INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FROM THE INSIDE:

Ukraine's Utilization of Diaspora Populations to Influence Politics in Canada

By

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Author's declaration

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I, the undersigned, **Nataliia Dikalchuk**, candidate for the **Master's Program in Public Policy**, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research. All sources have been properly credited in the text, notes, and the bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. Furthermore, I declare that no part of this thesis has been generated using artificial intelligence (ChatGPT).

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Ethical Approval

The thesis "International Relations from the inside: Ukraine's Utilization of Diaspora Populations To Influence Politics in Canada" does not present any potential ethical concerns. The research focuses on Ukraine's strategic engagement with its diaspora in Canada, examining how advocacy networks, lobbying groups, and diplomatic efforts shape political outcomes. The study relies on qualitative data, including case studies and interviews with relevant stakeholders. However, all interviews will comply with ethical research standards, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The thesis does not involve vulnerable populations or sensitive personal data. The research analyzes public advocacy efforts and institutional strategies rather than private or covert activities. The individuals and organizations studied operate within legal and transparent frameworks, reducing any risk of harm or ethical dilemmas.

All information collected will remain strictly confidential. Participants' names or any identifying details will not appear in the final thesis or any publication resulting from this research. Data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Moreover, participation is entirely voluntary. Interviewees are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. In this case, the data will be deleted and not used in the study.

Furthermore, this study maintains an objective approach, avoiding undue influence on political actors or policy processes. It aims to contribute to academic discourse on diaspora politics and international relations without promoting any specific political agenda.

Nataliia Dikalchuk, 25.03.2025

Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate Ukraine's strategic use of its diaspora population in Canada as a tool for influencing politics and international affairs. The diaspora serves as a channel for achieving Ukraine's foreign policy objectives, with consideration for fields such as military support, economic assistance, and NATO membership. By examining historical and contemporary cases, the authors illustrate how the Ukrainian government utilizes advocacy networks, lobbying groups, and diplomacy within the Ukrainian diaspora to shape public opinion and influence decision-makers abroad. The research examines the diaspora's role as a significant actor that mobilizes to influence political agendas and support Ukraine's interests abroad. Drawing on qualitative data and case studies, this thesis adds to an understanding of the relations between migration, foreign and diaspora politics, shedding light on the influence of smaller states within the global political landscape. The analysis provides developing policy recommendations for how Ukraine can further strengthen cooperation with their North American diasporas to shape favourable policy decisions.

Keywords: Ukrainian diaspora, Ukrainian Canadians, diaspora politicization, diaspora studies, international relations, foreign policy.

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I. Introduction

Over the past five decades, diaspora studies have emerged as a distinct field, with research increasingly recognizing diasporas as vital bridges between their homelands and host countries, functioning as influential transnational actors (Shain & Barth 2003; Adamson 2012). Diasporas as dispersed ethnic or national groups across different countries have influenced international politics since ancient times and continue to do so (Diamanti-Karanou 2015, 1). However, the nature and extent of their engagement with both countries vary considerably. While some diasporas focus primarily on cultural preservation and economic remittances, others, such as the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, have leveraged geopolitical crises to position themselves as key political players advocating for specific foreign policy outcomes (Gamlen 2008; Ragazzi 2014).

Nowadays, more governments recognize diaspora populations as important policy actors who can actually influence politics both in homeland and host country as a part of "soft power". Canadian society is a reflection of multiculturalism that arises. Canada is ranked 8th globally for having the highest number of foreign-born residents (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2020). Moreover, The Queen's University research on multiculturalism in 2020 (Figure 1) highlights Canada as one of the democracies with the strongest level of success in policies that secure diversity.

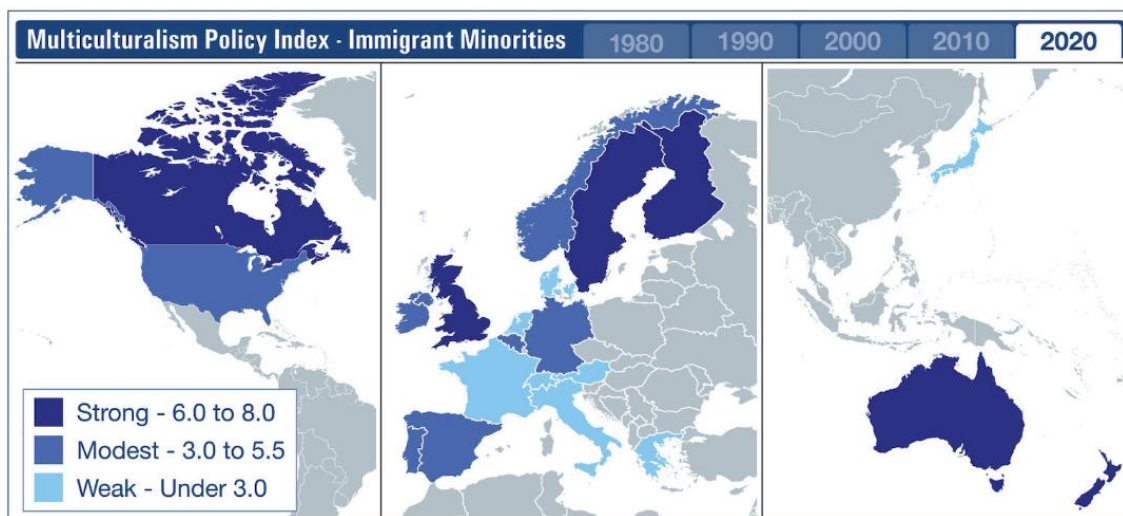Mapping the strength of multiculturalism policies:
21 countries, 2020

Figure 1. Queen's University. "Multiculturalism Policies in Contemporary Democracies". URL:
https://www.queensu.ca/mcp/.

Recognizing this, migrant diasporas have become increasingly vocal in advocating for their rights and pushing for greater recognition and support within the host society. Such groups as Ukrainian, Black, Chinese, Indian, Hong Kong, Sikh, Muslim and other diasporas are powerful agents in contributing to national discussions on policy and societal issues. They have leveraged their collective influence to advocate for racial equality, immigration reform, social justice, pressing for policies that reflect their diverse experiences and challenges.

The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada ranks among the largest globally. As reported in the 2016 Census, approximately 1.36 million individuals—nearly 4% of Canada's population—identified Ukrainian as part of their ethnic heritage (Statistics Canada 2017). This number has grown further following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Between March 17, 2022, and April 1, 2024, 298,128 individuals arrived in Canada under the Canada-Ukraine

Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program, which facilitated expedited work permit processing (Government of Canada 2024). The ongoing war has further underscored the importance of the Ukrainian diaspora, as international support for Ukraine's security has become increasingly crucial.

The politicization of diasporas is a unique phenomenon. While many diasporas maintain cultural, economic, and social ties with their countries of origin, the degree to which they become significant political players varies widely. Some communities continue to focus primarily on cultural or economic matters, while others—like the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada—have capitalized on geopolitical crises to position themselves as key influencers in shaping the policies of their host countries toward their homeland.

Despite Canada's substantial support to Ukraine, there is a prevailing belief that its effectiveness is hindered by insufficient engagement between Ukrainian authorities and the diaspora, compounded by ineffective communication with the Canadian government.

The Countries Committing the Most Aid to Ukraine

Countries committing the most aid to Ukraine from Jan. 24, 2022 to Aug. 31, 2024 (in billion U.S. dollars)

	Country	Amount	% of 2021 GDP
1	United States	92.7	0.39
2	EU-Institutions	48.0	
3	Germany	16.5	0.38
4	United Kingdom	15.0	0.47
5	Japan	9.9	0.20
6	Canada	8.5	0.42
7	Denmark	7.5	1.86
8	Netherlands	7.0	0.68
...			
10	France	5.0	0.17
...			
14	Italy	2.5	0.12

Military / Financial / Humanitarian

Converted from Euros on Oct. 11, 2024
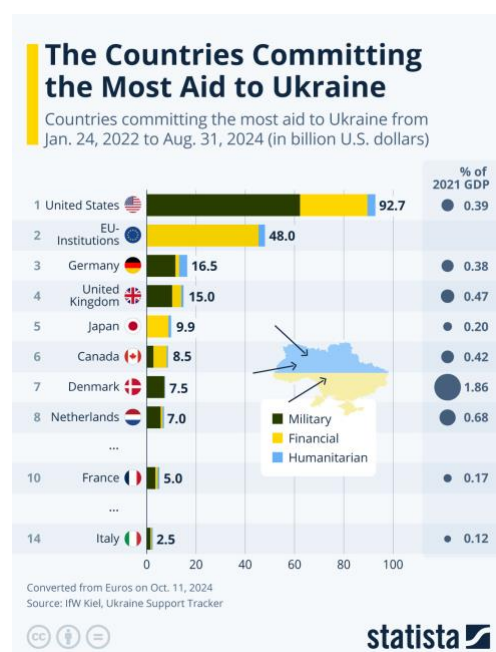Source: IfW Kiel, Ukraine Support Tracker

statista

Figure 2. Statista. Distribution of military, humanitarian and financial help by countries.

There is limited research on the specific factors that most significantly contribute to the influence of diasporas, particularly the Ukrainian diaspora, in Canadian politics. A preliminary literature review suggests that past studies have predominantly focused on the influence of larger, well-established diaspora populations, such as those from India, Israel, or China (Sheffer 2003). There has been insufficient attention given to how smaller states strategically mobilize their diaspora communities to impact the politics of host countries. Moreover, much of the existing diaspora literature pertains to the roles these communities play in their home countries through the economic or social impacts they have on their countries of origin, rather than on the host country (Pradhan, Mohapatra 2020). The current gaps in diaspora literature reveal the necessity for more targeted research that examines the unique role of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, especially in light of recent geopolitical events. This thesis aims to address this gap by investigating the conditions under which the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada has become politicized and how it has sought to influence Canadian foreign policy. Specifically, it explores the lobbying strategies, advocacy networks, and institutional mechanisms that have proven most effective in advancing Ukraine's foreign policy objectives, particularly against the backdrop of Russia's aggression. By situating this case within broader theories of diaspora engagement, this research enhances our understanding of how smaller states can leverage their diasporas to amplify their global influence, an area currently lacking in research. Furthermore, it underscores the need for a more strategic approach to diaspora-state relations, offering policy recommendations on how Ukraine can better engage with its Canadian diaspora to strengthen bilateral relations and advance national interests. More specifically, the following research questions must be addressed:

1. How has the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada been politicized?

2. What lobbying strategies, advocacy networks, and institutional mechanisms has the Ukrainian diaspora employed to influence Canadian foreign policy?

3. To what extent has the Ukrainian government in Canada effectively engaged with its diaspora in shaping foreign policy outcomes, and where are the key gaps in communication and collaboration?

To answer these questions, following sub-objectives should be addressed:

1. To provide a comprehensive review of literature that examines political diaspora and how diasporas become politicized.

2. To analyze the factors that have led to the politicization of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada.

3. To identify the methods and strategies successfully used by Ukrainian diaspora groups in lobbying and advocacy efforts.

4. To propose strategic policy options aimed at strengthening the partnership between Ukraine, its diaspora in Canada, and, by extension, the Canadian government.

Building on Sheffer's concept of diaspora politics, this study utilizes the theoretical frameworks of transnationalism (Portes 1996) and political mobilization (Sheffer 2003) to explore the factors and processes that drive the transformation of diasporas from passive, cultural communities into active political actors. By applying this approach, the research analyzes how the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada mobilizes to influence Canadian foreign policy, highlighting the role of diaspora communities in shaping transnational political processes and enhancing their homeland's international influence.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, designed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Ukrainian diaspora's role within the

Canadian socio-political and cultural landscape. During the research, such data collection methods were used: a) literature, documentation and statistics review. A comprehensive overview of existing knowledge on the topic serves as the foundation for understanding the concept of political diaspora and the preconditions of diaspora's politicization; b) expert interviews. In-depth interviews with policymakers, NGO representatives, community leaders to gather insights on diaspora activities and engagement in Canadian policy making;

c) observation. Analysis of diaspora organizations' activities, such as public hearings, cultural events, and advocacy campaigns;

d) case study. A detailed examination of a specific lobbying campaign provided by Ukrainians in Canada.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for Ukrainian policymakers across various countries, offering best practices for effectively lobbying and advancing Ukrainian interests on the international level. By focusing on the case of Ukraine and its diaspora in Canada, this thesis aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice in international relations, contributing to a nuanced understanding of how domestic actors abroad shape foreign policy, and how smaller states can capitalize on diaspora engagement to achieve strategic objectives, especially in a crisis.

The thesis is structured into five chapters. The introduction clearly outlines the research problem, objectives, significance, and scope of your study. The first chapter describes the theoretical framework and provides an overview of research on diaspora mobilization. The second chapter presents the research methodology, including the rationale for selecting particular methods. The third chapter presents an empirical analysis based on archival research, interviews, case studies, and observations. The fourth chapter provides policy

recommendations for Ukrainian policymakers, according to the gaps found during fieldwork. The concluding chapter summarizes the findings and offers topics for future research.

II. Literature Review

1. Understanding of Political Diaspora: Conceptual Framework

Diaspora is a complex and multifaceted concept. Traditionally viewed through the lens of cultural preservation and economic remittances, diasporas are now increasingly understood as a subject of international politics and law that is significant in the modern world. The evolving role of diasporas as political actors has gained increasing scholarly attention over the past several decades. American researcher Robin Cohen in his book "Global Diaspora: An Introduction" (2008) described 4 main stages that diaspora research has gone through: 1. 1960-1970s – numerous applied studies on the resettlement of Irish, Jewish, Armenian and African communities appeared; 2. 1980s – consideration of diaspora by separating the characteristics of social ethnic groups living far from their historical homeland (political refugees, immigrants, oppressed ethnic minorities and others); 3. Early 1990s – determination of the relevance of the term for considering problems of national identity and migration; 4. 1997 – to the present. The fourth phase of diaspora research, according to Cohen, is due to the intensification of globalization processes, in which the activities of diasporas acquire a political dimension. Modern scientific research in this area aims to examine the political activity of these groups, the possibility of using the potential of diasporas in international politics to strengthen political and socio-economic ties between states. Before exploring the theory behind diaspora, we need to comprehend the concept. As Gerring says, concepts are the building blocks of all theoretical structures and the formation of many concepts is legitimately theory-driven (Gerring 1999, 381).

Understanding the concept of political diaspora is essential for analyzing how transnational communities influence foreign policy in host countries. While the term "diaspora" has been widely used across disciplines, its political dimensions require a more focused conceptual approach. This section adopts Adcock and Collier's (2001) four-level framework of concept formation to systematically define and operationalize "political diaspora."

• Level 1: Background concept. Task: Conceptualization

The concept of diaspora eludes a singular, universally accepted definition, given its dynamic and multifaceted nature; however, scholars have reached a consensus on a core set of attributes—such as common origin, collective memory, transnational connectivity (through politics and economics), and cultural retention—that fundamentally characterize the phenomenon. For instance, Robin Cohen explains diaspora as a multifaceted phenomenon that presupposes the dispersion of peoples from their ancestral homelands, combined with the maintenance of a collective identity, cultural memory, and enduring transnational ties (1997). Another diaspora scientist, Nina Glick Schiller, conceptualizes diaspora as migrant communities that are constituted through persistent engagement—social, economic, and political—with both their homeland and host societies, forming complex transnational social fields (1992). Stuart Hall (1990), from a cultural perspective, highlights the evolving and re-articulated nature of diasporic identities, shaped by historical memory and lived migration experiences.

Building on this foundation, the concept of political diaspora introduces an additional dimension: the active mobilization of diaspora groups to influence political decisions in host or home countries. This includes lobbying, advocacy, coalition-building, and participation in electoral or diplomatic processes. Sheffer (2003) defines diaspora politics as the political

activities undertaken by diasporic communities aimed at influencing both homeland and hostland policies. Importantly, politicization is not inherent to all diasporas—it is contingent on contextual factors like geopolitical crises, opportunity structures in the host country, and the organizational capacity of diaspora institutions.

• Level 2: Systematized Concept. Task: Operationalization

To move from broad definitions to analytical utility, this study operationalizes "political diaspora" by identifying specific, observable features that distinguish politicized diasporas from culturally or economically oriented ones. This involves narrowing the concept to include only those communities that exhibit sustained political engagement, structured organization, and a strategic focus on foreign policy outcomes.

• Level 3: Indicators

To operationalize "diaspora", we define indicators (measurable criteria) that refer to quantifiable factors to assess whether and how a diaspora functions as a political actor:

1. Geographic Distribution and Size

    - The scale and distribution of the diaspora population, which influences its political potential through numbers and regional concentration.

Example: The Ukrainian Canadian community, with over 1.3 million members, is one of the largest and most regionally organized diasporas in Canada giving a potential for actions.

2. Political and Civic Engagement
-   The number and activity level of diaspora-led organizations engaged in lobbying, advocacy, and electoral participation.

Example: The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and its role in policy lobbying and organizing political campaigns related to Ukraine.

3. Transnational Connectivity and Homeland Engagement

   - Evidence of formal or informal links to homeland institutions, including collaboration with government bodies or diaspora engagement strategies.

Example: Ukrainian government outreach to diaspora groups during wartime for advocacy, funding, and international solidarity.

4. Cultural and Ideological Cohesion

   - The ability of diaspora organizations to maintain a unifying identity and vision, which strengthens their legitimacy and political leverage.

Example: The shared collective memory of historical oppression (e.g., Holodomor) and resistance to Russian aggression serves as a unifying force for mobilization in Ukrainian case.

2. Politicization of Diaspora: Theoretical Framework

The politicization of diaspora—the process through which diasporic communities evolve from culturally or economically focused groups into organized political actors—has become a significant area of inquiry in transnational and migration studies. As diasporas increasingly influence domestic and foreign policy decisions in both host and home states, scholars have sought to understand the mechanisms, motivations, and conditions that lead to this transformation. This section outlines two key theoretical approaches that underpin the study of political diasporas: transnationalism, as developed by Alejandro Portes (1996), and political mobilization theory, as presented by Gabriel Sheffer (2003). Together, these frameworks help explain not only how diasporas maintain political agency across borders, but also why certain communities become politicized while others remain disengaged.

Transnationalism, as conceptualized by Portes (1996), refers to the sustained cross-border ties that migrants and diaspora communities maintain with their countries of origin. These transnational practices encompass economic, social, cultural, and importantly, political interactions that defy the traditional assumption of full assimilation into host societies. Portes emphasizes that many diaspora communities operate within transnational social fields—multilayered spaces where individuals are simultaneously embedded in the institutional, emotional, and cultural life of both home and host societies. This dual embeddedness fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility to both contexts, enabling diaspora members to act as political stakeholders in multiple national arenas. According to this point, diaspora identities are shaped by shared narratives—often centered on oppression, struggle, or displacement. These collective memories fuel political consciousness and solidarity, especially in relation to perceived injustice or threat to the homeland. This leads to heightened political sensitivity and readiness to act.

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Building on this, scholars such as Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) argue that transnationalism facilitates a "simultaneity" of action and identity, wherein individuals navigate and influence political developments in both locations. Transnational communities maintain dense organizational and communication networks such as churches, cultural groups, media, and student associations—that span across borders usually operating simultaneously in multiple countries, from remittance systems and hometown associations to media outlets and religious institutions (Portes et al. 1999). These networks form the infrastructure that makes political mobilization logistically feasible. In this case, diasporas often act as intermediaries between their homeland and host country, using their position to influence foreign policy or humanitarian aid. In this way, political engagement becomes a strategic tool to shape international responses or policies that affect their homeland. When an urgent cause arises (e.g., war, election interference, sanctions), these existing structures can quickly be repurposed for political activism.

Transnationalism explains why politicization occurs. According to Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002), transnational political practices arise when three conditions are met: (1) sustained identification with the homeland, (2) political opportunity structures in the host state, and (3) the existence of organizational platforms that can coordinate action. Politicization, then, is not simply about identity or memory—it is the result of structural conditions that facilitate or constrain diaspora activism. The role of media and technology further enhances this process by accelerating communication and information-sharing across borders (Brinkerhoff, 2009). From this perspective, political engagement is not an isolated or accidental phenomenon but a natural extension of preexisting transnational ties. Diasporas may vote in homeland elections, organize public protests, fund political causes, or advocate for policies in their host countries that align with the interests of their countries of origin. These actions are embedded within

broader social networks and organizational structures that facilitate cross-border flows of information, capital, and political narratives.

While transnationalism explains the conditions of possibility for diaspora political engagement, Sheffer's (2003) theory of diaspora politics focuses on the mechanisms of mobilization. Sheffer's central claim is that diasporas remain primarily ethnocultural communities until certain political catalysts—such as conflict, state repression, or opportunities for influence—stimulate collective action. Political mobilization, then, is not an essential feature of all diasporas but a reactive and strategic phenomenon, dependent on internal and external stimuli. The key mechanisms Sheffer identifies include:

- Exogenous shocks (e.g., homeland crises, wars, regime collapse), which activate identity-based solidarity and generate a demand for political action. Under the influence of strong emotions or pivotal events, individuals experience moral shock, a sudden disruption in their core values and ethical frameworks, often prompting a reevaluation of their beliefs and actions (Stevenson, Crossley 2014);

- Opportunity structures in the host country, drawing from social movement theory (Tarrow, 1998; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001), where open political systems, diaspora-targeted policies, or multicultural institutions create enabling environments for mobilization;

- Organizational capacity, where diasporas must possess or develop institutional infrastructures—such as advocacy groups, ethnic media, professional networks, or religious institutions—that facilitate collective action, political lobbying, or resource mobilization.

Therefore, the politicization of the diaspora could be viewed through the prism of classical theories of mass mobilization and social psychology. Social networks play a pivotal role in processes of mobilization (Crossley 2008). Social ties constitute a fundamental mechanism through which collective action is structured and activated. Citizenship, friendship, professional affiliations, and organizational memberships form a complex infrastructure that facilitates the diffusion of information, the construction of collective identities, and the circulation of material and symbolic resources (Diani 2003). Connections as an element of a social network can be direct (people or organizations are directly acquainted) or indirect (when they share a common resource, field of activity, or value orientation without directly encountering each other).

According to the three main approaches to understanding social networks, diaspora networks fulfill several key functions. First, the informational function involves the dissemination of politically relevant news and messages that trigger a sense of responsibility and identity; as Pamela Oliver notes, mobilization requires reaching a "critical mass" of participants willing to act. Second, the identity function refers to the formation and reinforcement of collective identity through ongoing communication; Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin emphasize that networks transmit not only information but also values, and Charles White's concept of "catnet" (category + network) is especially pertinent for diasporas, as it is at the intersection of shared interests and interaction that frustration can be transformed into political action. Finally, the exchange function encompasses informal sharing of resources—informational, emotional, and material; as McAdam, Klandermans, and Opp argue, these "soft" resources are often crucial for enabling collective action, particularly when access to formal institutions in the host country is limited.

Building on that, Sheffer, Yossi Shain (1999) highlights the strategic agency of diaspora elites—individuals or groups who serve as "brokers" between the diaspora, host governments, and homeland institutions. These actors are crucial in shaping narratives, framing political demands, and navigating institutional arenas to influence policy outcomes. From this perspective, the politicization of diaspora is best understood as a multi-level process—where macro-political changes (e.g., international crises), meso-level organizational strategies (e.g., coalition-building), and micro-level identity politics (e.g., generational memory, trauma) converge to transform diasporas into transnational political actors.

The strategic action framework—drawing from Hassel and Wegrich (2022)—offers a meso-level perspective that centers on how diaspora actors operate within "action situations": structured environments such as policymaking forums, lobbying encounters, or parliamentary consultations where different actors with varying preferences and resources interact to influence outcomes.In this context, diaspora politicization is not simply reactive or emotionally driven; it is also strategic and calculative. Actor constellations in these action situations often include diaspora elites, host state officials, NGOs, think tanks, and sometimes representatives of the homeland government. Each actor brings different levels of governance capacity, shaped by their institutional access, political legitimacy, and ability to produce or mobilize knowledge (Peters 2015; Boaz et al. 2019). The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, for instance, has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to operate effectively within Canadian political institutions—testifying before parliamentary committees, coordinating with foreign affairs offices, and framing Ukraine's needs in language resonant with Canadian policy priorities. Diaspora organizations strategically frame their demands to align with the normative and institutional logic of the host country, thereby increasing their chances of influencing policy. This framing process involves the translation of emotionally charged narratives (e.g., displacement, war, trauma) into policy-

relevant discourses that fit within Canada's foreign aid, human rights, or immigration frameworks. This aligns with the insights of Flynn and Asquer (2017), who argue that policy influence requires not just access but also strategic capacity: the ability to define problems, propose legitimate solutions, and navigate institutional constraints. Action situations are not neutral arenas; they are shaped by opportunity structures (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001) and institutional asymmetries. Thus, diaspora mobilization is most effective when actors can recognize and exploit these institutional logics. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), for example, was able to rapidly pivot from cultural diplomacy to high-level advocacy after the 2022 invasion by framing the conflict as not only a threat to Ukraine but also a challenge to the global liberal-democratic order—a narrative deeply aligned with Canada's foreign policy identity.

The case of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada offers a compelling application of the transnationalism and political mobilization frameworks. Transnationalism explains the preconditions: strong identity ties, emotional and symbolic attachments to the homeland, and dual engagement with home and host societies. Political mobilization illustrates the activation process: how these conditions translate into organized political behavior Long-standing transnational ties—rooted in collective memory, cultural institutions, and historical interest in Ukraine's sovereignty—created the foundational conditions for political engagement, as described by Portes. However, it was the external shock of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 that activated widespread political mobilization, in line with Sheffer's theory. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and similar organizations rapidly transitioned from cultural preservation to strategic political advocacy, engaging in lobbying, protests, and policy influence. This transformation illustrates how diasporas, under specific conditions, evolve into powerful transnational political actors.

III. Methodology

The research approach used in the study presents qualitative methods to explore Ukrainian diaspora activity in Canada and its influence on Canadian political processes. The methodology integrates multiple complementary methods, including case study analysis, direct observation, expert interviews, archival research, and desktop analysis.

Canadian Ukrainians' activities were selected as the case study for several compelling reasons, all of which align with the research objective of analyzing how diaspora communities influence the politics of host countries. According to Thomas (2011), a case study consists of two key components: the subject—a practical, historical instance—and the object—the theoretical or analytical frame through which the subject is examined. This thesis adopts what Thomas classifies as a "typical and explanatory" case study, where the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora is studied to illuminate broader processes of diaspora politicization and transnational identity formation. In this context, the subject of the study is the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora, explored through its historical development and political mobilization in response to pivotal events such as the Maidan Revolution and the 2022 Russian invasion. The object is the broader social phenomenon of diaspora engagement and political activism, analyzed through the lenses of moral shock theory, diaspora engagement, and transnational activism (Thomas, 2011).

Firstly, Canada is home to one of the largest and oldest Ukrainian diasporas. According to the 2021 Canadian census, over 1.3 million Canadians claim Ukrainian heritage (Statistics Canada 2021), and that number has increased since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. The depth and longevity of the Ukrainian presence in Canada make it an ideal case study for examining how diaspora identity evolves from cultural preservation to political

engagement. In recent years, this transformation has been visible through the increased activity of institutions such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), [1]the Canada-Ukraine Foundation[2], and youth organizations like Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada[3], Plast[4], and Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union[5]. The diaspora's organized lobbying initiatives (Fihel, Homel, Jaroszewicz, Lesińska, & Bentz 2025) have had a tangible impact on Canadian policy—shaping decisions on multiculturalism, immigration, and foreign policy, particularly regarding Ukraine. Notably, the diaspora played a key role in Canada's early recognition of Ukrainian independence in 1991, the official recognition of the Holodomor as genocide, and continued fundraising and advocacy efforts for military support and sanctions against Russia (SUSK 2024, Carment, Nikolko, MacIsaac 2020). In summary, the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada was chosen due to its unique combination of demographic scale, institutional maturity, political influence, and strategic relevance in both domestic and international contexts. Archival fieldwork, including research in rare book collections, further enriched the case study by tracing the historical arc of Ukrainian-Canadian political mobilization, helping to contextualize current advocacy strategies within a broader socio-political and historical framework.

Desktop research served as the foundation for the literature review, encompassing the analysis of legal documents, policy papers, academic publications, media reports, and organizational records relevant to Ukrainian diaspora activities. It provided a theoretical background and a broader context to complement the upcoming interviews. Expert interviews (Doringer 2020, Von Soest 2023) with eight representatives of the Ukrainian Canadian

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[1] Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC). URL: https://www.ucc.ca/.
[2] The Canada-Ukraine Foundation. URL: https://www.cufoundation.ca/.
[3] Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada (CUYM) URL: https://cym.org/.
[4] Plast. URL: https://www.plast.ca/.
[5] Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union (SUSK). URL: https://www.susk.ca/.

community, including UCC, SUSK and political figures in Canadian provincial governments involved in political advocacy were essential to this research, as they shared first hand insights into the strategies, motivations, and challenges behind diaspora lobbying efforts. The semi-structured interviews (Leech 2002) with prepared questions last for 45 minutes in person. These interviews offered access to experiential knowledge not available through documents alone, validated secondary data, and captured diverse perspectives across different advocacy organizations. Participants were chosen by a purposive sampling (Ahmad, Wilkins 2024) based on the experience and knowledge in diaspora political activities. That ensures that gathered information is relevant and provides meaningful insights to the study answering research questions. While conducting interviews, it was important to build rapport (Small and Cook 2021, 18-19) with respondents to create more open conversations. The comfortable question order was launched with a "non-threatening and to the threatening" approach (Leech 2002, 666). Thus, respondents were more willing to give honest answers.

All data collected from participants was treated with strict confidentiality. No names or identifying information appear in the final thesis or any related publications. Data was securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence; in such cases, their data was excluded from the analysis. The collected information may be used in this thesis, as well as in future academic presentations, publications, or reports, with full assurance that participants' identities remain anonymous throughout. Through observation activity, the researcher gathers firsthand insights on how diaspora groups engage with Canadian society and politics, how they mobilize their community, and the forms their political activism takes in practice. It was essential to understand which narratives Ukrainian Canadians send to the public and what goals they follow. Following the completion of the interviews, the collected data was

analyzed to identify recurring patterns, ensuring coherence with the insights derived from the secondary sources and enhancing the overall validity of the research findings.

In summary, this research design helps to answer research questions and objectives, receiving meaningful insights about strategis of Ukrainian diaspora in lobbying Ukrainian interests in Canada. By combining case study analysis, expert interviews, and document review, the research captures the multidimensional nature of diaspora influence and highlights the mechanisms through which transnational actors shape foreign policy outcomes but also identifies gaps and areas for strategic improvement.

IV. Empirical analysis

1. Politicization of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada

Historical records collected in John Luczkiw's Diaspora Collection at the Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research at the University of Toronto provide a valuable archive of the Ukrainian Canadian community's evolving identity. It identifies a series of distinct phases that Canadian Ukrainians undergone:

1. First Wave (1891–1914): Economic Migration

The first major wave of Ukrainian immigration to Canada began in the 1890s, with settlers primarily from rural regions of Western Ukraine.The main reason for migration at that time was high poverty rates in Ukraine at that time which pushed many Ukrainians to seek better economic opportunities in Canada, where the government encouraged immigration, promoting "free land that is waiting for you in the Prairies" (Sniderman & Sanderson 2022). This phase was largely apolitical. Community efforts focused on survival, farming, and establishing cultural and religious institutions (churches, reading halls, mutual aid societies). Diaspora members interacted, driven by a collective aspiration to recreate a sense of homeland abroad. Ukrainian identity was preserved through folk culture, language, and the church, laying the groundwork for later community cohesion.

2 .Second Wave (1918–1939): Post-War Refugees

After World War I and the collapse of empires, many Ukrainians fled political instability and repression in Soviet and Polish Ukraine. This group of immigrants consisted of intellectuals, nationalists, and former soldiers who brought a stronger sense of political identity and national consciousness. Although unable to secure Ukrainian independence on their native

soil, diaspora members redirected their efforts abroad, initiating political advocacy within host countries. That community printed media, built schools and established organizations such as the Ukrainian National Federation. The emergence of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) in 1940 was an important step in the development of the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora, serving as a national organization that represents the interests of Canada's Ukrainian community. Political conversations about Ukrainian independence and Soviet repression began to take root. In the 1940s–1980s, the committee focused on uniting the efforts of Ukrainians in Canada to support the Ukrainian people in their struggle for independence and to preserve the ethnic and spiritual identity of the diaspora. They fought for the celebration of national holidays, organized targeted protests against the policy of russification of Ukraine, and against the persecution of participants in dissident movements of the 1960s–1980s in Ukraine. There was growing differentiation between Canadian-born Ukrainians and new immigrants, but a shared sense of heritage persisted.

3. Third Wave (1945–1955): Displaced Persons and Political Exile

After World War II, Canada accepted a large number of Ukrainian Displaced Persons, many of whom were refugees from Soviet-occupied Ukraine. This wave of migration was largely driven by political persecution, forced labor under totalitarian regimes, and the mass displacements caused by war. Many fled as political exiles escaping repression, conscription, and ideological violence. This cohort was markedly more political. They formed anti-communist organizations, veterans' groups, and exile institutions that focused on internationalizing the Ukrainian cause. Anti-Soviet narrative became a central part of diaspora identity. Organizations like the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) grew in strength coordination diaspora activities across Canada.

4. Fourth Wave (1991–2013): Post-Soviet Migration

When Ukraine became independent in 1991, a new wave of migration emerged, consisting of students, professionals, and economic migrants due to economic instability in a new country. Canada, particularly following the adoption of its official multiculturalism policy in the 1970s, progressively embraced more liberal and inclusive immigration frameworks, established itself as a prominent destination for Ukrainians seeking to rebuild their lives in a culturally accepting society. Moreover, Canada was the first country who recognized Ukrainian independence (Government of Canada 1991) which contributed to improving relations towards Canadians. This diaspora cohort contributed to the cultural and intellectual renewal of the diaspora sharing modern trends, but was initially less politically active than the previous one. Many maintained strong transnational ties and frequently traveled to Ukraine. While still emotionally connected to Ukraine, many newer members of the diaspora experienced less of the moral struggle tied to the years of fighting for independence, which made it easier for them to adapt and integrate into Canadian society. Their integration was shaped by bilingualism and dual identities.

5. Fifth Wave (2014–present): War-Driven Migration

Beginning with the Euromaidan (2013–14), the annexation of Crimea, and the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, this phase marks a profound political turn. Many newcomers are war refugees, activists, and highly educated individuals fleeing violence or political persecution. Two potential responses emerge in such circumstances: individuals, driven by the trauma of conflict, may seek to escape the haunting memories of war, opting instead for a fresh start devoid of the scars of violence; alternatively, they may experience a profound sense of solidarity, compelling them to mobilize and advocate on behalf of those left behind, channeling

their anguish into efforts to amplify the suffering of their homeland. The Ukrainian diaspora has become deeply politicized—mobilizing protests, lobbying governments, fundraising for defense and humanitarian aid, and shaping foreign policy debates. Political engagement has become a central part of community identity, fueled by a sense of duty, memory, and urgency.

As outlined in the theoretical framework, events such as warfare, separatist movements, or territorial annexation provoke moral shock, compelling individuals to experience a profound reinforcement of their identity, often leading to a heightened sense of belonging and a recalibration of their personal and collective values. Conversations with community members born and raised in Canada revealed a clear transformation: the Maidan Revolution served as a catalyst, compelling them to take to the streets and assert their Ukrainian identity. Similarly, the Russian invasion acted as another pivotal force, galvanizing a deep sense of urgency and motivating individuals to actively mobilize in support of their homeland. Three out of three people being interviewed confirmed that the events of 2014 and 2022 changed the behaviour of the Ukrainian diaspora.

Although the respondents' comments on the nature of the two tragic events remain fascinating for understanding diaspora activity. In the case of the Maidan Revolution, the primary emotional impetus was the profound sense of national awakening and resistance against corruption and authoritarianism in Ukraine. It was a collective struggle for democratic principles and human rights, which resonated strongly within the diaspora, prompting many to take to the streets in solidarity and actively assert their Ukrainian identity. On the other hand, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, with its direct military aggression and blatant violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity, provoked a different kind of moral shock. This event created a profound sense of urgency and survival, pushing the diaspora to engage not just in symbolic acts of solidarity, but in substantial efforts aimed at influencing foreign policy and

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gathering material and diplomatic support for Ukraine. While both events stirred a heightened sense of collective identity, the Russian invasion in 2022 generated a more immediate call to action, resulting in a rapid and more widespread mobilization within the community.

The differing responses to the Maidan Revolution and the Russian invasion of 2022 can be attributed in part to the way information was communicated by central Ukrainian authorities. In 2014, when Crimea was annexed by Russia, the narrative provided to the Ukrainian diaspora was relatively sparse and pragmatic (Kovalenko 2017). The primary message shared by the government emphasized the need for material support, such as resources and financial aid, without a strong focus on the emotional and political implications of the crisis. At the time, the government refrained from officially labeling what was undeniably a war as such, opting for more ambiguous terminology that downplayed the severity of the situation. Then-President Poroshenko's decision to characterize the conflict as an "anti-terrorist operation" rather than a full-scale war contributed to a significant misrepresentation of the nature of the conflict (Spravdi 2023). This terminology led to a widespread misconception, particularly among the diaspora and international audiences, that the Ukrainian state was primarily combating local separatists, rather than confronting a broader, Russian-led intervention.

In contrast, the Russian invasion of 2022 was accompanied by a much more emotional and urgent narrative, one that vividly framed the invasion as a direct existential threat to Ukraine's sovereignty and survival. Therefore, the reaction of international partners was also appropriate. On the first day of the invasion, Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau announced sanctions against Russian parliamentarians acknowledging that Russia started a full-scale invasion of a sovereign country (Markiewicz 2022). The Ukrainian central government adopted a more sophisticated communication strategy, appealing to the global Ukrainian diaspora for both tangible support and political action, framing the war as not just a national but a global

struggle for democracy and human rights. This shift in how the crisis was communicated allowed the diaspora to feel not only a moral obligation but a sense of urgency, significantly amplifying the mobilizing effect of the invasion compared to the relatively subdued response in 2014. This contrast in messaging helped explain the heightened and more expansive mobilization observed within the Ukrainian-Canadian community in 2022.

In general, respondents believe that the authorities' communication of the outbreak of the war in 2022 was much more direct and coherent, which contributed to greater mobilization among the diaspora. Compared to 2014, when terms and formulations such as "anti-terrorist operation", "war with separatists" blurred the true essence of the conflict, in 2022 the authorities clearly labeled the war as aggression by Russia. This approach provided a more accurate perception of the threat, which allowed people to understand the scale of the war and become more actively involved in the processes of supporting Ukraine.

2. Cultural Events and Public Diplomacy as Influence Tools

Cultural events have emerged as a significant soft power mechanism through which the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada not only sustains national identity but also fosters political solidarity and influences public discourse around Ukraine. These events serve as more than just celebrations of heritage—they are increasingly becoming platforms for subtle diplomacy, narrative framing, and mobilization of both diaspora members and Canadian allies. In this sense, cultural diplomacy has become a complementary tool to direct lobbying efforts, particularly in maintaining long-term engagement and visibility for Ukraine in Canada.

One of the most prominent examples is the Bloor West Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival, one of the largest Ukrainian cultural events outside Ukraine. Drawing over a million visitors annually, the festival features traditional music, folk dancing, artisan crafts, food, and political messaging, effectively turning a weekend of festivities into a soft power hub. Sponsored by Canadian federal and provincial governments, as well as private organizations, the festival not only reflects state endorsement of multiculturalism but also represents a significant opportunity for diaspora leaders and Ukrainian officials to connect with broader Canadian society. What makes this festival politically meaningful is its ability to blend celebration with advocacy—often including booths, performances, or speeches that raise awareness about ongoing issues in Ukraine, fundraise for humanitarian efforts, or promote civic initiatives. In recent years, the presence of Ukrainian artists, politicians, and activists from Ukraine has strengthened the transnational ties between Kyiv and the diaspora, creating moments of emotional and political resonance. Most money raised at the festival goes to fundraising campaigns. While being there, we noticed that the invitation of modern Ukrainian bands and singers adds a powerful dimension to these events, particularly in shaping a more accurate and dynamic image of Ukraine today. Many community members expressed that

showcasing contemporary artists—whether it's pop, electronic, rock, or folk-fusion—not only energizes younger audiences but also challenges outdated stereotypes often associated with Ukraine. As one attendee put it, "For decades, people thought of Ukraine through the lens of village life or old Soviet tropes—but now, when a band like Kalush or Go_A performs, it's clear we're talking about a country that's modern, resilient, creative, and globally connected."

The significance of student-led efforts cannot be understated. Young Ukrainians in Canada—many of whom arrived after 2014 or 2022—have been particularly active in cultural diplomacy, merging identity expression with activism. As interviewees from UCC Toronto and the Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union noted, students are uniquely positioned to "translate" Ukrainian realities to Canadian audiences, using the academic and civic spaces they occupy to engage both emotionally and intellectually. These activities also help sustain a sense of belonging among displaced youth while channeling their energy into organized political and cultural work. A key series of events is "Ukrainian Week", typically organized by student unions, local UCC branches, and academic institutions. These events often feature film screenings, panel discussions, exhibitions, and public lectures on Ukrainian history, culture, and current affairs. A particularly powerful tradition has been the symbolic distribution of unissued diplomas to represent the thousands of Ukrainian students who were killed or displaced by the war before completing their education. As one student organizer explained in an interview, "Giving out unissued diplomas is a way to not let their stories be forgotten—it turns pain into purpose." These symbolic gestures play an important role in politicizing cultural space, reminding audiences that behind the abstract narratives of war are young lives, interrupted futures, and an entire generation shaped by trauma.

One of the most anticipated events is Vyshyvanka Day happening on May 15, 2025. The event, celebrating traditional Ukrainian embroidered clothing (vyshyvanka), has evolved

into a global phenomenon among the Ukrainian diaspora. In Canada, it is marked by public marches, community picnics, school programs, and art installations. However, this year's commemoration carried a particularly heavy emotional and political tone due to America's shift in international politics that changed the global order. Given the ongoing war, organizers and participants used the visibility of Vyshyvanka Day to revive awareness of the war in public consciousness, especially at a time when global media attention has begun to wane. Some community leaders have discussed incorporating narratives such as "embroidered resistance" or "we wear culture, we carry memory," aiming to juxtapose traditional dress with the resilience of the Ukrainian people. As one interviewee from the UCC's cultural committee emphasized, "We don't do culture just to preserve it anymore—we do it to fight back. Every embroidery, every song, every story we tell is a form of defiance." This comment reflects the broader transformation of diaspora cultural work: once focused primarily on identity maintenance, it is now tightly interwoven with strategies of political resistance, storytelling, and international solidarity. Despite its effectiveness, this tool of soft diplomacy remains somewhat underutilized by the Ukrainian state. While the Embassy and consulates support some cultural initiatives, community interviews suggest that much of the initiative and funding still falls on grassroots organizations and diaspora volunteers. As one cultural coordinator in Toronto explained, "Kyiv should see us not just as singers and dancers, but as their cultural diplomats." This statement points to a missed opportunity for the Ukrainian government to systematically invest in diaspora-led cultural diplomacy as part of its broader foreign policy strategy.

In summary, cultural events have proven to be powerful mechanisms of public diplomacy and diaspora engagement. They form a critical part of the broader advocacy ecosystem—reinforcing political messages, sustaining community morale, and fostering

solidarity beyond ethnic boundaries. As Ukraine continues to fight for its sovereignty and global attention, these cultural spaces will remain not just sites of celebration, but stages for political expression and diplomatic influence.

3. Case study: Advocacy campaign of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada in 2022

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked a turning point in the intensity, coordination, and global impact of diaspora mobilization, creating a moral shock for many. Among the various advocacy efforts, one of the most successful and strategically significant was the Ukrainian Canadian Congress's (UCC) campaign to secure military, financial, and humanitarian aid for Ukraine from Canada. The UCC consists of 34 departments located in cities across Canada, uniting Canadian Ukrainians and establishing a working strategy.

Within hours of the invasion, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) launched the "Stand with Ukraine" campaign—an archetypal case of strategic framing and micromobilization. Drawing on Gregory Bateson's foundational idea of framing as an interpretative schema that helps individuals structure and make sense of reality, the UCC constructed a compelling interpretive frame that redefined the war not merely as a regional conflict, but as a fundamental violation of international law, democracy, and human rights. This framing process aligns with Erving Goffman's notion of "mutual awareness": a shared communicative space in which individuals recognize that their interpretations are being understood and validated by others. The UCC created such a space by strategically aligning its narrative with core Canadian values and foreign policy norms.

In this process, the UCC engaged in what frame theory describes as diagnostic framing (Christiansen 2024)—it identified and interpreted the Russian invasion as a clear moral and legal violation, thereby transforming it into a publicly recognized social problem. This diagnosis resonated with the Canadian public and political elites, many of whom already viewed Russia as a threat to the liberal international order. The next step in the UCC's framing

strategy was prognostic framing—proposing concrete ways to address the diagnosed problem (Christiansen 2024). These included targeted sanctions, increased military aid to Ukraine, and diplomatic isolation of Russia. By presenting these as logical and moral imperatives, the UCC positioned its policy recommendations as the only rational solutions within the framed context. Finally, the campaign achieved motivational framing—mobilizing individuals and communities by merging their personal values with the collective goals of the movement (Christiansen 2024). Through carefully selected language, symbols, and public demonstrations, the UCC facilitated a process of micromobilization—where individual interpretative orientations converged with the ideological framework of the movement. In essence, people did not just support Ukraine abstractly; they reinterpreted their own worldview to align with the movement's, resulting in widespread civic action, donations, protests, and political lobbying.Ultimately, the success of "Stand with Ukraine" was not just in its messaging, but in how it enabled individuals and institutions to see their own values reflected in the Ukrainian cause—thereby catalyzing a powerful wave of political and social mobilization.

The campaign's efficacy also stemmed from its networked character. The UCC built coalitions with non-Ukrainian advocacy groups, civil society organizations, and religious communities, expanding its reach beyond the Ukrainian community. This exemplifies the "network politics" element of TAN theory—horizontal linkages between actors that generate broader normative support. At the grassroots level, diaspora members took part in rallies, fundraisers, and educational campaigns, reinforcing the legitimacy of the movement. For many, the invasion triggered a moral shock, transforming latent emotional ties into active political behavior. Interviews conducted with UCC members confirmed that both the 2014 Maidan Revolution and the 2022 invasion catalyzed this politicization process, but the latter's clearly

communicated urgency, moral clarity, and unified governmental messaging drove unprecedented mobilization.

As Charles Tilly posits, political protest often leads to the formation of political collective identity, centered on the questions: "Who are we?" and "What do we want?" (Tilly 2003). During the Ottawa rally, Ukrainian flags, national songs, and public speeches by diaspora leaders and political allies transformed individual emotion into a shared political identity—as Ukrainians abroad demanded justice and sovereignty for their homeland. This protest demonstrated a hybrid collective identity: for many second- or third-generation Ukrainians, identity had previously been embedded in cultural practices—churches, language schools, and community clubs. However, the rally also produced a detached collective identity, particularly among younger participants, who experienced political awakening through the act of protesting itself—discovering their "Ukrainianness" through activism.

We can effectively analyze the success of UCC' campaign using Kurt Schock's framework for evaluating nonviolent collective action. His two core criteria—resilience and leverage—help illuminate why these actions achieved tangible political results (Schock 2005). Despite operating far from the immediate conflict, the diaspora organization UCC maintained continuous engagement through regular protests, lobbying efforts, educational campaigns, and digital mobilization. Even months after the invasion began, community actions did not decline—a sign of strategic continuity. This persistence ensured that Ukraine remained a top priority in Canadian media narratives and parliamentary agendas, despite the competing global crises. In this sense, resilience was not only physical or logistical, but moral and symbolic. Emotional proximity to the conflict—intensified by moral shock and collective identity— allowed organizers to sustain momentum even in the absence of coercion or repression by the Canadian state.

The protests also fulfilled Schock's principle of leverage—the capacity to impose costs on authorities or create pressure points that influence policy outcomes. In this case, while the Canadian government was not repressive, it was highly responsive to public sentiment and organized interest groups, particularly in the context of multiculturalism and electoral democracy. The diaspora's concentrated protests and lobbying efforts applied symbolic and reputational pressure on political leaders by positioning Ukraine aid as a moral imperative in line with Canadian values of human rights and international law. Furthermore, protesters amplified their impact by strategically targeting critical junctures: rallies were timed with major parliamentary votes or international summits, and demands were aligned with actionable state decisions—such as arms deliveries, refugee resettlement, and sanctions against Russia. These efforts created a leveraged influence without direct confrontation, nudging Canadian policymakers to expand military aid, impose stricter sanctions, and accelerate humanitarian programs.

The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada has achieved notable success in political mobilization due to a favorable Political Opportunity Structure (POS)—a central concept in the political process theory developed by Doug McAdam. This theory argues that the emergence and effectiveness of social movements rely on the presence of three main components: indigenous organizational structures, collective consciousness, and openness in the political system that allows movements to pursue their goals (McAdam 1996).

1. Indigenous Organizations

The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada is deeply institutionalized, with long-standing organizations such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), the Ukrainian Canadian Education Foundation, as well as churches, youth associations (Ukrainian Canadian Student's Union),

and Ukrainian schools. These institutions provide the logistical capacity, leadership networks, and communication tools necessary for transforming emotional outrage into coordinated political action. Such pre-existing infrastructure is a critical prerequisite in McAdam's framework for sustaining collective mobilization.

2. Collective Consciousness

Shared historical memory—such as that of the Holodomor, Soviet repressions, and more recent events like the Euromaidan Revolution and Russia's full-scale invasion—has cultivated a strong sense of collective identity among Ukrainians, including Canadian-born generations. This emotional and symbolic connection to Ukraine fosters the development of what Charles Tilly refers to as political collective identity, which is crucial for movement endurance and impact.

3. Openness of the Political System

Canada's liberal democratic system, characterized by multiculturalism, civic inclusion, and responsive governance, presents a relatively open political opportunity structure. According to McAdam, movements are most likely to emerge in systems that are neither too closed (where action is stifled) nor too open (where institutional channels sufficiently absorb dissent). The Ukrainian diaspora has benefited from:

- access to decision-makers (a lot of Ukrainians are represented in governmental bodies),
- elite alignment with the diaspora's goals,
- low risk of repression.

These conditions allowed diaspora-led movements to gain traction and influence without facing structural barriers or coercion.

When these three components—organizational readiness, collective consciousness, and political openness—converge, a "moment of political opportunity" emerges. The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada was able to seize such moments, especially during the crises of 2014 and 2022, and translate moral shock into sustained political pressure. Their actions fit squarely within McAdam's theory, illustrating how structural and emotional factors jointly facilitate the rise of successful social movements that produce tangible policy outcomes—such as increased military assistance, expanded refugee programs, and harsher sanctions against Russia.

The Ukrainian government played a symbolic role in supporting the UCC-led "Stand With Ukraine" campaign, particularly in its protest mobilization and public advocacy across Canada, as interviewees confess. Although the protests were organized by the diaspora and civil society, the Embassy of Ukraine in Canada and Consulate General offices in cities like Toronto and Edmonton still acted as bridges between the Ukrainian state and diaspora actors.

The Ukrainian Embassy in Ottawa publicly endorsed the UCC's campaign, amplifying its messaging through official channels. Ukrainian diplomats—including Ambassador Yuliya Kovaliv—attended rallies, delivered speeches, and gave media interviews, aligning diaspora advocacy with Kyiv's foreign policy priorities. Their participation helped elevate the protests beyond community expressions into recognized instruments of public diplomacy. Moreover, The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and President Zelenskyy's office regularly issued briefings and policy priorities directed at allies and diaspora communities. UCC used this messaging to tailor protest demands and lobbying efforts. For instance, calls for military aid, sanctions, and the closure of Canadian airspace to Russian aircraft mirrored Ukraine's formal diplomatic requests—demonstrating a coordinated message across borders. Ukrainian leaders frequently acknowledged the role of the diaspora in public addresses. President Zelenskyy himself, in multiple speeches, thanked diaspora communities globally (including in Canada)

for their mobilization (President of Ukraine 2022). This recognition legitimized the protests and created a feedback loop of moral validation between Kyiv and diaspora organizers. "Stand with Ukraine" organizers said that most coordination was informal, but the UCC maintained regular contact with Ukrainian diplomats to align on timing, messaging, and political targets. For example, UCC timed several protests and advocacy pushes around key dates in Canada's Parliament or global summits—often based on cues from Ukraine's diplomatic missions. However, all efforts were primarily the initiative of diaspora members, not central bodies.

This case demonstrates the powerful interplay between transnationalism, diaspora mobilization theory, and TAN theory. As Portes (1996) suggests, long-standing transnational ties—cultural identity, historical memory, and dual engagement—created the infrastructure for action. Sheffer's (2003) political mobilization theory helps explain why such mobilization intensified during the war: structural opportunities, emotional resonance, and organizational strength converged. Finally, Keck and Sikkink's (1998) TAN framework illuminates how the diaspora translated emotion and identity into strategic advocacy, producing measurable political outcomes in Canada's foreign policy.

These advocacy efforts yielded rapid and tangible results. By March 2022, the Canadian government had committed more than CAD 500 million in support to Ukraine (Government of Canada 2022). More importantly, sustained lobbying led to the provision of advanced military equipment, wide-ranging sanctions against Russian elites, and the creation of the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), facilitating resettlement for thousands of displaced Ukrainians. This success illustrates what Keck and Sikkink identify as "leverage politics," wherein activists use material and moral leverage to influence powerful actors. The UCC and its allies mobilized both diaspora members and broader Canadian society to apply political pressure through mass rallies, media appearances, and direct lobbying. The diaspora's

historically embedded trust within Canadian institutions enabled it to act as a legitimate intermediary, capable of converting moral urgency into policy action.

The UCC's 2022 advocacy campaign exemplifies the evolution of diasporic engagement from symbolic nationalism to instrumental political influence. Through the mechanisms outlined in TAN theory—information, leverage, and network politics—the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada not only influenced domestic policy but also contributed directly to Ukraine's international defense strategy. This case confirms the role of diasporas as consequential transnational actors, particularly when their efforts are grounded in moral legitimacy, strategic communication, and sustained political networks.

4. Ukrainian Government Role in Diaspora Mobilization

Interviews with members of diaspora organizations confirm that the presence of a central Ukrainian voice—articulated by the government and amplified by diplomatic channels—has become significantly louder and more coordinated in 2022 than it was during the 2014 crisis. After the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution and annexation of Crimea, the Ukrainian state began to more strategically engage its diaspora as a political asset. Before that, Ukraine's engagement had largely focused on cultural diplomacy—language schools, churches, commemorations—but the events of 2014 catalyzed a redefinition of the diaspora as a transnational political actor. This shift mirrors what Shain defines as a "diaspora-centered foreign policy"—where homeland governments increasingly recognize diaspora communities as diplomatic extensions of state interests (Shain 2002). In the wake of the 2022 full-scale invasion, this collaboration intensified as the Ukrainian government framed the diaspora as part of a broader "global frontline"—tasked with amplifying Ukraine's message, influencing foreign policy, and shaping public opinion abroad. The clear articulation of national objectives (e.g., weapons deliveries, sanctions, and NATO integration) from Kyiv has enabled diaspora leaders to lobby with greater clarity, legitimacy, and consistency. This evolving dynamic reflects the maturation of Ukraine's external engagement strategy, positioning the diaspora not just as cultural ambassadors, but as strategic partners in international advocacy.

Institutionally, the Ukrainian government engages with the Canadian diaspora through:

- The Embassy of Ukraine in Ottawa and its consulates which have acted as liaison bodies for political messaging, coordination of rallies, and diplomatic lobbying. These institutions regularly attended and co-hosted rallies organized by diaspora groups such as the UCC, offering official state presence that lent diplomatic legitimacy to the

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events. They also facilitated connections with Canadian political actors and helped convey Ukraine's official positions on key issues like military aid, sanctions, and refugee policy;

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Office of the President, which conducted: - periodic briefings for diaspora leaders, especially during critical military or diplomatic developments, -distribution of advocacy toolkits—including talking points, visual materials, and messaging guidelines—to help align global narratives; - promotion of strategic foreign policy goals (e.g., NATO membership, sanctions escalation) through informal channels and public addresses. Informally, government officials, including the President, Members of Parliament, and diplomats, have leveraged direct appeals via social media, Zoom calls, and diaspora visits to galvanize political support and emotional solidarity. President Zelenskyy's virtual address to the Canadian Parliament in March 2022 exemplifies this direct engagement—mobilizing both diaspora and broader Canadian support through emotionally resonant storytelling and urgent calls to action (Parliament of Canada 2022);

- The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC), a key umbrella organization, acts as both an intermediary and advocate, supported politically by Kyiv and organizationally embedded in diaspora networks like the UCC: -amplifying Ukraine's messaging across its global network; - coordinating advocacy initiatives with national diaspora organizations (like UCC in Canada); - representing diaspora interests in international forums and during Ukrainian government consultations.

Taken together, these actors offered important, but often insufficient engagement. While embassies and consulates provided visibility, and agencies like the MFA shared helpful tools, there was no centralized strategy to integrate diaspora mobilization into Ukraine's

foreign policy apparatus. This gap led many diaspora leaders to act independently, filling the vacuum left by the Ukrainian state. As one respondent put it: "We didn't wait for instructions—we just did what needed to be done without anyone's help."

Since the full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian government has made some attempts to engage its global diaspora—including Ukrainian communities in Canada—but these efforts have been largely reactive, fragmented, and insufficiently institutionalized. While the diaspora's mobilization was crucial in influencing Canadian foreign policy and generating public support, interview respondents consistently highlighted that this success occurred despite, not because of, direct state coordination. Although Ukrainian diplomatic missions in Canada—such as the Embassy in Ottawa and the Consulates in Toronto and Edmonton—endorsed diaspora-organized protests like "Stand With Ukraine" and participated in select events, this engagement remained largely symbolic. There was no centralized or systematic outreach strategy from Kyiv to coordinate diaspora advocacy efforts or to provide consistent policy briefings, messaging guidance, or capacity support. As one respondent put it, "They didn't engage enough... they are just lucky the Ukrainian diaspora in Toronto and in Canada in general were already active." Unlike other states with extensive diasporas—such as Israel, Armenia, etc,—Ukraine lacks dedicated institutional infrastructure or a ministry specifically tasked with diaspora affairs. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state bodies do occasionally engage with diasporic groups, these efforts tend to be ad hoc, driven by individual personalities, and lack long-term planning. Interviewees agree that the absence of a formal framework has constrained the Ukrainian government's ability to strategically mobilize diaspora resources, co-develop campaigns, or integrate diaspora advocacy directly into foreign policy decision-making. Despite the extraordinary momentum generated by diaspora organizations like the UCC in Canada, the Ukrainian government has not capitalized on this to

create a permanent consultative mechanism. For example, there is no official advisory council of diaspora leaders connected to Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, nor regular diaspora summits or digital platforms for coordinated action. While Ukrainian embassies and consulates maintained warm relations with community leaders, this has not translated into institutional partnerships capable of scaling diaspora influence in a structured way. They act in their way, trying to fit into the central government's narratives. This means the relationship between the Ukrainian state and its diaspora in Canada has remained largely informal and improvisational. In interviews, several UCC representatives noted that they often received updates about Ukraine's foreign policy goals from public speeches or news coverage rather than through direct briefings or internal coordination. This reliance on informal channels limited the diaspora's ability to act quickly and align effectively with shifting state priorities.

V. Policy recommendations for the Ukrainian government

This study has demonstrated that the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada represents a potent political actor, mobilized through sustained transnational ties, organizational capacity, and strategic use of Canadian institutional frameworks. While diaspora organizations such as the nUkrainian Canadian Congress have effectively shaped Canada's foreign policy in support of Ukraine—particularly after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022—there remains significant room for improvement in how the Ukrainian state engages, coordinates, and supports this influential community. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the Government of Ukraine:

1. Reinforcing Rule of Law and Combating Corruption

While the Ukrainian diaspora has demonstrated remarkable solidarity and mobilization—particularly in the wake of the Maidan Revolution and the 2022 Russian invasion—continued engagement, especially within official channels of Canadian governance, is not unconditional. One recurring concern expressed by diaspora activists, policy advisors, and civil society actors interviewed for this thesis is Ukraine's persistent struggle with corruption and weak rule of law. This can be explained by the absence of strong institutional continuity after the Soviet collapse that resulted in corruption, clientelism and weak democratic values in the society, as honest collaboration was rarely rewarded. One of the key factors impeding more robust support was the perceived lack of transparency and endemic corruption within Ukraine's defense and procurement sectors. Interviews with diaspora advocates confirm that while emotional and moral arguments resonated, Canadian policymakers expressed

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concerns about the potential misuse of lethal aid, especially given the blurred lines between irregular volunteers, state institutions, and oligarchic influence at the time.

These reforms are not merely technocratic; they are deeply political acts that define the state's legitimacy. A deeply entrenched system of corruption cannot be dismantled by piecemeal policies, minor reforms and speeches but by lasting institutional reconstruction. This must come in the form of centrally guided institutional development that pursues dynamic alignment with European partners, forming new untainted government bodies in Ukraine, and widespread civic education and cultural reorientation within society itself. In the absence of credible reforms, diaspora mobilization—no matter how passionate—will face diminishing returns in both public perception and institutional influence abroad. Ultimately, rule of law is not a parallel concern to national defense—it is part of it. The moral authority of the Ukrainian cause, especially in democratic states like Canada, depends in large part on the ability to demonstrate that Ukraine is not only resisting authoritarian aggression but also actively embodying the democratic values it claims to defend. Without this, the effectiveness of diaspora advocacy, and the resilience of international alliances, will remain fragile.

2. Institutionalize Diaspora Relations through a Ministry of Diaspora Affairs

To ensure sustained, strategic engagement, Ukraine should establish a formal Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, that will be responsible for diaspora relations. This Ministry would operate as a central government body tasked with coordinating global Ukrainian diaspora relations, with regional offices or diplomatic liaisons in key countries like Canada, particularly in cities with significant diaspora populations such as Toronto, Vancouver, or Ottawa.

This recommendation draws on policy transfer theory, particularly Dolowitz and Marsh's (2000) concept of voluntary lesson-drawing, where states adopt best practices from

others facing similar challenges. In this case, Ukraine can learn from the Armenian and Israeli governments, both of which have institutionalized diaspora engagement through dedicated offices and structured coordination mechanisms. For instance, Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs works closely with Jewish communities abroad to shape international policy narratives, while Armenia's Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs functions as a bridge between the government and Armenian communities worldwide, facilitating investment, advocacy, and crisis response. Functions of a Ukrainian office in Canada could include:

- Coordinating diaspora consultations on foreign policy messaging to ensure alignment on strategic priorities (e.g., military support, sanctions, aid, etc) instead of putting all responsibility on diaspora communities;

- Identifying and supporting key diaspora-led initiatives with political potential, such as lobbying campaigns or humanitarian aid projects;

- Co-producing policy agendas with diaspora organizations. Rather than treating the diaspora as an informal extension of state policy, Ukraine should engage in joint agenda-setting processes with Canadian-Ukrainian advocacy groups. Mechanisms could include biannual Ukraine-diaspora policy forums, collaborative white papers or briefing notes on strategic topics, joint task forces on advocacy campaigns. The Ukrainian government can receive relevant data on the Canadian political landscape to launch new advocacy campaigns;

- Facilitating real-time information exchange during crises (e.g., Russia's escalation or major policy debates in Canada) to enable rapid, coordinated responses.

By adapting these models to the Ukrainian context, this Ministry would not only formalize Ukraine's approach to diaspora engagement but also help institutionalize practices that have already proven effective in comparable political environments.

3. Address Coordination Gaps and Bureaucratic Fragmentation

The thesis identifies gaps in coordination between Ukrainian consulates and community organizations, often stemming from a lack of shared protocols and institutional continuity. To remedy this, the Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a new Ministry of Diaspora Affairs should develop a Diaspora Engagement Strategy with clear mandates, metrics, and interdepartmental coordination mechanisms. Components might include:

- centralized communication platforms for diaspora coordination;

- mandated reporting systems on diaspora engagement outcomes;

- shared calendar and database of diaspora initiatives;

- creating protocols for crisis communication and coordination, allowing diaspora organizations to respond rapidly and in sync with official Ukrainian messaging during emergencies or geopolitical developments.

The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada has proven invaluable in shaping foreign policy outcomes that favor Ukraine. However, its full potential remains underleveraged due to ad hoc engagement, limited institutional support, and fragmented coordination. By adopting a more strategic, structured, and collaborative approach to diaspora engagement, the Ukrainian government can amplify its voice in Canadian policymaking and foster a more resilient, long-term partnership with its global citizens.

4. Enhance Strategic Communication and Narrative Framing

Ukrainian government representatives in Canada should align their public diplomacy efforts more closely with the narrative strategies employed by diaspora organizations, which have proven highly effective in resonating with Canadian political values such as democracy,

human rights, and multicultural solidarity. According to the collected data, narrative framing appears to be driven more by the diaspora's own interpretations and localized understandings than by directives from central Ukrainian authorities. To improve that, actions may include:

- developing targeted training programs for embassy staff and consular personnel focused on Canadian media engagement, diaspora narrative framing, and public relations strategies that reflect local cultural and political sensitivities;

- establishing a joint communications task force between Ukrainian diplomatic missions and key diaspora organizations to co-create messaging campaigns, especially during critical moments such as policy announcements, aid appeals, or international crises;

- distributing regularly updated toolkits containing unified talking points, infographics, fact sheets, and social media templates that diaspora advocates and influencers can use to ensure message consistency across platforms;

- hosting regular strategy briefings and workshops with diaspora leaders to align on objectives, share media analytics, and evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies in real-time;

- creating a digital content hub that aggregates verified news, official statements, and compelling human-interest stories to serve as a resource for both diaspora activists and Canadian journalists.

5. Investment in Youth Engagement and Diaspora Leadership Development

To secure long-term support and ensure the sustainability of diaspora engagement, Ukraine must prioritize investment in the next generation of diaspora leaders. As the data in

this thesis shows, the politicization of the Ukrainian diaspora—particularly after 2014 and 2022—has created new civic energy among young Ukrainian Canadians. However, without intentional strategies to cultivate and retain this momentum, much of this political capital risks dissipating over time due to generational drift, assimilation, and disengagement. To avoid human resources outflow, the Government of Ukraine—through either a dedicated Ministry of Diaspora Affairs or its diplomatic missions—should implement a Diaspora Youth Leadership and Civic Engagement Program that could include the following initiatives:

1. Internships and fellowships: create youth fellowships in Ukraine's public institutions for Canadian-Ukrainians, mirroring programs such as Israel's Birthright or Armenia's iGorts. These initiatives foster identity, policy literacy about modern Ukraine, and direct exposure to Ukraine's civic landscape. Ukraine can draw inspiration from successful youth engagement models implemented by other post-Soviet states. One notable example is the "Bring Together Lithuania" (Jungtinių Amerikos Valstijų Lietuvių Bendruomenė) program, initiated and supported by the Lithuanian government and its diaspora partners. This summer internship and cultural immersion program is designed specifically for young Lithuanians living abroad, particularly in North America. The program offers professional internships in public institutions, NGOs, and businesses in Lithuania, cultural and historical excursions to strengthen diasporic identity, networking events with Lithuanian leaders in politics, culture, and business, full or partial financial support to enable participation from a diverse pool of applicants.

2. Annual Global Ukrainian Youth Summits: host conferences bringing together Ukrainian youth leaders from Canada and other diaspora communities to engage with Ukrainian policymakers, academics, and civil society. These gatherings

should center on advocacy training, leadership development, cross-border collaboration and networking.

3. Youth summer camps and cultural exchange programs: diaspora youth from the ages of 8-16 should be given the opportunities to travel and live in Ukraine collectively for extended periods of time to participate in cultural events and literacy training to promote physiological and social alignment with the Ukrainian population.

4. Exchange programs for Canadian Ukrainians in Ukrainian high schools and universities. This will encourage diaspora youth to connect with their heritage, fostering a stronger identity and sense of belonging to both Canada and Ukraine. Additionally, the students can influence public opinion, policy, and media narratives in Canada with firsthand experience of Ukrainian life and challenges.

5. Civic Education Partnerships: develop partnerships with Canadian universities, Ukrainian Studies departments, and diaspora schools to offer co-funded programs in Ukrainian history, political science, and policy advocacy— embedding Ukraine's democratic values and priorities into diaspora education.

By creating structured pathways for youth to engage politically and professionally with Ukraine, the government can ensure the long-term vitality of diaspora-state relations. This investment is not merely symbolic; it is a strategic imperative. Diaspora youth are uniquely positioned to act as cultural interpreters, policy advocates, and institutional bridges in countries like Canada, where multicultural identity and civic participation are highly valued. Failing to engage them systematically risks losing a powerful generational asset at a time when global support for Ukraine is critical and increasingly contested.

The diaspora communities are untapped of political resources for the Ukrainian government that should be utilized at the earliest opportunity. First, the diaspora needs to be

encouraged and rewarded in their participation in Ukrainian institutions with the guarantee of protection against corruption. Second, students in the diaspora communities should be brought into these Ukrainian institutions both to develop continuity with Ukrainian objectives but also to bring Western standards into Ukrainian government, making them part of a change. Youth, also, needs to be aware of and part of Ukrainian culture from an early age as to ensure the diaspora remains strong and organized and to ensure that Ukraine will not lack young and educated people who can provide assistance going forward. The government needs to create communication and messaging programs and knowledge around diaspora engagement that continuously reinforce and grow projects they attempt to initiate that also ensures the continuity of ideas and policies within the diaspora. This all should be facilitated by a new Ministry of Diaspora Affairs built on models used by Israel and Armenia that will be able to coordinate and maintain these relationships with diaspora in a manner that benefits Ukraine directly.

VI. Conclusion

This research examined the political mobilization of the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora and its role in influencing Canadian foreign policy, particularly in support of Ukraine. What historically began as a community focused on cultural and economic aspects has evolved into a political entity capable of sustained advocacy, agenda-setting, and public diplomacy. This politicization has not occurred passively; rather, it has been facilitated by a mature institutional system, emotional resonance with the homeland, and a favourable political opportunity structure in Canada. Notably, the remarkable adaptability of diaspora actors stands out. They mobilize swiftly in response to geopolitical crises while aligning their messaging with core Canadian values such as democracy, multiculturalism, and international law. The Ukrainian diaspora's politicization today reflects a hybrid model of engagement—simultaneously operating as cultural diplomats, policy advocates, and civic educators. It is this multidimensional identity that enables the diaspora not only to maintain visibility for Ukraine on the global stage but also to influence Canadian policymaking in meaningful and measurable ways.

Several core findings emerged from the research. Framing matters if you want to capture a local audience. The UCC's "Stand With Ukraine" campaign strategically aligned its messaging with Canadian political values, transforming a distant conflict into a domestic moral cause. This framing enabled rapid micromobilization and policy influence. Moreover, since the onset of the full-scale war, cultural events have increasingly served as political platforms and instruments of soft power for the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada. Festivals such as the Bloor West Village Ukrainian Festival and symbolic commemorations like Vyshyvanka Day have evolved beyond their original purpose of cultural celebration; they have become diplomatic

arenas where Ukrainian identity, political messaging, and public emotion intersect. These events provide opportunities for diaspora leaders, artists, and Ukrainian officials to engage the Canadian public, raise awareness about Ukraine's struggle, and mobilize support through storytelling, performance, and symbolic acts. However, as the war enters a protracted phase and global media attention wanes, a shift in public engagement dynamics has become apparent. While the events remain highly attended and continue to showcase national pride and solidarity, there has been a noticeable decline in overt political messaging and advocacy-oriented content. Community members increasingly view these gatherings as spaces for emotional connection, cultural preservation, and communal resilience rather than as venues for advancing Ukraine's military, economic, or political objectives.

While broader public interest in overt political messaging may fluctuate, diaspora youth have emerged as a vital and consistent engine of engagement, creativity, and resilience. From symbolic acts like unissued diploma ceremonies—honoring Ukrainian students killed or displaced by war—to Ukrainian Week events on university campuses, young Ukrainian Canadians are forging new and dynamic pathways that blend cultural identity with purposeful activism. These youth-led initiatives are not only emotionally powerful, but also highly effective in translating the Ukrainian cause into formats that resonate with Canadian audiences, especially within educational and civic institutions. Their familiarity with digital platforms, social media, and grassroots organizing allows them to mobilize support across generational and ethnic lines, expanding the reach and relevance of Ukrainian advocacy efforts.

While there has been symbolic alignment between the Ukrainian government and diaspora, such as diplomatic participation in protests and public events, diaspora engagement remains largely grassroots-driven and informally coordinated. This highlights a significant missed opportunity for Ukraine to systematically harness the full political, cultural, and

economic potential of its global diaspora. Despite strong commitment and mobilization, diaspora actors, alongside Canadian policymakers, continue to voice concerns over Ukraine's persistent governance challenges, particularly regarding corruption and weak rule of law. These concerns not only affect Ukraine's international credibility but also constrain the effectiveness of diaspora advocacy, as partners grow wary of potential mismanagement or lack of institutional accountability. In this context, the absence of a structured, trust-building approach from the Ukrainian state weakens long-term engagement. Without credible reforms and institutionalized partnerships, even the most passionate diaspora support risks stagnation or decline. To unlock the full value of transnational mobilization, Ukraine must treat governance reform and diaspora coordination not as separate issues, but as interdependent pillars of its broader international strategy.

While this thesis focused primarily on institutional leaders and visible actors within major urban centers, voices from outside these spheres—particularly recent immigrants, working-class individuals, rural communities, and youth without formal organizational ties— remain underexplored. Due to the time limitation for data collection and analysis, study relies on interviews with individuals selected primarily for their visibility and leadership within Ukrainian Canadian advocacy circles. Future research should prioritize grassroots perspectives and adopt comparative approaches to more fully understand the dynamics of diaspora engagement. Capturing their experiences would offer a more comprehensive view of how diaspora identity and activism are shaped across different social strata. Additionally, comparative studies are needed to contextualize the Ukrainian-Canadian case within broader patterns of diaspora-state relations. Examining how other diasporas with similar political landscape, such as Israeli, Armenian communities, navigate transnational influence, institutional coordination, and homeland politics could provide valuable lessons for Ukraine.

For instance, Israel's well-established structures for diaspora engagement, including the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and strategic youth programs like Birthright, offer a compelling model for how a state can harness its global communities to advance both soft power and policy objectives. Comparative analysis would help identify which models are transferable, what limitations exist, and how Ukraine might tailor such approaches to its unique geopolitical and cultural context.

Overall, this study provides both a roadmap and a reality check for Ukrainian government to consider. Strategically, Ukraine must no longer treat its diaspora as a symbolic resource or crisis-time amplifier. Instead, it must institutionalize diaspora engagement through a Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, modeled on Armenia and Israel, with mandates that include coordination, messaging alignment, youth programming, and policy co-creation. Practically, this requires investment in: exchange and leadership programs for diaspora youth, real-time communications infrastructure for crisis response, joint public diplomacy campaigns and media toolkits, strategies integrated into foreign policy. The diaspora is not simply an extension of Ukraine abroad, it is a political force in its own right. Harnessing that force will require more than symbolic speeches or periodic acknowledgments. It demands coordinated structures, shared narratives, and mutual accountability. Most importantly, Ukraine must address internal governance challenges. The diaspora's ability to mobilize support abroad is directly tied to Ukraine's moral credibility. The rule of law is not a parallel concern, it is foundational. Without demonstrable progress in transparency, institutional reform, and accountability, diaspora advocacy risks diminishing returns in both public perception and political leverage.

The Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora stands as a compelling example of how identity, memory, and political opportunity can converge to produce powerful transnational activism. As Ukraine continues to fight not just for its territory but for its democratic values, the diaspora

may prove to be one of its most enduring and strategic allies, if it is supported, coordinated, and treated as such.

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Appendix. Guide to the interviews

The semi-structured in-person interviews were used for this research.

I. Introduction

1. Welcome and rapport-building:

"Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I'm conducting this interview as part of my master's thesis at Central European University."

"Your insights will help me understand the experiences, strategies, and institutional dynamics of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada."

2. Informed consent:

"This interview is confidential. Your name and personal details will not appear in the thesis or any future publications unless you consent otherwise."

"You're free to skip any question, pause the interview, or withdraw at any time."

3. Permission to record:

"Do I have your permission to record this conversation for transcription purposes?"

II. Warm-up / Grand-Tour Questions

The interviews started with grand-tour questions to give a verbal tour of something interviewees know well and comfortable to talk about. The interviews incorporated a range of example questions designed to elicit additional insights and guide the conversation.

"What did your childhood in the Canadian-Ukrainian environment look like?"

"Can you describe your first memories of being involved in a diaspora-related event or organization?"

"Can you give an example of your regular diaspora involvement today?"

III. Understanding Diaspora Engagement and Influence

These questions explore identity, community function, and transnational ties:

"Canada was the first to recognize Ukraine's independence. Do you believe that was due to long-term diaspora advocacy?"

"How would you characterize the Ukrainian diaspora's role in shaping political, cultural, or economic ties between Ukraine and Canada?"

"How have the activities of your organization—or the broader diaspora community—changed since the full-scale invasion in 2022?"

"How aware do you think diaspora communities are of the Ukrainian government's needs and priorities?"

"To what extent do Canadian governments and elected officials invest in building reciprocal relationships with diaspora communities?"

"How does this investment (or lack thereof) influence the diaspora's political support for Canadian policymakers?"

IV. Advocacy and Policy Impact on Canadian Politics

These aim to capture concrete cases and strategic thinking:

"Can you provide a recent example where diaspora activism directly influenced a Canadian law, policy decision, or aid allocation?"

"How do protests, cultural events, or rallies organized by diaspora groups affect public opinion or political debates?"

"What preparation goes into engaging during Canadian elections? Are there strategies to influence candidates or policy platforms?"

V. The Ukrainian Government's Role

These questions probe institutional relationships and transnational diplomacy:

"To what extent is the Ukrainian government aware of the diaspora's influence on Canadian policymakers?"

"Have there been efforts by Ukraine's diplomatic missions to guide or align diaspora messaging—especially during crises or coordinated protests?"

"How much financial or organizational support does Ukraine provide to diaspora-led activities in Canada?"

"Who (individuals, institutions, ministries) is responsible for diaspora relations, and how well do they coordinate with your community?"

"Do you feel the Ukrainian government values your role as a diaspora actor? What could be improved?"

VI. Wrap-up and Final Reflections (5–10 minutes)

"Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?"

"What advice would you give the Ukrainian government if it wanted to better collaborate with the Canadian diaspora?"

VII. Ethical Closure

Thank the participant again.

Reiterate that they may withdraw their responses at any time before publication.

Offer to share a summary of findings or the final thesis if they are interested.