceedings in the House of Commons.⁴³ In *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Nossal discusses the role of public opinion, interest groups and Parliament in external issues but fails to explain how they are connected. Conversely, Taras argues the public is more interested in international affairs, but he does not relate this development to activities inside Parliament.

Without making this connection, the literature cannot describe the underlying process that actually produces parliamentary influence and how this influence might actually impact foreign policy. Instead, earlier work tends to focus on characterizing the impact of parliamentary influence without describing the process that creates this impact. For example, Tucker, Taras and Nossal all use the notion of agenda-setting to describe the impact of parliamentary influence, but none explain precisely how Parliament is able to impact policy in this way. Without a more detailed analysis, Taras can only conclude

⁴³ Eayrs, *Art of the Possible*, 103.

that “at best, Parliament is a participant in the decision-making process, one among a number of institutions and forces that can have an impact.”⁴⁴

Second, the literature also focuses on institutional activities in Parliament to assess parliamentary influence on foreign policy. Early analyses that established the executive dominance model based their conclusions on an examination of debates and committees. Eayrs selected examples from parliamentary debates to supplement his historical research. For his part, Farrell conducted a systematic content analysis of House transcripts to chart the amount of time that MPs spent considering international affairs, the types of issues discussed and attendance patterns at SCEAND meetings. More recent studies have used a similar approach, although some have been more systematic than others. For example, Page draws conclusions about parliamentary interest in foreign policy through an analysis of committee records between 1945 and 1983.

A weakness of this focus is that it assumes parliamentary influence must be registered in a formal way to exist. Such an approach underestimates the impact that parliamentarians sometimes have through other opportunities they might have to work on foreign policy issues. Cooperating and working with interest groups to address mutual concerns, joining inter-parliamentary associations, lobbying cabinet ministers in weekly cabinet meetings and gathering firsthand information about some issues through traveling overseas and meeting with foreign officials give MPs opportunities to possibly influence or contribute to the policy process. Although this work does not appear in the public record and is difficult to document, evidence suggests it merits greater consideration.

⁴⁴ Taras, “Bystander to Participant,” 16.

This thesis addresses these issues to produce a more comprehensive understanding of parliamentary involvement in Canadian foreign policy process. Chapter Two introduces an alternative framework that illustrates how the process of parliamentary influence really works. Chapter Three applies the framework to a series of case studies that illustrate parliamentary influence. The issues of Biafra and foreign investment are used to illustrate the impact that formal proceedings in Parliament can have on decision-making while Canadian policy towards the 2004 Ukrainian election and ballistic missile defence are used to show the informal ways in which MPs can influence and contribute to the policy process. The final chapter summarizes the findings of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK

Having described the primary schools of thought in the literature, this thesis now presents an alternative framework that provides a greater understanding of parliamentary involvement in foreign policy. For the reasons set out by proponents of the executive dominance model, this framework recognizes that Parliament is not a decision-making body and that its impact on the policy must come through the 'influence' it can have on the policy process. However, it also builds on earlier work to present a broader approach that explains how parliamentary influence actually works.

The executive dominance model and critique offered by Taras each present only half of the process that produces parliamentary influence. On the one hand, the executive dominance model focuses on what transpires inside Parliament, such as debates and committee work, but does not connect these to what goes on outside it. On the other hand, Taras challenges conventional wisdom by pointing to changes in the domestic environment, such as domestication, that might increase parliamentary interest in external issues but is unable to show how these external developments impact the work of MPs. The new approach introduced here breaks down this distinction to show that Parliament is not an isolated institution and the activities of MPs cannot be separated from the public they represent.

To understand its role in the policy process, Parliament must be placed in a broader perspective and connected to the domestic environment where public opinion and the media play primary roles. Parliamentary interaction with the domestic environment is explored through a discussion organized around the *incentives* that produce parliamentary interest in foreign policy and the *opportunities* that parties and individual

parliamentarians have to become involved in the policy process. These concepts connect what happens outside Parliament to what happens inside through linking the reasons why parliamentarians get involved in external issues to the means they have, as individuals and members of political parties, to influence or contribute to Canadian foreign policy. Developing this relationship produces a more detailed explanation of parliamentary influence by describing the underlying process that produces it.

The incentives that produce parliamentary interest and involvement in foreign policy issues can come from the personal interests of MPs, public opinion or partisanship. Societal trends, such as domestication and immigration, mean there are segments of the public who pay close attention to particular issues and have the motivation and means to translate their concerns into political action. At the same time, as Canadians become more interested and aware of international issues, foreign policy assumes a greater political importance and plays a bigger role in the ongoing battle that parties wage for public support. Media attention to activities in the House of Commons and, to a lesser degree, committees makes Parliament a central forum in this struggle by giving the opposition opportunities to criticize the government and make their own views known to voters between elections.

In response to these incentives, parliamentarians, as members of political parties and individuals, have opportunities to influence or contribute to Canadian foreign policy. These opportunities include formal proceedings in Parliament, such as votes, debates, question period and committee work, which represent the most visible side of parliamentary involvement in the policy process. Although many believe the control that

parties exercise over these activities limits their impact, their potential political importance keeps them relevant to the policy process.

Outside the public eye, the work that parliamentarians do on issues that concern the public can be important. For example, informal avenues, such as caucus meetings, parliamentary associations, working with interest groups and travelling overseas, give MPs meaningful opportunities to participate in the policy process. Such work receives less attention than proceedings inside Parliament, but evidence suggests it warrants more consideration and must be addressed to develop an inclusive analysis of parliamentary involvement in foreign policy.

For the reasons set out in the executive dominance model, the influence process described by the framework of incentives and opportunities does not decide Canadian foreign policy. Instead, parliamentary influence is less obvious and has a more indirect impact on the policy process. The capacity to focus public attention on issues and concerns can make Parliament an important actor in the policy process. Generating interest in a particular issue might alter the priorities of policymakers and pressure a government into acting in cases where it otherwise might not. Sustained criticism in Parliament can also slow the government decision-making processes. Delaying the implementation of unpopular decisions can provide time for external actors, like interest groups, to focus and shape public opinion on an issue. Committees can exert a more refined influence through their consultations with interest groups and identifying emerging issues or highlighting possible policy options. In some cases, individual and groups of likeminded MPs have made a variety of other contributions, such as using their status and access to the media to become important spokespersons for certain causes.

The impact of parliamentary influence on foreign policy is more evident in minority parliaments where the opposition can use the threat of a non-confidence motion or voting against particular measures to gain greater influence over government decision-making. In the House of Commons and committee meetings, the government must compromise and work with other parties to secure support for its legislative and policy agenda. As Prime Minister Lester Pearson described it, political necessity simply means that minorities 'instinctively and unconsciously' pursue an agenda that will attract some opposition support.⁴⁵

The government caucus can also take on a greater in minority parliaments. Private members recognize that the fate of the government depends on their support. This will lead some backbenchers to adhere more closely to the party line. However, it also means that ministers have to be more attentive to criticism and opinions from members of their own caucus because they recognize that losing support of even a few backbenchers can have serious consequences.

Although Parliament assumes greater influence under minority governments, the process that produces parliamentary influence is fundamentally the same under minorities and majorities. The personal interests of MPs, public opinion and partisanship are the primary incentives that draw parliamentary attention to international issues. Strictly speaking, the opportunities that parliamentarians have to participate in the policy process also remain the same under minority and majority governments even if the impact of the resulting activity can be enhanced during periods of the latter. Discussion now turns to

⁴⁵ Lester Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 3, eds. John Munro

exploring, in greater detail, how Parliament is connected to the domestic environment through the incentives and opportunities that parties and their members have to influence and potentially contribute to the policy process.

Incentives

The roots of parliamentary interest and involvement in foreign affairs often lie outside the House of Commons. To be sure, there are always legislators whose background and personal interests lead them to follow certain international issues. Beyond this select group, however, public pressures provide reasons for parliamentarians to be interested and involved in foreign policy issues.

Members of Parliament are constantly responding to issues and concerns raised by constituents, interests groups and the media, and changes to the domestic environment such as domestication and immigration make foreign policy a larger part of this ongoing dialogue. The domesticated foreign policy agenda contains issues that can impact specific constituencies, entire regions, or the country as a whole. Immigration also creates segments of the electorate that pay attention to foreign affairs as many members of Canada's large immigrant population retain strong ties to their former home lands and closely follow Canadian relations with these countries.

As a result, today's Members of Parliament are routinely approached by constituents and organizations that are trying to raise the profile of certain issues and concerns. The political importance of some interest groups and immigrant communities

in their ridings makes parliamentarians a receptive audience for their concerns and parliamentarians are often willing to pass them along to cabinet ministers or senior bureaucrats in Ottawa. Members of Parliament recognize the potential consequences of appearing to be out of touch from those they represent.

Personal Interest

Some parliamentarians are elected with interests and backgrounds that lead them to take an active interest in some foreign policy. For example, a growing number of MPs have studied and worked overseas. As of 1970, 26 MPs had studied outside Canada while 17 had worked overseas. By 1993, 50 had studied outside Canada and 22 had worked abroad.⁴⁶ Other kinds of work experience can lead MPs to become interested in certain foreign policy issues. For example, an opposition MP elected with extensive work experience in the field of international trade was invited by the trade minister of the day to chair meetings with representatives of foreign companies during Canadian trade missions.⁴⁷ Bill Graham (Toronto-Centre, Ontario) arrived in office with a background in international law. He subsequently became chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and eventually foreign and defence minister.

An increasing number of parliamentarians are born outside Canada. In 1970, there were 16 such members. In 1993, this number had grown to 26. Today, there are over 40 MPs that were born overseas.⁴⁸ There is no research showing that legislators

⁴⁶ English, "Member of Parliament and Foreign Policy," 74.

⁴⁷ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, December 5, 2005.

⁴⁸ English, "Member of Parliament and Foreign Policy," 74.

born outside Canada champion different issues or have different political views than those born inside the country, but anecdotal evidence suggests they sometimes seek to influence the foreign policy issues that interest the expatriate community from which they come.

The successful passage of a 2004 motion recognizing the deaths of more than one million Armenians under the Ottoman Turks in 1915 as an act of genocide illustrates this point. This motion was supported by members from all parties, but former Liberal Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Center, Ontario), whose family is Armenian, was its primary sponsor. Assadourian's own parents had lived under Ottoman rule before immigrating to Canada and he received significant support from the sizeable Armenian community in his Toronto riding.

Domestication

Many have noted how domestication has affected the foreign policy agenda. Tucker, for instance, has written that 'foreign policy has, perhaps irreversibly, traversed the increasingly thin line between the high politics of national security and the low politics of socioeconomic issues impinging more directly on the concerns of the public.'⁴⁹ Likewise, Nossal notes that Canadian governments have always been concerned with issues of 'high politics' concerning war and peace but they are increasingly unable to

⁴⁹ Tucker, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 40.

'escape an abiding concern with the low politics of economics, trade, the environment and social affairs.'⁵⁰

The impact of domestication is recognized within government. Gordon Smith, a former deputy minister of foreign affairs, believes it is essential for senior policymakers to grasp the fact that today "supposedly 'foreign policies' can have enormous effects on supposedly 'domestic policies,' while the opposite is also true."⁵¹ The final report of the 1994 Special Joint Parliamentary Committee reviewing Canadian foreign policy acknowledged this and explained that globalization has blurred the line between foreign and domestic policies by "erasing time and space, making borders porous, and encouraging continental integration."⁵²

The potential impact of domesticated issues on Canadians was recognized in the Chrétien government's 1995 foreign policy statement, *Canada and the World*, which stated:

...international trade rules now directly impact on labour, environmental and other domestic framework policies, previously regarded as the full prerogative of individual states. The implementation of international environmental obligations, for instance, could have major domestic implications for producers and consumers and impact on both federal and provincial governments.⁵³

In comments to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, then Liberal Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre, Manitoba)

⁵⁰ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 6.

⁵¹ Gordon Smith, "Managing Canada's Foreign Affairs," Paper submitted to the Canadian and Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2003, 2.

⁵² Report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, *Canada's Foreign Policy: Principles and Priorities for the Future*, (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1994), 6.

underscored this point. “More and more the developments outside Canada have an impact inside Canada,” he noted, “we’re not dealing with some abstract or distant issue when we talk about foreign affairs. We’re dealing with an international dimension of national issues that have an impact on and touch every Canadian in almost every way everyday.”⁵⁴

Taras was the first to suggest that domestication might affect parliamentary involvement in foreign policy, but the impact of this trend has become more obvious since he made his observations in 1985. Recent trade disputes with the United States show how parliamentarians can face considerable constituency pressures in connection with foreign policy issues. American duties on Canadian softwood products and the closure of the U.S. border to Canadian beef exports following the discovery of “mad cow” disease in Alberta had a devastating impact on each respective industry. In the softwood example, American actions resulted in dozens of mill closures and thousands of layoffs. The rural communities that are home to secondary businesses that support the forestry sector also suffered. A similar impact resulted after forty countries imposed import restrictions on Canadian beef exports, a boycott that cost the Canadian cattle industry more than \$6 billion.⁵⁵

The domestic impact of these issues placed considerable pressure on MPs from affected areas as provincial governments, businesses and displaced workers pressed Ottawa for financial assistance and a speedy resolution to the disputes. In the case of

⁵³ Government of Canada, *Canada and the World*, (Ottawa: Queens Printer, 1995), 4-5.

⁵⁴ Lloyd Axworthy, *Address to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade*, April 16, 1996.

⁵⁵ Boame Attah et al., “Mad cow disease and beef trade: An update,” (Ottawa: Industry Canada, 2004), 5.

“mad cow,” one MP explains that his constituents reacted quickly “once the border closed to Canadian beef and people realized just how small the domestic market is.”⁵⁶

Members of Parliament from all parties listened to the concerns of their constituents and responded by lobbying cabinet ministers, their party leaders, and civil servants.

These are just two examples of the domestic impact that foreign policy can have in a globalized world. In recent months, the potential economic costs of meeting emission targets in the Kyoto Accord have generated much discussion. Opinion polls now indicate that environmental policy is challenging health care as the issue that most concerns Canadians. This rising public interest in the environment is reflected inside Parliament where parties have engaged in considerable debate over how Canada should proceed with addressing climate change. Public concerns about other issues, such as foreign investment, the protection of fish stocks, agricultural subsidies, and the exporting of prescription drugs, have all attained a level of political importance that the executive dominance reserves for domestic issues. These sorts of issues can clearly have an impact the well-being of Canadians and cannot be ignored by those who represent them.

Immigration

Another trend affecting parliamentary involvement in foreign policy is the growing ethnic diversification of the Canadian population. Data from the 2001 census shows that Canada’s ethnic makeup is becoming increasingly diverse. For instance, more than five million Canadians, representing 18% of the total population, were born outside

⁵⁶ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, December 5, 2005.

the country. Nearly two million new immigrants came to Canada between 1991 and 2001 alone.⁵⁷ Canada is also attracting immigrants from a growing number of countries. More than 200 ethnic backgrounds were reported for the 2001 census.

Canada's immigrant communities are interested and involved in a variety of foreign policy issues. They are naturally concerned about Canadian immigration policy, and they frequently ask MPs to for assistance in cases involving family members and other acquaintances. Former Liberal MP Denis Mills (Toronto-Danforth, Ontario) said that three quarters of telephone calls to his constituency office concerned immigration issues.⁵⁸ Ethnic communities are also concerned with issues impacting their former homelands and Canadian policy in the region. "Even with the passage of time," explains one MP, "these groups maintain strong ties to their home countries."⁵⁹ For example, many Jewish and Muslim Canadians pay close attention to developments in the Middle East and Canadian policy towards this region. The fast growing Chinese-Canadian community is concerned with expanding Canada's economic ties with China and human rights issues in their former homeland.

To help realize their goals, organizations representing Canada's immigrant populations, such as the Canadian Jewish Congress and Ukrainian Canadian Congress, spend considerable time lobbying MPs. Parliamentarians from ethnically diverse ridings are often targets of letter writing campaigns, and meet with immigrant organizations in their Ottawa or constituency offices. Groups with sufficient resources make

⁵⁷ Statistics Canada, 'Canada's Ethnocultural Portrait: The Changing Mosaic,' *2001 Census: Analysis Series*, (Ottawa: Industry Canada, 2003), 5.

⁵⁸ English, "Member of Parliament and Foreign Policy," 74.

⁵⁹ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, November 10, 2005.

presentations to parliamentary committees or arrange other events to raise the profile of their interests. For example, Canada's Baltic community hosts an annual "Baltic Evening" on Parliament Hill that attracts members of all parties. The Canadian-Israeli Committee also arranges trips to Israel for MPs to educate about its way of thinking.⁶⁰

Some groups target MPs with functional responsibilities, such as committee chairs and opposition critics.⁶¹ Others focus on those who share their ethnic background. During the 1980s, Conservative Joe Clark (Yellowhead, Alberta) had little contact with the large Ukrainian population in Western Canada despite serving as foreign minister in the Mulroney government. This community instead worked closely with Conservatives Don Mazankowski (Vegreville, Alberta) and Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-West, Saskatchewan) who share their Ukrainian heritage.⁶²

The growing political significance of Canada's ethnic communities makes MPs receptive to meeting with their representatives. As Taras points out, parliamentarians see lobbyists as important links to voters and campaign funds, a point that is especially true of organizations representing immigrant communities. The ability of these groups to "turn out the vote" and provide dedicated campaign workers and other resources enhances their clout. Describing the importance of ethnic voters during his nomination battle, former Liberal MP John English (Kitchener, Ontario) notes "their willingness to come out and vote on a cold December of night was much more pronounced than was the

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon, *The Domestic Mosaic: Domestic Groups and Canadian Foreign Policy*, (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1985), 46.

⁶¹ Roy Norton, "Ethnic Groups and Conservative Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic Departures: The Conservative Era in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1984-93*, Michaud, Nelson ed., (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2001), 250.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 245.

case for other association members.”⁶³ Some organizations endorse candidates and parties that reflect their foreign policy views. During the 2004 election the Canadian Islamic Congress issued “report cards” for all 301 incumbent MPs that, based on voting records and statements in the House of Commons, ranked their support for the organization’s views and objectives.⁶⁴

To help gain the support of ethnic groups in their ridings, MPs are quite willing to carry their foreign policy concerns to ministers and senior bureaucrats. English suggests that pressures from such groups can create “special interest” politicians who spend considerable time representing the views of foreign-born constituents to policymakers.⁶⁵ During the 1980s, Conservative MPs from Western Canada acknowledged support they received from constituents of Eastern European descent by making representations to ministers and department officials about developments in Soviet Union.⁶⁶ Liberal Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga-Erindale, Ontario), who vehemently opposed the war in Iraq and was ultimately removed from the Liberal caucus for repeatedly making anti-American comments, credited Muslim constituents with helping her secure the Liberal nomination in her riding before the 2004 election.⁶⁷

⁶³ English, “Member of Parliament and Foreign Policy,” 74.

⁶⁴ Shannon Proudfoot, “Muslim report fails to credit MP for helping Arar,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 12, 2004.

⁶⁵ English, “Member of Parliament and Foreign Policy,” 74.

⁶⁶ Norton, “Ethnic Groups and Conservative Foreign Policy,” 246.

⁶⁷ Jeff Heinrich, “Many make sure their Islamic values are reflected,” *The Montreal Gazette*, June 23, 2004.

Partisanship

Earlier it was noted that observers have argued that the absence of partisanship in the foreign policy process limits parliamentary involvement in external issues. This view continues to resonate with some current MPs. One legislator explains that divisions between the parties focus on “approach” or “tactics,” not “goals or values.”⁶⁸ A former cabinet minister summarizes the situation saying that “Joe Clark would have been a perfectly acceptable Liberal foreign minister.”⁶⁹

However, few issues are immune from the affects of domestic politics. The highly partisan nature of Canadian politics means parties seldom pass up an opportunity to criticize or embarrass each other over any matter, even in cases where they fundamentally agree. This is particularly evident in the House of Commons and, to lesser degree, committees where proceedings are structured around the adversarial relationship between the government and opposition. As David Smith puts it, “partisanship pervades the House and infects every aspect of its activities.”⁷⁰

After a period in which the government deliberately and carefully pursued a non-partisan approach to foreign policy, partisanship re-emerged as a central part of the policy process during the late 1950s. The unravelling of the post-war consensus started during debate over how Canada should respond to the Suez Crisis in 1956. The government and opposition proposed fundamentally different ways of addressing this issue. Conservatives criticized the Liberal government for allegedly abandoning Canada’s

⁶⁸ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, November 3, 2005.

⁶⁹ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, November 10, 2005.

British heritage and pandering to American interests after Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent refused to support the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt. Conservative leader John Diefenbaker (Prince Alberta, Saskatchewan) maintained this attack during the 1957 election campaign to attract pro-British voters.⁷¹

The defeat of the minority Conservative government led by Diefenbaker in 1963 made partisanship as a legitimate part of the foreign policy process. The government's slow response to the Cuban missile crisis and its failure to obtain the nuclear weapons needed for Canadian defenses to operate at maximum effectiveness was widely criticized in Parliament and the media. These attacks appeared to resonate with Canadians as opinion polls suggested that public opinion was turning against the government.⁷²

Uncertain answers to opposition questions in Parliament and the eventual resignation of Conservative Defence Minister Douglas Harkness (Calgary-North, Alberta), demonstrated the government was in disarray. Sensing that voters were ready to elect a new government, the opposition Liberals introduced a non-confidence motion in the House of Commons. This motion passed with support from the New Democratic and Social Credit Parties, and triggered an election that the Liberals eventually won. While Lester Pearson told voters that his party was duty bound to remove a

⁷⁰ David E. Smith, "Clarifying the Doctrine of Ministerial Responsibility as it Applies to the Government and Parliament of Canada," Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities, 2006, 104.

⁷¹ David Dewitt and John Kirton, *Canada as a Principal Power*, (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1983), 173.

⁷² Jocelyn Ghent-Hart, "Deploying Nuclear Weapons, 1962-63," *Canadian Foreign Policy: Selected Cases*, eds. Don Munton and John Kirton, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1992), 102.

“disintegrating and discredited administration,” he later admitted that political opportunism played into his decision to defeat the government.⁷³

More recently, domestication, changing demographics, and other developments have elevated the political significance of foreign policy issues and provide parties with more reasons to use them for political gain. Oftentimes, parties will deliberately emphasize their different approaches to foreign policy for electoral reasons. According to one MP, foreign policy contains a number of “wedge issues” that parties use to distinguish themselves from rivals and attract voters.⁷⁴ This is most often seen in the area of Canada-U.S. relations and was the case in issues such as the 1988 Free Trade Agreement, the Iraq War and missile defence.

Canadian participation in the NATO mission in Afghanistan has been the subject of considerable political wrangling between parties. The opposition has tried to persuade voters that Conservative support for the mission demonstrates the government follows the same approach to foreign affairs as the unpopular Bush administration.⁷⁵ At the same time, the government has used Canadian involvement in Afghanistan to create political difficulties for the opposition. During the 2006 Liberal leadership race, the Conservatives introduced a motion asking the House of Commons to support extending Canadian involvement in Afghanistan. It was speculated that the timing of this motion

⁷³ Shortly after their narrow loss in the 1962 election, the Liberals had decided to defeat the government at the earliest opportunity. The government’s mishandling of the nuclear weapons issue gave Pearson a rationale that he could be use to justify his actions to voters. See Pearson, *Memoirs*, 65-7.

⁷⁴ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, December 5, 2005.

⁷⁵ For example, Bruce Campion –Smith, “Layton Sets Sights on Tories,” *Toronto Star*, September 11, 2006.

was intended to create problems for Liberal leadership candidates by exposing divisions over the Afghanistan mission within their party.

Opportunities

Personal interest, public opinion and political calculations can create significant parliamentary interest and involvement in foreign policy issues. In response to these incentives, parliamentarians have a range of opportunities potentially to influence and contribute to the policy process. Votes, debates, question period, and committee work represent the most visible means that MPs have to participate in policy debate. The formal proceedings in Parliament focus more on political parties than the work of individual MPs, but they can be used by the opposition to influence foreign policy discussions. In addition to these activities, opportunities exist for individual or groups of like-minded MPs to influence or contribute to the policymaking process in less formal ways. Through caucus meetings, parliamentary associations, working with interest groups and traveling overseas, parliamentarians can sometimes influence or contribute to the policy process.

Formal Opportunities

Votes

Looking first at the formal side of the legislative process, votes in the House of Commons are the most obvious means by which Parliament could determine or set Canadian foreign policy, but for reasons already discussed, parliamentarians are seldom asked to vote on foreign policy issues. The unwillingness of governments to hold more

votes on international issues has long frustrated the opposition. Tensions over this aspect of the policy process increased after the Liberals introduced “take note” debates to parliamentary procedure in 1994. These debates do not conclude with a vote and became the Chrétien government’s primary means of discussing foreign policy in the House of Commons. Seven of the nine take note debates that have occurred since 1994 focused on issues concerning foreign and defence policies.⁷⁶

Opposition frustration with the lack of votes in the House of Commons was displayed during a take note debate on the issue of Iraq. During the debate, Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Quebec) argued that “not voting on a matter as serious as war constitutes a serious democratic deficit.”⁷⁷ Former Prime Minister Joe Clark similarly added that a debate without a vote would simply confirm the House as a place that “only talks” and has no authority to act.⁷⁸ Some Liberals also expressed a desire to vote on this issue. Carolyn Parrish urged the government to “trust 301 members in the House to be able to stand in their place on behalf of their constituents.”⁷⁹

Nonetheless, except during periods of minority government, votes that do take place seldom have a direct impact on policy. Strict party discipline means that governments rarely risk losing votes in the House of Commons, especially those deemed matters of confidence. The result according to Paul Thomas is that votes from

⁷⁶ Take note debates have been held on: peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia (1994), terrorism (2001), the Canadian coast guard (2002), Iraq (2003), ballistic missile defence (2004), mad cow disease (2004), and the deployment of Canadian troops to Afghanistan (2005). Health care and Hepatitis C are the only domestic issues to be debated through take note debates.

⁷⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, January 29, 2003, 2884.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2888.

“backbench MPs are a relatively weak resource during times of majority government.”⁸⁰

As discussed earlier, being assured of parliamentary support means that majority governments sometimes use votes to legitimize their own policies or decisions. For example, Prime Minister King had Parliament approve Canada’s entry in World War II in 1939, and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien used a vote in Parliament to build legitimacy for the Kyoto Protocol. In both cases, the outcome of the vote was never in doubt and the government could claim that Parliament endorsed its policies.

Motions that are passed by the House of Commons are seldom binding on the government. In 2004, the Chrétien government refused to recognize the parliamentary motion acknowledging that the Ottoman Empire committed genocide against Armenian during World War I. A statement issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs after the motion passed bluntly stated that “Debates and votes on private member's business in the House of Commons are an integral part of the Canadian democratic process, but private member's motions are not binding on the Government of Canada.”⁸¹ Liberal Foreign Minister Bill Graham (Toronto-Centre, Ontario) was more diplomatic but made the same point. “The government certainly understands the will of the House,” said Graham, “but the government’s position remains that, in respect of Turkey and Armenia, we are working with them for reconciliation.”⁸²

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2920.

⁸⁰ Paul Thomas, “Parliamentary Reform Through Political Parties,” *The Canadian House of Commons: Essays in Honour of Norman Ward*, ed. John C. Courtney, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1985), 48.

⁸¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, “Canada Reiterates its Firm Position on the Armenian Tragedy,” *Press Release*, April 21, 2004.

Question Period and Debates

Despite the rarity of votes, other formal opportunities exist for MPs to express their views on international issues. Inside the House, question period and debates provide opportunities for opposition parties to criticize the government's performance and policies. These opportunities are particularly important for the opposition which, in Dawson's words, uses Parliament to wage a "perpetual war on the government." Hockin agrees that "the Opposition has always seen the House of Commons as its most potent forum for exposing, embarrassing and puncturing Governments."⁸³

Some believe this criticism has little impact because it seldom changes government policies. Farrell concludes that this is so because "one can point to very few debates in the House of Commons where the government changed its position on an issue of foreign policy apparently as a result of opinions expressed publicly by members of Parliament."⁸⁴ Dewitt and Kirton similarly find few cases where "opposition parties influence foreign policy decision making enough to induce changes."⁸⁵ These statements establish a rigorous standard by suggesting that parliamentary influence is only registered when the opposition parties actually convince the government to change its policies.

In reality, however, the opposition recognizes that the government, for fear of looking weak and indecisive, seldom abandons major policies because the opposition makes persuasive arguments. Moreover, opposition parties have little interest in

⁸² Graham Fraser, "Armenia genocide did happen: MPs," *Toronto Star*, April 22, 2004.

⁸³ Thomas Hockin, "The Prime Minister and Political Leadership: An Introduction to some Restraints and Imperatives," Thomas Hockin ed., *Apex of Power: The Prime Minister and Political Leadership in Canada*, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 7.

⁸⁴ Farrell, *Making of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 149.

⁸⁵ Dewitt and Kirton, *Canada as a Principal Power*, 177.

“refining” government policies as Byers suggests because their goal is to establish themselves as credible alternatives, not contributors, to government policy. Improving the quality of government policies by offering constructive advice would obviously do little to help the opposition achieve this goal.

Only when parliamentary criticism is placed in a wider context and connected to the domestic environment does its potential impact on government policies become obvious. The public is the primary audience for activities in the House of Commons as it is the body that ultimately makes and defeats governments. As elected politicians, the prime minister and cabinet ministers are naturally sensitive to being publicly criticized and embarrassed in House of Commons. According to one former deputy minister, “the government is like any other organization: what entity likes to admit its mistakes, particularly if they’re going to be on the front page of the paper tomorrow morning?”⁸⁶

The ability to publicly criticize the government in the House provides opposition parties with opportunities to influence the policy process. Even if this criticism seldom changes government policies, its possible political impact keeps Parliament relevant to the policy process. As Franks puts it, the “important influence of Parliament is not its direct effect on legislation and policy. Rather, its influence is indirect. Parliament normally wields power through the threat of bad publicity.”⁸⁷

Of course, the threat of negative publicity only exists if activities in Parliament are relayed to voters. Since few people see parliamentary proceedings first-hand, Canadians rely on the media for information about events in the House of Commons.

⁸⁶ Paul Kemp, *Does Your Vote Count*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2003), 111.

Hockin alluded to this linkage when stating that “Abject failure in Parliament has a way of being transmitted to the public at large.”⁸⁸ Franks elaborates when stating that “Parliament is a place of words, and politics is a war of words. These words only have meaning when communicated to the world outside. The essential links in these connections are the media.”⁸⁹

The importance of the media in this process is clearly demonstrated by the differing significance of question period and debate. Question period provides opposition parties with an effective platform to criticize the government under an intensive media spotlight. The spontaneous and highly partisan exchanges between members of the government and opposition that characterize question period provide for good political theatre that naturally attracts the attention of reporters. Savoie believes that Parliament has been marginalized in many respects but acknowledges that television clips of question period can be “politically explosive.”⁹⁰

Opposition parties select the topics raised in question period, which allows them to focus attention on issues they see as politically advantageous. Often times, the opposition uses question period to perpetuate interest in media stories that are embarrassing to the government. As one observer puts it, the opposition bases its questions on issues already running in the press because “at least some reporters will be interested in the question [the opposition member] is asking as well as the answers, and

⁸⁷ CES Franks, *The Parliament of Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 221.

⁸⁸ Hockin, “The Prime Minister and Political Leadership,” 10.

⁸⁹ Franks, *Parliament of Canada*, 157.

⁹⁰ Savoie, *Breaking the Bargain*, 229.

they'll write another article the next day.”⁹¹ Parties also use question period to try and generate media interest in issues that are not already being reported. In this way, question period draws “the acts of government out into full publicity and threatens at all times to submit the most obscure happenings to a sudden and unexpected scrutiny.”⁹²

Of course not all issues raised by the opposition find a place in public discourse, and those not picked up by the media are forgotten as the opposition moves onto other matters. Still, question period allows Parliament to focus public attention on various topics and create political issues requiring attention from policymakers. Longtime NDP MP Bill Blaikie (Elmwood Transcona, Manitoba) notes that “sustained days or weeks of questioning on an issue can prompt the government to consider an issue it hasn't addressed or re-consider an existing policy.”⁹³

As one example, question period helped turn the voyage of the American supertanker *Manhattan* through the Northwest Passage, which Canada claimed as its sovereign territory, into an urgent political issue that could not be ignored by the Trudeau government. This matter did not enter the public dialogue until February 1969 when it was first reported by the *Globe and Mail*. On the same day that this story appeared, the Conservatives raised the matter during question period and asked the government to explain how Canada would respond to the vessel's passage through Canadian waters.

⁹¹ Kemp, *Does Your Vote Count*, 119.

⁹² Norman Ward, *Dawson's The Government of Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 439.

⁹³ Bill Blaikie, Personal Interview, December 10, 2005.

According to Trudeau and Ivan Head, “it was from these humble beginnings, fuelled by intense media interest and speculation that the national outcry began.”⁹⁴

Prolonged questioning in the House can sometimes convince the government to reconsider a policy. Some believe this was the case concerning Prime Minister Joe Clark’s pledge to move the Canadian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This proposal was roundly criticized by interest groups and the media, and even department officials. Warner Troyer suggests that having to defend the embassy move in an upcoming session of Parliament also weighed heavily on the new prime minister and his advisors. They recognized that the issue had to be dealt with before Parliament assembled as “there was question period to be considered, and that ubiquitous electronic eye, capable of carrying the government’s daily discomfiture into homes across the land.”⁹⁵ George Takach believes these fears were realized when the legislative session began. After interviewing those involved in the issue, he concludes that “the incessant pummelling from opposition members in the House of Commons was difficult [for the government] to withstand. Clark, as a Commons man, took the debate seriously.”⁹⁶ In the end, parliamentary criticism helped persuade the prime minister to abandon the embassy move.

Unlike question period, few reporters cover debates in the House of Commons. Former Conservative MP Patrick Boyer (Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Ontario) concludes that

⁹⁴ Ivan Head and Pierre Trudeau, *The Canadian Way: Shaping Canada’s Foreign Policy, 1968-84*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995) 29.

⁹⁵ Warner Troyer. *200 Days: Joe Clark in Power*, (Toronto: Personal Library, 1980), 64-5.

⁹⁶ George Takach, “Clark and the Jerusalem Embassy Affair,” *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab Israeli Conflict*, eds. David Taras and David H. Goldberg, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989), 162.

speeches “given by rank-and-file members of Parliament are not getting on the national news.”⁹⁷ This lack of media presence makes debates less effective than question period in drawing public attention to government shortcomings. Routine debate similarly provides few opportunities for the government to explain the benefits of its policies to voters. For these reasons, the emptiness of the public and media galleries during debates is usually reflected by the attendance of parliamentarians themselves.

Of course, there are exceptions and debates occasionally find their way into the news cycle. This was the case when the House debated issues such as the 1988 Free Trade Agreement with the US, Canadian involvement in 1991 Gulf War, and the recent U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. However, these examples are exceptions rather than the rule. Even when the media shows interest, the government can usually “ride out” any criticisms the opposition might make because debates are onetime events that rarely generate the kind of sustained media and public attention needed to influence government policies.

Committees

Parliamentary committees are another institutional means that MPs have to participate in the policy process. To be sure, there are limitations on the extent of committee involvement in foreign policy. In addition to the concerns expressed by the executive dominance model, foreign policy committees face the same challenges as those that focus more on domestic issues. In the first place, committees are established by the

⁹⁷ Kemp, *Does Your Vote Count*, 108.

House of Commons and therefore they cannot have any powers or abilities that the House itself does not have. This means they have no decision-making powers and governments are not obligated to accept their advice and recommendations. This lack of authority is a point of frustration for many MPs, especially those in opposition who lack the informal access to policymakers that is enjoyed by government backbenchers.⁹⁸

There are also legitimate concerns about committee independence. Having parliamentary secretaries sit on committees that oversee the departments they themselves represent is naturally seen as a conflict of interest. Members from both sides of the House claim that parliamentary secretaries work to protect government interests and limit the committee's ability to scrutinize the government policies and decisions.⁹⁹ Others believe the control that party whips have over committee assignments simply provides another means of reinforcing party discipline. Governments have shown little reluctance to revoke the committee memberships of their own MPs if they become too assertive and independent, a practice that hinders the ability of committees to effectively assess government policies.

In spite of these concerns, parliamentary committees still provide MPs with opportunities to contribute to the policy process. Their influence is partially determined by idiosyncratic variables, such a committee's relationship with the minister and the willingness of the government to consider the recommendations offered in its reports. Some ministers look to committees for advice on particular issues while others are less

⁹⁸ Kemp, *Does Your Vote Count*, 155.

⁹⁹ Having served as the Parliamentary Secretary of Foreign Affairs, McWhinney is "not sure that it is a good plan constitutionally to have a minister, or his representative on behalf of the government, sitting on the same committee that is supposed to scrutinize his or her ministry." Kemp, *Does Your Vote Count*, 163.

receptive and base their decisions on alternate sources of information.¹⁰⁰ Others note that committees are more influential when they operate in a non-partisan fashion and have membership willing to devote time and effort to conducting the extensive public consultations needed to produce substantive reports that might resonate with policymakers.¹⁰¹

Committee influence seldom comes through involvement in the legislative process. The few bills that do require parliamentary approval are often routed through other committees. As Peter Dobell points out, legislation with international implications affecting multiple government departments is usually sent to the committee having the greatest financial stake in the bill, which is seldom the foreign affairs committee.¹⁰² The *Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act*, for example, was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development instead of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND).

Committee members have greater opportunities to contribute to the policy process by producing detailed studies of specific foreign policy issues. The impact of these studies may be more subtle than overt but they remain an important part of Parliament's role in the policy process even if, as one MP puts it, "nobody waits trembling for their reports to come down."¹⁰³ Even when committee recommendations are rejected by

¹⁰⁰ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, December 7, 2005.

¹⁰¹ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, November 10, 2005; W.B. Dobell, "Parliament's Foreign Policy Committees," David Taras ed., *Parliament and Foreign Policy*, (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs), 24.

¹⁰² W.B. Dobell, "Parliament's Foreign Policy Committees," 21.

¹⁰³ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, November 3, 2005.

governments, former Liberal Foreign Minister Allan MacEachen (Cape Breton Highland, Nova Scotia) suggests it is “not been for lack of serious and detailed attention.”¹⁰⁴

Some believe these studies provide committee members with opportunities to raise awareness of certain issues amongst policymakers and the public through offering well researched and considered policy advice. As one MP puts it, the foreign affairs committee is most influential when it is “forward-thinking” and concentrates on issues that have received little attention. Another adds that ‘much of a committee’s effectiveness comes through its ability to raise the profile of specific issues that “might get lost in the shuffle.”¹⁰⁵

This was demonstrated through early work that the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee conducted on the issue of free trade. Beginning in the 1970s, the committee spent considerable time exploring the possibility of bilateral free trade with the United States. The committee recommended that the government seek the most comprehensive free trade deal possible to strengthen the competitiveness of Canadian industry and maintain access to the American market. This endorsement stimulated discussion of a politically unpopular issue and lent legitimacy to like-minded proposals from business interest groups. Stakeholder presentations to the committee provided encouragement to the government by showing that industry and the business community were warming to the possibility of free trade. Dobell suggests the committee’s recommendations were one

¹⁰⁴ Allan MacEachren, “Parliament and Foreign Affairs,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 17:2 (Summer 1984), 9.

¹⁰⁵ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, November 10, 2005.

reason why Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau initiated sectoral free trade negotiations with the U.S. in the early 1980s.¹⁰⁶

The public consultations that committees conduct can contribute to their influence. In the process of preparing reports, committees often meet with individuals and groups who possess detailed knowledge of certain issues or might be impacted by government policies. For example, committee members often hear from and question ministers and other government officials, representatives from business and non-governmental organizations, and academics. In some cases, committees travel abroad to meet with officials from foreign governments or collect firsthand information about certain issues. Hearing from groups with interest and expertise in particular issues and areas also provides committees with important evidence to support their advice and recommendations to the government. As Dobell suggests, “reports are tabled with unanimous approval of all parties, the government will be facing a small body of informed opinion, usually supported by interest groups, which it might find difficult to ignore.”¹⁰⁷

These consultations also provide opportunities for industry, ethnic and non-profit organizations to make formal submissions and have their views and opinions recorded in the public record. They can also allow individuals and organizations to boost the profile of their agendas and concerns. Some believe this was the case when the foreign affairs committee investigated Canadian policy towards Latin American and the Caribbean in 1982. Page believes the committee became an effective forum for interest groups to

¹⁰⁶ W.M. Dobell, “Parliament’s Foreign Policy Committees,” 32.

promote their agenda, because the hearings were widely reported by the media. In the end, he concludes that the committee's primary contribution was the role it played in "developing a greater public awareness of the issues and a better informed constituency."¹⁰⁸

Listening to the different perspectives offered by these groups, along with the foreign travel conducted by foreign affairs committees help create a group of MPs with some foreign policy expertise. Yet, this information does not simply create a more informed group of MPs. It sometimes becomes a catalyst for parliamentarians to influence policymakers in other forums.

Thordarson suggests that Liberal MPs used information acquired during committee hearings to "forcefully and effectively" lobby to maintain Canadian participation in NATO during Trudeau government's review of Canadian foreign policy in 1969-70. In this case, SCEAND members consulted thoroughly with a variety of individuals and organizations in Canada and abroad. This experience "produced a group of MPs who were much better informed than the majority of members of Cabinet."¹⁰⁹ Using this knowledge, Liberal MPs expressing their opinions might have influenced the decision-making process more than actual committee report and played a role in

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Don Page, "The Standing Committee on External Affairs 1945-1983 – Who participates when?" *Parliament and Foreign Policy*, ed. David Taras, (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1985), 58.

¹⁰⁹ Bruce Thordarson, *Trudeau and Foreign Policy: A study in decision-making*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972), 151.

convincing the government to continue participation in NATO, albeit with a limited European presence.¹¹⁰

Committee consultations can also provide political benefits for parties. Government and opposition MPs recognize the importance of committees in gauging public reaction to particular issues. For the government, committee consultations can help identify potential political problems arising from its policies and decisions. Grievances about government policies expressed by witnesses representing important blocs of voters can be politically useful for the opposition.¹¹¹

Informal Opportunities

A comprehensive assessment of Parliament's role in Canadian foreign policy requires an examination of the informal and less visible opportunities MPs have to influence or contribute to Canadian foreign policy. As one MP explained, "opportunities don't have to be institutionalized to exist."¹¹² All parliamentarians attend weekly caucus meetings, hold private discussions with Ministers or interest groups, and have opportunities to travel. Trying to document these kinds of "behind-the-scenes" activities is a methodological challenge faced by all students of Parliament. Atkinson and Jackson agree that "the most interesting stages of the legislative process often take place in private

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹¹¹ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, December 7, 2005.

¹¹² Confidential Source, Personal Interview, November 3, 2005.

and are not easy to investigate systematically.”¹¹³ They believe that this challenge prevents outside observers from developing a greater appreciation for Parliament.

To present a more comprehensive assessment of parliamentary involvement in foreign policy issues, this framework attempts to go beyond “the tip and most visible part of the parliamentary process,” to consider the informal opportunities that parliamentarians have influence or contribute to policy outside the public eye.¹¹⁴ In particular, the potential importance of opinion within the government caucus, inter-parliamentary associations and the work of individual or likeminded groups MPs are worthy of examination. As these activities do not attract the same degree of media attention as question period and other activities in the House of Commons, they assume less importance in the political battle waged between parties. Instead, this work can provide MPs with opportunities to work together in less partisan ways to address issues of mutual concern.

Government Caucus

Weekly caucus meetings provide MPs with opportunities to engage in frank debates away from media and public scrutiny. However, the confidential nature of these deliberations means that their importance is often underestimated. Institutional norms, like party discipline and caucus solidarity, and the media’s delight in exploiting intra-party divisions usually means that caucus discussions remain confidential. In addition,

¹¹³ Robert J. Jackson and Michael M. Atkinson, *The Canadian Legislative System*, (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1980), 42.

¹¹⁴ Alan Kornberg and William Mishler, *Influence in Parliament*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1976), 304.

caucus divisions are seldom registered through vote switching in the House of Commons. There have been occasions, like the conscription crises during both World Wars and the collapse of the Diefenbaker government in 1963, when differences over foreign policy resulted in ministerial resignations, but such cases are rare.

In spite of parliamentary norms, caucus meetings often produce significant debates. As Paul Thomas puts it, “the popular image of ordinary MPs as a servile group who regularly yield to wishes of their leaders is a misleading one because it ignores the substantial measure of private, intraparty discussion and dissent that exists.”¹¹⁵ Of course, divisions within the government caucus obviously have the greatest potential to affect government decisions and policies. Unlike their opposition counterparts, who typically see caucus as an opportunity to develop political and parliamentary strategies to attack the government, government members can use caucus meetings to privately lobby and question cabinet ministers directly about issues raised by their constituents.

Based on his experience as the senior policy advisor to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Eddie Goldenberg concludes that:

The role of caucus in government decision-making is often underestimated by outsiders who focus on the highly visible party discipline in the House of Commons. Because caucus does not meet in public, and is therefore not visible, its role in the process is not often given the significance it deserves...it is in the government caucus...that MPs speak their minds to ministers and the prime minister.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Thomas, “Parliamentary Reform Through Political Parties,” 44.

¹¹⁶ Eddie Goldenberg, “Making Difficult Decisions,” *The National Post*, September 25, 2006. Similar comments are also made by Bruce Thordarson in “Posture and Policy: leadership in Canada’s external affairs,” *International Journal* 31 (Autumn 1976), 686-7.

He goes on to say that Chrétien, who was often criticized for running a highly centralized government, never forgot his experience as a backbencher and seldom missed weekly caucus meetings “where he measured the mood of his MPs, and was often influenced by it.”¹¹⁷

The government caucus has played a significant role in a number of foreign policy issues. For example, in 1975, the constituency offices of Liberal MPs from Toronto were flooded with representations from the public and Jewish interest groups opposing the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s potential participation in the United Nations (U.N.) crime conference scheduled for that city. These MPs used caucus to voice their concerns, and helped convince Prime Minister Trudeau that it would be wise to cancel the conference to avoid hurting the fortunes of provincial Liberals in the upcoming Ontario election.¹¹⁸

Goldenberg concludes that the views of caucus were a “significant factor” in the government’s decision to stay out of the Iraq War.¹¹⁹ Donald Barry states that MPs, particularly those from urban ridings, reported an “unusually high level” of interest in the issue amongst their constituents, many of whom were opposed to supporting the invasion without the support of the U.N. Security Council.¹²⁰ Statements from Liberal MPs reflected these sentiments and some publicly questioned whether their government could

¹¹⁷ Goldenberg, “Making Difficult Decisions,” September 25, 2006.

¹¹⁸ Thordarson, “Policy and posture,” 687.

¹¹⁹ Eddie Goldenberg, “Making Difficult Decisions,” September 25, 2006

¹²⁰ See Donald Barry, “Chrétien, Bush, and the War in Iraq,” *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, 35: 2 (Summer 2005).

muster enough parliamentary support for military action.¹²¹ Opinion within caucus reinforced the government's scepticism of the American case for war and helped persuade him to decide against Canadian participation.

Parliamentary Associations

Members of Parliament have other informal opportunities to get involved in issues that concern their constituents. "Parliamentary diplomacy," can provide Canadian MPs with opportunities to discuss important issues with legislators from other countries. Inter-parliamentary associations, bilateral parliamentary associations and friendship groups, all provide for these sorts of exchanges. Involvement in inter-parliamentary activities began as far back as 1900, when Canada joined the Inter-Parliamentary Union, but this participation accelerated when the NATO Parliamentarians and the Canada-United States Inter-parliamentary groups were established in 1955 and 1959 respectively. Today, Canadian MPs participate in five bilateral parliamentary associations, six inter-parliamentary associations and twenty-nine parliamentary friendship groups.¹²²

Meetings of these groups are often criticized as taxpayer funded junkets, but they provide legislators with important opportunities to develop their knowledge of international issues, gain firsthand experience, and, in some cases, make important, if not newsworthy, contributions to the policy process. For example, former Liberal Charles Caccia (Davenport, Ontario) was noted for his leadership in the Canada-Europe

¹²¹ Chantal Hébert, "MPs show little support for U.S. plan," *Toronto Star*, October 4, 2002; Jeff Sallot, "Chrétien faces caucus revolt over Iraq crisis," *Globe and Mail*, February 11, 2003; Sheldon Alberts, "Anti-war Liberals vow to oppose PM," *National Post*, March 15, 2003.

Parliamentary Group. The extensive ties he developed as chair of this group provided valuable assistance to the government during the 'Turbot War' between Canada and Spain in 1995.¹²³

The bilateral Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group has proven to be an effective forum for working on trade disputes between the two countries. Peter Dobell credits the Group with reviving faltering negotiations over the West Coast Salmon Treaty in the early 1980s. In this case, Canadian MPs used the contacts they developed through the membership in the group to arrange private meetings with US Congressmen and Senators from Alaska and Washington State. As a result of these discussions, the countries agreed to resume negotiations, which eventually led to the signing of a five year agreement.¹²⁴

Individual MPs

The literature ascribes little significance to the work of individual MPs. However, parliamentarians can make important contributions to the policy process in certain cases. For example, former Liberal David Pratt (Nepean-Carleton, Ontario) was known for his involvement issues affecting Sierra Leone. Pratt had traveled to the country through a municipal exchange project as an Ottawa city councillor and developed rapport within the Sierra Leone community in Canada. When civil war broke out in their homeland, members of this community approached Pratt for help. The MP personally briefed

¹²² For a complete listing see Peter Dobell, "Parliamentary Diplomacy: A Career Path for Some Members of Parliament?," *Parliamentary Government* (Ottawa: Parliamentary Centre, 2003), 17-18.

¹²³ English, "Member of Parliament and Foreign Policy," 74.

¹²⁴ Dobell, "Parliamentary Diplomacy," 9-10.

Foreign Minister Axworthy on the situation, and was eventually designated as Axworthy's special envoy to the country. In this capacity, Pratt prepared two reports on the conflict for the government's consideration and was invited to share his insights with SCFAIT.

The case of William Sampson provides another example of the contributions that individual MPs can make in specific cases. In February 2001, Sampson, a Canadian citizen, was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia and sentenced to death for allegedly carrying out a car bombing which killed Christopher Rodway, a British citizen. While in custody, Sampson was repeatedly tortured by Saudi prison guards. This issue was eventually brought to the attention of Liberal MP Dan McTeague (Pickering-Scarborough East, Ontario) by Muslim constituents who had organized a petition calling on the government to demand Sampson's release.¹²⁵ After speaking with the Saudi Ambassador, McTeague learned that Sampson could be released if Rodway's son wrote a letter to Saudi officials requesting clemency.¹²⁶ McTeague flew to London at his own expense and obtained a clemency letter from Rodway's son, and subsequently submitted to Saudi officials. On August 7, 2003, three months after receiving the clemency letter, Mr. Sampson and six other westerners accused of being his co-conspirators were released.

Conclusion: An Alternative Framework

Overall, the framework of incentives and opportunities places Parliament in a wider influence process that accounts for its connections to the public. In doing so, it

¹²⁵ Francine Dube, "Letter from victim's son clears Sampson of blame," *National Post*, May 17, 2003.

explains why and how parliamentarians seek to influence and contribute Canadian foreign policy. The personal interests of MPs, public opinion and partisanship are incentives that generate parliamentary interest in foreign policy. In response, there are a variety of ways through which Parliament and individual or groups of like-minded MPs can participate in and potentially influence the policymaking process. These opportunities range from the formal proceedings in the House to the informal work of parliamentarians.

The influence and contributions that result from the process described through the concepts of incentives and opportunities can impact the policy process in many ways. Question period can play a key role in shaping the political agenda or persuading the government to revisit a particular policy or decision. Committees can draw attention to the trends and longer-term policy options that get obscured by more pressing political issues. Away from the partisanship that characterizes activities in the House of Commons, Members of Parliament from different parties sometimes work together to make more positive contributions to the policy process. Membership in inter-parliamentary associations can provide MPs with opportunities to help resolve difficult issues, and the firsthand observations and insights that parliamentarians gain through travel abroad will sometimes inform the decisions of policymakers.

¹²⁶ Graham Fraser, "When in trouble far from home," *Toronto Star*, April 17, 2003.

CHAPTER THREE: CASE STUDIES

As a next step, this chapter uses the framework of incentives and opportunities to explore case studies that illustrate parliamentary influence. The emergence of Biafra as a major political issue for the Trudeau government in 1968-9 and the broadening of federal regulation of foreign investment in Canada during the 1970s focus on the formal opportunities that Members of Parliament have to participate in the policy process. Canada's refusal to join the U.S. missile defence project and the work parliamentarians did to raise concerns about the legitimacy of the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections highlight the informal opportunities that parliamentarians have to influence or contribute to the policy process.

These issues illustrate the nature of parliamentary influence and how the process that actually produces this influence ties Parliament to the domestic environment. The foreign investment and missile defence examples are also interesting because they evolved under majority and minority governments and highlight how Parliament can exert greater influence during minorities. Taken together, the case studies provide an examination of parliamentary involvement in foreign policy over a forty-year period. Along with the examples cited in Chapter Two, they establish a pattern that suggests that Parliament can help influence Canada's response to complex and controversial international issues even without a decision-making role.

Parliament as Agenda-Setter: The Case of Biafra

Introduction

During the summer and fall of 1968, Canadian policy towards the Nigerian Civil War unexpectedly became a major political issue for the new Liberal government of Prime Minister Trudeau. The plight of the civilian population in the breakaway state of Biafra captured the attention of interest groups and the media in Canada. However, concerns about the humanitarian impact of the conflict did not secure a place on the government agenda until it became a central issue in Parliament.

The case of Biafra provides a clear example of parliamentary agenda-setting and how the process that produces this impact connects Parliament to the domestic environment. Overtures from interest groups and developing media interest in the issue provided the opposition with incentives to focus on Biafra in Parliament. Opposition parties used question period and committee hearings to criticize the government for not committing Canada to a greater role in resolving the conflict and mitigating its impact on civilians. Touring Biafra with a media contingent and reporting on the impact that the conflict was having on civilians also gave opposition MPs opportunities to heighten public awareness about the issue in Canada and to criticize the government for not making greater contributions to international relief efforts.

Believing that parliamentary and extra-parliamentary criticism reflected public opinion, the government gradually increased Canadian involvement in humanitarian relief. Only after recognizing that this criticism did not appear to reflect what the public was actually thinking did the government become less responsive to its critics.

Interest Groups, the Media and Biafra

In July 1967, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu proclaimed the state of Biafra in the oil rich eastern region of Nigeria. The ensuing civil war pitted the well-armed Nigerian army against the outmanned and out-gunned Biafra militia. After a year of fighting, Nigerian forces had essentially blockaded Biafran territory, a strategy that led to widespread starvation amongst the civilian population.

In Canada, the initial reaction to these developments involved interest groups who were concerned about the impact that the conflict was having on civilians. These groups included established organizations, like the Canadian International Red Cross and the Presbyterian Church, as well as groups that arose in direct response to this issue, such as Canadian Committee for the Rights of Biafra (CURB). The former needed to preserve relationships with government officials to pursue interests in other areas. They therefore lobbied policymakers behind closed doors instead of criticizing them in public. Groups founded solely to influence Canadian policy towards Biafra were less concerned about maintaining long-term access to the policy process, which gave them latitude to campaign in public after early private lobbying failed to produce results.

At this early stage, interest groups tried persuading department officials to increase Canadian involvement in relief campaigns or initiate efforts to secure a ceasefire through the United Nations. They also established relationships with a core group of

opposition MPs, the value of which would become more obvious as this issue developed. But as Donald Barry points out, these efforts failed to produce the desired results.¹²⁷

Circumstances changed in the summer of 1968 when the media began reporting on how the conflict was affecting civilians and pictures of starving Biafran children appeared on television and in newspapers. This coverage was fuelled by interest groups who decided to press their case in public to generate greater political support for their cause. The government was clearly surprised by this development. When asked about the issue by reporters in July, the prime minister responded "Where's Biafra?" Trudeau had previously visited eastern Nigeria and knew where the region was but his response reflected his sensitivity to the issue of separation. The prime minister wanted to avoid giving the appearance that Canada was, in any way, recognizing the existence of a territory that was trying to separate from a federal state by military means.¹²⁸ The prime minister's response to reporters put the government on the defensive by making it seem insensitive to the needs of starving Biafrans.¹²⁹

In response to pressure from interest groups and critical media, the government became more responsive. In July, Secretary of State for External Affairs Mitchell Sharp (Eglinton, Ontario) announced that Canada would contribute \$500,000 to a national campaign launched by the Nigeria/Biafra Relief Fund of Canada, and would be willing to

¹²⁷ Donald Barry, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process: The Case of Biafra," A. Paul Gross ed., *Pressure Group Behaviour in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975), 119.

¹²⁸ Ivan Head and Pierre Trudeau, *The Canadian Way: Shaping Canada's Foreign Policy, 1968-84*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), 103.

¹²⁹ Head and Trudeau have written that this moment on "... the flood tides were now open. 'Incredible,' 'astonishing arrogance,' 'callous] were among the criticisms soon levied against the government," by the opposition parties and interest groups. See Head and Trudeau, *The Canadian Way*, 103; Mitchell Sharp, 'Which Reminds Me...A Memoir,' (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 207.

help airlift humanitarian supplies to affected areas with agreement from Nigerian and Biafran officials. In September, the government accepted a Nigerian invitation to have a Canadian representative participate in an international observer mission to monitor conditions on the ground.

Biafra in Parliament

Attention to developments in Biafra reached new heights after the fall session of Parliament began in September 1968. As Barry puts it, "Parliament's part in the controversy was of primary importance, for its concentration on the issue largely awakened and sustained public interest in the question."¹³⁰ During the summer, Conservative leader Robert Stanfield (Halifax, Nova Scotia) and his advisors decided to concentrate on Biafra during the parliamentary session. This decision was made in response to overtures from interest groups and concerns expressed by members of the Conservative caucus. The Conservatives hoped this strategy would help Stanfield shed his reputation as being primarily interested in domestic affairs and establish his foreign policy credentials. There were also political benefits to focusing public attention on what many perceived as a failed government policy.

When the House of Commons reconvened, the opposition opened its offensive against the government by using question period to great effect. Stanfield caught the government unprepared during the first question period of the new legislative session. "Mr. Speaker," said Stanfield "will the Prime Minister tell the house what measures the

¹³⁰ Barry, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process," 136.

government of Canada proposes to take even at this late stage to avert what threatens to be one of the great tragedies of modern times?" Neither Trudeau nor his advisors, whose job it was to anticipate opposition questions and develop replies for cabinet ministers, believed the opposition would focus on a distant issue like Biafra.¹³¹ The awkward response provided by Sharp, to whom Trudeau referred the question, revealed the government's lack of preparedness.

The opposition would put more than 250 questions to the government about Biafra during the fall. Uncertain responses to early inquiries indicated that the government was vulnerable and convinced the opposition to continue their attack.¹³² The media relayed this criticism to voters and also became highly critical of the government itself. Interest groups supported this attack to raise the profile of their concerns. Organizations such as the Presbyterian Church provided opposition MPs with information about the situation in Biafra to use in the House of Commons. This strategy was especially useful for organizations that needed to preserve relationships with policymakers as it allowed them to avoid a direct confrontation with the government.

Opposition parties reiterated demands made by interest groups and the media. They pressed the government to seek United Nations involvement in the conflict, persuade the Nigerian government to allow relief flights into Biafra, facilitate the flow of aid by providing relief assistance and aircraft, and convince countries supplying arms to the combatants to halt their shipments.¹³³

¹³¹ Head and Trudeau, *The Canadian Way*, 102.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 102-3.

¹³³ Barry, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process," 120.

The government took refuge in legal arguments to justify a policy of limited involvement. But Sharp noted that such reasoning gave the 'impression that the government put politics ahead of human suffering.'¹³⁴ While agreeing that "a starving child prompts an emotional response, and properly so," Trudeau cautioned that emotion should not motivate actions, such as conducting relief flights without permission from Nigerian authorities, that were being advocated by interest groups and opposition MPs but could be interpreted as Canadian support for the secessionist state.¹³⁵ Still, the government contributed another \$500,000 to the International Red Cross in late September. Sharp also promised to raise the issue at the United Nations, but later said that Canada could not generate the necessary support to do this.¹³⁶

At the start of October, the Presbyterian Church arranged for NDP MP Andrew Brewin (Greenwood, Ontario) and Conservative David MacDonald (Egmont, P.E.I.) to spend two days touring Biafra. Presbyterian officials had previously worked with these MPs and knew they had made a less publicized trip to Portugal in 1966 to prepare a report on the suppression of human rights in that country.¹³⁷ The Church hoped that having parliamentarians report their observations to the media and voters would help pressure the government into making greater contributions to humanitarian efforts.

While in the region, Brewin and MacDonald met with Biafran officials, pilots conducting relief flights, and humanitarian workers. After arriving home, the MPs found

¹³⁴ For example, the government noted that the UN Charter forbade the international community from intervening in the 'domestic jurisdiction of any state,' except in emergency situations. Sharp, 208.

¹³⁵ As quoted in Andrew Brewin and David MacDonald, *Canada and the Biafran Tragedy*, (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel Publishers, 1970), 161.

¹³⁶ Barry, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process," 120.

¹³⁷ Brewin and MacDonald, *Canada and the Biafran Tragedy*, 13.

that their trip was front page news and had thrust them “from modest obscurity into the glare of temporary flame.”¹³⁸ Barry notes that public interest in Biafra seemed to reach its highest point after the MPs returned to Canada. The risk associated with the journey and the fact that the Canadian MPs were the first visitors from any western country to visit Biafra since the conflict began drew media attention to their tour of the region. Reports from Charles Taylor, a correspondent with the *Globe and Mail* who had accompanied the MPs on their tour, and other journalists who had visited the region furthered media interest in the issue.¹³⁹

The parliamentarians used this attention to criticize the government and press for greater Canadian involvement in Biafra. After returning home, Brewin and MacDonald held a well-attended news conference and issued a press release calling on the government to initiate a ceasefire initiative at the United Nations and to loan military aircraft to organizations providing humanitarian relief. They put these observations and demands before a national audience by appearing on television news and radio programs.

On October 7, the House of Commons unanimously agreed to a Conservative Party motion to refer the matter to Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND). This motion had been put forward at the urging of the Presbyterian Church, which saw the committee as another avenue through which it could press the government to act. The committee’s terms of reference focused on the humanitarian impact of the conflict and only allowed for testimony from three witnesses. However, it was clear from the outset that committee members, especially those from opposition

¹³⁸ Barry, “Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process,” 129.

parties, were set on undertaking a much broader study.¹⁴⁰ As a result, the committee undertook a wide ranging investigation that included testimony from several government and non-government witnesses.

Appearing before the committee gave government officials, including Minister Sharp, an opportunity to explain their position on Biafra. However, the hearings were dominated by interest groups that were openly critical of Canadian policy. Representatives from the Canadian Red Cross and Presbyterian Church, and others with first-hand knowledge of the conflict, including Brewin, MacDonald, and Taylor, made presentations to the committee. The committee investigation into Biafra was actually the first time that government officials were not the primary witnesses. Page notes that the hearings marked the start of the “displacement of senior diplomats from being almost the only witnesses to a minority of witnesses, from protected witnesses to politically charged targets, from team spokesmen to one of many departmental spokesmen, from anonymity to advocates of particular opinions.”¹⁴¹

The SCEAND study of Biafra marked an important phase in parliamentary involvement in the issue. While the committee eventually reported back to the House and made a number of recommendations regarding Canadian policy towards Biafra, its primary impact came at the political level. The hearings served as an important forum in

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁴⁰ The Committee’s terms of reference provided for it ‘...to hear Evidence on (1) The Report of the Official Observer Group, on which Canada has a member, on the conduct of federal troops in the prosecution of the war in Nigeria; (2) the reported famine conditions in that country and to invite Andrew Brewin, M.P. (Greenwood) and David MacDonald, M.P. (Egmont) to report their observations on the conditions of the civilian population in Nigeria....’ See House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and Defence, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, October 8, 1968.

¹⁴¹ Page, “The Standing Committee on External Affairs,” 37.

which interest groups and sympathetic MPs joined together to amplify pressure on the government to assume a greater role in humanitarian efforts and brokering a ceasefire. Brewin and MacDonald believe “the strength of the committee’s investigation lay in its presentation of a full picture of the background of events and the attitudes of the main participants, for the benefit [of] the Canadian public.”¹⁴² Barry similarly notes that media coverage of the hearings provided the opposition with ‘a means of further pressuring the government and sharpening its perception of the issue as a politically significant one.’¹⁴³

Facing growing criticism inside and outside of Parliament, the government secured Nigerian approval for the International Red Cross to use Canadian aircraft to deliver humanitarian relief to Biafra. After some delays in finding a landing strip capable of handling the size and weight of Canadian Hercules, the humanitarian flights began October 30.

Reasserting Executive Control

By late October, the government had had an opportunity to reassess the situation and realized the criticism from interest groups, parliamentarians and the media did not appear to reflect what the public was really thinking. Despite the attention being paid to the issue, the marginal success of interest groups’ fund raising drives and the limited contact that MPs reported having with constituents about the issue indicated that the

¹⁴² Brewin and MacDonald, *Canada and the Biafran Tragedy*, 37.

¹⁴³ Barry, “Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process,” 137.

general public was more passive than the government had thought.¹⁴⁴ Confident in the fact that this issue was not impacting its popularity with voters, the government reasserted its initial policy and became less responsive to critics.

In November, the government obtained permission from Nigerian officials for the Red Cross to conduct daytime relief flights using Canadian Hercules aircraft. The only condition that Nigerian leader General Gowon attached to this arrangement was that arms shipments not be intermingled with daytime relief flights. However, Biafran officials refused to accept this condition, a decision that led to the withdrawal of Canadian aircraft from the region. This decision also slowed media criticism of the government and some outlets now condemned Biafran leaders for failing to protect the interests of their people.¹⁴⁵

While Biafra would continue to draw some attention from interest groups and concerned parliamentarians until the conflict ended in 1970, it was no longer a dominant political issue for the government. When the SCEAND report was finally submitted to the House in late November, public and media interest in the issue had noticeably declined. During debate on the report, the government announced that it would contribute another \$1.6 million to relief efforts, but it used its majority in the House to defeat an opposition motion calling on Canada to raise the issue at the U.N. and ask arms supplying nations to cease their shipments.

¹⁴⁴ Barry's survey of MPs confirms that, for the most part, there was little contact between MPs and their constituents regarding the issue of Biafra. See Barry, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process," 139.

¹⁴⁵ Barry, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process," 122.

Conclusion: Parliament as Agenda-Setter

The Canadian debate over Biafra clearly illustrates the influence process described by the framework set out in the previous chapter. Lobbying by interest groups, media interest in the issue, and the possibility of political benefits provided the opposition with incentives to make Biafra a central issue in Parliament. In turn, question period provided the opposition and, indirectly, interest groups with opportunities to raise the profile of their concerns. Committee hearings and the fact-finding mission undertaken by Brewin and MacDonald also created opportunities to pressure the government and sustain interest in this issue.

Page believes this process had little impact on Canadian policy because “on the central issue of support for a federal union against a secessionist province, the government stood firm.”¹⁴⁶ He is correct in the sense that Biafra illustrates the limited impact Parliament has when the opposition criticism fails to reflect or generate wider public concern. After the government realized that parliamentary criticism was not resonating with Canadians, the opposition was unable to persuade the government to take any further actions.

At the same time, the early evolution of this issue provides a clear example of parliamentary agenda-setting. Criticism from opposition parties inside Parliament played an important role in creating a major political issue that the government could not ignore. Early on, Trudeau and his advisors were genuinely worried that this criticism was eroding

¹⁴⁶ Page, “The Standing Committee on External Affairs,” 37.

public confidence in the new government.¹⁴⁷ In response, the government changed course, even if only for short time, and paid a more active role in humanitarian efforts by making monetary contributions to humanitarian campaigns and allowing Canadian aircraft to deliver aid.

The central point in understanding this impact is that it was fear of losing voter support, not persuasive arguments from opposition MPs, which convinced the government to change course and address the situation in Nigeria. This underscores the fundamental connection between Parliament and the domestic environment, and the political nature of parliamentary influence. In this way, Parliament helped initiate and sustain public debate over Biafra and convinced a hesitant government that Canada should play a greater role in the issue. But the fact that this issue did not resonate with the public meant that this influence could not be sustained.

Policy through Parliament: The Case of Foreign Investment

Introduction

Nationalism was a prominent part of public discourse in Canada during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. This trend was manifested in academic writings, media commentary, and the activities of interest groups and parliamentarians. A primary concern of the nationalist movement was the growth of foreign investment, especially

¹⁴⁷ Head and Trudeau, *The Canadian Way*, 104. Also, Barry found that department officials perceived Parliament as a primary critic of government policy in this matter. See Barry, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process," 137.

American investment, in the Canadian economy. Some believed this trend could limit Canada's economic, and even political, sovereignty if left unchecked.

Parliament's role in the issue of foreign investment shows how the process underlying parliamentary influence connects the institution to the domestic environment. Nationalist concerns about foreign investment seemed to resonate with the public and drove parliamentary involvement in the issue. Liberal MPs urged the government to broaden its foreign investment regulations. To help inform its response to this issue, the government asked the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence to review and report on foreign investment in Canada. Amongst its many recommendations, the committee suggested establishing an agency to review proposed takeovers of Canadian firms by foreign companies.

Recommendations made by SCEAND and an internal government task force led by cabinet minister Herb Gray (Windsor West, Ontario) informed the decision-making process and were eventually reflected in government legislation. Parliamentary influence became more obvious after the Liberals were reduced to a minority government in the 1972 federal election. In this situation, the government broadened its foreign investment legislation to secure NDP support in the House of Commons. The *Foreign Investment Review Act*, tabled in January 1973, established the Foreign Investment Review Agency and represented a significant policy change in the way that Canada addressed foreign investment.

Nationalism Emerges

During the 1950s and early 1960s, foreign investment was not a topic of widespread public discussion or concern.¹⁴⁸ Governments introduced some measures to promote Canadian ownership in specific “key sectors” of the economy, such as transportation and resource industries, but fear of harming domestic prosperity kept policymakers from implementing broader measures applicable to the entire economy.¹⁴⁹ This situation changed as the 1960s turned into the 1970s and nationalism emerged as an important theme in Canadian politics. Nationalists believed ‘the major threat to Canadian survival is American control of the Canadian economy.’¹⁵⁰ A government task force, chaired by economist and leading nationalist Mel Watkins, warned that excessive foreign investment could threaten “the creation of a more independent national economy.”¹⁵¹

These concerns resonated with parliamentarians. Debate over foreign investment triggered a revolt within the New Democratic Party (NDP), which had the closest ties to the nationalist movement. Members of a vocal socialist wing within the party called the “Waffle Group,” declared that only nationalization of the economy could preserve Canada’s economic sovereignty. This represented a sharp departure from mainstream

¹⁴⁸ The 1957 report of a Royal Commission chaired by Walter Gordon raised some concerns about the post-war growth of foreign investment in Canada. In addition, the Liberal minority government under Prime Minister Lester Pearson was forced to withdraw controversial Canadian ownership requirements from its 1963 budget after being widely criticized by business and the Conservative opposition. However, opinion polls taken during this period showed that these activities did not generate wider public concern. See John H. Sigler and Dennis Goresky, “Public Opinion on United States-Canada Relations,” *International Organization*, 28:4 (Autumn 1974), 645.

¹⁴⁹ For example, the *Broadcasting Act* (1958) limited foreign ownership of Canadian non-cable television stations, a requirement that was later applied to radio and cable television stations. The *Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act* (1962) also addressed the Gordon’s call for greater disclosure by foreign-owned businesses.

¹⁵⁰ David Godfrey and Mel Watkins, eds., *Gordon to Watkins to You: The Battle for Control of our Economy*, (Toronto: New Toronto Press, 1970), 103.

NDP policy, which advocated cross-sector regulation of foreign companies but stopped short of calling for widespread public ownership in the economy. The radical nature of the Waffle programme and the extensive public relations campaign that the group conducted garnered media attention and helped heighten public awareness of the potential problems associated with foreign investment.

The issue also generated debate amongst Liberals. Economic nationalists in the party supported greater regulation of foreign-owned firms while more conservative members wanted to maintain the key sector approach adopted by the government in the 1950s and 1960s. This division was seen at the 1966 Liberal convention where Mitchell Sharp (Eglinton, Ontario) helped defeat a motion introduced by Liberal MP Donald Macdonald (Rosedale, Ontario) calling for broad regulation of foreign investment.¹⁵² Instead, Sharp helped pass an alternative resolution urging the government to continue to “encourage greater ownership of the economy, without discouraging foreign investment.”¹⁵³ These divisions were still apparent in 1970 when Liberal Alistair Gillespie (Etobicoke, Ontario) distributed a paper to his colleagues advocating mandatory 50% Canadian ownership of all firms operating in Canada.

Outside Parliament, interest groups were formed to advance the nationalist agenda. Chief amongst these was Committee for an Independent Canada (CIC). The committee was established in 1970 to “inform Canadians of what was happening [with respect to foreign investment], to focus attention on the issue, and then leave it to the

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁵² Sharp, *Which Reminds Me*, 145.

¹⁵³ John Fayerweather, *Foreign Investment in Canada: Prospects for National Policy*, (New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1973), 179.

politicians.”¹⁵⁴ It rejected the key sector approach and called on the government to regulate foreign investment in all areas of the economy. This goal had broad appeal as indicated by the fact that the organization drew members from the general public, media and all political parties. To make their views known, members of the CIC lobbied politicians, gave media interviews, distributed pamphlets, and organized conferences.

Even if the public failed to grasp the economic complexities of the issue, all these activities seemed to resonate with Canadians. As Dobell puts it, there was “a growing, yet still rather diffuse, state of national alarm over the potential threat to independence represented by this mass of strategically-placed private American investment.”¹⁵⁵ Opinion polls conducted during the period showed that a growing number of Canadians believed Canada had “enough” American investment and that too much foreign investment was bad for the economy.¹⁵⁶ The public demonstrated its willingness to act on these concerns. For example, Watkins was invited to speak about the work of his taskforce across the country and the CIC gathered 170,000 signatures for a petition supporting tougher regulation of foreign investment.

The Wahn Report

Trudeau commissioned two studies to find out whether there was a basis for concerns about foreign investment in Canada and, if so, to recommend measures that

¹⁵⁴ Walter Gordon, *A Political Memoir*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), 316.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Dobell, *Canada's Search for New Roles: Foreign Policy in the Trudeau Era*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 64.

¹⁵⁶ Don Munton and Dale H. Poel, “Electoral accountability and Canadian foreign policy: the case of foreign investment,” *International Journal* 33 (Winter 1977-8), 222; J. Alex Murray and Lawrence LeDuc,

could be implemented to mitigate the ill effects. In November 1969, the government instructed SCEAND, under the chairmanship of Liberal Ian Wahn (St. Paul's, Ontario), to solicit input on the foreign investment issue from industry, academics, and interest groups, and prepare a report for its consideration. Six months later, Trudeau asked Herb Gray, a minister known for his nationalist leanings, to lead an internal review of foreign investment in Canada and submit a report and recommendations directly to cabinet.

The Foreign Affairs Committee tabled its report just as Gray began his work in August 1970. The information and recommendations it presented were based on briefings that the committee had solicited from a number of organizations and commentators in Canada and the United States. Testimony heard by committee members predictably reflected the established divisions between nationalists and the business community. The president of the Royal Bank of Canada told committee members that foreign investment was crucial to the Canadian economy and warned of dire consequences should the government introduce misguided policies intended to limit it.¹⁵⁷ In contrast, nationalists seemed to accept foreign investment as a necessary evil, but maintained that the government needed to adopt tougher regulations to protect Canadian economic sovereignty.

Committee members recognized the importance of foreign investment to Canada's economic health, but concluded that it had undesirable side-effects that might adversely impact Canadian economic sovereignty and needed to be addressed. In

"Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Options in Canada," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 40:4 (Winter 1976-77), 490.

¹⁵⁷ Government of Canada, *Eleventh Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence Respecting Canada-U.S. Relations* (28th Parliament, 2nd Session, Ottawa, 1970), 67.

particular, the committee argued the key sector approach was too narrow to adequately protect the economy. In its words, the ‘techniques which have been employed in these key sectors of the economy have been effective in preserving Canadian control. Other sectors, however, have not been protected.’¹⁵⁸ The committee warned that extensive U.S. investment in unprotected sectors could undermine Canadian independence because Ottawa might become less willing to disagree with Washington for fear of facing negative economic repercussions.

The committee recommended measures that could be taken to address this situation. Wahn and his colleagues proposed that all future takeovers of Canadian businesses by foreign firms should require the consent of an independent “Ownership and Control Bureau.” This recommendation was a clear departure from the key sector approach previously followed by the government and was the first time it had been suggested that government establish a process to ‘screen’ foreign takeovers of Canadian companies. Watkins made a similar recommendation in an earlier report, but the agency he proposed would focus on collecting information about the activities of foreign-owned companies in Canada rather than taking activist role and reviewing the proposed takeovers of Canadian firms by foreign businesses.

There was some criticism of the committee report. Nationalists argued that subjecting proposed takeovers of Canadian firms to a review process did not go far enough in addressing the problem and that the agency should also be mandated to review new foreign investment. There was also some resistance to the report in the business

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

community. But its concerns focused on the committee's suggestion that government consider adopting regulations to make Canadians majority shareholders in all large companies operating in the country. During one interview, Wahn said he was told by a Liberal party official that unless this particular recommendation was dropped, the government would make sure the committee would not have quorum to approve its final report.¹⁵⁹ However, in a sign of caucus division over the issue, Wahn was able to secure approval of the final report after successfully recruiting Liberal MPs to replace committee members who followed government instructions.

In May 1972, the government released the Gray report that called on the government to enact tougher regulation of foreign investment. Like SCEAND, Gray recommended creating an agency to review foreign investments made in Canada. However, he suggested that the agency be given a broader mandate than Wahn and his colleagues had proposed. Gray recommended that foreign firms be required to have approval from the agency before making new investment in Canada, taking over Canadian-owned firms or expanding businesses already operating in the country. The report also suggested that the agency be empowered to monitor foreign firms to ensure they were complying with the terms of their approvals.

After much delay and deliberation, the government response to the Wahn and Gray reports was unveiled when the *Foreign Takeovers Review Act* was introduced in Parliament in May 1972. The legislation proposed to give officials with the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, not an independent agency as suggested by Wahn and

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism*, (McGill-Queen's University Press,

Gray, responsibility for approving or rejecting proposed takeovers of Canadian companies with revenue and assets above established thresholds. This limited mandate resembled the recommendations made by SCEAND, which did not recommend that all new foreign investment and the expansion of foreign-owned firms already in Canada be subjected to a government review.

The bill was criticized on both sides of this issue. Members of the business community warned the government against interfering in the economy and adding unnecessary barriers to foreign investment that produced Canadian jobs. The most vocal criticisms came from those who saw foreign investment as a problem. NDP leader David Lewis (York South, Ontario) described the bill as ‘a betrayal of what we had all waited for and expected because the review process would not implement the broader recommendations made by Gray.¹⁶⁰ The Conservative position was less clearly defined, which some suggested was due to caucus divisions over the issue.¹⁶¹ Conservative leader Robert Stanfield (Halifax, Nova Scotia) accepted the general concept of a screening agency but said detailed guidelines were needed to ensure that it did not disrupt economic development.

Well publicized committee hearings on the bill provided interest groups and MPs sympathetic to the nationalist cause opportunities to criticize the government for not going far enough. Amongst the critics were a group of Liberal MPs led by Wahn and Robert Kaplan (Don Valley, Ontario). The latter chaired the committee reviewing the

2003), 176.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Dobell, “Reducing Vulnerability: The Third Option,” eds. Don Munton and John Kirton, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1992), 254; Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism*, 182-3.

bill and publicly endorsed the broader screening process suggested by the Wahn and Gray reports.¹⁶²

Foreign Investment in a Minority Parliament

The *Foreign Takeovers Review Act* died on the Order Paper when the federal election was called in the fall of 1972. However, the results of the election had important implications for the foreign investment debate. While the Liberals managed to form another government, their sizeable majority was reduced to a slim minority. This meant that the government would have to work with opposition parties to get support for its legislative agenda. As had been the case when Pearson led consecutive minorities, the government was more likely to work with the NDP than the Conservatives, an arrangement that would allow Lewis to push for greater regulation of foreign investment.

The NDP seized the opportunity to advance its agenda. Not long after the election it declared that revised foreign investment was a condition of its support in Parliament.¹⁶³ While this demand was consistent with longstanding NDP policy, it also gave Lewis a way of appeasing those in his caucus who remained sympathetic to the Waffle. Recognizing that he would have to 'engage in a new form of politics,' to gain support for the bill in the House of Commons, Trudeau indicated that he was willing to accommodate NDP suggestions and that revised foreign investment legislation would be a priority in the new parliament.¹⁶⁴ During debate on the 1973 Throne Speech, Gillespie,

¹⁶¹ Fayerweather, *Foreign Investment in Canada*, 59-60.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Munton and Poel, "Electoral accountability and Canadian foreign policy," 231.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Pierre Trudeau, *Memoirs*, (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1993), 164.

now Ministry of Industry and Trade, said the government was willing to consider expanding the review process for foreign investment.

The new *Foreign Investment Review Act* was tabled in Parliament in January 1973. While it shared some features with its predecessor, the legislation also addressed the main NDP criticisms of the earlier bill through adopting other recommendations made by SCEAND and Gray. Unlike the earlier legislation, which would have established a review process administered by an existing government department, the revised bill proposed the creation of the Foreign Investment Review Agency, a stand alone government body whose commissioner would report directly to the Minister of Industry. The bill also provided the agency with a broader mandate as foreign takeovers of Canadian firms, new direct foreign investment and the expansion of foreign corporations already operating in Canada into 'unrelated' business would all be subject to review.

One might have expected the broad scope of the Act to spark a debate like those that occurred after the release of earlier government reports. But Canadians were largely indifferent to the bill. To be sure, some members of the nationalist movement believed the agency should be authorized to review all expansions of foreign-owned firms in Canada. On the whole, however, the absence of wider debate indicated a public willingness to accept government regulation of foreign investment.

Conclusion: Policy through Parliament

Parliamentary involvement in shaping Canada's foreign investment policies during the 1970s illustrates the connection between what happens inside Parliament and what goes on outside it. Nationalist sentiments focused public attention on concerns about the growth of American ownership in the economy. This was reflected in the views and activities of parliamentarians, who joined interest groups championing tougher regulation of foreign companies and lobbied government officials to move away from the key sector approach. Prominent members of the government caucus, such as Gray, Gillespie, and Wahn publicly urged the government to adopt broad policies that were inconsistent with the traditional key sector approach.

The Wahn Committee played an important role in shaping government efforts to address public concerns. Unlike the case of Biafra, where interest groups and concerned MPs used committee hearings to publicly criticize the government, the case of foreign investment shows that committee work can provide MPs with opportunities to contribute to the policy process by offering well considered advice and recommendations. The SCEAND report, which the government requested, made a genuine contribution to the policy process through its review of foreign investment in Canada. Wahn and his colleagues were the first to propose creating a government agency to review foreign investment across all sectors of the economy. This recommendation, which Gray went on to explore in greater detail, was later reflected in the *Foreign Investment Review Act*.

This issue also illustrates the impact of minority governments on Canadian foreign policy. Needing to secure parliamentary support for its foreign investment legislation, the government agreed to accommodate NDP suggestions in a new and

revised bill. The *Foreign Investment Review Act* broadened the review process to include new foreign investments and some expansions of foreign firms already in Canada. These changes addressed the main NDP criticisms of the earlier bill and were clearly designed to win that party's support for the new legislation.

Parliamentary Contributions: The 2004 Ukraine Presidential Election

Introduction

In the fall of 2004, Ukrainians went to the polls to elect a new president. The primary candidates, the incumbent prime minister, Viktor Yanukovich, and opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, presented voters with distinct visions for the future of their country. Even before the election was held, many believed that Yanukovich would use government resources, including the police and military, to ensure his own victory and deprive voters of a real choice. When the expected happened and international observers declared the election failed to meet democratic standards, Yushchenko supporters staged massive demonstrations and waged a campaign of civil disobedience that attracted attention around the world.

Like other case studies examined so far, parliamentarians' involvement in Canada's response to the fraudulent Ukrainian elections underscore the link between Parliament and the domestic environment. Controversy over the election captured significant public attention in Canada, which is home to a large and established Ukrainian community. This community recruited MPs to help them lobby policymakers and generate media interest in their concerns. Members of Parliament made financial

contributions to election monitoring initiatives and served as election monitors themselves. After returning to Canada, they relayed their observations to government officials, the media and public by giving interviews, speaking at public rallies and sponsoring emergency debates in the House of Commons.

In the end, this issue demonstrates the contributions that individual and small groups of like-minded and committed MPs can sometimes make to the policy process on behalf of those they represent. Members of Parliament were effective spokespersons for the Ukrainian-Canadian community and played an important role in raising awareness about government interference in the elections. Moreover, the information they collected while acting as election observers helped convince the government to reject the election results.

Canada's Ukraine Connections

The nature of parliamentarians' interest and involvement in this issue is understandable given the large Ukrainian-Canadian community and the increasing frequency with which MPs are observing elections in developing countries. This community was established in the early 20th century when the federal government encouraged immigration from Eastern Europe to help settle the western provinces. Today, the country is home to more than a million Ukrainian-Canadians, nearly three quarters of whom live in the "borscht belt" that stretches across the prairies.

The size and historical importance of the Ukrainian-Canadian community gives it a political importance not afforded to many other ethnic groups. Unlike some newer immigrant groups, the Ukrainian-Canadian community has the resources and

organizational strength needed to effectively lobby politicians and government officials. Ukrainian-Canadians tried to raise awareness of human rights abuses in their former homeland when Ukraine was under Soviet rule. Close relations between the Mulroney government and the Ukrainian-Canadian community played a role in Canada becoming the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence in December 1991.¹⁶⁵

As the number of countries trying to democratize their political systems and institutions has increased over the past twenty years, parliamentarians have increasingly been called upon to monitor elections. In recent years, Canadian MPs have observed elections in Central and South America, Pakistan, Mexico, the Palestinian territories, and a number of East European countries, including Ukraine. When monitoring elections, parliamentarians visit polling stations to ensure that electoral laws are being followed and oversee vote counts. Those who have participated in observer missions believe that foreign officials give them a level of respect that is not afforded to other observers.

As noted, the platforms of Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko offered voters a clear choice between competing visions for the future of the Ukraine. The former, who was backed by outgoing president Leonid Kuchma, was linked to the old Soviet regime and promised to strengthen ties to Moscow. Yanukovich also received support from industrial oligarchs who received favourable treatment under the Kuchma regime and benefited from favourable coverage in the state-owned media. In contrast, Yushchenko was seen as a reformer who would democratize Ukraine and modernize its economy. He promised to lessen Russian influence on the

¹⁶⁵ Norton, "Ethnic Groups and Conservative Foreign Policy," 249.

country and seek closer ties to western countries by applying for membership in the European Union and NATO.

The two candidates engaged in a bitter election campaign. Yushchenko supporters claimed that Yanukovych used state resources to bribe voters and government security forces to intimidate political opponents. It was also speculated that Yushchenko, whose face had been scarred after becoming ill during the campaign, had been poisoned by operatives working for Yanukovych. The opposition leader asked his supporters to take to the streets if government officials were believed to have falsified the election results in favour of Yanukovych. Ukrainian opposition leaders tried to draw outside attention to these developments. In a letter published in the *Globe and Mail*, an opposition leader requested international observers “to keep watch and ensure that this precious chance is not squandered and that this election is conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner.”¹⁶⁶

These developments did not go unnoticed by the international community. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provided observers to monitor the voting process, and warned that government interference in the electoral process would imperil Ukraine’s relations with the rest of Europe. In Canada, the Ukrainian community undertook a number of activities to assist their former homeland. For example, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) sent 60 observers to monitor the October 31 election, and helped organize polling stations so that Ukrainian citizens in Canada could vote.

¹⁶⁶ Yuliya Tymoshenko, “No strings on Ukrainian democracy,” *Globe and Mail*, August 27, 2004.

The Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta established the Ukraine Election Transparency and Election Monitoring Project (UTEMP). This initiative, which sent 26 election experts overseas to train Ukrainian officials, received a significant boost after the Institute received a \$250,000 donation from Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Ontario).¹⁶⁷ Wrzesnewskyj's parents had emigrated from Ukraine and he had long been involved in pro-democracy efforts in that country.¹⁶⁸ In addition to the financial assistance he provided to UTEMP, Wrzesnewskyj introduced a motion that was unanimously supported by the House and called on the Ukraine government to ensure that the election was free and fair.¹⁶⁹ The UCC issued a press release thanking MPs supporting democratic processes in the Ukraine.¹⁷⁰

The October 31 election went as expected in two respects. First, the official results certified by the Central Election Commission (CEC) showed that Yanukovych and Yushchenko were virtually tied. As neither candidate received the 50.1 % of votes needed to secure a first ballot victory, a presidential run-off between the top two candidates was scheduled for November 21. Second, international observers, including Canadian MPs, reported widespread and systematic violations of Ukrainian electoral

¹⁶⁷ Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, *Press Release*, September 16, 2004.

¹⁶⁸ Norma Greenway, *Ottawa Citizen*, December 13, 2004. During the 1980s when Ukraine was still part of the Soviet Union, Wrzesnewskyj helped smuggle photocopiers and other printing equipment into the country to support an underground press operation.

¹⁶⁹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, October 26, 2004, 807.

¹⁷⁰ Ukrainian Canadian Congress, "Canada's House of Commons adopts Motion to impress upon Ukraine the need to ensure fully transparent election process," *Press Release*, October 27, 2004.

laws, most of which favoured Yanukovych. The OSCE issued a statement questioning the validity of the election results.¹⁷¹

The Canadian government did not comment on these developments. Since the election was heading to a run-off, Prime Minister Paul Martin was not in the position of having to accept or reject a final result. But while officials refrained from publicly discussing the results, concerns were raised behind closed doors. In a confidential dispatch to Ottawa, Andrew Robinson, the Canadian Ambassador to Ukraine, expressed concern about the fairness of the November 21 run-off. "Regardless of the balloting," he noted, "the results of the vote count are likely to be close thanks to the enormous efforts of the authorities to hold onto power, through a parody of democratic elections."¹⁷²

Following the October 31 vote, Ukrainian-Canadians intensified their efforts to raise public awareness about the allegations of electoral fraud. As part of this campaign, the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies recruited Wrzesnewskyj, fellow Liberal MP David Kilgour (Edmonton-Beaumont, Alberta) and Senator David Smith (Ontario), to travel to Ukraine from November 8-13. Kilgour had travelled to Ukraine in the past and was recognized by the UCC in 2002 for assistance he had provided to the community throughout his political career. While in Ukraine, these MPs held a press conference to voice their concerns about the hundreds of irregularities witnessed by Canadian election observers. On the eve of the November 21 run-off, the three published a column in the

¹⁷¹ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Press Release*, October 31, 2004.

¹⁷² Mike Blanchfield, "Documents reveal diplomacy during Ukraine uprising," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 24, 2005.

National Post entitled “Don’t stuff Ukraine’s ballot boxes,” urging the Ukrainian government to follow its own electoral laws and allow a free vote.

The Institute also approached Wrzesnewskyj and Conservative Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, Alberta), who is married to a Canadian of Ukrainian descent and has close ties to the large expatriate community in Alberta, about joining the contingent of UTEMP election observers for the second ballot. The MPs agreed to this proposal and would go on to play important roles as Canadian policy developed.

Parliamentarians and the “Orange Revolution”

On the night of the run-off, there were conflicting reports about which candidate was leading in the vote count. The official count by the CEC put Yanukovich ahead by a narrow margin. Yet, exit polls funded by Western countries indicated that Yushchenko had a considerable lead.¹⁷³ Even Russian sponsored exit polls put Yushchenko ahead, albeit by much less. The next day, however, Yanukovich was officially declared the winner.

International organizations immediately challenged the legitimacy of this result after observers, including more than 100 Canadians, reported the vote was again marred by widespread irregularities. For the second time in less than a month, the OSCE declared that a Ukrainian election failed to meet democratic standards.¹⁷⁴ Republican Senator Richard Lugar, then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who

¹⁷³ Mark MacKinnon, ‘Yushchenko backs claim victory,’ *Globe and Mail*, November 22, 2004.

¹⁷⁴ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, ‘Widespread irregularities observed in Ukrainian Presidential Election,’ *Press Release*, <http://www.osce.org/item/8702.html>, November 1, 2004.

observed the second round of the election as the personal representative of the President George W. Bush, bluntly stated “that there was a concerted and forceful program of election day fraud and abuse enacted with either the leadership or cooperation of governmental authorities.”¹⁷⁵ Canadian MPs who observed the election expressed similar concerns.

Yushchenko supporters took to the streets of the capital city of Kiev insisting that government forces had stolen victory from their candidate. Millions eventually joined a makeshift camp in Independence Square in front of the Rada, the Ukrainian Parliament, in a protest that became known as the “Orange Revolution” for the orange scarves worn by Yushchenko and his followers. The protestors also waged a campaign of civil disobedience by blockading government buildings and major highways.

The Ukrainian community in Canada was understandably interested in these developments. As the president of the Alberta provincial council of the UCC put it, “we have families in Ukraine; we are all very concerned. Our phones haven’t stopped ringing, at our homes and here at our office.”¹⁷⁶ In the days immediately following the November 21 vote, the UCC brought the concerns of its members to the attention of officials in the Prime Minister’s Office and issued a press release urging Canadians to contact their MPs to voice their concerns.¹⁷⁷ It also organized public demonstrations across Canada that drew thousands of individuals with no personal connection to Ukraine. A gathering outside the Ukrainian consulate in Toronto on November 23 drew

¹⁷⁵ Remarks by United States Senator Richard Lugar on the Ukrainian Presidential Elections, http://kiev.usembassy.gov/files/041122_lugar-qa_eng.html, November 22, 2004.

¹⁷⁶ David Howell, “Ukrainians plan rally tonight,” *Edmonton Journal*, November 25, 2004.

approximately 2000 people who heard speeches from community leaders, Wrzesnewskyj, Goldring, Kilgour, and former Prime Minister John Turner.¹⁷⁸

The Canadian government publicly expressed doubts about the legitimacy of the election results. When questioned by reporters about initial reports of electoral fraud on November 23, Martin stated “if [the reports] are found by the OSCE to be accurate, then clearly I think the international community will want to examine its options.”¹⁷⁹ The government informed the House of Commons of its official position a day later. In response to a question from Conservative leader Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, Alberta), Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan (Edmonton Centre, Alberta) stated that allegations of fraud meant “the government cannot accept that the announced results by the central election commission reflect the true democratic will of the Ukrainian people...Canada rejects the announced final results.”¹⁸⁰ This announcement received an enthusiastic standing ovation from members of all political parties.

This decision was based largely on reports from election observers in Ukraine. Dan McTeague (Pickering Scarborough East, Ontario), the parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs, specifically noted the importance of firsthand information provided by Ambassador Robinson and parliamentarians who observed the vote.¹⁸¹ Immediately after the results were announced, Ambassador Robinson sent a report to Ottawa in which he

¹⁷⁷ Ukrainian Canadian Congress, “The Ukrainian Canadian Congress Condemns the Fraudulent Presidential Election Process,” *Press Release*, November 24, 2004.

¹⁷⁸ Henry Stancu and Philip Mascoll, “Ukrainian-Canadians rally for Yushchenko,” *Toronto Star*, November 24, 2004.

¹⁷⁹ Mark MacKinnon, “Protestors vow to stop Ukraine’s ‘coup d’etat,” *Globe and Mail*, November 23, 2004.

¹⁸⁰ House of Commons, *Hansard*, November 24, 2004, 1810.

¹⁸¹ Bill Curry, ‘Canada demands justice,’ *Ottawa Citizen*, November 25, 2004.

referred to Yushchenko as “the real winner.”¹⁸² In comments to reporters, McTeague singled out the work of Goldring, who remained in Ukraine following the election and provided direct reports to the government as developments unfolded. McLellan also cited concerns within the government caucus when explaining the government’s decision to reject the results. According to the deputy prime minister, there was “deep distress and concern on the part of all Liberal caucus members in relation to what seems to be happening in Ukraine.”¹⁸³

On November 24, Wrzesnewskyj introduced a motion requesting an immediate debate on the issue that was supported by all parties. The ensuing discussion demonstrated the deep connection between Canada and Ukraine. In his opening remarks, Wrzesnewskyj emphasized that the special relationship between Canada and Ukraine ‘is based on the hundreds of thousands of family ties between the two countries.’¹⁸⁴ These connections were illustrated through stories recounted by MPs. For example, Conservative Vic Toews (Provencher, Manitoba) recounted how his parents had fled Ukraine after his grandparents were murdered by the Soviet controlled regime. “So in a small way, many years later, I feel personally connected to the potential tragedy that is unfolding in Ukraine,” he said.¹⁸⁵ Fellow Conservative, Jim Prentice (Calgary-Centre North, Alberta), called attention to “the immense contribution [Ukrainians] have made to the cultural, economic and social fabric of Canada.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Mike Blanchfield, *Ottawa Citizen*, December 24, 2005.

¹⁸³ Les Whittington, “Canada slams Ukraine result,” *Toronto Star*, November 25, 2004.

¹⁸⁴ Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, November 24, 2004, 1848.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1855.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1870.

Yushchenko received a domestic boost in the last week of November when the Ukrainian Supreme Court delayed final certification of the election results and the Ukrainian Parliament passed a motion of non-confidence in the government that required President Kuchma to dismiss Yanukovich and his cabinet. Finally, on December 4, with more than a million Ukrainians protesting the election results in the streets of Kiev, the courts did the expected by overturning the disputed presidential election and ordering a new run-off between Yushchenko and Yanukovich for December 26. There are indications that the court gave considerable weight to video evidence provided by UTEMP, the project that Wrzesnewskyj had helped fund, during its deliberations.¹⁸⁷

In its ruling, the Supreme Court requested that the international community provide as many election monitors as possible to help ensure the integrity of the vote. Canadian organizations quickly responded to this request. On the same day, the Court issued its decision, the UCC pledged to organize and sponsor another delegation of election observers and noted that it had already raised \$750,000 to support this mission. The fact that a quarter of this money came from Canadians with no Ukrainian roots provides an indication of wider public interest in the issue.¹⁸⁸

The Canadian government pledged to send seventy-five observers to monitor the new election at a cost of \$525,000. However, the government was pressed by the UCC to increase the total contribution to 1500 observers at an estimated cost of \$8 million.¹⁸⁹ This demand was publicly supported by concerned MPs, including Wrzesnewskyj and

¹⁸⁷ John Turner, *Final Report of the Canadian Observers Mission to Ukraine*, May 2005.

¹⁸⁸ Gordon Jaremko, "Canadian group raises \$750,000 to send election monitors to Ukraine," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 5, 2004.

Goldring.¹⁹⁰ Sending a larger group of observers “is not a significant cost when you consider the consequences if the election should again be flawed,” said Wrzesnewskyj. Goldring recommended that Canada send no less than 1500 observers.¹⁹¹

On December 6, the government announced the creation of the Canadian Observers Mission to Ukraine. Foreign Minister Pettigrew stated that this \$3.5 million initiative would send as many as 500 trained election observers to Ukraine for the Boxing Day election, making it the single largest and most expensive election monitoring project ever sponsored by Canada. The Mission received a significant boost on December 16 when it was announced that former Prime Minister John Turner would lead the Canadian delegation. Adding the Observer Mission to election monitors organized by the UCC and the MPs participating in the OSCE parliamentary delegation brought the total Canadian contingent to more than 1000 individuals.

The December 26 run-off was monitored by more than 12,000 election observers. By early evening on election day, it was clear that Yushchenko would win by a significant margin. Although international observers noted some minor irregularities, they found no evidence of the widespread abuses that had characterized earlier votes. Canadian observers reached the same conclusion.¹⁹² “It’s really in stark contrast to the last election on November 21, when I personally witnessed some very, very concerning

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*; Bertrand Marotte and Carolynne Wheeler, “Pressure Mounts to Finance an Army of Observers,” *Globe and Mail*, December 6, 2004.

¹⁹⁰ Marotte and Wheeler, “Pressure Mounts to Finance an Army of Observers,” December 6, 2004.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁹² Carolynne Wheeler, “Ukraine’s PM refuses to admit defeat,” *Globe and Mail*, December 28, 2004.

problems,” said Goldring.¹⁹³ This result would withstand a late court challenge by Yanukovych. Yushchenko was declared president on January 10, 2005.

Conclusion: Parliamentarians as Contributors

The development of Canadian policy towards the Ukrainian elections illustrates the connection between the domestic environment and the interests and activities of parliamentarians. Personal connections to the Ukrainian-Canadian community led Wrzesnewskyj, Goldring and Kilgour to become involved in this issue. These MPs were effective spokespersons for the community in its efforts to draw attention to events in Ukraine through giving media interviews, attending public rallies, and privately lobbying policymakers.

These activities show why a broader framework is needed to assess parliamentary involvement in Canadian foreign policy. Unlike the cases of Biafra and foreign investment, parliamentarians’ involvement in the Ukraine example did not focus on the formal opportunities they have to debate and examine foreign policy in the House of Commons or committees. Members of Parliament instead made contributions to the policy process in less formal and visible ways. For example, they contributed to election monitoring missions organized by the Ukrainian-Canadian community and lobbied the government to increase the size of the Turner observer mission. Most important, after serving as election observers they provided Canadian officials with valuable information

¹⁹³ Fred Weir, “Democracy at Work,” *The Spectator*, December 27, 2004; Tamara Shephard, “Ukraine election quite fair: MP,” *Etobicoke Guardian*, December 31, 2004.

about the nature and degree of government interference in the voting process. These reports influenced the government's decision to reject the election results.

Parliamentary Politics: Canada and Ballistic Missile Defence

Introduction

Ballistic missile defence emerged as a major political issue in Canada following the election of American President George W. Bush in December 2000. The question of what, if any, role Canada should play in American plans sparked a heated public debate. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien overcame initial concerns and made the case for participation during his final months in office. His successor, Paul Martin, also favoured involvement and took steps towards including the country in missile defence. Yet in February 2005, the government announced that Canada would not support the system.

The missile defence debate also illustrates the connection between Parliament and the domestic political environment in which it operates. Public opinion, constituency pressures, and lobbying by interest groups were the incentives driving parliamentary involvement in this issue. These pressures only intensified as Canadians became more skeptical of the Bush administration's policies following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

Parliamentarians who shared public concerns about Bush and missile defence pressured the government to abandon its desire to participate in the program. Criticism of missile defence from within the government caucus was of particular concern to the government. On two occasions, Liberals formally registered their opposition to the

program by voting against missile defence in Parliament. The government also faced pressures outside Parliament where Bloc Quebecois, NDP and Liberal MPs worked with interest groups to turn public opinion against missile defence.

Parliament's impact on the missile defence debate became more significant after the Liberals were reduced to a minority government in the 2004 federal election. The opposition used its influence to commit Martin to holding a vote on any missile defence deal that was signed with the U.S. This created a political dilemma for the government after the Conservatives retreated from their earlier support for the system.

Parliamentary politics ultimately played a role in the government's decision not to participate in missile defence. Caucus criticism helped slowed the decision-making process, which provided more time for the public relations campaign being waged by interest groups and concerned MPs to affect public opinion. The political risks associated with holding a vote in the minority parliament also weighed on the government.

Chrétien, Parliament and Missile Defence

Missile defence was an early foreign policy priority for the Bush administration. Ottawa expressed some reservations about the impact that American plans might have on global stability and reiterated Canada's longstanding opposition to the weaponization of space. Bush did little to alleviate these concerns when outlining his vision for missile defence in a speech at the National Defence University in May 2001.¹⁹⁴ In his address, the president suggested that American plans would require withdrawal from the Anti-

Ballistic Missile Treaty and he did not rule out the possibility of deploying space-based weapons.

Even at this early stage there were signs that missile defence was controversial in Parliament. The Canadian Alliance advocated involvement in the program.¹⁹⁵ The Bloc and NDP maintained that Canada should not participate. There were signs that Liberals were divided on the issue. A senior minister confirmed that “a lot of us are opposed [to missile defence], not only in Cabinet but also in caucus and the party.”¹⁹⁶ Some Liberals reported that constituents had raised concerns about the program.¹⁹⁷ An opinion poll released in July suggested that concerns raised by constituents were representative of a broader public mood. Fifty-eight percent of respondents were against Canadian participation in missile defence and opposition to the program was strongest in Quebec.¹⁹⁸

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States changed the dynamics of the missile defence debate by reducing international criticism of the system.¹⁹⁹ This development seemed to alleviate Canadian concerns about missile

¹⁹⁴ Remarks by President George W. Bush to Students and Faculty at the National Defense University, May 1, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html>.

¹⁹⁵ See Art Hanger and Jim Hart, “The case for national missile defence,” *National Post*, March 30, 2000; Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, June 14, 2000, 8069.

¹⁹⁶ Jeff Sallot, “Reject Bush missile defence plan, Liberals urge PM,” *Globe and Mail*, May 4, 2001; Robert Fife, “Cabinet divided over missile shield,” *National Post*, May 16, 2001.

¹⁹⁷ Many Liberals tabled petitions in the House of Commons from constituents opposing missile defence. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, June 7, 2000, 7630; *Ibid.*, June 15, 2000, 8080; *Ibid.*, October 4, 2000, 8861.

¹⁹⁸ “Missile shield doesn’t fly in Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, July, 23, 2001.

¹⁹⁹ Russian President Vladimir Putin downplayed the impact that American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty would have on strategic stability. NATO members also agreed to study the possibility of developing a system to protect Alliance territory. See Dana Milbank, “No deal on nuclear weapons cuts: Bush, Putin stress ties,” *Calgary Herald*, November 16, 2001; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Prague Summit Declaration, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm>, November 21, 2002.

defence. While announcing the creation of a new Canada-U.S. military planning group in December 2002, Foreign Minister Bill Graham (Toronto-Centre, Ontario) stated that Canada was “prepared to examine the issue of missile defence.”²⁰⁰ Graham specifically cited growing international acceptance of the program as the main reason why the government shifted its position.

A Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT) report released just after this announcement confirmed the partisan differences on the issue. Liberal and Progressive Conservative committee members recommended that Ottawa continue opposing the weaponization of space and not make a final decision until more details about American plans were known. Canadian Alliance and NDP members suggested otherwise in their supplementary reports. The former argued that Canada should support the system. The latter urged the government to reject any involvement.²⁰¹

In February 2003, new NDP leader Jack Layton and leading anti-missile defence activists agreed to work together to oppose the program.²⁰² A committee led by NDP foreign affairs critic Alexa McDonough (Halifax, Nova Scotia) was established to coordinate the parliamentary and public components of the campaign. This initiative was still getting organized when the government began making its case for involvement in missile defence. In public, Chrétien cited easing international tensions and the limited

²⁰⁰ Daniel LeBlanc, “Canada open to missile-shield talks,” *Globe and Mail*, December 10, 2002.

²⁰¹ Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Partners in North America: Advancing Canada’s Relations with the United States and Mexico*, (Ottawa: Queens Printer, December 2002).

²⁰² Steven Staples, *Missile Defence: Round One. An insider’s account of how and why Canada said no to George W. Bush and why this issue won’t die*, (Toronto: James Lorimer, 2006), 91.

scope of the program as reasons why the government had shifted its position.²⁰³ Privately, officials also believed that supporting missile defence would help improve relations between the two countries that had deteriorated since Canada chose not to support the invasion of Iraq.²⁰⁴

This announcement sparked a lively debate in the government caucus. Some Liberals saw military benefits in joining the system. Others questioned the military value but believed that participation might help improve Canada-U.S. relations.²⁰⁵ A sizeable minority openly opposed missile defence. Many believed that missile defence would eventually lead to the weaponization of space. Others claimed the government was simply offering the Bush administration a “consolation prize,” for deciding not to participate in Iraq.²⁰⁶ Former Liberal Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, a vocal missile defence critic, provided detailed briefings outlining potential problems with the program to his former colleagues.²⁰⁷

In late May, Liberal Defence Minister John McCallum (Markham-Unionville, Ontario) announced that Canada would begin exploratory talks with the U.S. and that the government hoped to make a final decision about its role in the program by the fall. Members of the Liberal caucus demonstrated their unhappiness with this decision by

²⁰³ Allan Thompson, “Ottawa eyes US missile defence plan,” *Toronto Star*, April 29, 2003; Daniel LeBlanc and Jeff Sallot, “PM shifts on missile defence,” *Globe and Mail*, May 6, 2003.

²⁰⁴ Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang, *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar*, (Toronto, Viking, 2007), 165.

²⁰⁵ *Globe and Mail*, “NMD deal possible this fall,” May 9, 2003.

²⁰⁶ Sheldon Alberts, “Liberal rift delays entry into arms race,” *National Post*, May 8, 2003; Les Whittington, “Divided MPs,” *Toronto Star*, May 8, 2003; John Godfrey, “National Missile Defence is destabilizing,” *National Post*, May 12, 2003.

²⁰⁷ Mike Trickey “Backbenchers oppose cabinet on U.S. missile defence program,” *Ottawa Citizen*, May 8, 2003.

opposing a Canadian Alliance motion urging the government to participate in any system operated by NORAD. The motion passed with support from Alliance and most Liberal MPs, but thirty-eight members of the government caucus, many of whom were from Quebec, joined the NDP and Bloc in voting against it. Those breaking ranks said they did so to send a signal to the government about the level of discontent in caucus and draw public attention to their concerns about the program.²⁰⁸

If the government saw participation in missile defence as a way of improving post-Iraq relations with the U.S., the public clearly had a different view. A poll released in July indicated that a growing number of Canadians believed that Bush intentionally manipulated intelligence to justify the invasion and nearly two thirds of respondents had an unfavourable impression of the president.²⁰⁹ Opposition to the war and the Bush administration was strongest in the key electoral battlegrounds of British Columbia, Quebec and urban Ontario. A polling company spokesperson suggested these sentiments went beyond the issue of Iraq to the “credibility of the U.S. administration,” and would make “it harder for the administration to get Canadian support for any platform.”²¹⁰

In September, reports indicated the government would not reach a final decision about Canada’s role in missile defence within the time frame originally suggested by McCallum. Despite government claims to the contrary, Liberals opposed to the program attributed the delay to opposition in caucus. With Chrétien about to retire, Liberal John

²⁰⁸ Joan Bryden, “Liberals split on missile shield: Alliance motion on U.S. plan exposes rift in ruling party,” *Ottawa Citizen*, June 4, 2004; Sheldon Alberts, “38 Liberal MPs vote no on missile defence,” *National Post*, June 3, 2003.

²⁰⁹ Wallace Immen, “Canadian public skeptical of war in Iraq, poll shows,” *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 2003.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Godfrey (Don Valley West, Ontario) said it would be difficult “to take such a significant step at a time when one government will be going out and another will be coming in.”²¹¹

Martin, Parliament and Missile Defence

Paul Martin succeeded Chrétien as prime minister in December 2003. During the Liberal leadership race, Martin endorsed Canadian participation in missile defence. He signalled his support by naming David Pratt (Nepean-Carleton, Ontario), a strong advocate of missile defence, Minister of Defence. In January, Pratt informed Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld that the government wished to continue negotiations ‘with the objective of including Canada as a participant in the current missile defence program.’²¹²

Alarmed by these developments, anti-missile defence activists, peace groups, religious organizations, and like-minded think tanks met in early February and agreed to form the Canadian Campaign to Oppose Missile Defence (CCOMD). This loosely knit coalition would coordinate a national campaign against missile defence. Those who attended this meeting believed that MPs could be valuable allies in publicizing their concerns.²¹³

Later that month, the government showed it could still muster enough parliamentary support to join missile defence when the House defeated a Bloc motion calling for an end to missile defence negotiations. Once again, thirty Liberals used the opportunity to draw attention to their concerns by joining the Bloc and NDP in

²¹¹ Sheldon Alberts, “Missile defence delay gives critics hope,” *National Post*, September 9, 2003.

²¹² Department of National Defence, Letters Exchanged on Missile Defence, http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Focus/Canada-us/letter_e.asp#b.

²¹³ Staples, *Missile Defence: Round One*, 72-3.

supporting the motion.²¹⁴ Opinion soundings showed that parliamentary criticism of missile defence reflected what the public was thinking. One poll released in March showed that opposition to missile defence had grown to nearly 70 percent.²¹⁵

In the June 28 federal election the Liberals were reduced to minority status. This development would eventually have a significant impact on the missile defence debate, but in the short-term it did not stop the government from slowly moving towards participation in the program. In early August, Canada and the U.S. agreed to amend the NORAD agreement to make tracking and targeting information collected by the organization available for missile defence. Although Graham said this decision would “not affect or in any way determine” whether Canada eventually participated in the system, those on both side of the debate saw the move was a first step towards formal support.²¹⁶ Graham also promised that Parliament would have “input” into a final decision.²¹⁷

The most notable response to this issue came from the new Conservative Party led by Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, Alberta). Earlier votes on the issue suggested the government could count on Conservative support to secure parliamentary backing for a deal committing Canada to missile defence. However, while responding to media questions about the NORAD amendments, Conservative defence critic Gordon O'Connor

²¹⁴ Mike Blachfield, “Backbench Grits to side with Bloc on missile talks,” *National Post*, February 24, 2004; Mike Blachfield, “30 Liberal MPs join Bloc attack on missile plan,” *National Post*, February 25, 2004.

²¹⁵ Ispos-Reid, “Canadians’ Views on Future Canada-US Relations,” *Press Release*, March 31, 2004.

²¹⁶ See, for example, Paul Cellucci, *Unquiet Diplomacy*, (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2005), 179; Tonda MacCharles, “Ottawa lets U.S. use data from NORAD,” *Toronto Star*, August 6, 2004; Drew Fagan, “Canada opens door to missile shield,” *Globe and Mail*, August 6, 2004.

²¹⁷ John Ibbitson, “Martin twisting in the missile defence-wind,” *Globe and Mail*, August 6, 2004.

(Carleton-Mississippi-Mills, Ontario) declared his party would not commit to a firm position until the precise terms of Canadian participation were known. “We just don't sort of click our heels and salute and say ‘we're getting on with it.’ We have to know what we're signing on to. I just think it's a prudent thing to do.”²¹⁸

Meanwhile, the CCOMD developed contact with Liberal MPs opposed to missile defence, many of whom were members of the Quebec and women's caucuses. When the government caucus assembled in late August to plot strategy for the upcoming legislative session, activists and concerned Liberals seized the opportunity to further pressure the government. Shortly before this event, the CCOMD arranged for concerned Liberals to meet with retired U.S. Lieutenant-General Robert Gard, an outspoken missile defence critic, and Peggy Mason, the former Canadian ambassador for disarmament.²¹⁹ The CCOMD also sent letters of encouragement to Liberal MPs who had spoken out against the system and distributed briefing binders containing the latest critiques of missile defence to government and opposition MPs.²²⁰

On August 23, the first day of the caucus meetings, Liberal women expressed their concern about missile defence to the prime minister during a private meeting.²²¹ Anita Neville (Winnipeg-South Centre, Manitoba) emerged from this discussion warning Martin not to expect Liberal women to support involvement in the program. “Many feel strongly about it,” she said, “we did the right thing in [staying out of] Iraq, and it is the

²¹⁸ Tonda MacCharles, “Ottawa lets U.S. use data from NORAD,” *Toronto Star*, August, 6, 2004.

²¹⁹ Staples, *Missile Defence: Round One*, 142.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

²²¹ Gross and Lang, *Unexpected War*, 161.

right thing to do here.” Liberal Francoise Boivin (Gatineau, Quebec) told reporters that more than half the Liberal caucus was opposed to missile defence.²²²

The next day, interest groups arranged for Liberal MPs to address an anti-missile defence demonstration on Parliament Hill. It was during remarks to this gathering that Carolyn Parrish infamously referred to supporters of the system as a “coalition of the idiots.” This remark did not help her political career, but the more than 200 media stories it generated provided missile defence critics with opportunities to publicize their concerns.²²³

When the fall legislative session began in October 2004, the government accepted opposition amendments to the throne speech that included a requirement to hold a vote in Parliament on any missile defence deal reached with the U.S. This commitment was complicated by opinion polls showing that public support for missile defence continued to decline as antipathy towards the Bush administration grew.²²⁴ Members of Parliament also faced growing pressures in their constituencies. In formulating his own opinion, Liberal David Anderson (Victoria, B.C.) said “I will certainly be taking into account the perspective of those 2,000 constituents who took the time to sign a petition [opposing missile defence], and turn it into my office.”²²⁵

Liberals on both sides of the debate lobbied their colleagues on the issue. Parrish sent a letter to all Liberal MPs and Senators describing participation in missile defence as

²²² Alexander Panetta, “Liberal women against missile defence,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, August 25, 2004; Les Whittington and Mary Gordon, “PM warned on missile plan,” *Toronto Star*, August 24, 2004.

²²³ Mary Gordon and Les Whittington, “U.S. missile defence a ‘coalition of idiots’: MP,” *Toronto Star*, August 26, 2004; John Ivison, “Kill Parrish’s microphone,” *National Post*, August 27, 2004; John Ibbitson, “The Parrish Paradox,” *Globe and Mail*, August 27, 2004; Staples, 152.

²²⁴ Bill Curry, “Public backed missile shield talks in ’04,” *Globe and Mail*, July 6, 2005.

a “sell-out,” and questioning why the government had shown only “weak and insipid” support for a program it claimed was vital to national security.²²⁶ At Martin’s request, Graham personally lobbied individual MPs and had department officials hold special briefings for Liberal MPs in an effort to shore up caucus support for missile defence.²²⁷

Meanwhile, the Conservatives continued to say that the government should not count on their support in a vote on the issue. O’Connor warned that Martin “could get a surprising result in Parliament.” A Conservative official admitted that political considerations were driving his party’s approach to this issue. “The goal posts are moving on this, because there’s a recognition that missile defence just doesn’t sell in Quebec or among urban voters in Ontario.”²²⁸

To draw attention to its concerns, the CCOMD suggested that opposition MPs urge the foreign affairs committee to conduct public consultations before the government made a final decision.²²⁹ McDonough introduced such a motion at the October 20 committee meeting. The CCOMD sent committee members messages urging them to support the NDP proposal, but the motion was defeated by Liberals and Conservatives.

Public and caucus opposition to missile defence, the evolving Conservative position, and the commitment to hold a vote on an agreement in Parliament presented Martin with a political dilemma. With the Bloc, NDP and some Liberal MPs solidly

²²⁵ *Victoria Weekend*, “Missile shield protest won’t sway Anderson,” December 3, 2004.

²²⁶ Joanne Laucius. “Missile defence plan a ‘sellout’ Liberal MP says,” *Ottawa Citizen*. October 6, 2004.

²²⁷ Robert Fife, “Liberal MPs are pushed to back missile shield,” *The Gazette*, November 2, 2004; Stein and Lang, *Unexpected War*, 162.

²²⁸ Mike Blanchfield, “PM frustrates Cabinet with indecision on missile defence,” *National Post*, November 6, 2004; Sean Gordon, “Tories soften missile defence stance,” *Calgary Herald*, November 10, 2004.

²²⁹ Staples, *Missile Defence: Round One*, 178.

opposed to missile defence, Martin needed Conservative support to win a vote in the minority parliament. But committing Canada to a role in the program with support from a party that Liberals accused of sharing foreign policy views with the unpopular Bush administration would create its own problems. In particular, some Liberals worried that allying with the Conservatives on missile defence would hurt the minority government's ability to work with the NDP in the House of Commons while others worried it could cost the government support among left-leaning voters in the next election.²³⁰

In late November, Bush made his first state visit to Canada. Canadian officials were surprised when Bush pressed Martin on the issue during a private meeting as the issue was not on the official agenda. During subsequent discussions with Harper, the president reportedly scolded the Conservative leader for not showing more support for missile defence and using the issue for partisan purposes.²³¹ After these private meetings, Bush and Martin held a press conference at which the president decided it was time to practice some "public diplomacy."²³² Frustrated with Canadian indecision, Bush told reporters he hoped the two countries would "move forward on ballistic missile defence co-operation."²³³ He repeated this appeal during his keynote speech in Halifax the next day. Instead of helping Martin, these remarks only seemed to underscore the connection between the unpopular president and missile defence.

Opponents of missile defence saw the president's remarks as an opportunity to further pressure the government and organized letter writing campaigns and petitions to

²³⁰ Kate Jaimet, "Martin seen on 'tightrope' over missile defence issue," *National Post*, August 11, 2004.

²³¹ Alexander Panetta, "Bush lectured Harper on missile defence," *Edmonton Journal*, February 21, 2005.

²³² Cellucci, *Unquiet Diplomacy*, 163.

²³³ *Globe and Mail*, "The man who dared say missile defence out loud," December 3, 2004.

make their views known. Liberal MPs reported being “flooded” with emails, letters and phone calls from constituents objecting to missile defence in the days following the Bush visit.²³⁴ In Parliament, the opposition kept up the pressure and put almost 100 questions to the government about missile defence between the time of Bush’s visit and the end of February. The Conservatives claimed that Martin was damaging Canada-U.S. relations by sending mixed signals about Canada’s position on the program. Using information supplied by the CCOMD, the NDP and Bloc criticized the government for not immediately ruling out participation in missile defence and jeopardizing Canada’s longstanding opposition to the weaponization of space.²³⁵

In early December, Quebec Liberals passed a motion opposing missile defence at a provincial policy convention. The women’s caucus succeeded in getting a similar motion put on the agenda for the Liberal national policy convention in March. It was expected that party members would overwhelmingly support the measure. Senior Liberals said the government should not make a decision about missile defence until after hearing from the party’s rank-and-file. In a minority parliament, Liberal Senator Terry Mercer (Nova Scotia) warned that “it might not be too long before we’re back at the polls and these are the people who are going to be knocking on doors and putting up signs and making phone calls on behalf of candidates across the country. It’s important that we listen to them.”²³⁶

²³⁴ Jeff Sallot, “Martin takes heat on missile defence,” *Globe and Mail*, December 3, 2004; *Globe and Mail*, “Quebec Liberals reject U.S. missile defence plan,” December 4, 2004.

²³⁵ See, for example, Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, December 2, 2004, 2203; *Ibid.*, December 3, 2004, 2256; *Ibid.*, December 6, 2004, 2312; *Ibid.*, February 2, 2005, 2971; *Ibid.*, February 10, 3351.

²³⁶ Michael Blanchfield, “Senior Liberals warn PM on missile shield,” *National Post*, December 30, 2004.

The government tried to appease its critics by attaching conditions to Canadian participation and holding additional briefings for its own MPs, but opinion polls continued to show that a majority of Canadians opposed the Bush administration and missile defence.²³⁷ With Canadians steadfastly against the program and Liberals poised to oppose Canadian involvement in missile defence at their upcoming policy convention, Martin could not delay a decision any longer. On February 24, the government announced that Canada would not participate in missile defence. Martin told reporters that Canada would continue to work with the U.S. to enhance continental security but would not concentrate its efforts on missile defence. This decision received support from a strong majority of Canadians.²³⁸

Conclusion: Parliamentary Politics

The case of missile defence illustrates parliamentary influence on Canadian foreign policy and how the process that produces this influence connects Parliament to the domestic environment. Canadians were wary of missile defence from the outset and became more skeptical about the President Bush and the program after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Constituents and interest groups brought their concerns to the attention of parliamentarians. Members of Parliament who shared these concerns worked with interest groups to oppose missile defence and Canadian plans to join the system.

²³⁷ Bruce Champion-Smith, "Missile Support Plummet," *Toronto Star*, February 12, 2005; Stein and Lang, *Unexpected War*, 170.

²³⁸ Alexander Panetta, "PM gets thumbs-up on missile defence," *Chronicle Herald*, March 23, 2005.

As one MP put it, “missile defence was more about domestic politics than sound foreign policy.”²³⁹ Parliament and its members played important roles in shaping the political context in which the government made its decision on missile defence. The government recognized the potential problems associated with signing onto missile defence over strong objections from caucus. Caucus opposition was strongest amongst women and Quebec MPs who represented groups of voters that the Liberals would need support from to regain a majority. The minority government also worried that having to enter an election with Liberals split on the issue could hinder its ability to run an effective campaign. Graham spent considerable time trying to shore up caucus support for missile defence, but had little success. In the end, criticism of missile defence from Liberal MPs helped slow the government decision-making process, which gave anti-missile defence activists and MPs more time to make their concerns about the program known to Canadians through their public relations campaign.

Martin faced additional challenges after losing his majority in June 2004. The evolving Conservative position placed the government in a ‘no-win’ situation. In the minority parliament, the Liberals would not win a vote on missile defence without Conservative support. However, the government also recognized the potential political consequences of signing on to missile defence with help from a party that it often accused having the same foreign policy views as the unpopular Bush administration.

²³⁹ Confidential Source, Personal Interview, December 3, 2005.

CHAPTER FOUR: PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN FOREIGN POLICY

RECONSIDERED

Nearly twenty five years ago, Michael Hawes suggested that the literature had comprehensively described Parliament's role in making Canadian foreign policy. As he put it, 'While it does not seem likely, it is possible that more subtle forms of parliamentary influence are quite important to our understanding of Canadian foreign policy. The literature simply does not tell us!'²⁴⁰

But little has changed since Eayrs provided his initial analysis of Parliament's role in external issues. To be sure, Taras points to the need to develop a broader approach, but he stops short of providing that approach himself. In the absence of more recent and detailed analysis, it is still assumed that Parliament has a limited role in external issues because its members have few opportunities to participate in the policy process and even fewer incentives to use those that do exist.

This thesis has described how the executive dominance model has prevented the emergence of a more complete understanding of Parliament's role in Canadian foreign policy. In a theoretical sense, it treats Parliament as an isolated institution and does not explore its connection to the domestic environment. This means that Eayrs and others do not appreciate the political nature of parliamentary influence or explain how this influence is exercised. In more practical terms, the executive dominance model narrowly defines parliamentary involvement in foreign policy and does not fully appreciate the informal opportunities that MPs have to participate in the policy process.

²⁴⁰ Hawes, *Principal Power, Middle Power, Or Satellite?*, 15.

This thesis has addressed these weaknesses by setting out a new framework that adopts a broader approach and provides a more subtle understanding of parliamentary influence that Hawes claimed was lacking. The framework shows that Parliament is not an isolated institution, but is instead connected to the public, media, and other actors in the domestic political environment. While it does not claim that Parliament is always a primary actor in the policy process, this framework does provide a more systematic means of understanding the process through which Parliament and its members can sometimes influence and contribute to Canadian foreign policy.

The executive dominance model sees no need to explain this process because it assumes that Parliament has little influence on foreign policy. Nossal, Tucker and others admit that Parliament can draw attention to particular issues, but they treat such cases as 'one-offs' and unusual deviations from normal circumstances that do not warrant further explanation. Taras does little better when describing the process that produces parliamentary influence. He recognizes that Parliament is home to 'political activity' that can help shape the political agenda but does not explain that such activity focuses on interaction between Parliament and the domestic environment.

The framework introduced in Chapter Two describes this interaction and provides a greater appreciation of the process underlying parliamentary influence through the concepts of incentives and opportunities. These concepts help place Parliament in a wider context and connect what happens inside the institution to what goes on outside it. The personal interests of MPs, public opinion and partisanship provide incentives for parties and their members to pay attention to international affairs.

Canadians have long demonstrated their interest in some international issues, such as those involving Canada-U.S. relations and the deployment of the country's armed forces. However, societal trends, such as domestication and immigration, provide more reasons for Canadians to be interested in a wider range of international issues. Domestication means the foreign policy is not limited to distant and overseas issues that have little impact on voters. Instead, some external issues can tangibly affect Canadians and cannot be ignored by those who represent them. Immigration similarly creates segments of voters that have strong personal connections to some overseas issues. As the Ukraine case study illustrates, members of ethnic communities often retain strong links to their former homelands and closely follow Canadian relations with these countries.

Members of Parliament can face considerable public pressure over foreign policy issues. Canadians make their views on international issues known to parliamentarians through letter writing campaigns, petitions, and personal representations. Interest group involvement in the case studies examined in this study also shows that a number of organizations have the resources, committed memberships and connections needed to effectively lobby parliamentarians and policymakers. In issues ranging from humanitarian crises and foreign investment to overseas elections and missile defence, constituents and interest groups demonstrated a willingness to make their foreign policy views known to elected officials. These pressures will only continue to grow as the line between domestic and foreign policy continues to fade and newer ethnic communities become more established and develop their organizational capacities.

While Nossal believes that representing public views on foreign policy remains "problematic" for Members of Parliament, the cases examined in this thesis show that

parliamentarians remain aware of the public's foreign policy concerns and work to address these in Ottawa.²⁴¹ Contact with Ukrainian groups led some MPs participate in election observer missions in the Ukrainian presidential elections. The concerns that constituents and interest groups raised about missile defence encouraged Liberal MPs to publicly oppose Canadian participation in the scheme.

Growing public interest in international affairs elevates the political importance of foreign policy, which means it also assumes a larger role in the ongoing political battle between parties. As they do in other areas, parties underscore their differences on foreign policy matters and criticize positions taken by their opponents in an effort to attract voters. The media attention given to activities in the House of Commons makes it an ideal forum in which parties can communicate these differences to voters. As domestication, immigration, and other developments make the public more aware of international affairs and build their interest in particular issues, foreign policy will become increasingly partisan and a topic of greater discussion in Parliament.

In response to these incentives, Members of Parliament have a range of opportunities to potentially influence or contribute to the policy process. Votes, debates, question period and committee work represent the formal opportunities through which Parliament can influence government decisions and policies. These institutional activities tend to focus on political jousting between parties, not the work of individual MPs, as party discipline usually discourages members from straying too far from the party line. While there are legitimate concerns about the degree of control that parties

²⁴¹ Nossal, *Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 272.

exercise over parliamentary proceedings, question period and committee work can still provide opportunities through which parliamentary influence can be exerted.

The potential impact of these opportunities, especially question period, becomes clearer when Parliament is connected to the domestic environment. In addition to giving parliamentarians and their parties reasons to focus on international issues, the public is the primary audience for activities in the House of Commons. Parliament remains a politically important forum that provides the opposition with opportunities to criticize government decisions and policies. The media is the conduit that transmits this criticism to the public, which ultimately controls the government's fate. Although the government uses media coverage of activities in Parliament to defend and demonstrate the wisdom of its decisions and proposals, the House of Commons remains the 'opposition's show,' and provides parties wanting to form a government with an important means of communicating with voters between elections.

This process highlights the political nature of parliamentary influence. Cabinet ministers are elected politicians and naturally sensitive to how they themselves, their respective departments and the government as a whole are portrayed in the media. Even if this criticism does not determine how Canadians vote, it might contribute to the overall impression they have of the government. In this way, parliamentary criticism remains relevant to the policy process through the threat – whether real or perceived – that it could hurt the political fortunes of policymakers.

The framework also shows that a comprehensive analysis of Parliament's role in foreign policy issues must account for the work that MPs do outside the House of Commons and committee meetings. Parliamentary involvement in the policy process is

not limited to formal proceedings in Parliament. Members of Parliament also have informal opportunities to work on external issues that concern their constituents. As this study shows, the government caucus has been influential on a number of occasions. Parliamentarians can also make important contributions to Canadian foreign policy through caucus meetings, parliamentary associations, working with interest groups or traveling overseas.

Working with interest groups offers MPs the prospect of playing important roles in foreign policy debates. Allying with Members of Parliament to address mutual concerns can provide interest groups with access to policymakers in Ottawa and valuable spokespersons who have established ties to the media. Supplying opposition parties with information to use against the government in question period provides interest groups with a means of publicizing their concerns without having to confront the government themselves. For example, the Ukrainian-Canadian community recruited parliamentarians to help raise awareness about government interference in Ukraine's presidential election and lobby government officials to enlarge the Turner-led observer mission.

These alliances can also further the interest of parliamentarians and their parties. Having interest groups provide his party with firsthand reports about events in Biafra provided Conservative leader Robert Stanfield with valuable information to use against the government in question period. Similarly, interest groups prepared position papers and arranged special briefings for Liberal MPs who opposed to missile defence. Parliamentarians that become strong advocates for ethnic communities in their ridings no doubt hope that their efforts will be rewarded during the next election.

The confidentiality surrounding deliberations of senior policymakers and the number of issues and competing perspectives that must be considered when examining complex policy questions make it difficult to clearly determine which factors weighed most heavily on the decision-making process. However, through the process described by the framework of incentives and opportunities, Parliament can be seen as being influential at different points in the policymaking process.

The actual impact of parliamentary influence is as varied as the incentives and opportunities that parliamentarians have to participate in the policy process. Well planned opposition attacks in the House of Commons can generate or sustain public interest in particular issues. The ability to focus public attention on certain matters allows Parliament to shape the political agenda and determine which issues the government must respond to without necessarily determining the details of the response itself. This was the case when sustained criticism from the opposition and interest groups increased awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Biafra and persuaded the Liberal government to take a more activist role. While critics were able to place the issue on the public agenda, the government remained in firm control of the details of Canadian policy and adopted a more cautious approach than its critics were demanding.

Parliamentary criticism may cause a government to reconsider a particular decision or policy. Some believe this was the case when Clark abandoned his promise to move Canada's Israeli embassy to Jerusalem. Opposition to missile defence amongst Liberal MPs was also an important factor in the government's decision to abandon its plans to join missile defence. This last case demonstrates that that parliamentary criticism does not necessarily come only from the opposition.

Again, to appreciate the nature of parliamentary influence one must connect Parliament to the domestic environment and understand that the public is the audience for activities in the House of Commons. It is difficult for any government to indefinitely ignore parliamentary criticism that reflects or appears to reflect public opinion. Actions taken by the government in the cases noted above were motivated more by the belief that parliamentary concerns were resonating and undermining its credibility with voters than the actual persuasiveness of the opposition arguments in Parliament. The Biafra example illustrates this point as parliamentary influence was only sustained while the government believed opposition criticism reflected wider public concern. After realizing that this was not the case, the government reasserted its initial policy and took a harder line against its critics.

Parliament can also exercise a more refined influence through its standing committees. The studies produced by committees provide opportunities for members of different parties to cooperatively review specific issues or areas of international affairs and make policy recommendations to the government. The House foreign affairs committee played such a role in the development of Canadian policy towards foreign investment in the 1970s through recommending the creation of a screening agency to review overseas investments in the country. Consultations conducted by the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee stimulated wider discussion about free trade and gave credibility to its suggestion that Canada pursue a bilateral deal with the United States.

The notion of 'influence' implies that Parliament is somehow involved in pressuring the government into addressing an issue or changing a policy when it otherwise would not. However, this thesis also shows that parliamentarians can make

more positive contributions to the policy process outside the confrontational and partisan dynamics that dominate proceedings in the House of Commons. The work that some Members of Parliament did as international observers during the Ukrainian presidential elections in 2004 demonstrated Canada's commitment to ensuring the vote was free and fair. Cabinet ministers specifically cited the firsthand reports and evidence provided by government and opposition MPs when explaining why Canada rejected the election results. David Pratt's work on policy towards conflict in Sierra Leone and assistance that Dan McTeague provided to help secure William Sampson's release from a Saudi jail also demonstrate the meaningful work that MPs can do on foreign policy issues.

The case studies examined in the previous chapters show that parliamentary involvement in a given issue is not necessarily limited to either formal proceedings in House or more informal opportunities. Some opportunities may prove to be more effective than others in certain issues, but parties and their elected members will use any means available to make political gains and address those issues that concern their constituents or the public in general. For example, question period and committee work were the primary means that opposition parties used to focus public attention on Biafra, but the trip that MacDonald and Brewin made to the region, and their efforts to relay their observations to Canadian after returning home were instrumental in generating media interest in the issue. In the Ukraine example, parliamentarians gave media interviews, attended public rallies and wrote opinion pieces for national newspapers. They also sponsored motions and emergency debates in the House of Commons to highlight concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.

A final factor to consider when assessing the nature of parliamentary influence is the dynamics that minority parliaments inject into the policy process. The framework of incentives and opportunities describes the process that produces parliamentary influence remains the same under majority and minority governments. But the impact of this influence becomes more obvious in the latter. The issues of foreign investment and missile defence, which evolved under majorities and minorities, illustrate this point. Although the compromises and concessions that Prime Ministers Trudeau and Martin made while leading minorities made parliamentary influence more obvious, committee work and lobbying within the government were important even when their governments enjoyed majorities in the Commons.

Parliamentary influence becomes more obvious under minority governments as simple math dictates that governments must accommodate some opposition demands to pass legislation and conduct other business in the House and committees. This need to compromise was demonstrated when the Liberal government amended its initial foreign investment legislation to accommodate NDP demands and secure parliamentary support for the *Foreign Investment Review Act*. More recently, the opposition parties used their combined majority to amend the Martin government's throne speech to require the government to bring any agreement on missile defence to Parliament for a vote.

Those in opposition are not the only ones who can achieve an elevated importance. Government backbenchers can also exercise more influence in minority parliaments. With only a few votes determining the fate of a bill or even the government, support from private members cannot be taken for granted and there is a greater onus on ministers to consider the views of caucus when making decisions and policies. Not only

could the government risk losing votes by alienating members of its own caucus, but proceeding with a particular policy that is unpopular in caucus may create divisions at a time when the party solidarity needed to win an election is obviously important. The revised foreign investment legislation passed under a Liberal government with NDP support in 1973 also allowed Trudeau to address concerns from those in his own party who were calling for tougher regulation of overseas investment in Canada. Criticism of missile defence from Liberal MPs was a significant factor in the missile defence debate. The government made efforts to bolster caucus support for the program, but had little success. In the end, Liberal opposition to missile defence was an important factor in the government's decision not to participate in the system.

It is difficult to reconcile evidence presented here with the view that Parliament assumes a "distinctly inferior role" in external issues. To be sure, proceedings in the House of Commons, committees, or the work done by parliamentarians outside the public eye will not always have a clear impact on the policy process. A number of the concerns that outside observers and parliamentarians themselves have expressed about limits on parliamentary influence on the policy process have been noted in this study. The competing demands and heavy workloads that Members of Parliament must contend with limits the time they have to spend on foreign policy. Institutional norms and procedural issues also limit the opportunities that parties and their members have to get involved in the policy process.

In spite of these concerns, this thesis shows that Parliament can have an impact without a decision-making role. This is not a new development as Parliament played a significant role in Biafra, the *Manhattan*, and foreign investment through the process

described by the framework of incentives and opportunities. These were all high profile issues in Canadian politics not long after Eayrs provided his initial analysis and well before Nossal and others reaffirmed and added to the model that Eayrs established. Developments such as domestication and immigration simply provide more reasons for the public, political parties and parliamentarians to take an interest in foreign affairs and focus on international issues inside and outside Parliament.

More important, the framework developed in Chapter Two demonstrates how this impact actually comes about. The framework provides a simple but systematic and comprehensive means of tracing the evolution of parliamentary involvement and influence in the policy process. Examining the “incentives” explains the reasons why certain matters receive attention in Parliament or from individual parliamentarians. The notion of “opportunities” highlights the various means and activities through which parties and their members respond to these incentives and participate in the policy process. Merging these concepts into a single framework connects Parliament to the domestic environment. Once this connection is made, it becomes clear why Parliament should not be overlooked when trying to explain the making of Canadian foreign policy.

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