"How Shall We Speak?"
The Casting Out of the Canadian Arab Federation
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Introduction

After over four decades, the Canadian Arab Foundation (CAF) has become an important conduit for expressing the needs and concerns of Canada's Arab community. Despite its important place in Canadian social, political and cultural life, the CAF faces serious financial difficulties and official marginalization. This chapter begins with a brief account of CAF's contemporary experiences with the Canadian government, outlining the fragility of CAF's future. Drawing on interviews with former CAF presidents, this chapter charts internal debates amongst Arab-Canadian leaders regarding the goals and challenges of Canadian multiculturalism. Such debates parallel some of the debates within the general Arab-Canadian community. The former CAF presidents interviewed include John Asfour, professor of English Literature and CAF president from 1997-2002; Raja Khouri, an organizational and race relations consultant, commissioner with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, co-chair of the advocacy committee of Human Rights Watch Canada and CAF president from 2002-2004; Omar Alghabra, former member of parliament and CAF president from 2004-2005; and Khaled Mouammar, former Immigration Refugee Board member and CAF president from 2006-2010. In combination with these interviews, this chapter explores various media and academic texts to reflect on broader power relations between Arab-Canadians and the Canadian government.

The interviews exhibit that CAF leadership (and the Arab-Canadian community) can be divided on *ways* to speak; some argue for a focus on integrationist, nation-centred advocacy while others argue for transnational activisms that connect domestic advocacy with foreign policy work and extra-national solidarities. However, this paper argues that this debates between Arab-Canadian leaders talks over the larger obstacle of structural racism. While some CAF leaders debate strategies of communication with the Canadian government, this paper questions the government's desire for political communication with its Arab racialized constituencies. The way in which Multiculturalism policy is being contemporarily narrated and implemented suggests that political diversity that disrupts dominant political and social discourse (which might emerge from new immigrants or new citizens) is not welcomed by the Canadian multiculturalism project. As such, CAF's recent shift from integrationist, nation-centric and discursively adaptive approaches to confrontational activism and alternative political languages may not reflect new leadership as much as it reflects Arab-Canadians' growing feelings of disconnection from Canadian governmental and institutional power. Before elaboration on these power dynamics between CAF and the Canadian government, I outline the history of CAF.

The Canadian Arab Federation

The CAF, established in 1967, is a non-partisan, non-profit national umbrella organization that offers membership to 40 Arab-Canadian organizations. It aims to liaise between the Arab community and the media, the three levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal), and various national bodies and NGOs. CAF is comprised of a Board of Directors, an Executive Committee, staff and volunteers who

work at the national office and implement special projects, programs and services. The Board of Director, consisting of the Arab-Canadian member organizations, elects a nine member volunteer executive committee on a biannual basis. The CAF's stated functions are anti-racism and civil rights education and campaigns, as well as government, media and community relations. CAF also runs programs like job search workshops and language instruction for newcomers that serve many various immigrant groups beyond their Arabs constituents (CAF 2009a).

Perusing the materials held at the Toronto CAF office reveals plenty of literature for new immigrants and racialized communities in Canada. There are free handouts and pamphlets outlining individual rights in the Canadian legal system and information on obtaining free legal advice in the event that those rights are breached. Such pamphlets include "When CSIS [Canadian Security and Intelligence Services] Calls…" and "Police Complaints Process." There are also large amounts of information on access to social housing, Ontario Disability, Employment Insurance, Old Age Security, and Ontario Works. Some pamphlets on English language instruction or community events are written in Cantonese as to engage the local Chinese population residing close to the CAF office.

The Canadian Arab Federation is a member of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC), a non-profit, non-partisan coalition of national ethnocultural umbrella organizations like the Armenian National Federation of Canada, the Belarusian Canadian Coordination Committee, the Canadian Hispanic Congress, the Canadian Hellenic Congress, the Canadian Jewish Congress and twenty other ethnocultural organizations. The CEC has a long-standing history in Canada of advocating for

minority rights. In fact, it was founded in 1980, before the Multiculturalism act was passed into law in 1988.

CAF's Contemporary Standing with the Canadian Government

As of early 2009, CAF was receiving $1,083,000 in federal funding from the Canadian government to run language instruction programs for new immigrants in Toronto. On 19 March 2009, Jason Kenney, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, suspended CAF's federal funding for those programs. Kenney also threatened to suspend $180,000 of federal funding which currently supports CAF's job search program.[1] The language instruction funding was cut shortly after the current CAF president referred to Kenney and other politicians who remained quiet during Israel's attacks on Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009 as "professional whores of war" (quoting Norman Finkelstein). According to CAF, Kenney has "leveled a number of different allegations against CAF and its leaders" but he has yet to provide proof (CJPME 2009). Morover, according to Mouammar, at the time that his controversial statement was made, CAF was already marginalized on the Canadian stage as is exemplified by the fact that Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper refused to meet with CAF since becoming Prime Minister in 2006.

Kenney, however, has argued that funding was cut to CAF because the current CAF president encourages Canada to regard Hamas and Hezbollah as "legitimate organizations" (Talaga 2009). Kenney notes,

> Here we have in Canada, someone who, until the end of this month at least, was receiving public subsidies from my department, who says [...] these organizations that are essentially anti-Semitic and seek the destruction of Israel [...] should be able to operate in Canada (quoted in Talaga 2009).

CAF's statements about Hamas and Hezbollah have been less an affirmation of their (complex) ideologies and practices and more of a call not to abandon the civilians that

such organizations represent. During the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict, CAF president Khaled Mouammar criticized the Canadian government's stance on Hezbollah. Mouammar argued that "by refusing to deal with Hezbollah, a political party represented in the Lebanese government whose resistance to Israel's aggression is supported by 87 per cent of Lebanese citizens," Canadian officials were "emboldening Israel to launch further wars against its neighbours" (Fraser 2006). Moreover, in a policy positions statement released in September 2006, CAF (2006) recognized that "both of these groups are legitimate political parties, with grassroots support, and are represented in the legislature and the cabinets of Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority respectively." CAF further noted that "both groups are resisting the illegal Israeli occupation of Lebanon and Palestine respectively" and that right "is guaranteed under international law" (Ibid). Based on this argument CAF urged the government to "remove Hezbollah and Hamas from the list of banned organizations" (Ibid).

Canada was one of the first countries to cut aid to Palestinians in 2006 after Hamas won Palestinian parliamentary elections. This decision affected Palestinian civilians profoundly. Canada did not resume aid until June 2007 "when Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas expelled Hamas from the government after Hamas' violent takeover of Gaza" (Associated Press 2007). Canada's move which was emulated by other western states was decried by activists around the world. It was seen as irresponsible and hypocritical in its promotion of a democratic election and the subsequent abandonment of the civilians that participated in the elections due to unfavorable outcomes for particular foreign interests. When CAF expressed the same concerns, they were targeted by the Canadian government as promoting anti-

Semitism. Kenney announced that people in Canada "need to exercise freedom of expression *responsibly*" and regularly invokes the fear of the "rise of a new form of anti-Semitism cloaked in debates about Israel's actions in the Middle East" (emphasis added, quoted in Talaga 2009). This rhetoric is indicative of broader war-on-terror discourse in which freedom of expression is reserved for supporters of foreign policy.

Beyond domestic measures of marginalizing CAF through funding cuts, the Canadian government is also ostracizing CAF on the world stage. According to CAF's current leadership, the Canadian government has intentionally undermined the organization by discouraging foreign governments and European anti-racism organizations from inviting CAF to conferences and events. Mohammad Boudjenane, the former executive director of CAF, claims that past invitations to international conferences on anti-racism have resulted in private and public reprimand from Canadian government representatives who protested his addressing of aboriginal issues, Islamophobia and civil rights abuses in Canada (for example, for citing the case of Maher Arar).

In the domestic context, Mouammar explains that, when the African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC) held a convention in Ottawa (May 2009), they were contacted by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and told to remove Boudjenane from the speakers' list, while making gestures to the contingency of governmental funding for the conference. Despite the implied threat, ACLC refused to remove Boudjenane from the speakers list and argued that the conference had already been scheduled. Eventually, after strong resistance, Boudjenane was still able to speak, and the conference retained funding.

In another instance, when a number of community organizations wrote to the Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism, requesting that he reconsider the government's decision to boycott the Durban II World Conference against Racism scheduled for May 2009 (CAF 2009b), the minister responded that he would meet with them but that "CAF would not be invited to the meeting" because it "promote[s] anti-Semitism." The signatories on this request (including members of ACLC, the Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, the National Anti-Racism Council of Canada, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the Chinese Canadian National Council, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Canadian Arab Federation and the South Asian Women's Center) responded that, without any specific examples, "serious allegations […] are being leveled against an organization with which we have worked with collaboratively over the years on such issues as anti-racism" (CAF 2009b). The signatories pressed for the "specifics on which this claim of anti-Semitism is based" and stated that "without this being clarified, [they] do not believe that a meeting with [the minister] under such a cloud of allegations will be conducive to meaningful discussion of the issues" (CAF 2009b). According to Mouammar, the minister did not reply, and no one met with him.

Examples like these illuminate the ways in which the government is attempting to isolate CAF from other racialized organizations both internationally and domestically. Such measures work with ideological and repressive state apparatuses to interpellate CAF, and arguably other racialized organizations in Canada, into centripetal Canadian subjectivities for fear of total ostracism. Indeed, a general censorship and punishment of anyone who criticizes Israel's policies or supports

Palestinians are part of a general environment that is not only limiting CAF's "political space" (Siddiqui 2009), but also marginalizing Arab-Canadians and others whom question government policies. Examples of this include the recent denial of George Galloway's entry to Canada, the attempted banning of Israeli Apartheid Week on university campuses and the charging of student organizers at York University. Such a stifling political space is intensified by Kenney's explicit call for Catholic Zionism and in his declaration of Israel as part of "God's plan in history" (Babych 2003). Indeed, Khouri's (2003, 40) study shows that 80.4% of Arab-Canadian respondents "do not believe the Canadian government employs a balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" and 71.2% feel that the federal government does not care about their views.

Power Relations between CAF and the Canadian Government

Canada's Multiculturalism Act (1985) explicitly states that it seeks to preserve and enhance multiculturalism in Canada by recognizing the right of "freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, and association." It further declares that all Canadians "are entitled to the same rights, powers and privileges" and "whether by birth or by choice, enjoy equal status." It goes on to say that all Canadians are "subject to the same obligations, duties and liabilities." How is this language understood, implemented and communicated in everyday life? Who delineates the borders between rights-sanctioned expressions and unlawful hate speech? What are the "duties" and "obligations" of Canadians? How are these signifiers given meaning?

At Huron University College's Canadian Leaders Speakers' Series in April 2009, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism delivered a

speech entitled "Good Citizenship: The Duty to Integrate". The minister notes that

The Multiculturalism Act and The Citizenship Act and programs are "pathway[s]

through which people must pass to join our Canadian political community." He

expresses the importance of such rights-of-passage:

> How can a country that maintains such a high level of immigration while embracing the diversity that it brings, maintain a sense of social cohesion, a common purpose and of national identity? And what more can we do to strengthen the ties that bind us together as Canadians? (Kenney 2009)

While this seems like a familiar Western discourse of nation-making, as the minister

continues, a clear bias presents itself in the way he seems to understand "the ties that

bind us together as Canadians." His focus on maintaining or creating a national

identity that is shared by all Canadians (including newcomers) valorizes a particularly

English history:

> the vast majority of young Canadians [cannot] even identify John MacDonald as our founding Prime Minister. The majority of Canadians [could not] identify in a recent survey Canada's political system as being characterized as a Constitutional monarchy […] the vast majority of young Canadians cannot identify the principal battles in Canada's military history, important […] touch points for understanding of our history. Are we beginning to develop a kind of historical amnesia in Canada? Not just amongst newcomers, but amongst the children and grandchildren of *old stock Canadians*? (emphasis added, Kenney 2009)

The minister fearfully pinpoints the "challenge to the sense of Canadian identity […]

through Canada's growing diversity." Interestingly, he does not see the growing

diversity itself as Canadian identity. Instead, this diversity is juxtaposed with an "old

stock Canadian" identity that is signified through symbolisms of English history (i.e.

John A. MacDonald).

In his speech, Kenney cites *The Unfinished Canadian*, which "deplores the

way Canada is becoming […] 'The greatest hotel on earth'." Kenney reads a

quotation from a review of *Who We Are*: "many see Canada as the perfect rooming

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house, a peaceful, accommodating post-nation state or as a soul-less railway terminus, a place that demands little of its citizens." Kenney urges his audience "to take this metaphor of 'Hotel Canada' very seriously." Quoting Rudyard Griffiths he goes on warning that this phenomenon "is undermining the very strengths and underpinnings that have made Canada a great country. The lack of knowledge of what has given us the country we know, he warns, is potentially disastrous" (Kenney 2009). Despite Kenney's dismay at the so-called historical amnesia of young Canadians, he himself quietly forgets to prioritize contemporary histories of First Nation people or the histories of other immigrant-settler communities in Canada as potential ties that bind. In the old stock narrative, diversity is not what gives this country its strengths; rather diversity is seen as an addition to white foundations.

Indeed, to remedy this allegedly looming disaster of historical amnesia (or more specifically, the potential regression of salutations to English history), the minister encourages his audience to remember British histories. He asks his audience to "continue to embrace Canada's best traditions of diversity and of pluralism" while "also focus[ing] on those things that unite us, not simply those that make us different." He describes the things that unite us:

> We should focus in particular, on the political values that are grounded in our history, the values of liberal democracy rooted in British parliamentary democracy that precisely have given *us* the space to *accommodate* such diversity (emphases added).

The notion of an "us" that accommodates diversity creates a dichotomy of insiders and outsiders. For Kenney, diversity or difference is juxtaposed against an unmarked "us", essentially obscuring and, therefore, naturalizing his own bias and cultural identity. He continues underscoring his belief that "our Citizenship Program, our Multiculturalism Program must increasingly focus on integration, on the successful

and rapid integration of newcomers to Canadian society." Integration for the minister is "deepening" immigrant "understanding[s] of the values, symbols and institutions that are rooted in *our* history" (Kenney 2009, emphasis added).

Kenney's linear notion of the passage into Canadian political citizenry is quite clear. Cultural assimilation comes first, and structural assimilation could happen later. Indeed, Roberts and Clifton (1982, 89), speaking specifically about Canadian multiculturalism argue that such is the status quo: "Cultural assimilation can occur without structural assimilation" such that "members of ethnic groups can share the beliefs, norms, and values of the dominant group yet remain excluded from participating in this group's organizations and institutions." For them, "the possibility of structural assimilation without cultural assimilation is much less likely," and structural assimilation necessitates "the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values" (Ibid). They insist that "to argue that structural assimilation is not a precursor of cultural assimilation is to make a case for […] a 'sociological anomaly'" in Canada (Ibid). Cultural assimilation as precursor to achieving political audibility deflates the myth that all citizens are equal by virtue of their citizenship. If some Arab-Canadians try to culturally assimilate they find that their own political histories are at variance with the histories they are expected to take up.

The Problem with Nation-Centric and Culturally Adaptive Integration

Historical Memory

In a national survey, the outcomes of which are published in "Arabs in Canada: Proudly Canadian and Marginalized" in 2003, 86.4% of Arab-Canadian respondents stated that they are immigrants. While this pool of Arab-Canadians does not represent

all Arab-Canadians, and updated figures do not exist that focus on the Arab-Canadian

community in specific, it is generally apparent that most Arab-Canadian families have

parents who immigrated to Canada as adults (and therefore constitute a largely first

generation population). Indeed, according to Statistics Canada's "Ethnic Diversity

Survey," the proportion of people born outside the country is at its highest in seventy

years. Almost one-quarter (23%, up from 18.4% in 2001) of Canada's population

aged 15 and over (5.3 million people) are first generation (i.e. were born outside

Canada) (StatsCan 2003). Of the 5.3 million people in the first generation, nearly one-

half (46%), or 2.4 million, reported non-European origins in the "Ethnic Diversity

Survey."

Therefore, Canada has a huge population of people who have called other

places home. Arab immigrants, now Arab-Canadian citizens, have historical and

contemporary relations to and with other sociopolitical and economic contexts

because of their economic, social, familial and cultural relationships with their

countries of origin. First generation Arab-Canadians' commonly consume newspapers

from their home countries (Khouri 2003, 22) as well as Arab-Canadian newspapers

like *Al Jalia* which keep them connected to other geographies. The mention of

familiar cities, villages, schools and streets in the news (mainstream and otherwise)

resonate significantly with Arab-Canadian memory and consciousness and can

sometimes have emotional and psychological effects. More materially, many Arab-

Canadians are financially responsible for family members in the Middle East

(Mouammar 2009). Therefore, when there is strife in the Middle East, Arab-

Canadians can be both psychologically and economically affected.

Like many communities, including the "old stock Canadian" community, the consciousness of the Arab-Canadian population is not confined by official national boundaries. With this in mind, it is still important to note that 64% of Arab respondents to Khouri's study claim that "they [do not] have a conflict between the Arab and Canadian sides of their identity" (Ibid, 20). Therefore, while being proud of their Canadian citizenship, Arab-Canadians maintain a pride and affinity with their culture and heritage (Ibid, 75). Indeed, the two modalities of identification are not seen as mutually exclusive or in competition. John Asfour (2009), former president of CAF and professor of English literature, emphasizes that Canada is as much home to him as it is to any Anglophone male, for they are both immigrants to Canada (distinguished, for Asfour, from indigenous peoples); they have both worked the majority of their lives in Canada and have contributed significantly to the cultural, social, economic and political capital of Canadian society.

Nevertheless, due to the marginalization of Arab-Canadian voices by dominant English ones, many Arab-Canadians feel the pressure to prove a sort of nationalism and urge other Arab Canadians to temper CAF's activist work on Palestine or Iraq, unless one can frame it as beneficial to Canadian society, so that they may be heard. Such conversations reveal that other geopolitical contexts are psychologically, economically and socially important to Arab-Canadians, but that such ties are conflicting with the nation-centric integration project English-Canada has set out for them.

Impossible Delineations: the foreign and the domestic and the immigrant's burden
Divisions between the domestic and the foreign are often hard to pin down, both terms evading definition in a globalized world. CAF leaders are divided when it

comes to opinions on the feasibility of delineating between the foreign and the domestic. Some promote nation-centric, locally-based advocacy approaches while others see Arab-Canadian advocacy as necessarily international or transnational. For example, Raja Khouri, CAF president from 2002 to 2004, ardently explains that during his presidency at CAF, he built an alliance with the National Council on Canadian Arab Relations (NCCAR) in Ottawa.[2] According to Khouri, NCCAR was to focus on foreign affairs while CAF would focus on domestic issues like civil rights. Khouri (2009) explains,

> With all due respect to Palestine, CAF's job is not to fight for Palestinian rights, CAF's job is to integrate Canadian Arabs in this country. Yes, you speak out on rights, and some of the interests of our community are these issues, but it's not the sole purpose of CAF to be defending Palestinian rights.

He goes on to warn that when one focuses on the foreign then you are "automatically marginalizing yourself." Echoing this logic, John Asfour (2009), CAF president from 1997-2002, remarks:

> We will not make a difference if we really put total energy towards what's going on in Iraq. Is it going to change anything about what the United States is doing in Iraq? Of course we can send out a press release. We can say the Americans are butchering people in Iraq. But our first duty, our main concern should be here.

Indeed, Khouri and Asfour realize a necessity to talk about issues that are of interest and importance to the dominant Canadian culture and discourse or risk marginalization, labeling and exclusion. Asfour emphasizes that, during his presidency, his team "wanted to be Canadian" and "zeroed in on problems that Arabs and Muslims are facing here first." It is important to note that all three leaders express deep compassion, concern and interest in the goings-on of political, economic, social and military strife in the Middle East but maintain that the conflicts in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and other Middle East countries are "not our platform" (Asfour 2009). This

local focus on human rights is valuable in that it focuses its efforts, successfully or not, on hindering the entrenchment of global phenomena, like the war on terror, at the local and national level. Integrationist leadership strategies insist that CAF should "first and foremost pay attention to what's going on in Canada" and defend Arab-Canadians (Asfour 2009). Such work is exceedingly urgent for working against human rights infringements in Arab-Canadians' daily lives.

Interestingly, while CAF leaders, with the exception of Mouammar, make distinctions between local and foreign advocacy they simultaneously exhibit difficulties in mapping out these boundaries. Khouri notes that, during the Iraq war, his team "took a very public role in opposition to the war and to oppose any Canadian involvement." He goes on to note that CAF took a position on Canada's denunciation of Hezbollah, which is considered both a domestic and foreign issue. Khouri's team also took a position on bringing *Al Jazeera* media to Canada. Then he concludes: "you can't always separate the foreign from the domestic." He refines his point to say that one must be able to ask the Canadian government "for things they are directly involved in." This is a difficult criterion to assess.

CAF under Khaled Mouammar seeks to drive this point home by arguing that in a world where it is difficult to differentiate the national from the transnational, "international issues affect [Arabs] domestically" (Mouammar 2009):

> Whatever happens in Iraq or Afghanistan is, in the end, part of a larger rhetoric of a war on terror that has to demonize Muslims and Arabs—interchangeable terms for many people—internationally. Consequently, we saw the implementation of the Anti-Terrorism Act in Canada which targeted Arabs and Muslims in 2001.

Nation-centric advocacy strategies may protest the breaching of Canadian civil rights without necessarily connecting the fight with those of others around the world. For

Mouammar this is a difficult task as the global war on terror is directly related to everyday Canadian attitudes which "affect people's employment in Canada, target Arab boys in school and puts pressure on Arab Canadians to send money abroad"; these issues "add to social problems in Canada" (Ibid). Therefore, for CAF leadership and those in the community who have elected Mouammar to leadership twice since 2006, it is impossible to "dissect international issues from domestic issues" (Ibid).

The current activist and transnational or extra-national administration (and tis supporters) further argues that the Canadian government itself brings foreign conflicts into the domestic scene. For example, during the Gulf War Canada joined forces with the United States (US) and began targeting its own Iraqi-Canadian population with CSIS interrogations as it was receiving intelligence from Canadian posts in Iraq (Kashmeri 1991). More recently, *Haaretz*, a leading Israeli newspaper reported on a speech made by Canada's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. After a four-day trip to Israel in the spring of 2009, Kenney testified that

> a new anti-Semitism that emanates from an alliance of Western leftists and Islamic extremists is more dangerous than the 'old European' form of Jew-hatred […] The existential threat faced by Israel on a daily basis is ultimately a threat to the broader Western civilization (quoted in Ahren 2009).

Haaretz described Kenney as part of a staunchly pro-Israel government, led by Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Ibid). Similarly at the Inaugural Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Commission for Combating Anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom on February 17, 2009, the minister said:

> There are organizations in Canada, as in Britain, that receive their share of media attention and public notoriety, but who, at the same time as expressing hateful sentiments, expect to be treated as respectable interlocutors in the public discourse. I think, for example, […] of the leader of the Canadian Arab Federation who notoriously circulated an e-mail when my colleague, our shadow Foreign Minister, Bob Rae, was running for the leadership of his party, calling on people to vote against Mr. Rae because of Arlene Perly Rae's

> involvement in Canada's Jewish community. The same individual, the same organization, the Canadian Arab Federation, just last week circulated—including to all parliamentarians—videos which include propaganda, including the incitation to hatred of children, by organizations such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.

Kenney's references to specific names and organizations in Canada at global conferences insert the Canadian domestic scene into an international context where contemporary global dynamics of naming friends and foes along ideological lines (like East versus West) run rampant. Internal Canadian debates have been drawn out to parallel the global fight against Islamic extremism (including Arabs who are commonly conflated with Muslims in popular discourse).

Alghabra (2009) argues that while there is no formal literature stating that immigrants are not allowed to talk about foreign policy, there are challenges. He argues that Arab-Canadians are "typically discredited" when they focus on the political events in a region outside of Canada. For Alghabra, the advocate-immigrant or the racialized advocate is perceived to be biased or narrow-minded by Canadian politicians when the "focus is on Palestine or Iraq."[3] Alghabra further argues that if one talks about Palestine, one has got to talk about Darfur and Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world where human rights are being breached. "One cannot focus on one region and expect to be taken seriously by the Canadian government." He explains,

> If our voices only surface when international politics occur, it only reinforces the stereotype that we're only foreign Arabs. You have to be a citizen of principle and stand up to injustice everywhere.

Within this framework, the racialized advocate can be burdened with the task becoming a global citizen, expected to take on multiple world issues in order to achieve credibility in one issue. To show affinity to values or nations foreign to English-Canada and its national interests is to become a threat, an immigrant to be

feared as a centrifugal force. Such are the conditions for foreign affairs advocacy. Thus, the right to discuss foreign affairs is assigned unequally along racial(ized) lines. While the Charter of Rights in Canadian law and the Multiculturalism Act gives all Canadian citizens the right to freedom of expression and association, such rights can be undercut by the vague notion of "responsibilities."

A 2009 publication entitled "Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship" from Citizenship and Immigration Canada focuses heavily on emphasizing the responsibilities of new citizens in Canada to "defend our way of life" (3). As per the question I posed earlier, who delineates the borders or responsible speech and ways of life? That Arab-Canadians are struggling with freedom of expression and often strategically hide their affiliations to other nations in order to be politically audible reveals that their rights are asymmetrical with those of English-Canadians who are free to not only talk about, but act on, foreign affairs, sometimes, to the detriment of the very Arab-Canadians who are "equal" to them under the law. Indeed, Canadian officials often align themselves rhetorically, ideologically and politically with other nations (i.e. the US or Israel) or with ideologies, like Catholic Zionism,[4] when giving speeches or rationalizing governmental policies (e.g. the Anti-Terrorism Bill) without being perceived as biased or unpatriotic. Government officials can use the discourse of retaining Anglo hegemony in Canada without being viewed as narrow-minded or biased. The Arab-Canadian cannot miss this bias because it is cultured and different. Yet this bias is manifested by the very governmental structures that seek neutrality in their immigrant-citizens.

Advocates of integrationist strategies reveal the power imbalances in Canadian society when they point out that Khaled Mouammar's recent controversial statement (i.e. "whores of war") did not justify the government's response, but instead "gave [the government] what they wanted on a silver platter" (Asfour 2009). Such sentiments reveal an acute awareness that the racialized advocate has to be exceptionally careful with language and political statements for fear that an already antagonistic insider-observer will use a blunder to discredit their whole body of work.

How do Arab-Canadians Speak? Coping Strategies & Proposals for Empowerment

Arab-Canadians are in constant conversation about ways in which to attain a political voice in Canada. How do they transcend the "obstacles" of historical memory and the eminence of foreign affairs in their lives? They debate strategies, ponder them and at times argue over them. However, conversations about *ways* to speak eclipse those about the right to speak.

Asfour and Khouri encourage a form of cultural adaptation, each arguing that CAF should appeal to the values and language of the dominant culture, or in Asfour's (2009) words, to "play ball or get out." While dissonances exist between each presidents' articulation of this view, adaptive leaders generally promote cultural or linguistic integration as well as nation-centric advocacy work. When asked about CAF's 2009 funding cut from the Harper government, all CAF leaders agree it was erroneous. Nonetheless, adaptive strategists continue to promote cultural integration as a potential remedy and preventative strategy for the plights in Arab-Canadian life. Similarly, concerning speaking with the government, Khouri and Asfour promote dialogue on the government's terms, speaking "their language, referencing their values, and contextualizing our issues within Canadian history" (Khouri 2009). They

acknowledge a centralized power system that is dominated by a culturally distinct—

English—group. Articulating a slightly different definition of this strategy, Alghabra

(2009) addresses this practice as one of speaking to the hegemonic values of the

"Canadian public," rather than the government.[5] Asfour and Khouri grudgingly

promote recognition of the English national narrative as necessary for survival in a

country where Arabs "are at the bottom of the totem pole [sic]" (Asfour 2009).

Adaptive thinkers invoke shared systems of meaning or "universal" values –

sometimes referred to as "liberal" values by Alghabra – as the bases upon which to

communicate with the dominant culture. The insistence on the culturally adaptive

strategy reveals that Arab-Canadians are keenly aware of the audience to whom they

are speaking and attempting to persuade – an audience with much more political and

economic power – even if they are resentful of this reality. This strategy seeks to

dismantle Arabophobia and Islamophobia in the dominant culture from within; by

appealing to the dominant language and values.

The integrationist adaptive strategy diverges from that of CAF under Khaled

Mouammar which is centered more on a practice of a "taking-up" of agency (Nyers

2003) and confrontational activism, such as rallies, petitions and strikes.

Contemporarily, CAF takes on a global consciousness of class and race struggles,

transcending the national sphere and invoking various competing historical narratives.

CAF speaks to the government, not with it, and has also put emphasis on speaking

with transnational and international audiences as much as it does with the state,

sometimes in an effort to seek third-party validation and intervention.

Like other marginalized groups in Canada such as undocumented workers who

use slogans like "we are here because you destroy our countries" and "no borders, no

nations, no deportations" (Nyers 2003, 1080), CAF sees their civil rights issues as part

of larger global movement fighting against imperialism, globalized economic and

labour exchanges and Islamophobia and Arabophobia. CAF has created a social

movement that gains legitimacy from building global relationships and international

narratives prior to or concurrently with local power centers. It also gains validation

and empowerment by "building contacts with other local racialized groups, unions,

students, human rights group, Muslim groups, church groups and anti-Zionist Jews"

(Mouammar 2009) (such as Six Nations histories or global imperialism

narratives). Most importantly, CAF's transnational consciousness acknowledges

various alternative historical narratives besides the hegemonic national narrative with

which dominant groups represent the state. They are attempting to dismantle

Arabophobia and Islamophobia outside of a hegemonic language. Instead they use

alternative language that is not accepted by dominant institutions. Such methods of

subversive activism diverge from an investment in discursive activism or

conventional political processes like elections and lobbying because they have lost

faith in a "shared" discourse with government.

Although the current Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and

Multiculturalism describes the CAF's racialized community as "service delivery

providers" (Kenney 2009) for the ultimate goals of "responsible" multiculturalism or

integration, under Mouammar, CAF refuses this role. Instead, CAF performs a

political advocacy role that uses subversive language and tactics to communicate its

advocacy. Consequently, CAF has suffered cuts in government funding even as it has

also received poignant gestures of solidarity from other racialized communities.

While Mouammar's term "professional whores of war" is a clear example of what Khouri, Alghabra and Asfour would describe as an unproductive way of speaking, there are other more nuanced and subtle recommendations they promote with respect to discursive strategies in dealing with the government. Integrationist leaders have a distinct prescription for the way in which one speaks about foreign affairs issues. They promote advocacy that uses "Canadian language" and "Canadian values." Khouri (2009) argues that there is

> nothing wrong with advocacy and taking on foreign affairs issues. Everyone else does it, the Jews do it, the Serbs do it, the Ukrainians do it, the Tamils just recently did it […] everybody does it. This is a multicultural country and people come from all over the world […] as long as you do it in the Canadian language, using Canadian arguments, and referencing […] Canada's interest.

Khouri (2009) argues that during his presidency CAF tried to "build alliances with like-minded people"; he promoted dialoguing with the Canadian government by "speaking their language" and "appealing to their values." Khouri (2009) claims his administration did so

> through mainstream methods like writing opinion pieces in national newspapers and issuing press releases that outline our position within a very Canadian context, using Canadian history and Canadian legislation, Canadian values. We used Canadian language that everybody could relate to, Canadian policy, Canadian history, previous behaviours […] things like Canada's longstanding support for human rights internationally. When you're talking about things that are looking like violations of human rights locally […] you look at Canadian history and you say 'wait a minute we've never done this before, why are we doing it now?' [We] put it in the context of a national narrative.

Khouri (2009) remembers receiving a resounding ovation once when he publicly spoke to the then Prime Minister, Paul Martin: "'we don't want you to be pro-Arab or pro-Palestinian. We want you to be pro-Canadian in the Middle East.' How can you argue with that?" In such a strategy of adaptation, appeals to narratives of Canadian history erase human rights abuses or show past human rights abuses as exceptional

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moments in a generally benevolent Canadian society. In fact, these strategies of

dialogue often try to get on the officials' good side. Asfour (2009) says that he

approached governmental representatives by "giving them the goods first." He recalls

an experience during the debates on the anti-terrorism bill when he said

> madam minister, I know you're a liberal thinker and you're a professor of Law
> and you have lots of knowledge and integrity and your record on human rights
> is great […] how can you help us with some of these regulations?

Such is the way that integrationist thinkers tried to appeal to Canadian values and

Canadian power. In this instance, Asfour was utterly shut down when the

representative abruptly answered that "the changes are made and that's it!" He

responded by asking "so madam minister why did you come here then?" For Asfour,

it was clear that the government did not intend to dialogue. Yet, integrationist

strategists try to commend officials to whom they are appealing on their education

and sensibilities, before advocating on behalf of their community. Perhaps these

strategies are trying to set up a basis for "shared values" (i.e. the valorization of

education and mainstream political views) in order to be heard. Nevertheless, these

dynamics reveal the largely unilateral direction of community-governmental dialogue.

Multiculturalism's Exclusions

The emphasis, amongst leaders in the Arab-Canadian community, on finding ways to

speak reveals the quagmire of Arab-Canadian empowerment. Debates within the

Arab-Canadian community are less about political positions; surprisingly, in fact,

there are fewer debates on political views and more about strategies to garner

sympathy and attention from Canadian power structures. Debates about how to speak,

when to speak, and on what topics, dominate conversations among Arab-Canadians.

This deliberation can be starkly juxtaposed with the urgent political issues, local and

foreign, that they are concerned with. The interviews I conducted with CAF leaders convey a deep sense of the desperation with which Arab-Canadians are scrambling to find the words, the strategies and the style with which to make their points of view heard, to dispel stereotypes of *Arabness* and to reduce discrimination against them. I argue that the debate on how to gain the attention of the Canadian government talks over larger issues of structural racism and the inadequacies of the language of Multiculturalism in Canada.

When integrationist discursive strategies were employed, Asfour and Khouri claim CAF's voice was slowly becoming credible. As such, delegations from CAF were invited to Parliament Hill and met with MPs and prominent politicians regularly. Arab-Canadian delegates felt like they contributed to the humanization of Arab-Canadian issues and that their stories had been heard. Moreover, according to Khouri and Asfour hegemonic media outlets – like the *National Post,* the *Globe and Mail,* the *Toronto Star* and CanWest television stations – actively sought out adaptive leaders' opinions on political and social issues relating to the Arab-Canadian community. Consequently, CAF leaders were regularly appearing in televised debates and on the news. Yet, according to Asfour and Mouammar, these discursive strategies did not ultimately produce transformative potential in redistributing or equalizing structural power systems (Martin & Varney 2003, 218). Indeed, Asfour (2009) argues that racialized organizations in Canada can have "great dinners, they have great meetings, some meet with politicians, and get great photo opportunities […] but what does that translate to?" He answers his own question: "Nothing." For Asfour, racialized organizations can only react to what goes on politically and socially: "They cannot initiate." It is true that some leaders from each camp of thought recall success stories

in which they were able to reverse power relations with government officials in media dialogues. However, the interviewees ultimately admit that these reversals were temporary, carnivalesque moments of euphoric power subversion.

Khouri and Alghabra argue that building credibility through adaptive discursive strategies is a long process that could take twenty years before liberatory changes are made. They encourage a patience and consistency and therefore do not believe that the discursive strategies employed during CAF's years between 1997 and 2006 were in vain. Instead they posit those years as the foundation for building a "credible" presence in Canadian society. According to Alghabra such credibility-building could take about "twenty years of hard work." However, Mouammar's administration became impatient with integrationist strategies and argued these did not have transformative potential and were not addressing urgent on-the-ground political issues (like structural discrimination against Arab-Canadians).

The details of contemporary controversies between CAF and the Canadian government are not isolated trends in an otherwise harmonious relationship, and the lack of dialogue between the Canadian government and CAF is not novel. According to Asfour, Jean Chretien continually refused to meet with CAF throughout his prime ministerial period. Moreover, Arab-Canadians do not easily forget the experiences of Arabs and Muslims during the Gulf War when Canada went to war against Iraq. The treatment of Arab-Canadians by CSIS for example created a culture of fear and intimidation amongst Arab-Canadians at large. Rashad Saleh, former president of CAF, remarked: "We've been going through many wars, in 1967, 1973, 1982 in Lebanon, but we never went through this kind of treatment" (Kashmeri 1991, 105). According to Saleh, there were large numbers of complaints coming in from around

Ontario: Burlington, Oakville and Ajax. Palestinian, Iraqis, Egyptians and Jordanians were questioned at home, on the phone and at work about their religious practices and whether or not they approved of Canadian involvement in the Gulf War. Arab-Canadians were accused of terrorism without evidence and mosques were under constant surveillance and scrutiny (Kashmeri 1991). This security campaign was launched long before 9/11. Therefore, the targeting of Arab-Canadians and associated invasion of privacy and intimidation is not new government practice. Indeed, Islamophobia and Arabophobia have a long history in Canada stemming from European and North American Orientalist representations of the Middle East.[6] Finally, CAF's contemporary criticism of Israel is not new either. To varying degrees, CAF has been a voice for Palestinians rights throughout the organization's history.

Thus the popular argument that CAF is being marginalized because of Mouammar's incendiary language, his alternative language strategies in general, or his promotion and support of confrontational activisms (i.e. rallies) is questionable. The claim neglects the manner in which others in the administration, like Boudjenane, are being ostracized in anti-racism organizations. Instead, it is the current government's conflation of multiculturalism with integration and arguably assimilation – exhibited in Kenney's rhetoric and the government's McCarthyist methods of publicly condemning deviant organizations – that needs to be examined further. Indeed the Canadian government is violating the right of "freedom of […] thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, and association." If all Canadians "are entitled to the same […] powers" why do Arab-Canadians feel such a power disparity when it comes to political dialogue and decision-making?

According to Omar Alghabra (2009), former Member of Parliament, there is a general political attitude that is fearful "that immigrants are trying to change policy and that they're a threat." Undeniably, there has been a historic fear of the ethnic minority and their "new" constitutional rights under the Charter of Canada. This attitude promotes a fear of so-called "Charter Canadians" and warns of "constitutional minoritarianism" where newcomers to Canada are given unbridled political power (Abu-Laban and Nieguth 2000, 472-5). However, the notion that newcomers have rampant political freedom under the Charter is highly questionable. What political power do newcomers really have?

It is true that the government's interpretation of multiculturalism "specifies that these policies must […] 'respond to the needs of all Canadians' and help [immigrants] participate fully" (Kashmeri: 1991, 127). It also instructs the government to "build bridges to these communities and consider their views when developing policies and programs" (Ibid). But when Canada performs politically or economically in the West Bank or in Iraq, does it seek out the voices and advice of its Middle Eastern citizens? According to Kashmeri, when it comes to foreign affairs, "the policy of the government in power takes precedence over ethnic minorities." (Ibid). He further argues that

> Canada did not consider the views of its large Arab and Muslim communities before it decided to join the US sponsored coalition in the Gulf. In fact there [was not] even a full parliamentary debate before this decision, let alone the seeking of a consensus from the people.

Similarly, Arab-Canadians were neither consulted in any public way when the Canadian government decided to cut off Red Cross aid to the West Bank nor were Arab-Canadian communities effectively engaged when the anti-terrorism bill was passed.

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This stifling political environment has rendered the Arab-Canadian citizen inaudible, forcing CAF to speak to or protest the government and not dialogue with it. The lack of governmental interest in dialoguing with CAF is quite shocking. Such a governmental refusal to recognize and acknowledge some of its own vulnerable citizens already violates the freedom of expression and inclusion that the Multiculturalism Act guarantees. Yet the government has explicitly worked to abjectify and cast out[7] Arab Canadians who do not contribute to the Anglo-national project. As such, the demand to integrate gives itself away as a demand for the erasure of one's extra-national connections when a Cdn actually tries to behave as an integrated citizen. Moreover, Arab-Canadian have spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to negotiate their extra-national identities and this has come to divide and paralyze people who are interested in the same anti-racist advocacies.

If the government were accusing CAF of illegal activities they would charge them. In fact, Omar Alghabra has argued that if the Canadian government has any information on CAF as supporting or running a terrorist organization or any proof that they are anti-Semitic they *should* be charged and given due process in the legal courts. However, CAF has not been charged, as they have not violated the constitution or the Charter. Just as the, albeit controversial, new citizenship guide outlines, citizens of Canada have the right of freedom of association, freedom of conscience and freedom of expression. There is no way to officially "punish" CAF for deviating from dominant political discourse. However, as demonstrated above, there are informal methods of ostracization that the government enacts to repudiate and completely marginalize CAF (like ostracizing them from other racialized groups or withdrawing financial support at a whim). Such informal punishments can go relatively unnoticed

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by the media and the public because of the ways in which racism works to rationalize those for whom citizenship is a right and those for whom citizenship must be earned. Ultimately, multiculturalism and citizenship rights are stratified according to race lines to produce two kinds of citizens: Those who can and are encouraged to challenge the state and still be considered as part of its democratic process and those whose challenges are figured as extraneous to the democratic debate and face consequential exclusion from the "privilege of citizenship". While diversity is often celebrated in governmental texts on multiculturalism, there are limits to the political diversity that the Canadian government is willing to incorporate and they limit such diversities in informal ways by bullying vulnerable organizations, publicly shaming them and instilling fear in non-targeted racialized organizations by making an example of the target *du jour*.

> Roberts and Clifton (1982, 91) argue that
>
> the traditional vision of a Canadian 'mosaic' composed of viable ethnic groups and communities is not credible […] With very few exceptions, ethnic groups in this country cannot perpetuate coherent cultural traditions because they lack the relevant social structures. [Even though the] government may say they wish to maintain and encourage genuine ethnic communities, their actions suggest otherwise. Examples like the restrictions on Hutterite land acquisition, the reluctance to settle Native land claims, and the resistance to Francophones who want more institutional control, all point out the government's general interest in institutional commonality rather than diversity.

With this reality in mind it would seem that Arab-Canadian leaders' obsessions with finding ways to speak that will make them politically audible is perhaps a futile endeavour. While such a slanted dynamic of power exists (undercut by racism) will the *way* one speaks garner political freedom? It would seem that the larger (and perhaps simultaneous) project is to dismantle the ways in which Canadian structural racism undercuts multiculturalism.

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The project of dismantling and problematizing Orientalist, Islamophobic,

Arabophobic and English-Christian centered ideological narrations of the nation in

Canada is an urgent one. Mitsui argues that

> Canadians will never think of America as an enemy, and neither can they think
> of the British or French as enemies, and nowadays even Germany. But it is so
> easy for Canadians to think of Arabs as the enemy. On the other hand they will
> never think of Israelis as the enemy. And if you start to classify the
> subconscious psyche of Canadians – who can and who cannot be the enemy –
> it so turns out that most of the countries with which Canada cannot engage in
> war are white […] Why can't Pakistan be our friend no matter what? Why
> can't Iraq? (quoted in Kashmeri 1991, 129)

This trend is what Kashmeri calls "white Canadian thinking." In a multicultural

society, differentiated from the melting pot of the US, one imagines that Canadian

society allows various political views to be heard and debated in public ways. For this

to happen, Canadian viewpoints will constitute any Canadian viewpoint and not be

limited to assimilated viewpoints. Arab-Canadian advocacy would come to be

understood as *Canadian* advocacy by virtue of the fact that the advocates are

themselves Canadian citizens. While the rights of citizenship can be exclusionary in

themselves and do not work to fully include and enfranchise all marginalized people

in Canada (such as temporary workers) the call to simply treat all citizens - the

politicized human par excellence - equally has yet to be answered. Hope remains that

this imperative will materialize in the future, and Canada's policies will one day

reflect the diverse political knowledge, histories and desires of its citizens equally.

Endnotes
[1] According to CAF, Arabs account for only 5% of the newcomers who benefit from CAF's
services.
[2] NCCAR has arguably less on the ground presence in Arab-Canadian communities.
[3] Alghabra notes that this strategy could also alienate other Arabs in the community.
[4] In June of 2003, the Canadian Alliance Alberta MP, soon to be minister of
Multiculturalism, spoke at St. Paul University as part of a conference sponsored by Christians
for Israel. At the conference, he argued that the best way to appeal to Catholics to be more

supportive of the plight of Israel is to "re-shape the debate." Describing himself as a "Catholic Zionist," the MP argued "Israel exists, not because Jewish people came in as new immigrants and stole land from their ancestors, but rather because it is the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people". The MP referenced the Pope in declaring Israel as part of "God's plan in history" (quoted. in Babych).

[5] This semiotic specification might reflect Alghabra's primary standpoint as a governmental political leader and does not significantly stray from the notion of adopting hegemonic language and values.

[6] One example of a Canadian text is *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909) in which J.S. Woodsworth describes Middle Easterners as the "least desirable class" of immigrants (167) and "not fitted for life in the Western Canada," where they were predominantly settling in the early twentieth century (169). Woodsworth says of the "Levantine races" that "their intellectual level is low" (168). He goes on: "Centuries of subjection, where existence was only possible through intrigue, deceit, and servility, have left their mark, and, through force of habit, [the Levantine races] lie most naturally and by preference, and only tell the truth when it will serve their purpose best" (168). In the end, for Woodsworth (the first leader of, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), the Levantine races "do not compare favorably even with the Chinese, and the most consoling feature of their coming has been that they form a comparatively small part of our total immigration." This dated text shows that racist language about Middle Easterners, and other immigrants to Canada, has deep roots, particularly in English-Canadian rhetoric about immigration and citizenship.

[7] I use this term with a nod to Sherene Razack's (2008) usage of the term to describe the ways in which Islamophobic rhetoric and the rhetoric of the war on terror justifies the expulsion of Muslims from the political community through stigmatization and surveillance.

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