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# Calgary Papers

*in Military and Strategic Studies*

Occasional Paper Number 4, 2011

## Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security: Historical Perspectives

*Edited by P. Whitney Lackenbauer*



CALGARY PAPERS  
IN MILITARY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

ISSN 1911-799X

Editor  
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Managing Editor: Nancy Pearson Mackie

Cover: The Mobile Striking Force, an air-portable and airborne brigade group designed as a quick reaction force for northern operations, was an inexpensive solution to the question of how Canada could deal with an enemy lodgement in the Arctic. During training exercises, army personnel from southern Canada learned how to survive and operate in the north. In this image, taken during Exercise Bulldog II in 1954, Inuk Ranger TooToo from Churchill, Manitoba relays information to army personnel in a Penguin. DND photo PC-7066.

*Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security: Historical Perspectives*  
Occasional Paper Number 4, 2011  
ISBN 978-1-55238-560-9

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# Calgary Papers *in Military and Strategic Studies*

## Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security Historical Perspectives

Edited by P. Whitney Lackenbauer

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## 1946: The Year Canada Chose its Path in the Arctic

Peter Kikkert

Concerns over Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic have arisen intermittently since the Second World War, provoking national anxiety. "Arctic sovereignty seems to be the zombie – the dead issue that refuses to stay dead – of Canadian public affairs," explain the authors of *Arctic Front*. "You think its settled, killed and buried, and then every decade or so it rises from the grave and totters into view again."<sup>1</sup> The gravest sovereignty crises that Canada faced historically shared two distinct features: they involved the Americans and they forced Canadian governments, both Liberal and Conservative, to choose between adopting a gradualist or activist stance on Arctic sovereignty. The gradualist approach is the more cautious of the two responses, characterized by careful negotiations and quiet diplomacy to achieve an implicit or explicit recognition of Canada's sovereignty. Gradualists argue that sovereignty is strengthened over time and wish to avoid overly aggressive acts that might jeopardize Canada's claims.<sup>2</sup> An activist approach involves a more forthright and forceful pronouncement of Canadian sovereignty, such as the drawing of straight baselines by the Mulroney government. Both approaches seek the same objectives: the attainment of international recognition of Canada's *de jure* sovereignty over the North, especially by the United States, and of *de facto* control of the Arctic lands and waters.<sup>3</sup>

Canadian diplomats have had to walk a fine line in deciding how far to push the boundaries of international law and test the patience of the Americans in affirming Canada's sovereignty. For the most part, decision makers weighed the costs and benefits of a forceful assertion of sovereignty and erred on the side of caution. In the years of the early Cold War, the Liberal government faced this dilemma as the exigencies of continental defence brought the world's attention squarely on the Arctic.

The Canadian decision to cooperate with the United States in continental defence and allow American defence projects in the North, the terms under which the two countries worked this relationship out, and its impact on Canadian sovereignty in the region has generated three distinct schools of thought. The first school reflects the ideas of Donald Creighton's seminal work *The Forked Road*, which proposed that the government of William Lyon

Mackenzie King led Canada into the suffocating embrace of the Americans, who ignored Canada's wishes and threatened its sovereignty in the North with several massive wartime defence projects.<sup>4</sup> Other scholars have expanded on this theme of American dominance and Canadian weakness in protecting its North. In *Sovereignty or Security?*, Shelagh Grant alleged that Canada sacrificed its control of the North to meet American continental defence needs and failed to protect its sovereignty.<sup>5</sup> In his quick survey of Arctic policy, "Lock, Stock and Icebergs?," historian Adam Lajeunesse also sharply criticized the Canadian government for not adopting a sufficiently aggressive approach to defend sovereignty after 1946. "The situation," he claimed, "seemed to call for a clarification of official Arctic policy and a more forceful assertion of Canadian control."<sup>6</sup> Instead of adopting a strong course of action, the Canadians passively established a policy of purposeful ambiguity and tried their best to avoid the real issues of Arctic sovereignty.

The second school, aptly named the "middle ground,"<sup>7</sup> which began with the work of Charles Stacey and James Eayrs and includes historians like Morris Zaslow and Jack Granatstein, stressed the conflict, cooperation and complexity of the Canadian-American relationship. Though Canada struggled with the inevitable consequences to its sovereignty, it remained an important ally to the United States and had to participate in continental defence.<sup>8</sup> Arguing that Canada acted as required, given the prevailing Cold War context, these scholars rarely provided any praise for the government's handling of the situation and ignored Canadian accomplishments in preserving its sovereignty while ensuring security.

The third line of thought, which can be called the revisionist school, challenges these interpretations. David Bercuson, Whitney Lackenbauer, Elizabeth Elliot-Miesel and Joseph Jockel have emphasized the cooperation, respect and open dialogue that characterized the defence relationship after 1943. Their work illuminates the victories of the Canadian government in safeguarding its sovereignty while ensuring its security.<sup>9</sup> Canadian manoeuvring led to American recognition of Canada's terrestrial sovereignty in the Arctic from 1947 onwards, they argue, and effectively balanced security and sovereignty needs.

This chapter elaborates on the basic argument David Bercuson made in his seminal article, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950: Solving the Canadian Dilemma," by focusing on the bilateral defence negotiations that occurred throughout 1946, culminating in the Chateau Laurier conference of 16-17 December. These discussions formed a strong foundation for the Canadian-American defence relationship that developed through

the Cold War. Given its strategic position and its historic alliance with the United States, Canada had to participate in continental defence. Canadian officials understood, however, that a purely passive approach to northern sovereignty and security could only end in disaster. In this long and trying year they worked out a solution that offered both.

Critics such as Grant and Lajeunesse, who assert that Canada could have pushed the United States into formally accepting its sovereignty, show a misunderstanding of the relationships that existed at the time, the essence of the negotiations, the state of international law, and the potential costs and benefits of certain Canadian courses of action. Indeed, Canada's cautious and gradualist strategy allowed the country to consolidate its territorial sovereignty over the Arctic lands. While agreeing to disagree about controversial legal issues like the sector principle, the two countries negotiated workable solutions that supported Canadian claims in the region.<sup>10</sup> Although quiet diplomacy lacked the glamour of a grand sovereignty-asserting action, Canada managed to avoid alienating its chief ally, contributed to continental defence, and laid the groundwork for a strategy that secured Canada's national interests in the Arctic.

### *In the Shadow of the Second World War*

In August 1945 Germany and Japan lay in ruins, and people everywhere anticipated a new era of peace. After six long years of war, the Canadian government looked forward to cutting down on defence expenditures and investing its resources in areas neglected during the conflict. Canada could be proud of its wartime service as one of the leading members of the Western alliance. Furthermore, the politicians could breathe a sigh of relief that the thousands of American troops who flooded into the Canadian North after 1941 in the name of continental defence would finally leave.

Though in 1942 and much of 1943 the King government did little to regulate the activities of the Americans in the North, the Canadians eventually became more proactive and started to manage events 'on the ground.' The government appointed a special commissioner, Brigadier-General W.W. Foster, to oversee the American defence projects in the North and started to set parameters on new American proposals. As the war drew to a close, Canada secured its control by paying to acquire full ownership of the permanent facilities on its territory. The Americans also agreed that, before they began any project on or over Canadian territory, they required approval from the Canadian government.<sup>11</sup> With the threat to the continent gone and the Canadians assuming control of the northern defence projects, the Americans

had little reason to stay in the region. Indeed, by the summer of 1945, most had gone home.

The Canadian effort to secure its control of the North in the last years of the war was timely because the post war international situation prompted immediate American requests to return to the region. Even before the Japanese capitulation in August 1945, the wartime relationship between the Western allies and the Soviet Union began to dissolve. On 11 September 1945, this fact became all too apparent to the King government, which desperately wanted to avoid becoming embroiled in another global crisis. Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, provided evidence of an extensive spy network that reached into the Department of External Affairs, the labs of Canada's atomic program, and the bureaucracies of its senior allies. A discouraged King remarked "if there is another war, it will come against America by way of Canada from Russia."<sup>12</sup> The Arctic, King implied, had just become one of the most strategic positions in the world.

In the ensuing months tensions continued to mount between the East and the West. While several Canadian analysts urged the West to adopt a more conciliatory approach to the Soviet Union,<sup>13</sup> concerns over the security of the North American continent continued to grow in the minds of Canadian and American officials. Led by American A.D. de Seversky, military thinkers unrolled polar projection maps in place of their old Mercator projections, and the proximity of the United States to the Soviet Union became strikingly obvious. Vilhjalmur Steffanson's much publicized idea of the Arctic becoming the world's 'new Mediterranean' no longer seemed so far-fetched.<sup>14</sup> With the enemy waiting ominously across the North Pole while the technological advances of the war slowly strengthened its military arsenal, many strategists came to see the Arctic as North America's Achilles heel. Although the Soviet Union possessed only a small strategic bomber force and no aircraft capable of making a round trip bombing mission to the United States, American military strategists and the press obsessed over the idea of enemy planes coming over the Pole to launch raids on the continent's industrial heartland. On 5 December 1945 General H.H. Arnold, Commander in Chief of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), the service most worried by the aerial threat, declared to the public that the Arctic would be the heart of any new conflict.<sup>15</sup> The strategic importance of Alaska and the Canadian North continued to grow in the minds of defence planners in the years ahead.

Although these fears did not run rampant in Ottawa, wartime and early postwar Canadian military operations in subarctic and arctic conditions actually convinced some government officials that the northern approaches



could become the focus of an attack by hostile ground forces.<sup>16</sup> In the late winter and spring of 1945 the Canadian military undertook Exercise *Polar Bear* in northern British Columbia and Exercise *Lemming* in northern Manitoba and the southern portion of the Northwest Territories.<sup>17</sup> These exercises, coupled with technological developments, led defence planners to claim “that the inaccessibility of the Arctic is just another myth, and, providing supplies are ensured, operations on the barren grounds which represent one-third of Canada’s area can be as unhindered as operations on the Libyan Desert.”<sup>18</sup> Officials worried that the enemy might use a diversionary land assault in the North to tie down large numbers of friendly forces. In the winter of 1946 the Canadians conducted another large-scale exercise, Operation *Musk Ox*, which gained international attention.<sup>19</sup> In light of these new aerial and land threats Canadian decision makers foresaw that the Americans would soon be pressuring them to assist in continental defence.

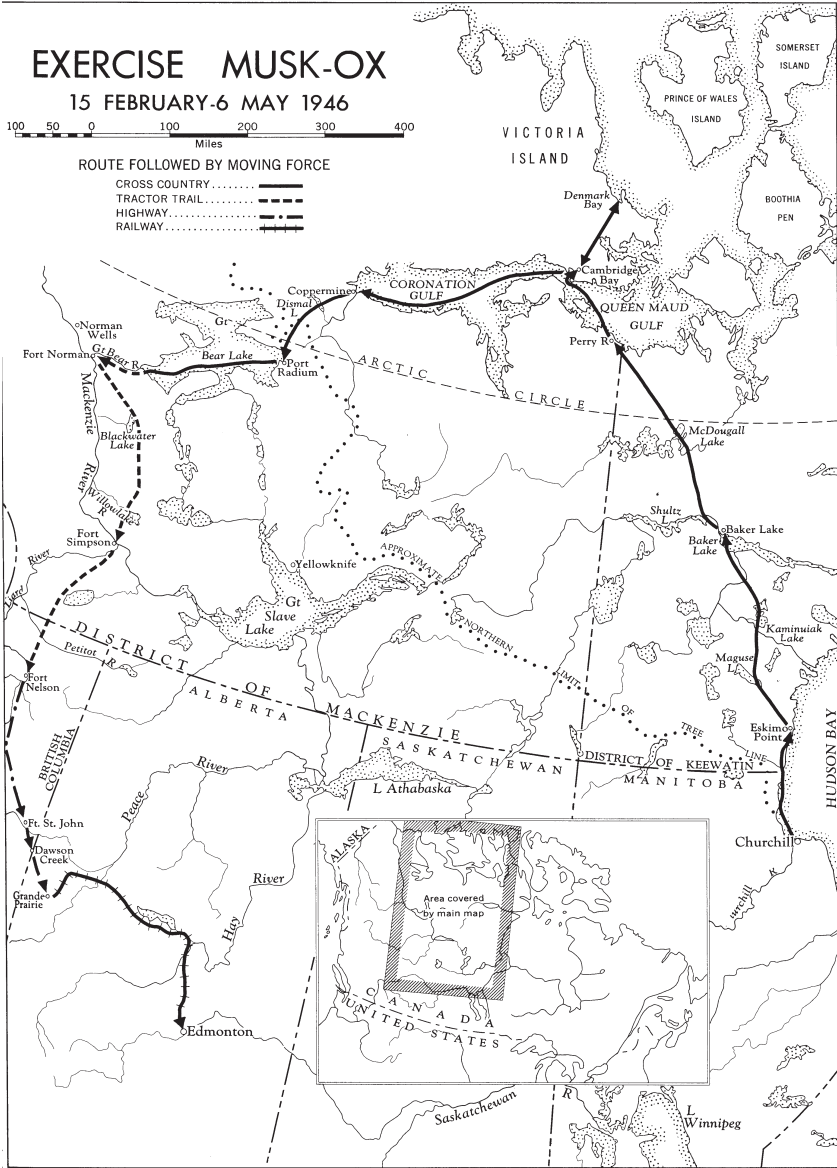
In the last months of 1945, the American defence planners started to press their Canadian counterparts to assist in reassessing continental defence needs based on the new international situation and the potential threats it created. In November the American section of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) suggested that a joint revision of ABC-22, the wartime defence plan, be undertaken as quickly as possible.<sup>20</sup> The Canadians embraced the opportunity, understanding the process would allow them to learn as much as possible about American plans and assessments, help them to prepare for the responsibilities the United States would impose on Canada, and give them the opportunity to assist in preparing specific defence plans. Almost immediately, however, concerns grew amongst Canadian officials in Washington that the PJBD was starting premature and improper planning for a formal defence treaty.<sup>21</sup> Since the war, Canada had managed to create some breathing room between it and the behemoth to the south and the prospect of an even closer and connected defence relationship was disconcerting to politicians and some senior bureaucrats. The Canadians, however, had learned valuable lessons from the Second World War. Their attitude and approach changed, and they would not repeat the mistakes – or the apathy – of 1942 and 1943.

### *A New Canadian Approach*

How could Canada handle the Americans and their defence needs? This was one of the most pressing questions facing External Affairs during the last two years of the war. As the Minister-Counselor at the Canadian Legation in Washington, Lester B. Pearson criticized the overbearing

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Americans, as well as the Canadian habit of taking a hard line on issues and then simply giving in when the Americans applied any pressure.<sup>22</sup> “When we are dealing with such a powerful neighbour, we have to avoid the twin dangers of subservience and truculent touchiness,” he suggested in



Map 3. From C.S. Beals, *Science, History and Hudson Bay* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968).

1944. "We succumb to the former when we take everything lying down, and to the latter when we rush to the State Department with a note every time some Congressman makes a stupid statement about Canada..."<sup>23</sup> When it found an issue worth fighting over, Pearson insisted that Canada should "go to the mat with Washington" and pursue the matter until the end.<sup>24</sup> During the early Cold War era, Canada followed this advice while keeping its close bilateral relationship intact.

Wartime urgency ensured a positive Canadian response to American proposals in 1942 and 1943. To reject their defence plans was out of the question. In the early postwar years, however, the imperative for urgent action was less obvious. Reports from Canada's analysts and diplomats did not spark fear of an imminent threat and the Americans could not convince the Canadians otherwise.<sup>25</sup> Rather than conceding to American thinking on strategic matters, the Canadians actually held their ground on certain issues, investigated American requests, and evaluated them with the protection of their country's interests in mind.<sup>26</sup> As Canadian officials, especially those in the PJBD, engaged in bilateral defence planning and explored issues like the standardization of military equipment, they demonstrated that they could delay or reject proposals without fear of the United States taking drastic unilateral action. When discussions shifted to the Arctic, this knowledge was essential.

Officials were also far better prepared to carry out these defence discussions than they had been during the war. Historian Elizabeth Elliot Meisel has argued that the failure of External Affairs to properly regulate American defence activities in Canada in 1942 stemmed from its small size and its relative inexperience. With a severe shortage of personnel, External Affairs had to set feasible priorities – which did not include the Canadian North early in the war – and did not plan for the difficult sovereignty issues that arose or develop an effective way of dealing with American pushiness. As the war progressed, however, External Affairs grew in size and sophistication and began to handle complex problems more effectively.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the Canadians were much better prepared to meet the incoming onslaught when defence planning began to heat up in 1946.

### *Planning the Defences*

By early 1946 high-ranking Americans fully accepted the Soviet Union as an enemy and the threat to the continent as reality.<sup>28</sup> If the Americans believed that the continent required defences, the Canadians would listen. They would not, however, be cajoled into making swift and damaging decisions.

By the spring, American defence planners began to pepper the Canadians with defence proposals aimed at improving their capabilities in the Arctic. The projects suggested for the Canadian Arctic Archipelago in March, April and May 1946 all sought to give the United States military greater knowledge of Arctic conditions. They did not demand large-scale installations, but relatively small operations with specific goals. On 14 March, Major General Guy V. Henry, American chairman of the PJBD, alerted his Canadian counterparts that the US War Department wanted to establish a program of photographic and virtual reconnaissance in the western Arctic Archipelago.<sup>29</sup> From a military perspective, this project was sensible. The first step to any military operation is to understand the lay of the land; the reconnaissance proposed by the Americans would have provided this essential knowledge. Any defence planning would also require detailed maps of the Canadian Arctic, which Ottawa did not have. Photographic reconnaissance would begin to resolve this problem.

Despite the military benefits inherent in the American request, the Canadians attempted to sidestep it. The Canadian Joint Staff told an American representative from the PJBD that the proposal created difficulties for the King government. They chose not to give a definitive answer regarding cooperation, nor did they give the Americans permission to act unilaterally.<sup>30</sup> Although the reasons for the Canadian rejection are not stated, they likely worried about the Americans exploring and taking pictures of a portion of the Canadian Arctic that remained unoccupied and barely explored. In this case, Canadian sovereignty trumped the defence needs of the Americans.

Undeterred by this initial rejection, in late April 1946 General Henry wrote to the Canadian secretary of the PJBD requesting permission for the USAAF to launch Operation Polaris, which would involve three B-29s flying three round trips per week over the Canadian Arctic.<sup>31</sup> The rationale for the mission reflected the American desire to improve its operational capability in the region, especially in Arctic aviation. If American bombers ever had to cross the Polar Regions on a mission against the Soviet Union, the crews required advance training and their equipment needed to be tested in conditions unique to the Arctic. The Canadians did not immediately respond to this proposal, however, and gave the issue more thought.

At the end of April, the American section of the PJBD also requested the continuation of the low frequency long-range aid to navigation (Loran) program established in northern Canada to assist in the air and ground navigation for Exercise *Musk Ox*. The program consisted of three transmitter stations at Dawson Creek, Himli and Gimli, and monitoring stations oper-

ated by the RCAF in Yellowknife, Norman Wells and Edmonton, the army at Baker Lake, and the Navy at Churchill. The United States operated and provided equipment for the transmitter stations, while Canada did the same for the monitoring sites and assisted in the messing, housing and transport for the American controlled stations. On 10 May 1946 Cabinet approved the extension of the Loran program until the following May.<sup>32</sup> During that time, the program would work its way into the less secure areas of the Canadian Arctic.

In the early spring, an American proposal to establish a joint service testing station in the Canadian North also bounced around Ottawa. Both the Canadians and Americans agreed that the technical services required a space where they could test equipment in Arctic conditions. Many suggested that the ideal location would be Fort Churchill, Manitoba, which was surrounded by a barren, Arctic landscape that was accessible year round by plane and rail.<sup>33</sup> This proposal did not unduly worry the Canadians, but they still balked at the idea of permitting the semi-permanent stationing of American troops in the North.

On 14 May 1946 the Americans also alerted the Canadian section of the PJBD that they wanted to carry out naval operations in the Arctic that summer. The objectives of Operation *Nanook* included the training of US naval personnel in Arctic operations and the recording of detailed hydrographic, electromagnetic and meteorological data. The Americans also sought Canadian permission to land a force of 28 Marines for a one-month period, preferably at Dundas Harbour on North Devon Island.<sup>34</sup> The task force would operate from 1 July to 1 October in the waters of Viscount Melville Sound and Lancaster Sound, with several ships operating in the Northwest Passage.<sup>35</sup> An internal Canadian memorandum reviewing the project explored the possibilities of the expedition and noted the ships would operate in an "area that has seldom been penetrated before save in a spirit of adventure and with ships of less than half the size." The report speculated on the possible commercial promise of the Northwest Passage, and highlighted the lack of Canadian activity in the area. The document also admitted that no Canadian naval ship ever entered the Arctic waters and no officers in the navy had any Arctic experience.<sup>36</sup> Despite these glaring deficiencies, no one in Ottawa worried about Canada's claim to its northern waters at this time, and the project did not stir up anxiety about sovereignty.

As important as these projects were to the Americans, they were more adamant that a chain of weather stations be established across the Arctic as quickly as possible. The roots of the proposed weather station program

stretched back into the war years. In the fall of 1944, Hugh Keenleyside received a letter from Lt.-Colonel Charles Hubbard of the USAAF, who insisted that weather stations in the High Arctic would be essential to future military operations.<sup>37</sup> The following March, Hubbard, who gained northern experience through his work on the Crimson Route, met with Escott Reid and Lester Pearson in the Canadian Embassy in Washington. Hubbard pointed out that the North Atlantic air routes required advanced weather forecasting. By 1944, forecasts for this area could only be made 24 hours in advance and remained unreliable. To solve this problem Hubbard envisioned six or seven stations spread across the Northwest Territories.<sup>38</sup>

While the Canadians neither approved nor disapproved of such a scheme, Pearson commented that his government would be more comfortable with an international plan of action that covered Alaska, the Canadian Northwest Territories and Greenland.<sup>39</sup> Pearson explained to Norman Robertson:

I pointed out to [Hubbard] that Canadians would look with some hesitation on meteorological stations in Canada's northern areas unless they were under the control of Canada itself, or of an international organization set up with the knowledge and consent of Canada and in the control of which Canada shared. Colonel Hubbard quite appreciated this but suggested that some doubt still existed as to the extent of our sovereignty over some of these Arctic districts north of Canada.<sup>40</sup>

If Hubbard was trying to coax the Canadians into accepting his proposal on weather stations, raising questions about Canada's sovereignty was a grave mistake. Robertson, however, was already aware of Hubbard's ideas and he questioned senior officials at the Arctic, Desert and Tropic Information Centre of the USAAF about the plan. These officers told Robertson that Hubbard's suggestions should be taken with a certain amount of reserve. "I gather that Hubbard is far from being persona grata to the Arctic experts of that organization who, in fact, managed some months ago to forestall his assignment work with them," Robertson concluded.<sup>41</sup>

After Hubbard's meeting with Reid and Pearson, the weather station proposal fell off the Canadian government's radar. On the other side of the border, however, Hubbard remained hard at work trying to get someone in a position of power to champion his idea. He finally found a willing and powerful ear in Senator Owen Brewster of Maine, whom he convinced to propose a bill requesting funds for the United States Weather Bureau to "con-

struct and operate meteorological stations in conjunction with a number of other countries.<sup>42</sup> As laid out in the Senate, the project would be initiated and controlled by a civilian agency.

In early May 1946 the Americans formally presented their plan for Arctic weather stations to the Canadian government. A memorandum from Lewis Clark, the Counselor at the US Embassy, proposed the establishment of three weather stations on islands in the western portion of Canada's Arctic by the summer of 1947. Clark made it clear that, while the United States was prepared to establish these stations independently, it "assumed that this would not be desired by the Canadian government in view of its general policy of retaining control of establishments in Canadian territory."<sup>43</sup> In this light, Clark made two suggestions: that the United States establish and assist in maintaining the stations which would be under Canadian control or that Canada establish, operate and maintain the stations independently.

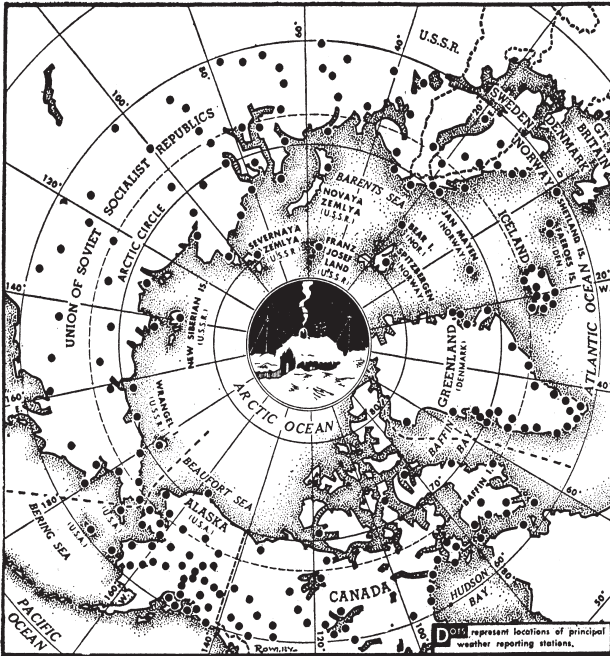
Most importantly, Clark "emphasized that his government wished to work out a programme on a fully cooperative basis and had no thought of interfering in any way with Canadian sovereignty."<sup>44</sup> Officials at External Affairs worried despite these assurances. Norman Robertson, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, told the Deputy Minister of Transport that Canada could not justify assuming the total cost of the project, but would also be in a precarious position if the Americans established and controlled the stations. Ideally, Canada required a compromise in which it retained control of the weather stations and made modest contributions to the program, while the U.S provided the supplies, necessary personnel and equipment.<sup>45</sup>

By mid-May 1946 Charles Hubbard again stood before the Canadians as a member of the American delegation at the first joint conference on the Arctic weather stations. All of the key departments on the Canadian side were represented at the conference, including Mines and Resources, the army and navy, the Department of Transport, External Affairs and the meteorological service. Hubbard reiterated the important role these weather stations could play in advanced forecasting and alluded to the military requirement for these stations when he argued that they would provide essential information about flying conditions in the North. In addition, the United States Navy (USN) and AAF agreed to provide logistical support for the operation. Lewis Clark argued for a quick decision, stating that "the international political situation at the present time is important. Those on the other side of the Arctic are very active. Because of this we can get funds at the present time and later this may not be possible."<sup>46</sup> With these funds the Americans hoped to establish weather stations at Winter Harbour on Melville Island in 1946,

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and on Banks Island, Prince Patrick Island, and on the west side of Ellesmere Island or Axel Heiberg Island in 1947. Although the United States presented a sound plan and seemed respectful of Canadian sovereignty, the Canadians again refused to make a quick decision.

### *Arctic Region Now Dotted With Nations' Weather Stations*



Map 4. From *Globe and Mail*, 5 January 1946, in Shelagh Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?: Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

The defence projects proposed by the Americans in the first half of 1946 made sound strategic sense and all had valuable non-military applications. They had practical and achievable aims and would not involve as many American personnel as the wartime mega-projects had required. The Americans also provided multiple assurances that these programs would not jeopardize Canadian sovereignty. These promises, however, did little to counter the *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty concerns of the Canadian government. In the aftermath of the joint conference on the weather stations, the Northwest Territories Council echoed the opinion of many Canadian officials when it claimed that it “was concerned about the aspect of sovereignty in



these remote sections of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago since most of these stations were going to areas where our claims on the basis of actual occupation are very weak." The council noted that the sector principle had never been accepted internationally and that it believed any permanent northern projects should be operated by Canada.<sup>47</sup> As valuable as these military projects might be, they could not be allowed to derogate Canada's sovereignty in the North.

### *Sovereignty Worries in the Arctic*

By 1946 Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic Archipelago was best encapsulated by Hume Wrong's phrase: "unchallenged, but not unchallengeable."<sup>48</sup> Since the early twentieth century Canada had taken slow but steady steps to secure its claim over the region. In the interwar period the Eastern Arctic Patrol visited remote stations almost every year, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) posts, post offices and customs houses dotted the mainland and archipelago up to Ellesmere Island. The government paid the Norwegians to drop their claims in the Canadian high Arctic and insisted that American expeditions entering the region acquire a Canadian permit. From time to time in the House of Commons a Canadian Minister would stand up and make mention of the Sector Principle and declare Canada's intent to protect its Arctic islands.<sup>49</sup> Other than the occasional statement, however, the government showed little concern about the nature of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and did even less to develop or settle the region. During the war, the Canadian government worried about its *de facto* control of the northwest, but only rarely was official attention directed to the Arctic islands.

In 1944 a small number of officials in the Department of Mines and Resources and External Affairs had begun to ponder the nature of Canada's sovereignty in the high Arctic. In February 1944, J.G. Wright, a member of the Northwest Territories Administration, noted that "it is the far and western islands, which are reached by our administration mostly in theory, where our claims to sovereignty are most likely to be questioned." Wright explained that Russia strengthened its claims to its Arctic possessions by establishing scientific and weather stations in the area. He surmised that "we may have to do something like that ourselves, in which case we would require weather stations to service air travel to reach some of our otherwise scarcely accessible islands."<sup>50</sup> He urged Canada to adopt a more active approach to secure its own claims in the region.

One of the few reports on the issue of Arctic sovereignty released by the Department of External Affairs during the war years argued the

necessity of effective occupation under international law. Any attempt to claim land based on discovery would generate possible rival claims from different nations that had explored the archipelago. The report concluded that the Arctic region required some degree of control and administration and "even taking into account that such 'control and administration' need not be as real in northern regions as in more temperate ones, there may be some doubt whether Canada is actually extending enough jurisdiction throughout lands already discovered to make her claim to these territories unquestionable."<sup>51</sup> The paper also recognized that there was no clear definition of effective administration and control. "The principle generally agreed to however, is that the possessing state must make its authority felt in the occupied territory and maintain order therein," it noted. "As a matter of practice, I should think this is translated in the administration of justice and the enforcement of national laws and regulations in the territory concerned." The report mused that in the near future this control could be expanded to encapsulate stricter customs laws and regulations, air regulations, immigration control, and the enforcement of specific Northwest Territories (NWT) Acts, such as rules against the importation of intoxicants, game laws, and permits for foreign scientists and explorers.<sup>52</sup> Enforcing these regulations would strengthen Canada's *de facto* control of the region. Accordingly, demonstrating a reasonable level of control, rather than making grand assertions of sovereignty based on discovery or the sector principle, became the government's game plan.

Other Canadian commentators shared a more positive interpretation of Canada's legal claim to the Arctic. In response to Hubbard's suggestion that some doubt existed as to the extent of Canadian sovereignty in the region, Charles Camsell, Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, noted that three wartime publications issued with the consent of the US War Department "refer repeatedly to the islands north of the Canadian mainland as 'the Canadian archipelago.'"<sup>53</sup> A 1946 report prepared by the United States also employed the phrase "Canadian Arctic Archipelago."<sup>54</sup> These mentions, however, did not allay the concerns of Canadian decision-makers involved with continental defence planning.

The American defence proposals called for activity in areas not permanently settled or even patrolled by Canada, claimed using the sector theory which had no solid basis in international law. In particular, the weather stations would be established in areas that few Canadians ever visited and, in many cases, they would be the only settlements and sources of authority for hundreds of miles. The thought of tiny American-controlled stations pop-

ping up throughout Canada's Arctic, flying the stars and stripes, gravely worried all branches of the Canadian government.

PJBD Recommendation 35, released in early May, did nothing to alleviate the King government's concerns. It attempted to establish the basic principles for defence cooperation, calling for closer collaboration between the two countries in intelligence sharing, the interchange of personnel, equipment standardization, joint manoeuvres and training, and the right of transit through either country's territory. The recommendation, however, said little about the protection of sovereignty. The safeguards that the King government had anticipated were absent. Rather than meekly signing on to these principles, Cabinet rejected the recommendation and ordered the PJBD to begin revising the proposal.<sup>55</sup> This time, the Canadian section would push harder for clauses explicitly protecting Canada's sovereignty.

The shortcomings in Recommendation 35 coincided with an equally frightening revelation from R.M. Macdonnell, the Canadian secretary of the PJBD. On 6 May 1946, he circulated a leaked report from the American Standing Sub-committee on the Arctic that called into question Canada's sovereignty over undiscovered lands within its sector.<sup>56</sup> The report, prepared in November 1945, explained that a gap existed in the network of Arctic aviation facilities extending from Spitsbergen to Greenland and across the "Canadian islands" to Alaska. To fill this gap, the paper suggested American reconnaissance flights to look for undiscovered islands in the Arctic upon which to establish weather stations. The committee questioned whether the United States recognized Canadian claims to the region north of Prince Patrick Island and west of Grant's Land, and asked if the United States could claim newly discovered islands north of the Canadian mainland.<sup>57</sup> In short, the report dismissed Canadian claims to the region based on the Sector Principle.

Though the low level-planning document carried little political weight in Washington, to a Canadian government already worried about sovereignty the report raised some unsettling possibilities. The Americans wanted to improve their capabilities in the Arctic and, it seemed, they might test Canada's *de jure* sovereignty to do so. The American report reinforced concerns expressed by Vice Chief of the General Staff General D.C. Spry that "hitherto unknown islands may be discovered within the Canadian sector by a foreign power, and claim laid to them by right of discovery and primary occupation." Spry's analysis criticized the lack of Canadian occupation, settlement, or development in the area and noted the apparent weakness of Canada's claims. "Thus it is of great importance that Canada should carefully safeguard her

sovereignty in the Arctic at all points and at all times," Spry remarked, "lest the acceptance of an initial infringement of her sovereignty invalidate her entire claim."<sup>58</sup>

Solving Canada's sovereignty concerns remained at the top of the list as the Canadian government and military became more entwined in continental defence. A meeting of the Military Cooperation Committee (MCC) made resolving these concerns even more imperative. Canadian and American military delegations met to hammer out a revised version of ABC-22 from May 20-23, 1946. After a marathon session of planning and discussion, the MCC released an "Appreciation of the Requirements for Canadian-United States Security" and a "Joint Canadian-United States Basic Security Plan." The documents stressed that the military potential of North America would be a major target in any outbreak of hostilities. In three to five years the offensive capabilities of any potential enemy would steadily improve, making the continent more vulnerable to attack. If the enemy acquired the atomic bomb, an attack might come sooner and would be much more lethal. Any aerial attack would come over the North Pole, making use of Spitsbergen, Greenland, and the Canadian Arctic islands as stepping-stones to the continent. To protect the continent, the Canadians and Americans had to keep ahead of the enemy capabilities by building an integrated air defence system, air warning, weather forecasting, communications networks, surveillance, anti-submarine capabilities and mobile strike forces to counter any possible enemy lodgement in the north.<sup>59</sup> The defence scheme of the MCC would force Canada to invest ten-fold more resources into continental defence and brace itself for a veritable Maginot Line in the Arctic. Acceptance of such a plan would also have a drastic impact on Canadian sovereignty.

### *Defending Against Help*

Canada was in a difficult position. Arnold Heeney, secretary to the Cabinet, informed Prime Minister King that continental defence would become the most serious problem facing the government in the postwar years. Considering the importance the Americans placed on securing a continental defence agreement, the Americans would probably approach Canada at the highest levels. "The government will probably have to accept the United States thesis in general terms," Heeney concluded, "though we may be able to moderate the pace at which plans are to be implemented and to some extent the nature of the projects which are to be undertaken."<sup>60</sup>

Historian Joseph Jockel has made a convincing case showing that the American government did not intend to establish a massive air defence sys-

tem on Canadian territory in 1946. Despite the threat assessment prepared by the MCC, the USAAF remained predominately focused on offensive operations, not continental air defences, in the early postwar years.<sup>61</sup> Jockel also noted that early bilateral “negotiations were conducted before the higher authorities had fully established what, precisely, the American interest was.”<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, senior American officials tended to leave the details of bilateral defence planning in the hands of lower ranking officers and diplomats and often, as in the case of the MCC recommendation, knew little about the actual plans.<sup>63</sup> These senior officials had little interest in the grandiose plans of the MCC, and suggestions for air defence bases and radar stations throughout the Arctic faded away for the short-term.

Regardless of the intentions of senior American officials, the plans prepared by the MCC, the multitude of proposed northern defence projects, and the failure of the PJBD to create a set of basic principles for cooperation that protected Canadian sovereignty left the King government reeling by June 1946. Everyone knew that Canada would participate in continental defence with its closest ally, in spite of its sovereignty concerns.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Canadian military officials recognized the importance of the proposed defence projects. After the conference on weather stations in May, Group Captain Douglas Bradshaw, the RCAF representative, stated that he “hoped that the project would not be turned down on the basis of the sovereignty question as he felt there was a very great need of these stations for air activity in view of the rather disturbing political situation at the present time.”<sup>65</sup> The Canadian Arctic would be one of the front lines of any new global war. According to David Bercuson, this posed a series of important questions for policy makers:

Did Canada have the resources to guard that front line to the satisfaction of its powerful ally, the United States? It was obvious, almost from the start, that it did not. But could Canada allow the United States to mount that “long polar watch” alone, from Canadian territory? Would this not be an admission that whatever sovereignty Canada claimed in the polar regions was weak at best and nonexistent at worst?<sup>66</sup>

How would Canada respond to the proposals for American defence projects in the Arctic? How would it protect its sovereignty in the region?

Canada required a solution to its problem that both protected sovereignty and provided adequate continental defence: it needed to “defend against

help.<sup>67</sup> The Canadians worried that the Americans might act unilaterally if they did not attempt to defend the Arctic, which the United States perceived as a strategically vulnerable position. To effectively defend the Arctic, however, the Canadians had to partner up with the United States and allow American soldiers onto Canadian territory. This, in turn, would raise grave sovereignty concerns and in the process of securing the continent the United States itself would become a threat to Canada. Canadian diplomats realized that any policy in the Arctic would need to provide both sovereignty and security. Defence against help guaranteed both.

Though this policy would eventually prove effective, the King government continued to struggle to find the solution to its dilemma in the summer of 1946. By the beginning of June, the Americans began to press the Canadian government for a quick decision on the proposed defence projects, lest they miss the narrow window of opportunity for operations during the Arctic's short summer. Canadian officials understood that their country had little choice but to participate in continental defence, but as American pressure mounted they became more determined to find a solution that would allay their sovereignty concerns. The government learned lessons from its wartime experiences, and did not plunge head first into defence cooperation with the Americans by accepting every defence proposal immediately. Instead, the government bided its time, pondered the problem, and attempted to form a response that would protect Canada's sovereignty and provide the Americans with the security they desired.

### *An Activist Approach?*

Throughout the spring and summer, several high-ranking officials proposed that Canada solve its sovereignty problems in the Arctic by aggressively pursuing formal American recognition of its claims. R.M. Macdonnell anticipated that Arctic problems would be at the forefront of Canada's foreign affairs in years ahead. Soon "there will be extensive programmes of northern exploration and development in which the United States will either be participating with Canada or will have been given permission to act independently," he predicted. With worrisome thoughts of American flags flying over bases in the Canadian Arctic flashing through his mind, Macdonnell suggested that the Canadians go on the offensive from the start and "endeavour to secure [American] agreement to our claims about Canadian sovereignty."<sup>68</sup> Lester Pearson echoed this sentiment when he suggested that Canada use the defence projects as leverage to attain from the Americans public recognition of Canada's claims based on the sector principle.<sup>69</sup> Both men advocated

an activist approach to Canadian sovereignty – a radical departure from the gradualist approach of the first half of the century.

After the Canadian-American Arctic weather stations conference in May, James Allison Glen, the Minister of Mines and Resources, expressed his worry to Louis St. Laurent about the prospect of permanent American installations in a region where Canada did little to strengthen its sovereignty. Glen thought that the project was not as urgent as the American alleged, and he emphasized that any resolution should include “a clear and definite understanding” of Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic islands.<sup>70</sup> Senior military officers seemed to agree that an aggressive offense was the best defence, and also advocated formal recognition of Canada’s claims. Charles Foulkes, the Chief of the General Staff, felt that “the whole question of Canadian sovereignty should be settled now, and that if weakness is shown at the present juncture it will only lead to increasing demands in future.”<sup>71</sup> A memorandum concerning the army’s position highlighted its agreement with the Department of Mines and Resources (DMR) and suggested that Canada work to gain “full title” to the islands on which defence installations might be built.<sup>72</sup> The military’s leadership, usually so willing to work closely with the Americans, remained wary of their chief ally setting up permanent facilities in the Arctic during peacetime.

Historian Adam Lajeunesse alleges that Canada should have adopted the approach endorsed by Foulkes, Macdonnell and Pearson. Canada should have pushed the United States for acceptance of its claims, in return for the defence rights the Americans wanted in the Arctic.<sup>73</sup> Certainly a dramatic activist approach had tremendous appeal. In theory, forcing the powerful Americans to bend to Canadian demands while solving, once and for all, Canada’s sovereignty worries is both alluring and idealistic. Given the world situation of 1946, this approach surely would have failed. Neither Pearson, Foulkes nor Macdonnell offered any evidence to support the assumption that the United States might have formally accepted Canada’s claims. Strategic and political considerations ensured that the Americans would not and could not accept a forceful Canadian request for sovereignty recognition.

Although the State Department made it abundantly clear that the United States did not want to violate Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic, the Americans never offered to formally accept Canada’s claims in 1946.<sup>74</sup> Global interests made such a declaration unrealistic, lest this be seen as acceptance of the sector principle. In 1926 the Soviet Union issued a decree that proclaimed its recognition of the sector theory and claimed an enormous swath of territory stretching from its eastern and western borders to the North Pole.

Even if the United States did not object to Canada's sectoral claims in principle, it did not want to strengthen the position of the Russians. Any formal acceptance of Canada's claims would have done just that.

### *The Antarctic Connection to Canada's Arctic*

American political and strategic interests in the Antarctic also dictated its response. In the first decades of the twentieth century countries used the sector principle to claim vast portions of the southern polar continent. The United States government refused to do so, and stated in 1924 that no Antarctic claim could be made unless it satisfied a strict definition of effective occupation far more stringent than the British version for polar regions (which only called for the occasional visit and legislative act).<sup>75</sup> In September 1929, the United States Navy Department criticized the sector principle as an illegal attempt by a few of the world's powers to unfairly divide up a large portion of the globe.<sup>76</sup>

After the war the United States began preparing its territorial claim in the Antarctic, and the strategic importance of the continent grew as the Soviet Union began to express an interest in the region. The USN began planning for a massive military project in the Antarctic, Operation *Highjump*, initiated in August 1946 and involving 13 ships, nine aircraft and 4700 personnel. That December, Dean Acheson, the Acting Secretary of State, indicated the political importance of the American Antarctic expedition when he claimed that the operation highlighted "a definite policy of exploration and use of those Antarctic areas to which we already have a reasonable basis for claim...in order that we may be in a position to advance territorial claims to those areas." *Highjump*, and a later expedition known as *Windmill*, provided the Americans with a firm foundation for claims based on effective occupation.<sup>77</sup>

Between 1946 and 1948 the State Department crafted the American claim in the Antarctic. Samuel Boggs, the State Department's Geographic Adviser and the man responsible for these plans, ignored all sector claims on the continent and formulated an American claim based on discovery and effective occupation. As long as the sector principle was not established in international law, the United States government could argue for a portion of the Antarctic that it considered both accessible and economically attractive.<sup>78</sup> Any recognition of the sector principle in one polar region would have established a precedent for the other, to the detriment of the American position in the Antarctic.

As long as the Americans rejected the sector claims in the Antarctic, they could also continue to operate in any area of the region they chose. The American military considered the Antarctic to be valuable for training and experimentation. Learning to cope with the extreme conditions could prepare



men and equipment for deployment in the Arctic, while avoiding the political sensitivities involved with undertaking a project the size of *Highjump* in the Canadian archipelago.<sup>79</sup> Senior American officials realized that they would lose this ability to train and prepare their forces for war against the Soviets if they accepted the sector theory in the Arctic.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, if Canada had insisted on formal American recognition of its sovereignty in the early post war years, based on the sector principle, the United States would have inevitably rejected its request, weakening any Canadian legal claim based on foreign acquiescence.

If the situation in the Antarctic made acceptance of the sector principle impossible for the Americans, what was their opinion of Canadian sovereignty in the region? Two documents from this period illuminate American thinking on the matter. While at times critical of Canadian claims, both reports endorsed cooperation rather than unilateral American action. In early 1946 Lt. Colonel James Brewster, Assistant Chief of Intelligence, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command, noted that international acceptance of a territorial claim and effective occupation were the only ways to take possession of a territory. Brewster pointed out, however, that the rigid American conception of effective occupation did not align with the precedents established by international law. In 1933, the *Eastern Greenland Case* decided that Denmark had demonstrated sufficient authority over parts of Greenland to claim the entire area as its own, although this jurisdiction was manifested solely by Danish legislative acts which could not be effectively enforced in most of the territory involved. The case indicated that the administration established for areas like the Canadian Arctic could be adapted to local conditions and meet only local requirements. Brewster recognized that development or mass settlement of the region was not required.<sup>81</sup>

Although the report acknowledged Canadian efforts to assert their sovereignty in the Arctic, Brewster maintained the northernmost regions of North America remained susceptible to foreign intrusion. These islands “represent[ed] either a potential spearhead pointed at Europe,” he noted, “... or, on the other hand, an especially vulnerable area, a possible spring-board for any foreign assault on the North American continent.” Brewster did not suggest the United States take immediate unilateral action in the Arctic, or that it should look for undiscovered islands to claim. Instead, he called for joint defence activity in the region, including patrols and the deployment of a network of meteorological, radio and air stations to ensure effective occupation before some other foreign power did so.<sup>82</sup> The United States, after all, would much rather see Canadians in the Arctic Archipelago than Russians.

A second report entitled, "Problems of Canadian-United States Cooperation in the Arctic," also came from the intelligence branch of the Atlantic Division, Air Transport Command.<sup>83</sup> Released in October 1946, the paper claimed that, while many of Canada's senior military advisers understood the interdependence of the two countries in continental security, many Canadians opposed any American military presence in the Arctic during peacetime lest it erode Canadian sovereignty. The Americans, however, did not want to challenge Canada's position in the Arctic, and while they may have thought that the Canadians had not done enough to effectively occupy the region, "in light of the latter decision [East Greenland], we are forced to conclude that the Canadian claim to sovereignty over the entire American Arctic would be sustained by an international judicial body."<sup>84</sup>

There would, of course, be a backlash if the United States seized islands that Canada considered its own. The Air Transport Command report listed Prince Patrick Island, Banks Island and Grant Land as the only locations that the American government could occupy with any hope of making a legal defence of its actions. While such an occupation might be technically legal, the violation of Canadian territorial rights "would lead to repercussions so severe that the violation, except in the case of emergency, would not be worth it." The report emphasized that the United States should not undertake a unilateral program of polar defence. Cooperation was preferable, even if this meant grappling with Canada's sovereignty concerns in ways that did not prejudice American interpretations of international law. In short, the United States could not accept the sector principle, but it did not seek to undermine Canada's sovereignty either.

Historian Shelagh Grant used the October 1946 report on the problems of Canadian-American defence cooperation in the Arctic as proof of diabolical American intentions. In her view, the Americans consistently considered undertaking the defence of the Arctic unilaterally and thought seriously of annexing certain Canadian islands.<sup>85</sup> This judgement stems from a problematic reading of the primary sources. In the end, this was a low-level planning document prepared by a low-ranking officer attached to a unit that was one small part of USAAF. "Sweeping internally generated 'think' pieces, discussing hypothetical situations does not represent actual policy," David Bercuson explained in a review of Grant's book. "In fact, there is not a shred of evidence that any top-level US policy body ever disputed Canada's claims to the Arctic Archipelago."<sup>86</sup> While the paper investigated unilateral action in the Canadian Arctic, it actually concluded that Canadian sovereignty must be

respected, even informally recognized by Washington. The report advocated cooperation, not coercion or intimidation.

The majority of Canadian officials understood that the Americans would not approve the sector principle. American proposals never suggested the acceptance of the principle and often implicitly rejected the theory. One of the clearest examples of this came in September 1946, when the American section of the PJBD announced the intention of the United States to establish a Great Circle Flying Route from the West Coast to Tokyo. General Henry explained to the Canadian Section that these planes would not fly over territory between 60° and 142° without permission from Canada. The Canadian report noted that “the selection of 142° as the Western limit rather than 141° which is the boundary between Alaska and Canada, was made so as to avoid giving support to the Sector principle.”<sup>87</sup> Officials in External Affairs also recognized American concerns about the sector principle in the Antarctic and suggested not placing the United States government in a position where it had to officially reject Canada’s application of the theory in the Arctic.<sup>88</sup>

Canadian diplomat Hume Wrong understood the situation best. From the start he realized that the Antarctic interests of the United States would keep it from publically endorsing the sector principle. In fact, Wrong dissuaded Pearson from adopting a more aggressive approach to the Arctic. A gradualist approach to sovereignty seemed to be Canada’s best option. For many years Canada proceeded without “difficulty on the assumption that our sovereignty was not challenged,” Wrong observed. “A declaration of this sort would revive discussion of an issue which may in practice turn out to have been closed.”<sup>89</sup> In addition, while the Antarctic prevented the United States from accepting Canada’s claims, Wrong realized the region provided a testing ground for the principles of polar sovereignty. He maintained “that it now seems probable that the Antarctic area rather than the Arctic will provide the field for working out general rules of international law concerning the relative merits of claims based on occupancy, formal annexation and discovery...There is a long way to go, however, before a generally recognized definition of what constitutes effective occupancy can be developed.”<sup>90</sup> Rather than risk a unilateral assertion of Canada’s sovereignty, why not wait and see if developments in the southern polar region clarified the situation in the Arctic?

Although several prominent officials still promoted an activist approach to Arctic sovereignty, others supported Wrong’s views. On 8 May 1946, E.R. Hopkins, a member of External Affairs’ Third Political Division, advised “we should not raise any question concerning our sovereignty in the Arctic in

advance of necessity.” Instead, the government required time to consolidate its knowledge about Arctic sovereignty and establish a firm position before it made any decision.<sup>91</sup> Since the days of O.D Skelton, External Affairs had promised to update its file on sovereignty in the North. By the summer of 1946, the department still had done nothing.<sup>92</sup> Soon an in depth exploration of Canada’s sovereignty in the North, and ways to safeguard it, was underway.

### *Debating the Options*

Given the relatively permanent nature of the Arctic weather stations and the long-term plan proposed by the Americans, the most substantive discussions revolved around this proposed program. A few public servants believed that Canada should take full responsibility for the weather stations, erecting and operating all of the facilities itself. The Northwest Territories Council questioned why Canada, after spending an obscene amount of money buying back all the wartime American bases in the North, would once again invite the U.S. into the region?<sup>93</sup> Canada might as well construct, operate, supply and man the stations on her own, rather than spend money to purchase them from the U.S. later.<sup>94</sup> The Minister of Mines and Resources took this idea seriously and recommended to External Affairs that:

Canada should establish and operate any necessary stations even if U.S. official publications admit Canada’s sovereignty. This looks like one of those defence (?) proposals that seem as though we were getting everything for nothing at the beginning and then we wake up after a while to find that the U.S. Senate has turned everything upside down and that the U.S diplomats are back again to ask us to pay for work we could have done better and more cheaply ourselves.<sup>95</sup>

After the joint weather stations conference in May, J.G. Wright, the Acting Superintendent of the Eastern Arctic, proposed that if Canada scraped the bottom of the barrel in the Meteorological Service and the military it might be able to find enough personnel to operate the stations.<sup>96</sup>

Most Canadian officials, however, recognized that it would be impossible for Canada to independently establish and operate such stations in the Arctic. Representatives from Canada’s Meteorological Service complained that to supply the necessary personnel to operate the proposed station, they would have to close at least one, and possibly two, current stations. They also doubted the likelihood of recruiting enough qualified personnel to staff all of

the proposed Arctic stations. Andrew Thomson and Commander Edwards noted that Canada's position on sovereignty seemed "unduly cautious," and Edwards suggested that Canada only needed to supply three of the ten staff members when the first stations were established. (In the future, this number could increase so that Canadians made up at least half of all weather station personnel.)<sup>97</sup> In his sober appraisal, this personnel ratio would effectively protect Canada's claims. Other officials also worried about the high cost of taking on the project alone, and thought that surely some American investment should be accepted.<sup>98</sup>

At the end of May, the Department of External Affairs produced a memorandum discussing the different courses of action available to Canada.<sup>99</sup> Either the United States or Canada could undertake the weather station program independently, although sovereignty concerns and the huge price tag made this option unattractive. The King government could refuse to cooperate with the project, although this would elicit a strong reaction from the United States and, in a worst case scenario, could lead to unilateral American action. The Canadians might defer decision on the program until a joint planning group could go over the plans and establish the specific parameters of the project. Finally, approval could be given immediately for the program, with the stipulation that it be a joint project with as many Canadian observers as possible.<sup>100</sup>

In External Affairs' opinion, none of the courses of action did enough to protect Canada's sovereignty. It wanted to create a set of guidelines for the weather station program that would safeguard Canada's claims and control over the Arctic. Acknowledging American assurances that Canadian sovereignty would not be threatened, the Department suggested that the weather stations program be approved as a joint project so long as Canada controlled the stations, the United States had no vested interests or claims in the facilities, Canadians replaced American personnel as soon as possible, and the two countries shared the annual operating costs.<sup>101</sup> This approach reflected the steps taken during the final years of the war to gain control of the defence projects in the Northwest. Using these tested methods, the Canadians hoped to secure their sovereignty.

Major General D.C. Spry's report listed the same possible courses of action as the External Affairs memorandum. The general embraced the idea of establishing a clear set of formal guidelines for all defence projects in the North. Spry added that the Americans should be required to seek permission before starting any exercise or project on or over Canadian territory, that the majority of personnel involved at permanent installations be Canadian, that Canadians participate in all projects (even if only as observers), and that

any publicity on the projects stress their joint nature.<sup>102</sup> The Cabinet Defence Committee accepted his recommendations at its meeting on 6 June 1946.<sup>103</sup> At last, the Canadians seemed ready to offer the Americans a positive answer on their Arctic defence projects.

### *Deferring the Decision*

As Canadian officials discussed their preferred course of action, the United States attempted to hasten a Canadian decision. At first the Americans tried to alleviate Canadian concerns by making the northern defence plans appear less threatening. For instance, the original plan for the weather stations program called for extensive air facilities at the Melville Island site. In early June, the Americans informed the Canadian government that "this programme has now been scaled down considerably. Strategic Air Command have been put in charge instead of Air Transport Command and they do things more simply than the somewhat grandiose Air Transport people." Strategic Air Command downgraded the proposed permanent airstrips to small scale temporary ones.<sup>104</sup> When these changes failed to elicit a quick and favourable Canadian response, however, the United States government re-applied pressure to expedite the Canadian decision.<sup>105</sup>

Unwilling to make a decision without King (who was in England at the time), the Cabinet decided to defer decision on the weather stations at their meeting on 12 June 1946.<sup>106</sup> As the month went on, worries continued to surface about Canada's interests and continental security. On 21 June Pearson told Norman Robertson that he asked "the War Department...not press us too hard with urgent requests for quick action in the field of defence in the North. I said that, while developments in the north were perhaps relatively small items in the defence plans of this country, they were for us matters of great importance, strategically and politically."<sup>107</sup> In a letter to Arnold Heeney, Hume Wrong noted that the United States utilized "a number of different channels in an effort to extract a prompt and favourable decision." The Canadian government was still in a precarious position.<sup>108</sup>

Prime Minister King returned from England to find the weather stations one of the most pressing issues on his agenda. In his discussions with several key British politicians, the real prospect of a Soviet war of conquest loomed large and his British peers suggested he reach a defence agreement with the Americans.<sup>109</sup> King understood the magnitude of the situation and considered continental defence to be necessary. Nonetheless, he would not rush into a decision without taking careful steps to protect his country's interests – and his legacy.

At a 27 June Cabinet meeting, King and his ministers decided to deny the American request to start the weather station program that summer.<sup>110</sup> The Prime Minister emphasized that the government required more time to study the general problem of continental defence and to formulate a coherent policy.<sup>111</sup> The absence of formal guidelines regulating the Canadian-American defence relationship and unresolved questions about the extent of Canada's participation in the project troubled the government.<sup>112</sup> King would not take risks without an urgent threat forcing Canada's hand, so his government adopted a cautious policy of delaying decisions on continental defence until the complex situation could be sorted out to Canada's benefit.

On 2 July R.M. Macdonnell informed a disappointed Lewis Clark about the Canadian decision over the telephone, carefully noting that this "did not rule out future consideration of the project." In his memorandum describing the Canadian decision, Macdonnell argued that "there were not lacking indications of developments not calculated to increase Canadian confidence in the intentions of some United States officials. Some irresponsible enthusiasts in lower levels in Washington were known to have made ill considered remarks about the possibility of raising the Stars and Stripes in unoccupied Arctic territory." The Americans, for instance, had already collected vast amounts of material for the project and started to recruit personnel for service in the Arctic. These hasty actions did little to alleviate Canadian concern about American intentions. After hearing the decision, Clark relayed the disappointment of the United States government and Macdonnell expected that the Americans would continue to place pressure on the Canadian government to accept defence plans.<sup>113</sup>

Despite Macdonnell's fears, the Americans actually shifted tactics. In August and September, the State Department and the United States military stopped pressuring the Canadians to accept continental defence proposals. Instead, they set about reassuring their Canadian counterparts. Major General Victor Henry wrote to Graham Parsons and explained why he believed the Canadians resisted the American defence plans. Henry argued that Canada's response was shaped by the large costs, the perceived threat to sovereignty, the possibility of negative public opinion, unwillingness to desert the Commonwealth in favour of the United States, and the fear of becoming another Belgium. To fix these insecurities, he suggested, "Canadian public opinion must be convinced of a potential threat before the Dominion Government will feel fully justified in carrying out this new, and from a Canadian point of view, revolutionary policy." The General urged that the two countries reach an agreement in principle on defence to show

the Canadian public that their government took the threat to the continent seriously and to alleviate Canadian sovereignty fears.<sup>114</sup>

In early September, Henry attempted to convince the Canadian section of the PJBD to reach an agreement on continental defence. The international situation dictated that the "security of the homeland of both Canada and the United States is unalterably bound up one with the other and will require the utmost of coordination." He emphasized that the American High Command did not want to violate Canada's sovereignty or its rights: it was a purely military problem that required joint defence cooperation.<sup>115</sup> Despite Henry's best efforts, the Canadians continued to defer their decision.

At this critical juncture, the British added their input into the situation. As King struggled to make a decision, Bernard Montgomery, the chief of the Imperial General Staff, paid a visit to Canada and met with the Prime Minister and key military personnel. The old soldier, whom King held in high regard, insisted that there would be another war in ten to fifteen years. "There was no possibility of Russia attempting to invade the North American continent at any time during the next fifteen years," Montgomery noted, "but ... she might attempt air raids either direct or from a base, or bases, established in the Arctic Islands."<sup>116</sup> Although the inaccessibility of the North provided some security for the continent, Montgomery recommended implementing an air defence scheme to thwart any Soviet raid across the northern approaches. If Canada could not afford such a scheme on its own, he urged that it reach an agreement with the Americans.<sup>117</sup> King, however much he respected Monty's opinion, still kept the American's waiting.

While the Canadian government stubbornly withheld permission for permanent projects in the Arctic like the weather stations, they tried to appease the Americans by approving less ambitious projects throughout the summer. Despite misgivings about the Americans overflying the Arctic, the Cabinet Defence Committee (CDC) accepted the proposal for Operation *Polaris*. In the middle of June the government also approved Operation *Nanook*, as long as the USN adopted a less "military" sounding title. If the United States needed to land Marines somewhere in the Canadian Arctic, the Canadians requested Dundas Harbour, where an RCMP detachment demonstrated Canadian sovereignty.<sup>118</sup> Cabinet also decided to allow the United States to continue to operate certain weather stations in the southern portion of the Canadian North.<sup>119</sup> Although the Americans appreciated these concessions, they grew increasingly restless for action on the larger continental defence projects as fall began.



### *Bringing the Canadians to the Table*

On 19 September 1946 the PJBD amended its 35<sup>th</sup> Recommendation to better protect the sovereignty of both countries.<sup>120</sup> King, however, still refused to sign off on the recommendation until he had a better understanding of American defence plans for the Arctic. By October, acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson suggested to President Truman that the Canadians might require a nudge before they agreed to defence collaboration. "The planning and application of joint defence measures remains the most active of our current relations with Canada," Acheson explained. "Our military authorities are naturally insistent on closing the gap between Alaska and Greenland and on pushing the defence of our industrial centers north of our border. For this we are dependent on the cooperation of the Canadian government." Acheson understood that this decision was a matter of great importance to the Canadians, who worried about the political risk and the danger it posed to their sovereignty.<sup>121</sup> He urged the President to tell King that the civilian members of the United States Administration, and not just the military, wanted more defence cooperation.<sup>122</sup>

As the State Department grew increasingly anxious, Hume Wrong observed that the Canadians still did not have a clear understanding of US planning or American conclusions about the Soviet threat. Wrong also commented to King that there "is still...a lot to be learned in Washington about our position and our problems." Closer military cooperation was necessary, but Wrong did not believe that such a relationship should be based on the current defence appreciation created by the MCC.<sup>123</sup> He urged King to tell the President that the Canadians wanted high-level diplomatic discussions to determine exactly what the Americans really planned for the Arctic.

During a meeting at the White House on 28 October 1946, Truman attempted to get King on the same page about continental defence. The President stressed the need for cooperation, and spoke on the value of the Arctic weather stations. Truman approached the situation calmly and did not place undue pressure on the Prime Minister. The next day, however, King received an oral communiqué from the President that presented quite a different message. Truman urged the Canadians to quickly approve the defence scheme created by the MCC and to concur to PJBD Recommendation 35 and its principles regulating continental defence.<sup>124</sup>

On 12 November 1946, Lester Pearson responded. Any discussion on defence needed to take into consideration the world political situation, and the fact that Canada could not escape a global conflict if one broke out. It

would be extremely difficult to work out a tolerable relationship with the Soviet Union as long as it was “governed by ruthless despots” and inhabited by “millions of fighting men to whom life is hard and cheap.” Armed conflict remained unlikely in the next few years, but “the way the world is now going, there can only be one ultimate result – war.”<sup>125</sup> Canada had obligations in continental defence, Pearson stressed, and had to cooperate with the Americans. It was time to commit.

During meetings of the Cabinet Defence Committee on 14 and 15 November, officials debated Canada’s next move. Many urged that Canada accept Recommendation 35 to give the two countries some principles on cooperation with which to work. However, Brooke Claxton, who in a month would become the Minister of National Defence, reminded all present of the fundamental difference between the viewpoints of the Americans and Canadians.<sup>126</sup> In the end, the Canadians wanted to accept the principles of defence cooperation as proposed by the PJBD, but remained wary of American intentions for the Arctic. On 21 November 1946, senior Canadian and American officials, led by Pearson and Atherton, met to lay the groundwork for high-level defence discussions that would hopefully answer all of Canada’s questions about American intentions.<sup>127</sup> Interestingly, one of the few subjects that the Americans stated they would not discuss was the sector principle,<sup>128</sup> because this was not a basis upon which they could officially support Canada’s claims. If any Canadian officials still believed that a formal recognition of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic based on the sector principle would be forthcoming from the Americans, their hopes were now finally dashed.

### *Two Days in December*

On 16 December 1946 senior Canadian officials found themselves sitting across from their American counterparts in the Chateau Laurier, Ottawa. Given the sensitive nature of the discussions the meeting was kept as secret as possible and the military men arrived at the hotel in their civilian clothes to avoid drawing any undue attention. Over the next two cold winter days, the allies attempted to work out a deal on bilateral defence cooperation that would provide for American security concerns without sacrificing Canada’s national interests. Of all the defence meetings between the Canadians and Americans following the war, this one stands out as the most important. Both sides came to the negotiating table willing to compromise and these men worked out the principles for a defence relationship that would last for years and have a significant impact on Canadian inter-

ests and sovereignty. Out of the meeting emerged an informal relationship, based on careful negotiations and agreement. "In the all important area of joint defence planning, both sides agreed that all the defence plans were 'somewhat utopian' and that their implementation had to be 'decided step by step,' with the rate of implementation 'under constant review,'" concluded David Bercuson.<sup>129</sup> The Canadians also discovered that the Americans had little interest in creating a vast air defence system, which undoubtedly soothed their anxieties.<sup>130</sup>

The Americans conducted the meeting in a friendly and informal manner, sending some of their best men for the occasion (including George Keenan, the resident Russian expert).<sup>131</sup> Political scientist Denis Smith has asserted that "as the diplomatic catalyst of the policy of firmness, and the American diplomat most respected by the Canadian Department for his judgment of the Soviet Union, Keenan was an inspired choice for the American delegation."<sup>132</sup> These men made a reasonable case and allowed the Canadians to draw their own conclusions. They did not attempt to "present demands or to insist on certain things being done."<sup>133</sup> Indeed, the Americans behaved impeccably.

"So far from being in an excitable or panicky frame of mind, the Americans had shown themselves very cool, level headed and realistic," a Canadian report on the meeting observed.<sup>134</sup> The American contingent told the Canadians that, while they did not believe a war would break out in the near future, measures should be taken to safeguard the continent. "In their general game of power politics Russians usually carried on with their bludgeoning tactics until 'A quarter of an hour before midnight,' and only modified their policy at the last minute."<sup>135</sup> The North American continent required defences if they decided to go "five minutes past midnight." The Americans believed that Arctic defences were long-term insurance, and they promised that any defence plan would proceed cautiously and gradually year-by-year, based on the international situation.<sup>136</sup> The Canadians questioned the Americans extensively about their global strategy and were pleased to hear that the US strategic focus remained offensive in nature.<sup>137</sup> For the most part, Canadian and American officials at the meeting saw eye-to-eye on Soviet intentions and the steps required to counter the communist threat.

The Americans also told the Canadians exactly what they had in mind for the North. They did not want to dash into grandiose proposals, but "seemed as anxious as the Canadians to keep the whole business as modest as possible."<sup>138</sup> The United States wanted weather and Loran stations in the

Arctic, but Pearson acknowledged that these proposals were moderate and benign. Financing would be discussed for each specific proposal and allotted proportionately. "The general intention," he explained, "would be that the Canadians should themselves finance *in toto* any measures which they themselves would have undertaken for their own purposes apart altogether from United States interest."<sup>139</sup> The American proposals would not unduly burden Canada's budget and promised to assist in the development of the North.

Pearson felt that this quieter tempo on the part of the Americans resulted largely from six months of stalling on the Canadian side.<sup>140</sup> The Americans recognized Canadian insecurities about sovereignty and made the price of defence cooperation significantly easier to bear. They agreed on a policy of firmness and patience. Accordingly, Canada finally committed to a joint continental defence agreement. Canada's *de jure* sovereignty would be protected and its rights respected. On 16 January 1947 Cabinet approved the final version of Recommendation 35, which laid out regulatory principles for all continental defence projects. Renamed Recommendation 36, the document represented, in the words of David Bercuson, "an explicit U.S assurance to Canada that the United States had no wish to violate the *de jure* sovereignty Canada claimed over the north."<sup>141</sup> All defence projects would remain under the control of the host country, no permanent rights would be granted to the visiting forces, and both countries would study each project individually and approve all public statements about the defence projects.<sup>142</sup> The Recommendation ensured that the principles of bilateral defence cooperation safeguarded Canada's sovereignty and protected its interests. By February these provisions had been applied to the weather stations program, and the contested project was finally approved. It had been a long road, but the negotiations of 1946 finally paid off for both countries.

\* \* \*

After the meeting at the Chateau Laurier, Canadian policy-makers lost some of their reservations about cooperating with the United States in continental defence. As the defence relationship between the two countries began to heat up, however, and the Arctic became the scene of more activity, the Canadian government still worried about its *de facto* sovereignty. Paper agreements were important, but Canada still needed to maintain control of developments on the ground. Despite minor indiscretions, most Americans,

especially high-ranking ones, would apply the spirit of the defence principles on the ground in the North. This respectful attitude, coupled with Canada's growing ability to maintain control of events on the ground, would effectively safeguard Canada's *de facto* sovereignty.

In 1946 the Canadians adopted a different attitude towards their defence relationship with the Americans than they had in the Second World War. They tried to be more assertive and defensive in handling their close ally, and they succeeded by continuing to learn from their mistakes and improving their efforts to control activities. Officials, especially those from External Affairs, worked to delay defence planning and decision-making, allowing time to ponder problems and formulate appropriate responses. Rather than capitulating to pressure and rushing to fill the Arctic with defence projects desired by the United States, Canadian decision-makers dictated the pace at which security planning progressed to suit their own interests. They adopted a strategy of defending against help and, while it was not the most dramatic plan, it allowed the Canadians to secure their sovereignty effectively while leaving the primary financial burden for defence on their key ally.

In 1946 the Canadian government was constrained by security concerns, international law, and the strategic interests of the United States. In the context of the time, the Canadians adopted the only realistic policy available to them: gradual acquisition. The Americans would have rejected any activist assertion attempting to trade defence rights for a public recognition of Canada's sovereignty based on the sector principle. In turn, Canada's quiet diplomacy secured *de jure* sovereignty over its terrestrial claims in the Arctic. The policy of 'agreeing to disagree,' used so effectively by Mulroney and Reagan in response to the voyage of the *Polar Sea*, (see chapter 13) did not appear out of thin air. They adopted an old and familiar position that had roots in the defence negotiations of 1946. Canada and the United States found space to coexist in the name of continental defence, finding a solution to Canada's sovereignty woes that both governments could accept while averting intractable disagreements on core legal issues. Franklyn Griffiths and other commentators continue to suggest that a functional Canadian approach to managing and controlling its internal waters, based on "agreeing to disagree" with the Americans on the legal status of the Northwest Passage, remains a feasible and realistic option. Such a policy has proven effective since 1946, and may remain the key to managing bilateral relations in the twenty-first century Arctic.<sup>143</sup>

## Notes

I would like to thank Richard Goette, Whitney Lackenbauer and Dan Heidt for graciously sharing their archival research with me.

- 1 Ken Coates, Whitney Lackenbauer, William Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2008), 1.
- 2 Franklyn Griffiths, "Canadian Sovereignty and Arctic International Relations," in *The Arctic in Question*, ed. E.J. Dosman, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 144-148.
- 3 Sovereignty is officially defined as "The possession of supreme authority within a territory." This concept is further split into de jure and de facto sovereignty. De facto "is the reality of control or possession, but not by right of law," and basically involves exercising control over land and water. De jure is legitimate ownership under the law, and the recognition of others that one can use force in a designated territory; Elizabeth Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy: Canada and the United States in the Northwest Passage*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 5; In 1946, Vice Chief of the General Staff D.C. Spry defined sovereignty as "as power, right or authority over a clearly defined and delimited area, *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER) Volume 12, 1946*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967- ), 1555-1561.
- 4 Donald Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).
- 5 Shelagh Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).
- 6 Adam Lajuenesse, "Lock, Stock, and Icebergs? Defining Canadian Sovereignty from Mackenzie King to Stephen Harper," CMSS Occasional Paper No. 1 (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2007), 3.
- 7 Whitney Lackenbauer, "Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948," in *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community*, eds. John English, Kenneth McLaughlin, and Whitney Lackenbauer. (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002), 153.
- 8 Cuff and Granatstein, *Canadian-American Relations in Wartime: From the Great War to the Cold War*, 105.
- 9 Lackenbauer, "Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948;" Elizabeth Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy: Canada and the United States in the Northwest Passage*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); David Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950: Solving the Canadian Dilemma," in *The Cold War and Defence*, eds. Keith Neilson and Ronald Haycock (New York: Praeger Press, 1990); Joseph Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987).
- 10 For further work on this theme see, "Sovereignty and Security: The Department of External Affairs, the United States, and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-68," that I co-authored with Whitney Lackenbauer, and reflects his research and thinking on this topic as well as my own. Work from our joint research appears in this article with his expressed permission.
- 11 Lackenbauer, "Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948," 154.

- 12 King, 11 September 1945. Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada Vol. 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 320.
- 13 Dana Wilgress to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, 12 November 1945, King Papers, 389: 359440-42. Reproduced in Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 118.
- 14 Eyre, *Custos Borealis: The Canadian Military in the North*.
- 15 David Beatty, *The Canadian-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1969), 117.
- 16 *Post-War Canadian Defence Interests in United States Defence Projects in Northwest Canada*, Preliminary Draft by Army Representatives on Joint Drafting Group, Working Committee on Post-Hostilities Problems, 6 July 1945, Department of External Affairs, *DCER Volume 11, 1944-45*, 1588.
- 17 Hugh Halliday, "Exercise "Musk Ox" Asserting Sovereignty "North of 60," *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Autumn 1998) 37-44. Exercise Polar Bear, held between February and March 1945, tested wet cold conditions and used 1150 soldiers. Exercise Lemming, held between 22 March and 6 April 1945, tested transportation in the North and used a small convoy of vehicles based out of Churchill, Manitoba.
- 18 *Post-War Canadian Defence Interests in United States Defence Projects in Northwest Canada*, Preliminary Draft by Army Representatives on Joint Drafting Group, Working Committee on Post-Hostilities Problems, 6 July 1945, *DCER Volume 11, 1944-45*, 1582.
- 19 Hugh Halliday, "Exercise "Musk Ox" Asserting Sovereignty "North of 60," *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Autumn 1998) 37-44.
- 20 Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 153.
- 21 Ambassador in U.S. to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 19 January 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946*, 1604-1605.
- While the Canadians were worried about defence planning getting out of hand, they also took hope in Recommendation 34 of the Permanent Joint Board. Accepted in early 1946, the Recommendation allowed for the "free and comprehensive exchange of information" between Canadian and American intelligence agencies.
- 22 Cited in Denis Stairs, "Realists at Work: Canadian Policy Makers and the Politics of Transition from Hot War to Cold War," in *Canada and the Early Cold War*, ed. Greg Donaghy, (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, 1998), 99.
- 23 Minister in United States to First Secretary, 21 March 1944, *DCER Volume 11, 1944-45*, 1406. In order to be successful in its broader relationship with the United States, Canada had to be careful not to use the "strong glove over the velvet hand" type diplomacy.
- 24 Stairs, "Realists at Work: Canadian Policy Makers and the Politics of Transition from Hot War to Cold War," 99.
- 25 Memorandum on Soviet Motives in Relation to North America, 2 February 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 5749, file 52-c(s).
- 26 For more on this argument see Andrew Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon: Canadian Military Strategy and Nuclear Weapons 1950-1963*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).
- 27 Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy*, 56.
- 28 Smith, *Diplomacy of Fear*, 122.
- 29 Major General Henry to Members of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, 14 March 1946, LAC PJBBD files 113.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Senior United States Army Member, PJBBD, to Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBBD, April 30, 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1541-1542.
- 32 Extract of Memorandum from Secretary to the Cabinet to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 10 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1547.

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- 33 An Introduction to Churchill and Surrounding Area, by 7099th ASU, NARA, RG 156, Entry 646-A, Box A764. According to Andrew Iarocci, "Most significant was its geographic location at an ecotone, a transitional zone between two ecological systems: the arctic barrens to the north and the boreal forest to the south. As such, the terrain around Churchill broadly represented the character of arctic lands across the north." Andrew Iarocci, "Opening the North: Technology and Training at the Fort Churchill Joint Services Experimental Testing Station, 1946-1964," *Canadian Army Journal*, Vol. 10.4 (Winter 2008), 76.
- 34 J. Graham Parsons, Secretary, United States Section to R.M. Macdonnell, Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, 22 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1).
- 35 J. Graham Parsons, Secretary, United States Section to R.M. Macdonnell, Secretary, Canadian Section, PJBD, 14 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1).
- 36 Memorandum to ACNS and CNP from P.T.O., Reference – PJBD American Section Letters of 14 May 1946 and 22 May 1946, LAC, RG 24, vol. 8152, file NSS 1660-12 (part 1). When the American Coast Guard Cutter *Polar Sea* transited the same waters in its journey through the Northwest Passage in 1985, it sparked outrage in Canada and elicited a strong response from the Canadian government. In late 1946, however, the government expressed little concern over the status of the Arctic waters. While it consistently worried about the impact of permanent or semi-permanent stations on Canada's claims to the Arctic islands, large scale American naval operations did not seem to pose the same kind of threat. Terrestrial sovereignty remained the government's primary focus.
- 37 C. W. Jackson, Acting Deputy Minister Mines and Resources, to Deputy Minister of Transport, 13 October 1944, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40C.
- 38 Meteorological Stations in the North American Polar Region, 2 March 1945, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 L.B. Pearson to N.A. Robertson, 6 March 1945, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.
- 41 N.A. Robertson, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs to L.B. Pearson, Canadian Ambassador to the US, 8 March 1945, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.
- 42 *Public Law 296*, 79th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1946, S. Doc. 765.
- 43 Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Deputy Minister of Transport, 4 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1544.
- 44 Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Deputy Minister of Transport, 4 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1544.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1551.
- 47 Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1553.
- 48 Hume Wrong to A.D.P. Heeney, 24 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, part 1.
- 49 The Sector theory was first officially used by the Department of the Interior in 1904, when it cut out a slice of the Arctic on a map of the country. In 1907 Senator Pascal Poirier proposed that Canada make a formal declaration of its sovereignty in the Arctic using the sector principle. An American report on the Canadian Arctic remembered that on 10 June 1925 Charles Stewart "definitely and officially" stated in the House of Commons that Canada claimed everything, "known and unknown, west of Davis Strait – Baf-



- fin Bay – Smith Sound – Robeson Channel – 60th Meridian, east of the meridian that divides Alaska from Canada (141°W), and north of the Canadian mainland up to the Pole.” Arctic Aviation Development Program for the United States Recommended by the Standing Subcommittee on the Arctic, 6 November 1945, NARA, RG 330, Entry 341A, Box 451, Folder 1, File “Geophysics and Geography.”
- 50 Wright to Gibson, 9 February 1944, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140.
- 51 Memorandum to Legal Adviser, 31 May 1944, *DCER, Volume 11, 1944-1945*.
- 52 Memorandum to Legal Adviser, 31 May 1944, *DCER, Volume 11, 1944-1945*; Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Director, Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, 1 June 1944, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 53 Charles Camsell, Deputy Minister Mines and Resources to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 13 March 1945, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 54 *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946, 1557*.
- 55 Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty,” p. 160.
- 56 Memorandum from Head, Third Political Division Legal Division: Sovereignty in the Arctic, 6 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946, 1545-1546*. She-lagh Grant made much out of the full version of this report, which the Canadians did not have access to, in her efforts to depict an American conspiracy to take over the Canadian North.
- 57 Arctic Aviation Development Program for the United States Recommended by the Standing Subcommittee on the Arctic, 6 November 1945, NARA, RG 330, Entry 341A, Box 451, Folder 1, File “Geophysics and Geography.”
- 58 *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*, Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946, 1557*.
- 59 Memorandum by Joint Canadian-United States Military Cooperation Committee, 23 May 1946, *DCER Volume 12, 1946, 1615-23*.
- 60 Memorandum from Secretary to the Cabinet to the Prime Minister, 12 June 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946, 1627-29*.
- 61 In March 1946 the AAF created an Air Defence Command, but gave it few resources. Only after the Berlin crisis of 1948 did the Americans initiate their first active air defences, and not until the following year did Congress provide funding for a permanent air defence system. Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 9.
- 62 Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 11.
- 63 Jockel, “The Canada-United States Military Co-operation Committee and Continental Air Defence, 1946,” *Canadian Historical Review* 64/3 (September 1983), 352-77.
- 64 Bercuson, “Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950: Solving the Canadian Dilemma,” 154.
- 65 Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946, 1554*.
- 66 Bercuson, “Continental Defense and Arctic Sovereignty,” 154.
- 67 Historian Whitney Lackenbauer insists that this concept was the driving force behind Canada’s approach to the Cold War Arctic. “From Defence Against Help to A Piece of the Action: The Canadian Sovereignty and Security Paradox Revisited,” CMSS Occasional Paper No.1. Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, 2000. See also Donald Barry and Duane Bratt, “Defense against Help: Explaining Canada-U.S. Security Relations,” *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 38 (2008).

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- 68 Memorandum from Head, Third Political Division, 6 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1545-1546.
- 69 Ambassador in the United States to Acting Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, 5 June 1946, Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER) Volume 13, 1946*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967-), 1565-66.
- 70 Minister of Mines and Resources to Louis St. Laurent, 25 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 71 Lieutenant-General C. Foulkes, Chief of the General Staff, to Chief of the Air Staff, 31 May 1946, Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) 2002-17, Box 113, File 2, pt. 1.
- 72 Chiefs of the General Staff Memorandum 2 June 1946, DHH 2002-17, Box 113, File 2, pt. 1.
- 73 Lajuenesse, "Lock, Stock, and Icebergs? Defining Canadian Sovereignty from Mackenzie King to Stephen Harper," 6.
- 74 Letter to Dr. Charles Camsell from R.M. Macdonnell, Associate Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, 11 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3346, file 9061-A-40C, pt. 1; Memorandum for File: "Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic," 25 September 1946, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3047, File 113.
- 75 W. Hughes to Norwegian minister, 2 April 1924, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1924* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 519-520.
- 76 *Report on the Arctic, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command, Headquarters, Atlantic-Division Air Transport Command, Report on the Arctic, 1946*, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2975.
- 77 Acheson to Secretary of Navy, 14 December 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 1497.
- 78 Jeffrey Myhre, *The Antarctic Treaty System: Politics, Law, and Diplomacy*, (London: Westview Press, 1986). The other idea prevalent in the State Department in the post war years focused on making the Antarctic into an international zone administered by a commission of nations or the United Nations. Regardless, this idea still required the sector principle not to be enforced in the Antarctic.
- 79 Peter Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 37. A close contemporary parallel to the American issues with the sector principle is the United States' position on the Northwest Passage. If the Americans accept Canada's position on the passage and allow it to be treated as Canadian internal waters, a precedent would be set for more strategically important straits throughout the world. Strategic and political implications ensure that the U.S. will never accept the Northwest Passage as Canadian internal waters, just as similar considerations kept the U.S. from accepting the sector principle in 1946.
- 80 Coates et al, 83.
- 81 *Report on the Arctic, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command, Headquarters, Atlantic-Division Air Transport Command, Report on the Arctic, 1946*, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2975.
- 82 *Report on the Arctic, Atlantic Division Air Transport Command, Headquarters, Atlantic-Division Air Transport Command, Report on the Arctic, 1946*, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2975.
- 83 *Problems of Canadian-United States Cooperation in the Arctic*, Headquarters, Atlantic Division, Air Transport Command, 29 October 1946, RG 319, Entry 82 (A1), Box 2785. Excerpts from this document were used in the Standing Subcommittee of the Arctic report cited by Macdonnell.
- 84 The report went on to list the Northwest Territories permits required before any foreigner could enter the Can-

- adian Arctic, the creation of an Arctic Game Preserve and the establishment of police posts as signs of Canada's occupation of the region. The report concluded that even in areas only occasionally patrolled by the RCMP an international tribunal would accept this activity as "sufficient to fix sovereignty."
- 85 Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 67.
- 86 David Bercuson, "Review of Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950," *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 70 (December 1989): 587.
- 87 Memorandum for File: "Canadian Sovereignty in the Arctic," 25 September 1946, LAC, RG 25, PJBDF File 113; Throughout 1946, the USAAF instructed all crews participating in Operation Polaris to remain within the area bounded by 60 degrees W and 142 degrees W. *SAC Historical Material, Strategic Air Command*, 4 October 1946, OI No. 2, NARA, RG 27, Entry 5, Box 1, Air Force.
- 88 *United States Claims in the Antarctic*, Note for Mr. Wrong from R.A.J. Phillips, 12 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 89 H.H Wrong to D.C Abbot, 13 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, part 1.
- 90 Hume Wrong to Pearson, 30 December 1946, RG 25, Vol. 2145, File A-2/2-10, Vol. 1
- 91 Memorandum from E.E. Hopkins, Legal Division, to Head, Third Political Division, 8 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1547. The Department of Mines and Resources was particularly annoyed by this.
- 92 Deputy Commissioner to Dr. Camsell, Re - Sovereignty in the Arctic, LAC, RG 85, vol. 823, file 7140, 11 May 1946.
- 93 J.G. Wright to R.A. Gibson, 18 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 94 J.G.Wright, Acting Superintendent of the Eastern Arctic, to R.A Gibson, Director, Northwest Territories Council, 18 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40, pt. 1.
- 95 Wright, Department of Mines and Resources to Head, Third Political Division, 20 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1550.
- 96 Memorandum by the Department of Mines and Resources, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1550-1554.
- 97 Andrew Thomson to R.M. Macdonnell, 18 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 98 External Affairs Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, United States Prospects for Arctic Weather Stations, 21 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3347, File 9061-A-40.
- 99 External Affairs Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, Subject: United States proposals for an Arctic Weather Station Programme, 30 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40. The report outlined the benefits of the program, underlining that these stations would supply meteorological information needed for civil aviation, provide intelligence for Service Departments undertaking future exercises in the North, offer bases from which further study of the Arctic could be undertaken, and create the occupation necessary to halt encroachment by foreign powers in the region. The weather stations program could, however, endanger Canadian sovereignty in the region if the United States was given to long of a leash.
- 100 External Affairs Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, Subject: United States proposals for an Arctic Weather Station Programme, 30 May 1946, LAC, RG 25, Vol. 3347, File 9061-A-40.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 *Sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic in Relation to Joint Defence Undertakings*,

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- Memorandum from Department of National Defence to Cabinet Defence Committee, 18 May 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1555-1561; Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 157-158.
- 103 "The Associate Under Secretary of State for External Affairs observed that Canada's claim was somewhat better established than might appear from the memorandum. It could be said that our claims had never been seriously contested. In his opinion, the challenge of sovereignty was less serious than the user's rights which would come about through occupancy." (Hume Wrong) Cabinet Defence Committee Minutes, 6 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, PJBDF File 113.
- 104 *Weather Stations in the Arctic*, Memorandum for Hume Wrong, Mr. Heeney, Colonel Gill and PJBDF File, 5 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 105 Memo for U.S. Ambassador by Lewis Clark, 20 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 106 Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 158.
- 107 Pearson to Robertson, 21 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 108 Hume Wrong to Albert Heeney, 24 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40. If it allowed the Americans into the Arctic, even on joint projects, Canadian sovereignty might be questioned as incomplete. If, however, the Canadians did not allow the Americans to establish posts "to which they attach a high degree of importance, they may seek to attain their ends eventually by claiming sovereignty themselves and treating some of the islands – especially those far from police and trading posts and not covered by Canadian patrols – as their own territory by right of occupation."
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- 110 Memo for file by R.M. Macdonnell, 28 June 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
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- 112 Note for Mr. Pearson from R.A.J. Phillips, 30 October 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
- 113 Memorandum from R.M. Macdonnell, 4 July 1946, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3347, file 9061-A-40.
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- 121 Memorandum by the acting secretary of state to president Truman, 1 October 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, vol. 5*, (Washington: USGPO, 1969), 55.
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- 124 Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 25-26.
- 125 Memorandum from the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Prime Minister, 12 November 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1670-1672.
- 126 *Cabinet Conclusions*, 15 November 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1686-1695.
- 127 Record of Conclusion, Informal Canada-United States Meeting, 21 November 1946, *DCER, Volume 12, 1946*, 1699-1702.
- 128 Joint Defence Discussions, 21 November 1946, NARA, RG 59, PJBD Series, vol. 2, file Basic Papers.
- 129 Bercuson, "Continental Defence and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1950," 161.
- 130 Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs*, 28.
- 131 Defence Cooperation Between the United States and Canada, Annex I: Copy of a telegram No. 1770 dated 19th December 1946 from Canada to the Dominions Office, Cabinet Defence Committee, 26 December 1946, PRO CAB 131/3 DO (46) 146.
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**ABSTRACT:** Climate change is transforming the Arctic. Questions abound about what this will mean for the Canadian Forces, for Canada's sovereignty position, for northern peoples, and for stability and security in the circumpolar world. Fortunately, Canadians have encountered and debated similar issues in the past. This volume, featuring chapters by established and emerging scholars, offers essential historical analysis on Canadian Arctic security and sovereignty policies and practices since the Second World War. The "lessons learned" lay a solid foundation for future research and historiographical debate in this dynamic field, and should inform Canadian thinking on what is necessary to protect national interests in the twenty-first-century Arctic.

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