ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY AND THE COLD WAR:
CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE DEW LINE

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Graduate Program in History

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2009

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This thesis analyzes how Arctic sovereignty issues shaped Canada’s negotiations with the United States about the establishment of the Distant Early Warning Line (DEW Line) in the Canadian Arctic during the 1950s. Against the backdrop of Cold War tensions, Ottawa and Washington agreed to install a chain of radar stations along North America’s Arctic border—mostly through Canadian territory—in an attempt to detect and deter potential Soviet nuclear attacks crossing the North pole. The asymmetric nature of Canada-U.S. relations and Ottawa’s consequent dependence upon U.S. defense stewardship, however, conflicted with Canadians’ view of their country’s recent national emancipation from its colonial relationship with Great Britain. During World War II, Ottawa’s experience with Canadian-American Northern defense cooperation had been mixed as a result of U.S. construction and operation of defense installations perceived to infringe upon Canada’s sovereignty. Whereas these wartime irritations informed Ottawa’s position throughout the DEW Line negotiations, the Canadian North carried significance beyond the strategic-military rationale of the Cold War. Canada’s Arctic served as a key element in the cultural construction of a Canadian national identity, in turn influencing how Ottawa conceived of the implications of a large American presence along Canada’s Northern frontier. This study demonstrates how sovereignty concerns shaped Ottawa’s course of action during the DEW Line negotiations, ensuring Canadian
ownership and jurisdiction. By bringing the Cold War dimension, the Canadian sovereignty debate, and the broader cultural forces into conversation with each other, this thesis argues that the interplay of these aspects in context of asymmetric Canada-U.S. relations is key to a thorough understanding of Ottawa’s position towards Washington during the DEW Line negotiations.
Dedicated to Anke
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research is a collaborative effort, and the preparation of this thesis would not have been possible without the continuous encouragement, support, and help of friends and colleagues. For this reason, I would like to thank those who provided me with the opportunity to spend this year at the Ohio State University and helped me during my research and writing of this thesis.

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Robert J. McMahon whose generous support provided me with invaluable feedback and guidance throughout the year. I am furthermore indebted to Paula Baker and my colleagues of History 869 for their helpful criticism and insights. I am particularly obliged to Ryan McMahon who not only reviewed this thesis at various stages but early on pointed me to material critical to my research. David Dennis and Matt Yates also shared their excellent comments and suggestions with me.

In addition, I am grateful to Peter L. Hahn for serving on my M.A. committee and introducing me to the history of U.S. foreign relations in History 770, a seminar that inspired rich discussions and vitally shaped my conception of diplomatic history.

I would like to thank the Graduate Program in History at the Ohio State University for providing me with the opportunity to complete a Master’s degree during my one year exchange. Furthermore, I am beholden to the International Office at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the Ohio State University for their help in mastering administrative challenges.
Finally, I am indebted to my family for their warm support and encouragement throughout my academic career and this year abroad. I wish to thank my girlfriend Anke Herrmann. I can only attempt to do justice to her patience, love, and never-ending support by expressing my deep gratitude: thank you.
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INTRODUCTION

Tales were told of American discrimination against Canadian contractors; of violations of Canadian customs and immigration procedures, by American snow trains and aircraft bringing in men and equipment; of American flags flying where Canadian flags … ought to have flown; of American security regulations forbidding Canadian journalists and, occasionally Canadian officials from visiting DEW Line stations. They all gave rise to a vague but uneasy conception that for all the rules and regulations drawn up in the international agreement of 1955, de facto control of the Canadian north had passed into American hands.¹

Canada is an Arctic nation and an Arctic power. […] The Arctic and the North is central to our national identity. It is an important part of our past, our present and our future. […] Through our robust Arctic foreign policy we are affirming our leadership, stewardship and ownership in the region.²

Canada and the United States are bound together in an ambiguous relationship that looks back on a multifaceted history shaped by periods of violent conflict and intimate cooperation. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Canadians persistently feared an American annexation of the British North American colonies. As a consequence of World Wars I and II, Canada had entered into a close partnership with the United States in the realm of continental defense. As the abovementioned statements by James G. Eayrs and Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon, respectively, make plain, however, questions of sovereignty, national identity, and a wariness about American influence had

not lost their relevance and continued to persist far into the twentieth century and beyond. As Washington and Ottawa, in the face of the perceived Soviet challenge, reaffirmed their wartime cooperation and engaged in the construction of an expanding North American air defense system, tensions about Canada’s sovereignty over its national territory in the Arctic emerged. The establishment of three radar chains across the North American continent, the Pinetree Line, the Mid-Canada Line, and the Distant Early Warning Line (DEW Line; see figure 1), which sought to detect and deter potential Soviet nuclear air attacks via the Arctic, contributed to Canadian uneasiness. In contrast to the other lines, the DEW Line, which was constructed in the sparsely developed and

![Figure 1: Early Warning Lines](source: New York Times, November 2, 1954.)
inhabited Arctic, formed a particularly significant case as it was the most ambitious and costly radar chain. More important, it was built, staffed, and paid for exclusively by the United States. As a consequence of this arrangement, the DEW Line drew exceptional attention to lingering concerns about expanding the presence of U.S. forces on Canadian soil.

This thesis will analyze to what extent resentments against an American military presence in the Arctic and apprehensions about potential infringements upon Canadian sovereignty affected Canada-U.S. negotiations over the establishment of the DEW Line. How did the sovereignty debate in Ottawa inform its diplomatic course of action? To what extent were such apprehensions reflected in the DEW Line agreements? Did currents of Canadian cultural nationalism during the 1950s intersect with foreign policy decision-making? To what extent did cultural conceptions of the Canadian Arctic as a vital part in the construction of a Canadian national identity influence Ottawa’s position in the DEW Line negotiations? This thesis furthermore addresses the interdepartmental constraints that shaped the Canadian position vis-á-vis Washington and places Ottawa’s decisions within the broader framework of Canada-U.S. relations.

**Historiography**

As seen within the framework of Canada-U.S. relations during the early Cold War period, the issue of Canada’s sovereignty along the Arctic DEW Line stations has received scant attention from scholars of relations between the two countries. Most scholarly investigations look into the DEW Line as part of Canadian-American postwar defense cooperation. The element of sovereignty plays only a marginal role in these works. Investigations that focus on sovereignty and the relationship between Ottawa and
Washington, on the other hand, either treat the Cold War dimension with inadequate attention or turn a blind eye to the expansion of North American air defense in the 1950s across Canada in general and the north in particular.

Among those works concentrating on the defense implications of the DEW Line, Joseph T. Jockel’s *No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States, and the Origins of North American Air Defense, 1945-1958* offers an intimate account of Canadian and American internal deliberations during the DEW Line negotiations. Jockel focuses on the bilateral processes of civilian and military decision-making in devising defense schemes, all within the context of national pressures and interests. *No Boundaries Upstairs* not only presents a history of the installation of the early warning lines, but also elucidates an increasingly interwoven defense relationship between Ottawa and Washington, one shaped by each nation’s domestic agenda. Concentrating on Cold War defense cooperation, other scholars touch upon the DEW Line and point to sovereignty concerns, although their works do not delve into deeper analysis.  

Limited by default in their access to official documentary material, contemporary accounts of the DEW Line provide narrative accounts of the construction in the American and Canadian Arctic or discussions of the political implications of the radar stations, all of which are heavily based on magazine and newspaper sources. Joseph Barber’s *Good Fences Make Good Neighbors* is an example of the latter kind, giving a vivid impression

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of public debate surrounding the issue of a large American presence. Richard Morenus composed a narrative from the American perspective that describes the planning and construction phase of the DEW Line. In *DEW Line: Distant Early Warning. The Miracle of America’s First Line of Defense*, Morenus drew a romanticized and overly harmonized picture of Canadian-American cooperation in the Arctic, rich in anecdotes of survival, polar bear chases, Canadian-American baseball games, and arguable insights that the only unresolved issue along the DEW stations was that “Canada insists upon spelling *defence* with a ‘c,’ while we spell *defense* with an ‘s.’”

Little scholarship addresses Canada-U.S. relations, the issue of Arctic sovereignty, and the 1950s establishment of air defense in the Canadian North in a comprehensive way. Elizabeth B. Elliot-Meisel’s *Arctic Diplomacy* traces Ottawa’s and Washington’s relations in the North from the nineteenth far into the twentieth century. The passing attention she gives to the creation of the North American air defense network and the DEW Line, however, leaves a significant gap in the Arctic sovereignty debate. In addition, Elliot-Meisel largely passes over Canadian contextual factors and the Cold War background. Other scholarly accounts put the Cold War setting center stage or focus on Canada-U.S. relations from a historical, theoretical or thematic perspective.

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A survey of the literature on Canada-U.S. relations and the establishment of the DEW Line thus reveals that while individual aspects of the story are touched upon, a comprehensive investigation, speaking to more than single elements, is still missing. In addition, all accounts conspicuously fail to appreciate the cultural significance of the Arctic region in the construction of a Canadian national identity as well as the contextual forces of Canadian cultural nationalism in the 1950s. The North’s cultural impact upon political decision-makers as well as public reactions to the installation of the DEW Line have been utterly ignored. In an attempt to address this gap, this thesis seeks to bring these isolated or ignored dimensions of the DEW Line negotiations between Canada and the United States into conversation with each other. By integrating the Cold War defense perspective with the Canadian sovereignty debate and the broader cultural forces at play, this thesis intends to provide a more comprehensive discussion and understanding of Ottawa’s position towards Washington.

**Chapter Outline**

Before analyzing the Canadian position towards the United States with respect to the establishment of the DEW Line, the first chapter will contextualize the relationship between Canada and the United States and provide an analytical framework within which this thesis will investigate the DEW Line negotiations. An outline of the defining features of Ottawa’s and Washington’s partnership along the issues of power asymmetry, interdependence, and a resulting sense of ambiguity on the Canadian side is followed by a contextualization of Canada-U.S. relations during the 1950s. An introduction of an

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analytical scheme through which to interpret Ottawa’s position towards Washington concludes the chapter.

The second chapter provides the historical background of Canadian-American defense cooperation during World War II and the early Cold War era. Beginning with the bilateral wartime treaties that organized the North American defense efforts in the military and economic realms, this chapter explores the first continental defense projects between Ottawa and Washington in the Canadian North. Canadian concerns about potential American infringements upon Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic will be addressed as a critical legacy for the renewed Northern defense projects of the following decade. The continuation of Canada-U.S. defense cooperation into the Cold War era with the 1947 agreement will prepare the historical stage for the analysis of the DEW Line negotiations.

An analysis of the Canadian North beyond the military-strategic dimensions will form the subject of chapter III. Investigating the North’s cultural significance as a space for the projection of Canadian imaginations as well as its use as a source of character-shaping features in the construction of a Canadian national identity is at the heart of this section. After providing the theoretical foundation for a comprehensive analysis of culture, the Arctic, and Canadian nationalism, cultural productions that fundamentally shaped Canadians’ ideas of the Northern parts of their nation will be analyzed. In a final step, this chapter connects these culturally constructed conceptions to the realm of Ottawa’s decision-makers, demonstrating how the North as an integral element of Canadians’ self-perception influenced the rationales of foreign policy elites.
Chapter IV forms the main part of this thesis and analyzes the negotiations between Canada and the United States about the establishment of the DEW Line in the Canadian Arctic. Tracing the origins of early warning during the early 1950s, this section will look specifically into Canadian responses to American requests and measures taken to ensure Canadian sovereignty and jurisdiction along the Arctic radar chain. Divided into three phases, this chapter will analyze Canadian actions in reaction to the construction of early test sites and changes in U.S. national security policy, the process of Ottawa’s internal discussion about Canada’s role in the construction and operation of the DEW Line, and the emergence of sovereignty concerns in the governmental as well as public sphere.

The final chapter will address the key questions raised earlier, discuss them in light of the preceding analysis, and provide a concluding assessment of Ottawa’s position throughout the DEW Line negotiations seen within the framework of Canada-U.S. relations.
I. CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS: ASYMMETRY, INTERDEPENDENCE, AND AMBIGUITY

The relationship between Canada and the United States has been shaped most clearly by its asymmetrical nature and a movement toward increased interdependence. Except for the size of their national territories, the gap between the two countries is sweeping. Be it in the realm of population size, economic production, political capital or military power, the United States outnumbers Canada many times over.\textsuperscript{11} Facilitated by the spatial distribution of most of the Canadian population along a 100-mile wide line along the Canadian-American border, both countries have developed an increasingly intertwined relationship, most prominently in the economic and cultural realm. This development was intensified by the First and Second World War. During the mid-1920s the United States surpassed the United Kingdom as Canada’s largest foreign investor and became its major trading partner. The growing permeability of the border, furthermore, allowed for American cultural products and lifestyles to enter Canadian society. Cultural penetration and a growing economic interdependence that raised fears of a \textit{de facto} dependence thus solidified Canada’s junior position in this unequal relationship at the onset of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{enumerate}
\item In the mid-1950s, Canada’s population, for example, ranged in the 15 million margin whereas the United States was home to about 165 million people, showing a roughly 2.5 million increase per year. (Statistics Canada. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/af-fdr.cgi?l=eng&loc=A1-eng.csv, accessed March 13, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau. http://www.census.gov/popest/archives/1990s/popclockest.txt, accessed March 13, 2009).
\item Doran, \textit{Forgotten Partnership}, 94-96.
\end{enumerate}
As a result of this imbalance, a peculiar sense of Canadian ambiguity with respect to its southern neighbor had developed, ranging between the recognition of shared interests and apprehensions about American influence. An awareness of such sentiments can be found in both countries. Lester B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs from 1948-1957 and later Prime Minister noted in his memoir that until World War II Canadian self-determination was primarily conditioned by decisions made in London. Emerging from World War II, “it was now the United States that had that power,” Pearson wrote, “a hard fact which brought us anxiety as well as assurance.”\textsuperscript{13} Even as he acknowledged the necessity for close cooperation, Pearson expressed concern about the power imbalance, writing that “as a debutant on the world stage we were worried, not about rape, but seduction.”\textsuperscript{14} In fact, he writes, “we may have gone merely from the colonial frying pan into the continental fire.”\textsuperscript{15} Yet, in contrast to some Canadian officials’ views\textsuperscript{16}, such perceptions did not go unnoticed south of the border. Noting a “growing sense of nationalism,” the New York Times wrote in 1956 that Canadians “complain that the United States tends to take them too much for granted and to treat their country as though it were a forty-ninth state.”\textsuperscript{17} Not commenting on whether such feelings were legitimate, the article recognized that they were “responsible from time to

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{16} Robert A. Farquharson, Information Officer at the Washington Embassy, states in a telegram to Ottawa that “sometimes Canadians here have the feeling that despite very real good-will that exists towards our country, most Americans do not know the Canadian case, do not even know that a dispute exists.” "Canadian Information in the United States," in Documents on Canadian External Relations (Vol. 21, 1955. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1999). Canadian ambassador A. D. P. Heeney similarly explains that his encounters with U.S. officials often left him with the impression that they were unfamiliar with Canadian issue. A. D. P. Heeney, The Things that are Caesar's (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 121.
time for magnifying minor irritations into major aggravations.”\textsuperscript{18} By the same token, Dwight D. Eisenhower recollected that he “knew that, because of the comparative size of our two nations, our Canadian friends sometimes suspected us of arrogance.”\textsuperscript{19} Addressing such feelings resulting from the asymmetrical relationship between both countries, he remarked in his memoir that it was his “government’s intention to approach all our common problems in a spirit of friendly understanding.”\textsuperscript{20} As these statements show, Ottawa and Washington were aware of the political implications their unequal but intimate partnership entailed.

While Canada and the United States grappled with each power’s new role in the international arena following World War II, relations during the 1950s grew tense in connection with international developments such as the Korean War and the Suez crisis. American domestic politics’ strain of McCarthyism became the most persistent burden, fueling anti-American sentiment in Canada. To put these irritations in perspective, however, it is necessary to note that Canadian-U.S. relations overall enjoyed good standing, especially in comparison to other international partnerships. In the context of the Canada-U.S. relationship, therefore, the abovementioned issues caused negative sentiments but need to be appreciated against the backdrop of this otherwise close partnership.

The Korean War, 1950-1953, conjured repeated comparisons between Washington’s and Ottawa’s contribution to the war effort. In addition to American complaints that Canadians were not doing enough, Canadian frustrations about the lack

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 242.
of consultations and disagreements over General MacArthur’s aggressive decisions cooled both countries’ relationship. With the end of the war, however, these strains were not to form an enduring hindrance.21 The Suez crisis in late 1956 served again as a cause for tensions between Canadians and their southern neighbor. While the events made Britain’s decline as an international Great Power obvious, Canadians saw themselves confronted with the unmodified influence of the United States. Had the Ottawa-London-Washington triangle served as a power moderating construct, Canadians now fully realized that they faced American pressure without mediation. James Eayrs, a contemporary political scientist, analyzed the Suez crisis with respect to Canada-U.S. relations commenting that “the shock of this recognition was apparent in the hostility towards American policies and American statesmen […]. It persisted, in form of a subdued but sullen resentment, for some months to come.”22

The most consistent irritant between Ottawa and Washington formed the political tribunals of McCarthyism. Far into the 1950s, Canadians were alienated by the Senate subcommittees’ witch hunts and accusations. This situation was exacerbated when Canadian officials became the subject of inquiries. Animosities peaked in 1957, when the Canadian Ambassador to Egypt, Herbert Norman, committed suicide. Suspected of being a communist and Soviet spy, Norman had been under investigation by the U.S. subcommittees time and again throughout the 1950s. Lester Pearson, who enjoyed a close relationship with Norman, protected him, sending him first to New Zealand and later to Egypt to be Canada’s ambassador. Norman’s death, which came to be interpreted in

22 Ibid., 104.
connection with the continuing investigations, fueled anti-American sentiments and hardened relations between Ottawa and Washington.\textsuperscript{23}

Analyzing Canada-U.S. relations from a theoretical vantage point, the American political scientist Charles F. Doran distinguishes among three major spheres that characterize Ottawa’s and Washington’s relationship: the political-strategic, the trade-commercial, and the psychological-cultural dimension. Whereas Canada was primarily interested in maintaining a beneficial economic relationship, the United States tended to emphasize the political-strategic dimension, as its trade volume with Canada had been comparatively low in relation to the overall American economy. Even though these two dimensions were important in their own right, Doran argues that the psychological-cultural realm formed the most important sphere of Canada-U.S. relations. Reflecting the power imbalance inherent in the relationship, he explains that “the United States may find Canadian complaints irritating; Canada frequently finds the American presence suffocating.”\textsuperscript{24} Elaborating on this aspect, Doran writes that

Americans tend to ignore the potential impact that American television programming has on a large Canadian viewership; or the impact that textbooks published in the United States and exported to Canada can have on learning; or the effect U.S. advertising can have on Canadian purchasing habits; or the effect an American tourist infusion can have on Canadian provincial parks and natural areas.\textsuperscript{25}

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\textsuperscript{24} Doran, \textit{Forgotten Partnership}, 41.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 98f; The 1950s saw an intense national debate about the lack of Canadian content in the media. The \textit{Canadian Forum} wrote in 1954 that “out of a total of 32 evening hours, twenty hours were either American produced commercial shows or film, five hours were CBC sustaining shows and four hours were produced by the station itself. This station is in a large Canadian market and undoubtedly would have carried more CBC produced commercial shows if they had been available” (Peter Morgan. “TV in Canada” \textit{The Canadian Forum}, May 1954, 38.).
\end{flushright}
Canada’s foreign policy, furthermore, played an important psychological and cultural role in shaping a Canadian national identity.\textsuperscript{26} Canada’s participation in both world wars instilled a sense of national accomplishment and pride. Taking up this idea, Pearson noted that “Europe was not only the cultural homeland of most Canadians, it was the battlefield on which we first became nationally conscious and proud of our Canadian identity.”\textsuperscript{27} The renowned Canadian historian Donald G. Creighton wrote that Prime Minister Mackenzie King was convinced that World War II “had made Canada a sovereign nation and that this achievement must be made manifest to the whole world by the removal of the remaining emblems of colonialism and the substitution of the symbols of independent nationhood.”\textsuperscript{28} The large influence of American culture, therefore, tended to produce adverse responses as it conflicted with Canadians’ idea of national maturity. A 1965 report of the Canadian ambassador to the United States, A. D. P. Heeney, and the American ambassador to Canada, Livingston T. Merchant, underlined this assessment saying that “the danger from the United States to English-speaking Canada is that of cultural absorption, while for French Canada it is cultural destruction.”\textsuperscript{29}

The asymmetrical and increasingly interdependent relationship between Ottawa and Washington thus was characterized by an ambiguous perception in which shared

\textsuperscript{26} In an article on Canada-U.S. relations, Dean Acheson, Secretary of State under the Truman Administration, corroborates the view that Canada's foreign affairs played a critical role in Canadians' self-perception. Acheson writes that for Canadian politicians “there is a strong incentive to seek success and reputation in external rather than internal affairs.” See Dean Acheson, “Canada: ‘Stern Daughter of the Voice of God’” in ed. Livingston T. Merchant Neighbors Taken for Granted. Canada and the United States (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 140.
\textsuperscript{27} Pearson, Mike. The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, 1948-57, 29.
interests coexisted alongside with Canadian concerns about an overwhelming American presence. With the establishment of intimate defense cooperation during World War II, which formed the foundation for Cold War defense relations, Canadian wariness was further fanned by its increasing cultural self-awareness and sensitivities towards a growing U.S. presence in Canada. Pearson accordingly commented on the state of Canada-U.S. relations in 1951, noting that “‘the days of relatively easy and automatic relations between our two countries are over.’”

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II. CANADA-U.S. DEFENSE COOPERATION, 1940-1950

The foundation for the Canadian-American defense cooperation in the Cold War was laid in the early years of World War II. The Ogdensburg Declaration of 1940 and the Hyde Park Declaration of 1941 not only coordinated the Canadian-American wartime effort but formed the first mutual North American defense agreement. Addressing the need to alleviate Canada’s financial bottlenecks and further tie Canadian-American war production, Hyde Park arranged for a reciprocal scheme of war material production in which both countries agreed to have war items manufactured in the country with the best capabilities to do so. In addition, the declaration allowed for materials needed by Canada for British orders to be secured by the British in the United States through the Lend-Lease Act of 1941.  

While the Hyde Park Declaration laid down the rules for closer economic cooperation between Ottawa and Washington, the Ogdensburg agreement of 1940 was devised to provide a similar framework in the defense realm. Underlining the close relationship between Prime Minister Mackenzie King and President Roosevelt, the agreement was struck in a “most informal character during which the President and the Prime Minister conferred in Mr. Roosevelt’s private car while it stood on a siding in the village of Heuvelton, N.Y., within sight of the St. Lawrence River,” the New York Times reported in 1940. At the heart of the brief Ogdensburg statement lay the

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31 Cuff and Granatstein, Canadian-American Relations in Wartime: From the Great War to the Cold War, 69-73.
establishment of the Permanent Joint Board on Defense (PJBD), which comprised Canadian and American military and civil research personnel. The PJBD was to serve as a communication forum between Canada and the United States as well as a device to produce assessments of “the defence of the north half of the Western Hemisphere.” It is important to note that the establishment of the board was intentionally designed to outlive the war.\textsuperscript{34}

World War II drew Canadian and American military attention to the Arctic. The expanding U.S. military presence in the Canadian North began to raise questions about Canadian sovereignty. The war brought a surge in joint Arctic activities, such as the establishment of the Alaska Highway, the Northwest and Northeast Staging Routes, the Mackenzie River air route, the Canol (Canada Oil) Pipeline, and Canada-U.S. military operations in the Aleutian Islands. Pearson, a diplomat in Washington at the time, complained about American disinterest and increasing aggressiveness that resulted in diplomatic “slights or injuries or omissions.” The increasing American military presence in Canada affected relations between the countries. Increased tensions are illustrated by a Canadian study in 1942 entitled “American Imperialism and Canada” as well as a U.S. State Department memorandum entitled “Changing Canadian-American Relations” of the same year. Even though the PJBD served as the key body through which the abovementioned projects were coordinated, at times the board “chased projects


\textsuperscript{35} Cuff and Granatstein, \textit{Canadian-American Relations in Wartime: From the Great War to the Cold War}, 109.

\textsuperscript{36} Elliot-Meisel, \textit{Arctic Diplomacy. Canada and the United States in the Northwest Passage}, 42.
already in progress.” The Canol Pipeline, which was built from 1942 to 1944 and ran from Norman Wells, Northwest Territories, to Whitehorse, Yukon, is a case in point, causing Canadian frustrations. Ottawa learned about the establishment of this oil pipeline only after the United States had commissioned a contractor for its construction.  

The increase in war-related projects, largely pressed for and carried out by the United States, spurred Canadian sensitivities and apprehensions about control and ownership of the Arctic territories. External Affairs officials frequently complained about a lack of consultation and Americans failing to request permission before projects were carried out. The abovementioned 1942 report remarked that Americans acted upon the notion to “act first and seek approval afterwards—if at all.” In a similar vein, the High Commissioner to Canada, the Right Honorable Malcolm MacDonald, commented in alarmist language on the situation between Canadians and Americans in the Arctic. Having travelled the region in 1943, he painted a highly critical picture of overextended Canadian forces, incapable of monitoring left alone controlling U.S. activities. Acknowledging the infrastructural improvements the Arctic flurry entailed, Elliot-Meisel presents a dire score with respect to efforts to minimize the impact of the U.S. military on the North and to uphold Canadian control:

[T]he Americans overextended existing facilities and local governments in areas that they worked and settled. They spread disease to the natives, often circumvented local officials, and at times ignored proper authorization lines to carry out their work. In addition, they tried their own men accused of crimes against Canadians, ignoring both Canadian laws and the Canadian criminal justice system.  

While Prime Minister King grew conscious of the tensions, officials in Ottawa became skeptical about U.S. motives for their expansive investments in the Arctic. Fears emerged

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37 Ibid., 41.
38 “American Imperialism in Canada” quoted in ibid., 42.
39 Ibid., 45.
that the United States may have been already pursuing strategies to secure gains for a post-war scenario.\textsuperscript{40} In general terms, Ottawa became increasingly apprehensive about what it perceived as Americans’ “casual attitude towards Canadian sovereignty.” In fact, rumors were going round that the U.S. army headquarters in Edmonton answered the phone with the phrase “U.S. Army of Occupation.”\textsuperscript{41}

Morris Zaslow, in contrast, argues that the Canadian response to American Arctic activities was overwhelmingly amiable. Nonetheless, she identifies a proclivity towards anti-American sentiment, most notably in the reporting of High Commissioner MacDonald. In her elaborate discussion of the joint military projects in the Arctic, Zaslow makes the case that the American efforts were “gladly” and “enthusiastically” welcomed. While she recognizes that Ottawa often only moved reluctantly and under pressure by Washington and within some parts of the population the presence of a substantial American military force caused resentment, she contends that Canadians were “disinclined to look the gift horse in the mouth while the war continued.”\textsuperscript{42}

Canada-U.S. defense cooperation in the Arctic during World War II thus left Ottawa with mixed feelings. While it deemed the joint military projects imperative and saw no alternatives to a U.S.-led effort, Canadians felt this cooperation came at a price. Questions about Canada’s ability to exercise control, sovereignty, and jurisdiction along its northern frontier emerged as a result of at times tense relations and insufficient consultations between both countries. U.S.-Canadian defense cooperation in the Arctic came to assume a central place in Ottawa’s wartime experience. As a consequence, it

\textsuperscript{40} Pearson quoted in Cuff and Granatstein, \textit{Canadian-American Relations in Wartime}, 109.
formed an important backdrop for future joint defense projects and critically informed Canadians’ views with respect to air defense installations during the 1950s.\textsuperscript{43}

The ensuing Cold War-conflict in the aftermath of World War II, however, left the Canadians little room for political maneuvering. In February 1947, following discussions in the PJBD, Canada and the United States reaffirmed their continental defense commitment in a joint statement. Prime Minister King declared that each government had “decided that its national defence establishment shall, to the extent authorized by law, continue to collaborate for peace-time joint security purposes.”\textsuperscript{44} Cooperation ranged from interchange of personnel, standardization of arms, organization or training, and “mutual and reciprocal availability of military, naval and air facilities in each country.”\textsuperscript{45} Stressing the independent character of this decision and addressing Canadian concerns, King emphasized that “no treaty, executive agreement, or contractual obligation has been entered into” and that “all co-operative arrangements will be without impairment of the control of either country over all activity in its territory.”\textsuperscript{46} With this declaration, Canada and the United States confirmed the continuation of their North American defense collaboration into the Cold War period. The scheme initiated against the backdrop of World War II thus provided the foundation for the expansion of the continental air defense architecture that followed during the 1950s.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.; Cuff and Granatstein, \textit{Canadian-American Relations in Wartime}, 108f; Elliot-Meisel, \textit{Arctic Diplomacy}, 41-57.

\textsuperscript{44} W. L. Mackenzie King, “Joint Statement by the Governments of Canada and the United States of America Regarding Defence Co-Operation between the Two Countries and Statement by the Prime Minister Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King” in \textit{Canadian Foreign Policy 1945-54. Selected Speeches and Documents}, ed. R. A. Mackay (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970), 228.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 229.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.; Pearson later explained that with the 1947 statement, Ottawa responded to a growing desire to retake responsibility of Arctic projects from World War II and expressed its position that “the granting of permanent or long-term rights in connection with United States defense installations on Canadian soil is undesirable.” See Lester B. Pearson, “Canada’s Northern Horizon” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 31 (1953): 582.
III. “THE TRUE NORTH, STRONG AND FREE”: THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NORTH

The Canadian North and the Arctic not only played an important role in the strategic rationales of the Defense and External Affairs departments. Beyond its political and military dimensions, the North served, furthermore, as a site of cultural significance and a critical component in the construction of a Canadian national identity. The North’s vast dimensions, sparse population, and low level of development gave birth to numerous myths, stories, imaginaries, and projections—discourses—which shaped Canadians’ self-perception and self-portrayal, in other words, their national identity. Canadians, who overwhelmingly live along the southern border of the country, thus looked to the North in order to assert their “otherness” with respect to the United States.

With Canada’s emancipation from Great Britain at the end of World War II, Canadians became increasingly conscious of the cultural implications of American influence in their daily lives. The establishment of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences in 1949 and the Royal Commission on Broadcasting in 1955, which investigated the U.S. impact on Canadian media, educational institutions, and cultural life, testified to a growing uneasiness about American cultural penetration and Canada’s quest for a national identity. A cursory selection of examples from the 1950s highlights Canadians’ sensitivities to questions of identity and culture. For instance, the premiere of CBC television in 1952, the first selection of a Canadian as Governor-General—the Queen’s highest representative in
Canada—in the same year with Vincent Massey, who had headed the aforementioned 1949 royal commission, or the creation of the Canada Council in 1957, a forum charged with promoting the study and production of Canadian arts, all these examples demonstrate a yearning for a more pronounced national consciousness.47

This section will explore the cultural significance of the Canadian North for the construction of a Canadian national identity. In order to allow for a more thorough appreciation of Ottawa’s position during the debates and negotiations surrounding the DEW Line, it is important to understand the Canadian Arctic not only in terms of Cold War political and military calculations but also as a cultural repertoire for the self-perception and self-portrayal by Canadians. Before turning to the cultural constructions of the North, their role in shaping a Canadian national identity, and how such processes reverberated in the foreign policy realm, the following section outlines the theoretical foundations upon which the ensuing discussion is based.

3.1. Theorizing Culture, Space, and Nationalism

In his seminal work Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson investigated the constituting features of nationalism. In doing so, he emphasized the key role of cultural aspects in forming an understanding of nations, and the way people conceive of themselves as a coherent community. Anderson argues that “nationality […] nation-ness,

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47 Ramsay Cook, “Nationalism in Canada: An Historical Perspective” in Canadian Cultural Nationalism. The Fourth Lester B. Pearson Conference on the Canada-United States Relationship. ed. Janice L. Murray (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 33f; Cook, Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995; The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters Sciences further advocated the expansion of support for institutions such as the National Film Board, the National Gallery, the National Museum, the Public Archives, the Library of Parliament as well as the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of the National Parks Service, see J. M. Bumsted, A History of the Canadian Peoples. 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 359.
as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts.”\textsuperscript{48} He suggests that the term “nation” or “nationalism” ought be thought of in terms of kinship or religion rather than ideological “isms” such as fascism or liberalism. Anderson accordingly defines “nation” as an “imagined political community.”\textsuperscript{49} Nations are “imagined,” because people of a specific nation may never come to meet every single member of their nation in person, nor even hear of them. Nevertheless, they perceive themselves as part of a larger group who share a common set of features such as language, religion, or origin. Anderson explains that “in fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact […] are imagined.”\textsuperscript{50} The way these ‘imagined communities’ or nations are conceived of contains two further characteristics: they are imagined as limited and sovereign. Nationalisms are limited in the sense that they attempt to define themselves against other nations. Anderson points out that “no nation imagines itself coterminus with mankind.”\textsuperscript{51} Nations are also imagined as sovereign, since the rise of nation states was profoundly driven by the Enlightenment’s deconstruction of the “divinely-ordained, hierachical dynastic realm”\textsuperscript{52} as the legitimate ruling mechanism. Self-determination, an elevated trust in the individual’s majority, and freedom from obstructive dependencies formed the hallmarks during the late 17th and early 18th century. Finally, Anderson explains that nations are imagined as communities, because they de-emphasize the socio-economic disparities amongst their populations in favor of the idea of a “deep, horizontal comradeship” in

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
which all members share a certain set of “sacred” features binding them together as a community.\(^{53}\)

A central element of Anderson’s concept is the role of media, especially print media. With the help of newspapers, magazines, radio or television programs, a country is able to engage in a national conversation. As a result of this exchange, people become aware of their fellow citizens’ existence, their shared experience and heritage, and realize that they belong to a community with hundreds of thousands or even millions of members even though these members will never come physically to meet each other. Media thus constructed a sense of national coherence, establishing a bond between its individual groups. “These fellow-readers,” Anderson writes, “to whom they were connected through print, formed […] the embryo of the nationally imagined community.”\(^{54}\) Anderson’s concept of nationalism may be summarized as follows: it is the notion that members of communities are conscious of their simultaneous existence, and that they are aware of the fact that they share a common set of features which allow them to conceive of themselves as a coherent body—a nation.

Jan Assmann is also interested in how nations imagine themselves, though in a different way. He focuses specifically on national identity and memory. In addition to Anderson’s anthroprological approach, Assmann thus adds a sociologic-mnemonical dimension. In his major work Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, Assmann analyzes the process of creating practices, symbols, and places that establish identity shaping narratives. Drawing on the pioneering work of Maurice Halbwachs and his research in the field of

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 44; For further elaboration on the cultural determinants in the historical evolution of nationalism see Anderson.
collective memories, Assmann defines three elements that together constitute the pillars of a nation’s historical self-image and national identity: a space-time reference, group specificity, and reconstructivity. First, space, leaving time aside, is a crucial frame for the construction of identities. The family home, a village, a region or a specific landscape form affective spaces that carry community-strengthening experiences and memories. This becomes especially apparent once people leave their native environment and soon after come to identify it as ‘home’. Second, group specificity alludes to the fact that national identities do not form universally adoptable patterns. Each nation’s narrative is associated with individual events and features that are emotive and value-laden and serve as distinctions from the ‘other’. This point echoes Anderson in that nations imagine themselves as limited. Finally, Assmann’s third element, reconstructivity, describes the fluid and moldable nature of national identities. He explains that these narratives are not fact-based representations of past times or real life features but rather the result of constant negotiation or reconstruction of experiences and memories, always subject to contemporary patterns of interpretation and interest.

Consisting of these three elements, national identity serves as a stabilizing and meaning-giving narrative particularly during times of transition and volatility. These cultural narratives are vocalized as well as validated by specialized and generally accepted persons or institutions such as poets, artists as well as intellectual and scholarly organizations. The practices, symbols or places that are defined by these cultural bearers

may find expression in writing, music, dance, or painting. Assmann’s conception of national identities is deeply rooted in a society’s shared cultural experience and provides valuable insight into the arbitrariness and malleability of national narratives. In this context, it will serve as a tool in the subsequent analysis of cultural agents in the formulation and validation of a common Canadian experience and memory, that is a Canadian national identity.

3.2. The North and the Construction of a Canadian National Identity

The Canadian North had been the subject of numerous writers, painters, playwrights, movie directors and radio producers, among others, before and during the 1950s. Through these and other forms of representation the Canadian North assumed a key role in the construction of a Canadian identity. In her landmark study *Canada and the Idea of North*, Sherrill E. Grace presents a cultural analysis of the North that dissects the various discourses that over time constitute and reconstitute Canadian perceptions and projections of their northern frontier. Analyzing a multitude of voices that critically shaped Canadians’ ideas and imaginations of ‘North’, Grace shows how the constant renegotiations of such representations not only formed an ongoing process in the creation

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57 Ibid., 52f. For a comprehensive discussion of the cultural processes of collective identity formation through the formulation of national narratives see Assmann and Halbwachs.

58 On a related note, Charles S. Maier suggests a historiographical narrative for the ‘20th century’ that focuses on ‘territory’ as the defining feature in the foundation of nation-states. Territory as an asset for a nation’s self-consciousness and self-image is substantial as it holds value “not just as an acquisition or as a security buffer but as a decisive means of power and rule” (Charles S. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History” *American Historical Review* June (2000): 818). The issues of a nation’s sovereignty and self-determination are closely related to its geographical conditions. Maier argues that throughout the first half of the 20th century, national identity and the idea of a “collective life” was rooted in the assumption “that a nation’s ‘identity space’ was coterminus with ‘decision space’ […] to which ordinary men and women tended to ascribe their most meaningful public loyalties (superseding competing supranational religious or social class affiliations)” (Ibid., 823). Similar to Assmann’s emphasis on space in the formulation of national identities, Maier thus calls attention to the fact that in reconciling a nation’s ‘identity space’ with its ‘decision space’ territory, nature, and landscape turn into subjects of paramount significance. They resemble cultural symbols and places of shared memories and experiences which are essential for the creation and validation of a national mythology.
of a shared heritage, origin, and experience but also permeated the rhetoric of high-level government officials such as Lester Pearson or John Diefenbaker.\(^59\)

At the heart of Grace’s work lies the proposition that the Canadian North represents a culturally constructed idea that performs a variety of functions and serves as a symbolic projection space of Canadianness.\(^60\) Settling on a definition of North, Grace explains that

North is not *natural, real*, a geological or meteorological matter of treelines, eskers, permafrost, snow and temperatures that can dip as low as -81° C. […] North is a discursive formation […] and as such it has done and continues to do a great deal of ideological and practical work. [The Canadian North] permeates all aspects of our culture, from painting to comic strips, from politics to classical music, and it encompasses the entire country.\(^61\)

As a discursively constructed idea North “is a *process*, not an eternal fixed goal or condition.”\(^62\) Images of North are constantly in flux, being renegotiated amongst a polyphony of cultural agents that in turn create multiple—at times even conflicting—ideas of North.

When viewing the North as a culturally constructed idea, it is important to identify the formative forces that shaped the discourse of ‘North’. During the mid-twentieth century these took the form of academic and arts associations and clubs, educational institutions, and governmental departments, mostly located in urban centers, above all in Toronto, along the southern border of Canada. As a result an inverse creation of images of the North ensued. While First Nation populations living in the Canadian North lacked a voice in the cultural centers of the time, southern Canadians exclusively defined the ‘North’. Grace pointedly notes that what became conceived of as North was “above all,


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 103; Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 15.


\(^{62}\) Ibid., 16.
[…] a construction of southerners […], paradoxically invoked to distinguish us [Canadians] from those who are more southern.” An important feature of representations of the Canadian North is that such ideas tended to “serve southern Canadian interests, be they psychological, spiritual, physical, material or political.” In a similar vein, Caroline Rosenthal draws attention to the uses of North as a feature for differentiation and as a projection space: “[I]n times of national crisis or when seeking to delimit itself from other nations, Canada has always looked north. However, this imaginary north had little to do with the north that is a homeland to the Inuit.”

The Canadian North as a culturally constructed idea thus plays a key role in the way Canadians conceive of themselves as a national community, sharing a common “northern” origin and experience and portraying themselves as a society distinct from the United States. Grace further underlines this point, arguing that “North […] is fundamental to who we are, to that ‘imagined community’ […] of Canada, with all its contradictions, failures, compromises, and successes.” The North as a projection space for a variety of discursive voices that together constantly renegotiate the significance of North for Canada therefore assumes a community-creating function. It becomes an integral part in the construction process of a Canadian national identity—not unlike the American west, some scholars suggest.

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63 Ibid.; It is noteworthy to point out that such discursive prescriptions applied to English as well as French Canadians. Quoting a Catholic Father, Grace shows how French Canadians already by the late nineteenth century connected their identity with images of North: “le nord … sera un jour la force, le boulevard de notre nationalité” (Ibid., 60).


65 Grace, Canada and the Idea of North, 23.

66 See Grace, Canada and the Idea of North, 12; In “The Canadian North versus the American West” Rosenthal traces the uses of North as a symbolic space for the projection of ideals and hopes for a nationally self-conscious community through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, noting that “attempts to employ the North in a similar fashion [as the American West] have failed.” Rosenthal suggests that
The Group of Seven, a circle of Canada’s leading painters, was the most influential group to employ northern imagery in an explicit effort to create a genuinely Canadian art and instill a sense of purpose, heritage, and shared experience in the “Canadian consciousness.” Based in Toronto, the group gained a “hegemonic position within the popular imagination of the nation” from the 1920s on.\(^6\) With increasingly abstract and serene paintings the Group of Seven’s leading figure, Lawren Harris, composed images that fused southern Canada with its Arctic parts. His *Winter Comes from the Arctic to the Temperate Zone* represents a striking amalgamation, symbolizing the intimate relationship between the southern regions and the North.

\[^6\] Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 60.
In addition, with the *Canadian Forum*, the Group had found a willing supporter, providing the artists with a platform to express their ideas. Commenting on the Group’s nationalist philosophy, Harris explained that the painters saw their work as an essential contribution in the creation of a “truly” Canadian identity, distinct from the United States:

We in Canada are in different circumstances than the people in the United States. […] We are on the fringe of the great North, and its living whiteness, its loneliness and replenishment, its resignations and release, its call and answers – its cleansing rhythms. It seems that the top of the continent will ever shed clarity into the growing race of America, and we Canadians being closest to this source seem destined to produce an art somewhat different from our southern fellows – an art more spacious, of greater living quiet, perhaps of more certain conviction of eternal values. We were not placed between the Southern teeming of men and the ample replenishing of the North for nothing.68

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The playwright Herm an Voaden was similarly interested in the northern imaginary and wrote several plays in 1930, announcing “his new northern vision for a Canadian theatre.” Voaden tapped deeply into the works of the Group of Seven. He was convinced that a genuinely Canadian theater had to dramatize Canadian subjects and be localized in the northern environment of the country. As a result, Voaden made ample use of Canadian topics and included numerous Group of Seven paintings in his books and on stage.\(^69\) By the same token, the comic designers Franz Johnston, a former member of the Group of Seven, and Adrian Dingle created the heroine *Nelvana of the Northern Lights*. Between 1941 and 1947 their comic heroine, a godlike figure that was vaguely based on Inuit mythology, traveled the Arctic region and served as a “truly” Canadian guardian of the North. In addition to the Nelvana-persona, the radio show *Sergant Preston of the Yukon* (originally *Challenge of the Yukon*) was broadcast during the late forties and the early fifties. Sergant Preston’s adventures were located in Dawson City at the time of the Klondike Gold Rush, at the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1955 and 1958, *Sergant Preston of the Yukon* also appeared on television, further broadening the show’s reach. Looking at movies that take up the northern theme, Grace points out that Pierre Berton, a Yukon-born author and writer for the *Canadian Forum* during the 1950s, claimed that “of the 575 Hollywood films made about Canada between 1907 and 1956, the overwhelming majority represent the country as vaguely northern or Arctic.”\(^70\)

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\(^69\) Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 5.

\(^70\) Ibid., 11f.
As indicated above, discourses about the North had not been restricted to the realm of culture. The political elites were as well-versed in appealing to a northern heritage, a common history that would essentially unite and, more important, guide Canadians in their collective struggle of negotiating a national identity. In his 1946 *Foreign Affairs* article “Canada Looks ‘Down North’,” Canadian Ambassador to the United States Lester Pearson presents the Arctic as a mythical force whose mere presence exerts a formative influence upon Canadians. Pearson writes that “Canada is one of the few countries with an unexplored frontier, luring the pathfinder into the unknown. This frontier, with its inevitable effect on the life and habits of the Canadian people, is, however, no longer the West. ‘Go North’ has replaced ‘Go West’.”\(^{71}\) Pearson even goes

so far as to depict the Arctic in gendered terms claiming that “[t]he Canadian Arctic is, however, no country for weaklings and its economic development will test the finest qualities of the men of the North.” Pearson’s “men of the North,” of course, do not refer to the Inuit, but to Canadians living along the southern border.

Members of External Affairs identified the North’s potential as a unifying and community-strengthening element right after the conclusion of World War II. Escott Reid, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs from 1948-1952, feared that with the end of the war Canada may suffer from a lack of direction. He saw the Arctic as a meaning-giving object upon which the nation’s energies and efforts needed to be concentrated in order to provide Canadians with a national purpose. His remarks are all the more striking, because despite his view that the North yielded little material benefit, he granted it the potential to serve as an identity-defining element:

After the emotional debauch of the war there is going to be a bad hangover in all the former belligerent countries. In order that people’s lives will not feel too empty, some peacetime equivalents to the exciting national objectives to the war must be found. The opening of a new frontier in the Canadian north can, I think, become a national objective of some importance to the Canadian People. Even if, from the point of view of securing the highest possible national income, the Canadian North is not worth a large expenditure of national energy and capital, a very large expenditure might nevertheless be justified in an effort to realize an inspiring and somewhat romantic national objective.

A final example in which representations and culturally constructed images of the Canadian North intersected with the political domain is an address by Prime Minister St. Laurent on the occasion of the formation of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources on December 8, 1953. While he presented the government’s rationale for reorganizing the administrative structures for the North, a decision that was primarily motivated by Ottawa’s view to emphasize to “non-Canadians,” that is Americans, “that

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72 Ibid., 647.
73 Escott Reid quoted in Morrison, “Eagle Over the Arctic: Americans in the Canadian North, 1867-1985”, 70.
the people of Canada are greatly interested in this northern territory and regard it as an important part of the territory subject to the sovereignty of the Canadian nation,”74 St. Laurent provided a brief glimpse into the sources that informed his conception of the North. Reaching the end of his address, he touched upon the issue of integrating the First Nation populations in the Arctic—“a very sympathetic group of people,” as he described them—with the rest of Canada, revealing that he had been “quite impressed by what I have read and seen in films about the Eskimos.”75 This statement is indicative of the formative influence of cultural works on the conception and understanding of the Canadian North. St. Laurents’ unsuspecting comment may serve as a window into the substantial role of cultural constructions of the North that, beyond the realm of arts and culture, shape the ideas of key political decision-makers.

As the discussion above has shown, the Canadian North carried substantial significance and relevance to Canadians beyond political and military dimensions. Numerous works by painters, writers, playwrights, comic book designers, or radio show producers created narratives that revolved around the North as a common heritage, a shared experience, and source of character-enhancing qualities. Imagining Canada as a northern nation, however, was not exclusively confined to the artistic realm, but also penetrated the political sphere as the statements by Escott Reid, Lester Pearson, and Louis St. Laurent have shown. It is at this point that cultural conceptions of the Arctic entered political discourse and influenced the way decision-making elites in Ottawa conceived of the North. The Arctic’s role changed from being a hostile and uninhabitable wasteland of snow and ice to a space rich in identity-shaping features that provided a

75 Emphasis added, ibid., 700.
Canadian national narrative, a narrative genuinely distinct from the American mythology. These narratives served as stabilizing and meaning-giving concepts that responded to Canadians’ quest for a national identity in their country’s transition—Canada’s “coming-of-age”—following World War II. The inclusion of a cultural dimension, therefore, when analyzing Ottawa’s position with respect to questions of Arctic sovereignty, ownership, and jurisdiction in the face of large-scale military projects in the North, implying a substantial American presence, is imperative if a comprehensive and fruitful discussion of the DEW Line negotiations between Canada and the United States is to result.
IV. SOVEREIGNTY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEW LINE

4.1. The Road to the DEW Line, 1950-1953

The American demonstration of its ultimate military superiority with the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki created a sense of security that led both Washington and Ottawa to allocate low budgets for North American defense in the early postwar period. Security estimates did not project attacks upon the continent in the years following World War II. As a result, the U.S. military saw this situation as an opportunity to emphasize military spending in areas of offensive capabilities.\(^76\) The Soviet detonation of a nuclear device in late 1949, however, swiftly changed such views. American and Canadian national security assessments now estimated that a nuclear air attack by the Soviet Union on North American targets was possible. Ordered by President Truman in January 1950, the national security review that resulted in NSC-68 stated with respect to Soviet military capabilities that Moscow was in a position to “attack selected targets with atomic weapons, now including the likelihood of such attacks against targets in Alaska, Canada, and the United States.”\(^77\) Heavily influenced by George F. Kennan’s depictions of the Kremlin’s inherent expansionist motives, NSC-68 sought to contain the communist threat through a “Rapid Build-up of Political, Economic, and Military Strength in the

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\(^{76}\) Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States, and the Origins of North American Air Defence, 1945-1958*, 7f, 30-33; Winkler, *Searching the Skies: The Legacy of the United States Cold War Defense Radar Program* (Langley AFB, VA: Headquarters Air Combat Command, 1997), 7; Winkler explains that “the dropping of the atomic bombs […] restored confidence in the doctrine of offensive operations. At the conclusion of the war, all air defenses were shut down” (Ibid., 14.).

Free World.” In light of Moscow’s large standing armies and its increasing nuclear arsenal, NSC-68 called for a broad effort based on the further integration of nuclear arms but most importantly emphasized the expansion of U.S. conventional military capabilities. The outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950 further reinforced American views about the Soviets’ hostile intentions and the need for the expansion of the North American air defense infrastructure. As a result, Washington set up a series of study groups that were instructed to investigate existing continental air defenses and related issues as well as make recommendations for improvements.

In late 1950, ‘Project Charles’ and ‘Project Lincoln’ were created in connection with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to look into “the technology of air defence, identifying potentially promising developments.” In August of 1951, Project Charles released its report, explaining that it was not in a position to determine the efficiency of an improved air defense system against hostile air forces. Arguing for the extension of existing radar stations along the Canadian-American border, the report also declared that the Canadian North, especially the Arctic, would not allow for the construction and operation of radar stations due to its harsh natural environment. An offshoot of Project Charles, the East River Project of New York, which was charged with developing civil defense schemes, released a report in the spring of 1952. Empasizing

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79 John L. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 109; Melvin Leffler also points out to NSC-68’s provisions for the domination of air space in connection with the nuclear deterrent as a critical element in the document’s strategy (Melvin P. Leffler, A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 357.). Ernest R. May, American Cold War Strategy. Interpreting NSC 68 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 14f; Winkler emphasizes the Korean War’s effect upon U.S. reevaluations of its air defense system, noting that interpretations of the North Korean attack included scenarios in which the invasion served as a first phase of general war manufactured by the Soviet Union (Winkler, Searching the Skies, 24.).
that civil defense in the face of atomic weapons would yield only very limited protection, the crux of the report was that a nuclear air attack had to be prevented:

UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, IT BECOMES IMPERATIVE THAT A SYSTEM OF AIR DEFENCE BE DEvised THAT AIMS AT DESTROYING SUBSTANTIALLY ALL OF THE AIRBORNE ATTACKERS PRIOR TO THE TIME THAT THEY REACH THE UNITED STATES. IF THIS IS NOT ACHIEVED, CIVIL DEFENSE BECOMES UNMANAGABLE AND LARGELY FUTILE. 81

Building upon this dramatic call for the expansion of air defense, the Lincoln Summer Study Group was set up in the summer of 1952. It was comprised of high profile scientists, among them J. Robert Oppenheimer, who later was forced to leave the group due to allegations of espionage. Two Canadians participated: John S. Foster of McGill University and G. R. Lindsey of the Defence Research Board (DRB). The group came to the conclusion that the construction of an improved air defense system was urgent and feasible. Overturning Project Charles’ assessment, the Lincoln Summer Study Group recommended the construction of distant early warning lines in the Canadian Arctic and affirmed the feasibility thereof. 82

The report of the Lincoln group did not receive a warm welcome in the U.S. defense community. It was seen as a distraction from stepping up offensive capabilities. Jack Gorrie, the chairman of the National Security Resources Board, however, brought the report before the National Security Council (NSC), where it was considered and resubmitted for further investigation. Although an assessment by the RAND Corporation 83 for the United States Air Force (USAF) gave only lukewarm support for the Lincoln group report, Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, and Paul Nitze, Director of

81 Original emphasis, report cited in ibid., 63.
82 Ibid.
83 The RAND Corporation was a World War II-offspring of Douglas Aircraft Company’s and the U.S. Defense Department’s efforts to provide external research for military projects.
the Policy Planning Staff, lent their weight to the report’s recommendations and decisively pushed for its further consideration in the NSC. As a result, on December 31, 1952, in the waning days of the Truman Administration, NSC-139 was approved and contained endorsements for establishing test sites for the construction of a distant early warning line in the Canadian North.

Between the creation of the first study group in late 1950 and the approval of NSC-139 in December 1952, Washington had not approached or consulted with representatives from the Canadian government. In fact, as internal documents of the Department of External Affairs demonstrate, Ottawa was not aware of the study groups’ activities until September 1952. Only then did it begin to issue inquiries about the nature of Project Lincoln. In a visit to Washington in October, Lester Pearson learned about the American plans and explained to the Canadian Cabinet Defence Committee that “the facts and reasoning back of this study have the most serious implications for this country.”

With the approval of NSC-139, Washington decided to bring the matter to the Permanent Joint Board on Defense and, for the first time, officially inform the Canadian side about its air defense plans and place the request for permission to establish test sites in the Canadian Arctic, dubbed ‘Project Counterchange’, in order to assess the feasibility of constructing the DEW Line.

Three major phases can be distinguished in the Canada-U.S. negotiations over the installation and operation of the DEW Line between 1953 and 1957. The first phase, which covered most of 1953, was concerned with the initial approval of the American request for the construction of test sites in the Arctic while ensuring that Ottawa’s

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84 “Extract from Memorandum from Secretary of State for External Affairs to Cabinet Defence Committee”, October 8, 1952, DCER, 1952, Vol. 18, 1223f.
position would be heard in the subsequent devising process. At the same time, the incoming Eisenhower Administration adopted the ‘New Look’ national security policy, which emphasized air superiority at the expense of conventional forces. This new policy reaffirmed the need for stepped up air defense mechanisms. The second phase was concerned with the results from Project Counterchange, the decision to establish the DEW Line, and the negotiations over Canadian participation in the course of the construction as well as later operations of the radar stations in order to ascertain the protection of Canadian sovereignty. This phase ranged from June 1954 to April/May 1955. The third and final phase, including the completion of the radar chain and the start of its operation in 1957, was characterized by increased complaints about unauthorized constructions, public concerns about the minimal presence of Canadians along the stations questioning *de facto* Canadian authority in the Arctic, and U.S. compliance with the DEW Line provisions. This phase ended in late 1958.

4.2. Phase 1: Early Test Sites, NSC-162/2, and Sovereignty, 1953

In January 1953, the American side of the PJBD presented the plans for Project Counterchange and requested permission for the installation of three test sites in the Canadian Arctic. Clearly, Ottawa was irritated by the way the United States had chosen to approach this topic without requesting the Canadian position on a matter of defense installations on Canadian territory beforehand. Already in late 1952, after it had learned about the existence of Project Lincoln, the Canadian embassy in Washington was instructed to convey to the Americans “the importance of submitting requests for defence
projects as far in advance as possible” and to use the “proper communication channels.”

Having obtained information about the soon-to-be-requested testing sites and the scope of Project Lincoln by January 1953, Ottawa became concerned about a substantial presence of U.S. personnel in the Arctic. In a memorandum to the Cabinet, Pearson explained that he saw the danger that as a result of Canada’s sparse development of the Arctic, its sovereignty might be called into doubt. While he acknowledged that *de jure* control was not at stake for the moment, Pearson made clear that “of more concern is the *de facto* exercise of US sovereignty, examples of which were numerous during the last war in other parts of Canada.” He therefore recommended defining “US rights and responsibilities in the Canadian Arctic” as well as the further Canadian development of the Arctic supervised by the Advisory Committee on Northern Development (ACND).

Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent reacted with equal alarm, pointing out that “it was

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86 My emphasis, “Draft Memorandum from Secretary of State for External Affairs to Cabinet”, January 21, 1953, *DCER*, 1953, Vol. 19, 1048. Whereas Pearson points to Canada’s experiences with joint Arctic projects during World War II, a note from Privy Council Office member R. A. J. Phillips reveals that incidents between U.S. and Canadian services continued into the early 1950s. In a memorandum titled “Incidents,” he lists a range of episodes that show conflicts between Canadian and American authorities during Northern operations, delayed requests for certain permissions for construction projects or attempts to overrule Canadian government orders. Indicating the sensitive nature of these incidents, both for domestic and Canada-U.S. relations considerations, Phillips emphasizes that he was “asked to use them with caution in order to avoid embarrassment to those who were kind enough to make some of the information available.” Ottawa’s apprehension about sovereignty issues becomes even more exposed when Phillips writes that at least one journalist was asked by Defense Minister Claxton to suppress reports about an incident in March 1952 (“Note from Privy Council Office to Clerk of Privy Council”, December 29, 1952, *DCER*, 1952, Vol. 18, 1194ff.).
87 Ibid.
88 The ACND was created as an interdepartmental body in 1948 resulting from increased Arctic activities by Canada as well as the United States. The ACND was established in order “to advise the government on questions of policy relating to civilian and military undertakings in northern Canada and to provide for the effective co-ordination of all government activities in that area.” (“Northern Development Policy”, January 16, 1948, *DCER*, 1948, Vol. 12, http://www.international.gc.ca/department/history-histoire/dcer/details-en.asp?intRefid=10616 accessed March 13, 2009).
within the realm of the possible that in years to come U.S. developments might be just about the only form of human activity in the vast wastelands of the Canadian Arctic.”  

Despite these apprehensions, roughly a month after the reception of the American request on January 31, 1953, Ottawa rapidly and without further mention of grievances approved the installation of the test sites. Canadian permission, however, was not unconditional. Whereas Ottawa rejected the option to refuse a request the United States deemed as essential to its national security, the Canadians had decided to attach important strings to its approval. Ottawa consented to Project Counterchange contingent upon U.S. agreement for the establishment of a bilateral Military Study Group (MSG). The MSG was charged with studying “those aspects of the North American Air Defence system in general, and the early warning system in particular, which are of mutual concern to the two countries.” The results and reports by the MSG were to be sent to Washington and Ottawa alike. By creating this joint study group, Canada tried to avoid future communication lapses between the two countries. The MSG’s function, therefore, was not merely to make sure that Ottawa would stay informed but, more importantly, that Canada would participate actively in the developing process of continental air defense. In July 1954, Minister of Defense R. O. Campney put it plainly, explaining that “the purpose of this suggestion was to ensure that the United States Government would not in future confront the Canadian Government with plans for radar construction in Canada which had not first been studied by a joint Canada-United States body.”

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90 “Ambassador in United States to Secretary of State of United States”, February 27, 1953, DCER, 1953, Vol. 19, 1060.
In addition to the MSG, the approval contained an elaborate catalog of conditions forming a framework within which the installation of the test stations was to be conducted. Ottawa stipulated that Canadian government officials participate in the research process, obtain access to scientific data, Canada retain all titles and rights to the test sites, Canadian law be observed (tax, labor, workers’ compensation, unemployment insurance), radio frequencies for communication and transport be cleared through the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), the wildlife and environment be respected, and contact with the native population be kept to a minimum. With these terms, Ottawa sought to reduce the impact of the American presence and ensure its jurisdiction and sovereignty throughout the testing phase of the radar stations. The approval of Project Counterchange on February 27, 1953, thus was, on the one hand, closely tied to detailed conditions and, on the other, dependent upon U.S. consent to a new bilateral study group. Whereas the first aimed at minimizing the American impact, the second measure can be interpreted as a reaction to the lack of communication prior to January 1953 with respect to American defense planning in connection with Project Lincoln. The joint Military Study Group was aimed at preempting short-notice requests and ensuring that Ottawa be informed about U.S. defense plans and participate in matters regarding early warning.

While the MSG supervised the investigations of the American test sites in the Arctic and did not submit its final report on the feasibility of the DEW Line before June

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93 Further echoing complaints about a lack of bilateral consultations, A. G. L. McNaughton, the Chairman of the Canadian section of the PJBD, also called for the establishment of additional bilateral instruments like the MSG to avoid being confronted with the “long list of North American defence requirements” by the United States. Without prior consultation or Canadian participation in the planning stages, Ottawa would be left with little room for maneuvering, he argues, so that “it will be difficult if not impossible to deny” such defense requests from Washington. (“Chairman, Canadian Section, Permanent Joint Board on Defence, to Minister of National Defence”, April 28, 1953, DCER, 1953, Vol. 19, 1063-65.)
1954, important changes in the United States national security outlook as well as Canada’s early warning line considerations occurred.

In early 1953, the Eisenhower administration initiated a review of U.S. national security policy. Eisenhower, a fiscal conservative and strong adherent of a balanced budget philosophy, resented Truman’s military Keynesianism formulated in NSC-68. The Truman administration had drafted its national security policy under the assumption that the year 1954 would constitute the year of greatest danger posed by the Soviet Union as it would have acquired sufficient nuclear weapons and improved and expanded its deliverance capabilities to attack the North American continent. Eisenhower, in contrast, conceived of the Cold War struggle as a long-term challenge. For that reason, the “maintenance of a sound, strong and growing economy” assumed equal importance, as did the military dimension if the United States were not to subjugate its values and institutions to the establishment of a ‘Fortress America’ or a ‘garrison state’. As a result, the central element of Eisenhower’s national security revision formed a shift in military expenditures that now, in an attempt to regain the initiative, championed the use of covert operations, foreign aid, allied forces, and, most important, the nuclear deterrent. “Inflicting massive retaliatory damage” at Washington’s discretion and considering “nuclear weapons to be as available for use as other munitions,” thus formed the core feature of Eisenhower’s policy, as it sought to reconcile fiscal considerations without impairing the American deterrent.

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95 Ibid., 582.
96 Ibid., 593.
Eisenhower’s New Look-policy, as formulated in NSC-162/2 and approved on October 30, 1953, shifted the focus from the conventional forces to the nuclear deterrent, which by default put the prime reliance on the U.S. air forces. Not only providing for nuclear air retaliation, NSC-162/2 also assessed that “in the face of Soviet atomic power, defense of the continental United States becomes vital to effective security; to protect our striking force, our mobilization base, and our people.”98 The creation of “maximum prior warning of possible aggression” formed a key element of NSC-162/2.99 Early warning, that would inform the U.S. air forces about an impending attack and have its retaliatory nuclear aircrafts take off, thus constituted a key ingredient in Eisenhower’s New Look national security policy.

The changing defense priorities of the Eisenhower Administration did not go unnoticed by the Canadians. Already in August 1953, the Canadian Ambassador to Washington, Hume Wrong, referring to a newspaper article by the recently replaced General Omar N. Bradley of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff, estimated that “before long Canada will probably be faced with new, and even larger requests, for co-operation in the defence of North America.”100 Wrong noted a “nagging anxiety” on the part of Washington regarding its exposure to Soviet nuclear attacks via the Arctic.101 The Soviet Union’s successful detonation of a thermonuclear device in mid-August 1953, further spurred such fears. Wrong thus concluded that Washington would “press for a more hermetic system of continental defence.”102 In an elaborate memorandum on Eisenhower’s new

99 Ibid., 582.
101 Ibid., 1066.
102 Ibid.
policy, Canadian Ambassador A. D. P. Heeney supported Wrong’s assessment, writing that an “increased attention to continental defence in co-operation with Canada to protect the main base of the striking power of the free world” formed an important part of the new American defense policy.\textsuperscript{103}

Ottawa began to discuss its participation in the overall air defense system, receiving first indications about the ramifications of NSC-162/2 and new signs that, despite the MSG’s ongoing studies in connection with Project Counterchange, Washington had approved internal reports that recommended the establishment of the DEW Line pending favorable results from the MSG. Parallel to the investigation on the DEW Line, Canada had suggested a Mid-Canada Line that would extend the warning times of the existing Pinetree network to up to three hours. While Washington had not objected to the construction of the Mid-Canada Line, it nonetheless considered a warning line in the Arctic essential. Against the backdrop of potential large-scale requests in the future, Ottawa considered constructing the Mid-Canada Line without any American involvement. Since this warning line would include stations in populated areas in Ontario and Quebec, treating it as an exclusive Canadian undertaking would yield the advantage of avoiding a debate about a substantial presence of U.S. military close to densely inhabited areas. The central argument for constructing the Mid-Canada Line single-handedly, however, was connected with the rationale that Canada would be in a position to avoid having to chip in for future joint defense installations. Minister of National Defense Brooke Claxton explained that

\begin{quote}
our taking the initiative with regard to the McGill Fence [Mid-Canada Line] would put us in a better position to say: ‘Well, we think we have done what we thought was necessary for continental defence. If you want to go on and do more we are not going to stand in the
\end{quote}

way’ and keep our self-respect without having to put out too great an expenditure of materials, manpower and money. 104

While the United States moved ahead with its internal deliberation process to construct the DEW Line, pending the results of the MSG, and thereby preempting Canadian-American consultations, Ottawa considered different schemes of Canadian involvement with troop participation in the Pinetree and Mid-Canada air defense projects at the expense of potential future installations such as the DEW radar chain. As a result, the first phase of Canada-U.S. negotiations over the installation of the DEW Line concluded with a heightened U.S. determination to step up continental air defense mechanisms in order to secure a credible deterrent and retaliatory capability as formulated in Eisenhower’s NSC-162/2. Ottawa, for its part, sought to ensure future consultations with the establishment of the bilateral Military Study Group and, apprehensive of impending defense requests, considered its participation in future joint air defense projects—an issue that was fundamentally to shape the Canadian government’s position towards the DEW Line throughout the ensuing phase.


Towards the end of 1953, the United States grew determined to expand the North American air defense system. This policy had been formulated in the Eisenhower national security revision and was further underlined by the approval of internal studies about the need for an extended early warning system. In order to gain Canadian support, Washington increasingly impressed upon the Canadian section of the Permanent Joint Board on Defense the urgent need for a warning line farther north. During its January 1954 meeting, the USAF representatives of the board presented a movie that

demonstrated the immense destruction caused by a hydrogen explosion. The Canadian military representatives were clearly impressed and emphasized in their report to Ottawa that they were the first non-U.S. citizens to see these pictures. Stressing the imminent nature of the Soviet threat, the report stated that “the explosion showed clearly the awesome power of the weapon and helped to explain why the United States is so concerned about the problem of air defence.”

Defense Minister Claxton not only disregarded the implications a reduced Canadian participation in North American air defense projects might have on Ottawa’s capabilities to claim and exert sovereignty in the North. In fact, Canada’s military representatives embraced the USAF’s presentation and its conclusions for the establishment of early warning lines in the Canadian Arctic. These statements illustrate an early divide between the Canadian government’s military and civil branches. While Defense responded approvingly to the plans for the installation of early warning lines, it was External Affairs and the Advisory Committee on Northern Development (ACND) that emphasized the negative political impact of permitting a substantial U.S. military presence in the Canadian Arctic. This internal divide was articulated by External Affairs already in a July 1952 memorandum. In a broad policy survey on the U.S. defense presence in Canada, the memo disapprovingly pointed out that “certain other Departments, notably National Defence and Finance, are not very concerned with protecting Canadian sovereignty or autonomy.” Trying to “avoid house-keeping or guard-duties for the United States,” the survey noted that Defense focused their attention on

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Canadian responsibilities abroad “rather than protecting such intangibles as sovereignty or autonomy at home.”

A “Policy Guidance Paper” by the ACND of May 1954 is instructive about the committee’s concern about perceptions of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. Emphatically underlining the importance of not turning a blind eye on the Arctic, the ACND stipulated that “northern development […] is never a joint responsibility; it is a Canadian responsibility which cannot be allowed to go by default or left to others to carry out.” The ACND thus advised that “public information on the north is to emphasize that the northern regions are as much a part of Canada as any other area in the country.” The paper stressed the importance of communicating Canadian ownership of the Canadian Arctic and encouraged public statements that emphasized Canadian development and activities in fields such as scientific, civil, economic, or defense projects. Statements about U.S. activities in the Arctic, the paper recommended, ought to be framed within Canada’s overall involvement in the Arctic. Furthermore, the paper explained that “the rest of the world should be aware that the Canadian Arctic is not an ‘Ultima Thule’ but is being effectively occupied, administered and developed by the Canadian Government and people.” Recognizing the utility and necessity of Canada-U.S. projects in the Arctic, the paper urged that public statements ought to stress the cooperative nature of Arctic activities, emphasizing Canadian control and ownership.

108 Ibid., 1139.
109 Ultima Thule is an Arctic island north of Greenland whose territorial status was and remains not defined due to questions that it does not reach above the water level on a year-round basis and therefore does not qualify as land. Ibid.
To back up its public rhetoric about developing and administering its Arctic territories, Ottawa had created the Department for Northern Affairs and National Resources in December 1953. Addressing the House of Commons on the occasion of the department’s creation, Prime Minister St. Laurent underlined the importance of asserting Canada’s hold on its Arctic territories: “We must leave no doubt about our active occupation and exercise of our sovereignty in these northern lands right up to the pole.”\textsuperscript{110} By the same token, the first Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Jean Lesage, reacting to a \textit{Time} magazine article that insinuated that Ellesmere Island would not belong to the national territory of Canada, exclaimed that “it is of some importance that Canada should never lose an opportunity to assert her sovereignty over these islands in the Arctic Ocean.”\textsuperscript{111} Merging continental defense and Arctic development, Pearson underlined Canada’s interest in the North. Whereas he painted the Arctic as a region rich in national resources, he also drew attention to the defense dimension of Canadian stewardship of its northern frontier:

\begin{quote}
We know that there is much to be gained from the Arctic. It may come in the form of power, oil, gas, minerals and general economic development providing the basis of new and growing communities. It may also come in the form of greater protection against aggression, for the north is a watching place for what may come from beyond the Pole. Canadians have every reason to look to the north.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

In contrast to the military branches of the Canadian government, the civil branches were outspoken about the need to assert, communicate, and solidify Canadian sovereignty over its Arctic territories. This divergence in Ottawa became even more pronounced when the MSG reported on the results of Project Counterchange in mid-

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\textsuperscript{110} Prime Minister St. Laurent, \textit{HoCD}, session 1953-54, Vol. I, 700.
\textsuperscript{111} Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Jean Lesage, \textit{HoCD}, session 1953-54, Vol. V, 4680.
\textsuperscript{112} Lester B. Pearson, “Canada’s Northern Horizon” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 31 (1953): 591.
\end{flushleft}
1954, and the Canadian government began to consider its participation regarding the DEW Line in earnest.

On June 2 and 3, 1954, the MSG presented its conclusions and submitted a report on the radar test sites in the Canadian Arctic to the Chiefs of Staff of Canada and the United States. The External Affairs representative at the MSG W. H. Barton reported to Ottawa that it had been determined that the Mid-Canada Line “is quite inadequate” and the establishment of a “distant early warning line to give the maximum possible notice of attack is required.”113 Based on this evaluation, the MSG recommended that Ottawa and Washington agree in principle on the construction of the DEW Line and that plans and studies be developed necessary for the installation of the line. The costs of the radar chain were estimated to range between $100 and $200 million and beginning of operation was projected to be feasible by 1957, a year later than initially devised.114

With the MSG report now making the case for the construction of the DEW Line, the Canadian government had to decide to what extent and in which form it ought to participate. In his report about the MSG conclusions, Barton outlined the two most likely courses of action: Whereas the first went along the lines of Defense Minister Claxton’s argument for a limited participation since Canada had decided to build and operate the Mid-Canada Line all by itself, the second rationale suggested an undefined formula between Ottawa and Washington that would propose a sharing of the costs. Barton pointed out that an active participation of Canada in the DEW Line had “obvious political attractions and would strengthen Canadian operational control over the system” as well as “ensure that the participation of the United States Government was on a scale sufficient

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114 Ibid., 988f.
to avoid recriminations” in case an attack would occur. Concluding his remarks, Barton made plain that if the Department of External Affairs would not take the initiative and press for substantial and active Canadian contributions and participation the likely result would be that the DEW Line would be solely constructed and operated by the United States.

During the months leading up to the final agreement between Ottawa and Washington on the construction of the DEW Line in May 1955, the Canadian debate about contributions and participation further revealed the rifts between Defense and External Affairs. Claxton’s successor A. O. Campney and the Canadian Chiefs of Staff referred to Canada’s commitment to the Pinetree network (Canada had financed and operated 1/3 of the stations) and the Mid-Canada Line, arguing that resources would not suffice for Canadian participation in the DEW Line. Lester Pearson and the Department for External Affairs, on the other hand, were more skeptical, remained hesitant to acquiesce to U.S. pressure to come to an agreement, and made their case for a substantial Canadian presence on the DEW Line as a means of asserting jurisdiction and sovereignty.

In August 1954, the St. Laurent Cabinet discussed the recommendations of the MSG report. The two pressing issues that demanded immediate attention formed the recommendation of the report to provide ‘agreement in principle’ to the construction of the DEW Line as well as the question regarding the role Ottawa would decide to assume in this project. It was quickly resolved that even if Ottawa would have considered rejection of the MSG’s proposals, there was “no alternative but to approve” as Campney argued. Any Canadian failure to do so, the Cabinet concluded, would signify an

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115 Ibid., 989.
116 Ibid.
acceptable delay to Washington so that Ottawa “would be faced with a proposal that the United States construct, man and operate the line wholly as an U.S. undertaking. It would be virtually impossible to withhold agreement to this suggestion.”

Further realizing that the Americans were determined to construct the DEW Line regardless of the costs and regardless of what a potential cost-sharing formula might be agreed to, Ottawa decided to approve the MSG recommendations in principle on August 18, 1954.

The nature and extent of Canadian participation, however, proved to be far more difficult an issue to resolve. In fact, in its agreement to the MSG recommendations, Ottawa explicitly stated that Canadian plans for participation were still under review; in other words, the Cabinet had not been able to agree upon a role, if any, for Canadians on the DEW Line radar stations. Especially the relationship between External Affairs and the Defense Department grew tense. A November 5 External Affairs memorandum summarized the potentially dangerous political implications of having the United States exclusively construct and operate the DEW Line: a likely situation may be that “the Mid-Canada Line will be the ‘Canadian Line’, the DEW Line will be called the ‘American Line’, and Canadians and Americans will get the impression that the U.S. was assuming

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119 R. A. Mackay, Assistant Under-Secretary of State, complained that positions of External Affairs were not properly communicated within the Defense Department regarding a briefing of officers. Suspecting ill-disposed attitudes, Mackay explained that he saw internal turf-battles occurring saying that it was not “the content of the memorandum [in question] but the fact that it came from External Affairs” which led Defense to represent its content incorrectly. (“Briefing on November 5 by Chairman of Chiefs of Staff on Proposed Radar Chains”, November 6, 1954, DCER, 1954, Vol. 20, 1030); Donald Barry, a political scientist, and John Hilliker, Head of the Historical Section in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, identify tensions between the External Affairs and Defense Departments during the 1950s. Both government branches emerged stronger from World War II and saw themselves repeatedly disagreeing on issues such as disarmament policy or the integration of the North American air defense system into NORAD, see Donald Barry and John Hilliker, “The Department of External Affairs in the Post-War Years, 1946-1968” in Donald C. Story, The Canadian Foreign Service in Transition (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1993), 13f.
responsibility for, and control of the Canadian Arctic.”

In a similar vein, Lester Pearson put forward his reasoning why it was vital for Canada to take part in the DEW Line project implicitly stressing the danger of relinquishing sovereignty over parts of Canada’s territory:

The main argument in favor of Canadian participation is political and relates to the fact that failing such participation the United States will be operating a continuous chain of radar stations and communications facilities in Canada from the Alaska-Yukon border across the Canadian Arctic and down the Atlantic Coast to Cape Race.

In addition, Pearson pointed out that he saw the Canadian Air Defense Commander’s ability to execute the functions assigned by Ottawa and Washington importantly impaired as a result of the probable lack of participation in important air defense stations in Canada.

In mid-November 1954, Ottawa informed Washington that it affirmed its approval of the MSG recommendations and agreed to permit the United States to begin the construction process of the DEW Line. Similar to its August note, Ottawa postponed a decision on the nature and extent of Canadian participation. By that time, the Cabinet distinguished between a construction and an operation phase in which Canada would have to decide how to participate. The Defense Department’s position that Canadian resources were exhausted with its construction and commitment to the Mid-Canada Line and the Pinetree radar chain had prevailed. The RCAF also referred to its engagement in Europe where it had stationed most of Canada’s still small air forces. Despite Pearson’s interjections, the DEW Line was now solely to be constructed by the United States.

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122 Ibid.
In May 1955, Ottawa and Washington signed the official agreement on the establishment of the DEW Line. Similar to the conditions attached to the installations of the test sites in conjunction with Project Counterchange, the terms for the DEW Line laid down a strict formula within which the United States would have to operate. The agreement stipulated that Canada retained all titles and rights to the radar station sites while the United States would be granted the necessary rights to access the sites and perform the construction work. Canadian law and immigration rules as well as customs regulations would have to be observed. Furthermore, the agreement required approval of the Canadian Department of Transport and the RCAF for the installation of radio stations and frequencies. Scientific data was to be made available to Ottawa. The DEW Line terms, notably, contained an elaborate section on the protection of the Inuit, the First Nation population in the Arctic. With respect to Canadian participation, the agreement stipulated that electronic equipment at the radar station had to be manufactured in Canada “as far as practicable.”\textsuperscript{124} Although Canadian and American contractors were to be treated on an equal basis in the awarding of construction contracts, Canadian labor was to be preferred during the establishment of the radar stations. The issue of Canadian participation in the operation and staffing was again put off, stating that “Canadian participation in the initial operation and manning of the DEW System shall be a matter for later decision by Canada.”\textsuperscript{125}

While External Affairs had tried hard to convince other departments in the Cabinet to support a substantial Canadian representation along the DEW Line stations, by

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 1049.
June 1955, it acknowledged that its position was not shared in the Cabinet. Defense Minister Campney had lobbied successfully for a minimal participation along the lines of transportation of material to the Arctic outposts but rejected any direct involvement in the operation of the stations. Supporting this view, the RCAF recommended “only token participation by the RCAF during the initial period of operation, consisting of liaison officers at selected stations.” Not taking into account the political implications of a large American presence in the Canadian Arctic, the RCAF argued that it was best to have the United States operate the DEW Line long enough on its own so it would “get the ‘bugs’ out of it and demonstrate that it works effectively and satisfactorily.” According to this scheme, Canadian personnel would not participate in the operation and maintenance of the DEW Line for the first three years of the radar stations’ operation, which deferred a Canadian presence on the DEW Line to the year 1960.

In a last minute effort, Pearson had hoped to sway his colleagues in Ottawa in May 1955, explaining that “in order that the Canadian Government can exercise effective control over a defence project which is important politically as well as militarily, Canada should at the earliest opportunity share in the operational responsibility for [sic], and acquire a financial stake in it.” Written in the margins of the memorandum Pearson further insisted that “our position should be to take on the maximum effort possible in respect of all activities on our own soil – even if it may mean the reduction of our defence effort overseas.” Additionally, M. H. Wershof, Assistant Under-Secretary of State,

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129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 764.
132 Ibid.
pointed out in a Cabinet meeting that repeatedly Ottawa had pledged to “participate effectively” in early public announcements regarding the operation of the DEW Line. Reiterating Pearson’s view, Wershof explained that Canada’s constant backtracking since its approval of the MSG recommendations in August 1954 substantially damaged its credibility.\footnote{133}{“Record of Meeting”, June 15, 1955, \textit{DCER}, 1955, Vol. 21, 769.}

In the summer of 1955, Ottawa finally informed Washington of its decision to not only have the construction of the DEW Line be the sole responsibility of the United States, but also to grant it the permission to staff and operate the radar stations on its own for a three-year period, starting with the stations’ operation in 1957. Reaffirming that air communications and radio frequencies were to be cleared through the responsible Canadian authorities, Ottawa stated that it would notify Washington in advance of the expiration of the three year period about its plans for Canadian participation. Even though one RCAF officer “should” be present at every DEW station and formal responsibility for the “military command of the area and operational control of the system” was vested in the RCAF, these terms were rather cosmetic in nature.\footnote{134}{“Extract from Journal of Permanent Joint Board on Defence”, n.d., \textit{DCER}, 1955, Vol. 21, 779.}

With the MSG’s report, Ottawa had now been confronted with the issue of Canadian participation in the construction and operation of the DEW Line chain. Even though it approved the MSG recommendation early, in August 1954, and thus agreed to the construction of the radar stations, the debates about the nature and extent of its contribution remained a contentious issue. With meager support in the Cabinet, Pearson tried to make the case for a substantial Canadian participation along the DEW Line in order to address political apprehensions about an overbearing American military
presence, which would raise concerns regarding the observation of Canadian jurisdiction and sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic. The Defense Department, however, prevailed with its rationale that, in the face of large-scale future defense requests from Washington, Canadian military resources were already stretched to its limit. Since Ottawa had decided to take complete responsibility for the Mid-Canada Line and contributed to the Pinetree network, Defense Minister Campney argued, Canada had done its fair share. As a result, Ottawa announced in November 1954 that the construction of the DEW Line was to be undertaken by the United States alone. An exchange of diplomatic notes on May 5, 1955, formalized the agreement. After lengthy deliberations, Ottawa informed Washington in the summer of 1955, that the United States would receive permission to staff and operate the DEW Line on its own up until 1960. Although the final agreement contained a comprehensive catalog of terms and conditions that sought to ensure American observation and respect for Canadian law and the Arctic environment, doubts about Canada’s de facto sovereignty soon began to arise.

4.4. Phase 3: Sovereignty Concerns and the DEW Line

With Canada’s decision to have the United States staff and operate the DEW Line network without Canadian participation, the main phase of negotiations between Ottawa and Washington came to a close. In light of the historically ambiguous relationship that saw a variety of sovereignty conflicts only a decade earlier during World War II, and despite the Department of External Affairs’ emphatic calls to “re-Canadianize” the Arctic, by mid-1955 the DEW Line had become an exclusively American-run defense project. This remarkable development became the subject of increasing public scrutiny and growing concerns about the actual extent of Canada’s control over the Arctic
territories. The third and last phase, therefore, illustrates how apprehensions about the American presence became more and more articulated in the Canadian government as well as the public sphere through recurrent inquiries and criticism that repeatedly challenged Ottawa’s reassurances that Canadian sovereignty was effectively exercised along the DEW Line stations.

The first major incident was brought to the attention of External Affairs in January 1956. In a letter from Under-Secretary of State, R. M. Macdonnell, to A. D. P. Heeney, Canadian Ambassador in Washington, Macdonnell explained that the American company Alaska Freight Lines, Inc. had “brought men, equipment and fuel from Alaska to Norman Wells [with the] intention to construct several hundred miles of winter road in order to make deliveries to DEW Line sites.” 135 This, in fact, had taken place without any prior clearance by Canadian authorities. Macdonnell accordingly wrote that the company’s plans constituted a “completely unauthorized operation in Canadian territory.” 136 In response to the incident, he instructed Heeney to “bring this matter orally to the attention of the State Department with a view to making clear the serious concern felt by Ministers.” Acknowledging its delicate nature, Macdonnell further emphasized that the company’s failure to observe the Canadian authorization procedure “is not only an embarrassment in itself but could, if exploited, become an irritant in Canada-United States relations out of all proportion to its size.” 137

A month later, in March 1956, Canada’s Department of Transport saw Canadian participation passed over and the DEW Line agreement violated. As had been stipulated in the DEW Line terms, Canadian labor and material were to be used whenever feasible.

136 Ibid.
137 Ibid., 169.
When Ottawa proposed to transport DEW Line equipment and material through the Mackenzie River Valley\textsuperscript{138}, Washington rejected this scheme without further explanation and suggested direct transportation from Seattle to the DEW Line stations in the Arctic. Such an arrangement would have shut out any significant Canadian contribution regarding transportation. While the Minister of Transport complained that the United States did not provide sufficient explanation as to why the Canadian proposal was rejected, he further pointed out that “the line of argument advanced by the United States communication appeared to disregard the general principles which we thought had been agreed as applicable in the operational phase of the DEW Line, […] namely, use of Canadian materials and Canadian supply agencies wherever feasible.”\textsuperscript{139}

The question about Canada’s effective protection of its jurisdiction and the exercise of its sovereignty in the Arctic arose again when it became known that mail going to and coming from the DEW Line stations would be channelled through U.S. Army posts in the United States. External Affairs expressed its concern about this “undesirable” situation and successfully argued that the Defense Department ought to

\textsuperscript{138} The Mackenzie River Valley is located in the western part of the Northwest Territories province.

\textsuperscript{139} “Minister of Transport to Minister of Defence Production” March 26, 1956, \textit{DCER}, 1956/57 Part II, Vol. 23, 171; see also: Minister of Transport George C. Marker, April 9, 1956, \textit{HoCD}, 1956, Vol. VII, 2726; In 1955 pilots of the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association (C.A.L.P.A.) had threatened to join the American Air Line Pilots Association (A.L.P.A.) out of frustration about Canadians’ lack of sufficient capabilities to carry out the DEW Line airlift. According to the \textit{Globe and Mail}, the United States accorded for 40% of the transportation of equipment and material to the radar stations. In a report, the pilots submitted to Ottawa the next year, they charged the government again with failing to provide for Canadian air transportation capabilities and thereby forfeited an important opportunity to draw important lesson for air traffic in the Arctic ( “Canadian Pilots Consider Joining U.S. Association” \textit{Globe and Mail}, November 11, 1955; “Pilots Criticize Canadian Efforts in DEW Supply” \textit{Globe and Mail}, April 23, 1956; for Canadian-U.S. transportation quota see Dave McIntosh, “U.S. Outpaces Canada Building Radar Fence” \textit{Globe and Mail}, July 7, 1955.).
reconsider its existing arrangement with the USAF and provide for a formula that included the Canadian Postal Service.\textsuperscript{140}

Concerns about the large American military presence along the DEW Line network, however, were not restricted to the inner circles of the Canadian government. The Opposition in Parliament increasingly pressured Prime Minister St. Laurent, Secretary of State Pearson, and Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources Jean Lesage about what measures Ottawa had taken to ensure jurisdiction and sovereignty. Newspaper articles and magazine reports from Canadian and American journalists, some of whom had visited DEW Line stations, largely informed parliamentary debate and presented a critical view of the American influence on, in addition to Canada’s lack of engagement in, the Arctic region.

As early as in May 1954, John G. Diefenbaker, a vocal leader in the Opposition and later Prime Minister, pressed the Government over what precautions it had taken to avoid interference by the presence of American troops along the DEW Line stations. He specifically referred to the effect of the American military on the Inuit population and pointed out the risk that Canadian sovereignty and jurisdiction might be in danger. Diefenbaker called attention to fears that “if these rights and the right of occupation, the right to establish radio stations and these other types of stations are given, they might also convey in time the right to claim that territory […] and may in the end mean the loss of sovereign rights for Canada.”\textsuperscript{141}

Shortly before the official exchange of diplomatic notes between Ottawa and Washington took place in May 1955, apprehensions about the American plans were


expressed in the House of Commons. While the need for the radar stations was not questioned, it remained a contentious issue as to who ought to be in charge of defending Canada’s Arctic borders. “I am in favor of Canadians defending Canada,” a Liberal MP exclaimed. Pressing his case, he argued that “we should take whatever steps are necessary to see that the major job of defending that North American frontier is discharged by Canadians and with Canadian principles and Canadian policies in mind.”

Later that year, Canada’s leading national magazine, Maclean’s, devoted its complete November issue to the North. Among travel reports on life with the First Nations and weather stations across the Arctic, the issue featured a gallery of paintings of the North, most of them by Group of Seven artists. In an editorial, Maclean’s charged Ottawa with not paying sufficient attention to Canada’s Arctic. Describing the creation of the Department for Northern Affairs and National Resources in 1953 as an act of correcting “the ills of absentee landlordism in the north,” the magazine characterized Canada’s Northern policy as a melange of “timidity, parsimony, indifference and sloth.” In fact, Canadians ought to be thankful to the United States for its leading role in constructing the DEW Line while Ottawa kept pretending “that it’s really our show again and they’re only participating as privileged guests.” The editorial concluded with a call to assert sovereignty through development and population of the Arctic. Otherwise, Canadians would “not be free of the danger of losing it to our enemies or to our friends.”

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In a May 1955 editorial, titled “Who Defends Canada?,” the *Globe and Mail*, Canada’s newspaper of record, formulated pointed questions aimed at drawing attention to Ottawa’s policy on staffing and operating the DEW Line. Although the *Globe and Mail* noted that the agreement struck between Ottawa and Washington allowed Canada to assume responsibility over and staff all DEW stations within “reasonable notice,” it inquired as to when the Government’s declared intention “to participate effectively in the operation and maintenance of the project” would materialize and what form it would take: “What is meant by ‘effectively’? More Canadians than Americans? Half and half of each? Or what? […] Some 3,000 Americans are now said to be based on Canada’s mainland. How many will be added to their number by the DEW line?”

Drawing attention to Ottawa’s Arctic defense policies, the newspaper thus posed key questions that were at the heart of the sovereignty debate, inquiring into the nature and extent of the Canadian presence along the DEW Line stations.

Several House of Commons debates put the Prime Minister under substantial pressure to clarify the Government’s position on the DEW Line issue during 1956. In March and April, Diefenbaker pressed St. Laurent about reports by the Yukon Board of Trade, which complained about American violations of Canadian law and air traffic regulations. Stressing that the DEW Line was not an exclusively Canadian defense installation and Americans therefore ought to carry a substantial burden of the construction, the Prime Minister tried to reassure Parliament, explaining that Canadian ownership was protected and symbolically represented through a provision that the Canadian flag would fly in the place of honor to the left of and at equal height with the

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Stars and Stripes at American-staffed radar stations.\textsuperscript{145} Again, Diefenbaker confronted St. Laurent, repeating his earlier inquiries into the measures that had been taken to protect Canadian jurisdiction. He further asked if St. Laurent could “say whether the action of the Governor General [Vincent Massey]\textsuperscript{146} in flying over that area and dropping his standard is a reassertion of Canada’s sovereignty and is designed as such.”\textsuperscript{147} The \textit{New York Times} had offered a similar interpretation of Massey’s visit.\textsuperscript{148} Although St. Laurent stressed in his response that he did not think that “any reassertion of Canada’s sovereignty was required,” he immediately added that the Governor General’s trip to the Arctic had served as a “demonstration to the whole world of the fact that that is territory within Canadian sovereignty.”\textsuperscript{149} St. Laurent had tried to calm concerns about the American presence in Canada’s northern lands and, even though he had declared that no reassertion of Canadian control was necessary, he did just that. In earlier debates, Pearson had responded in a similar fashion, providing categorical assurances that the DEW Line as a joint defense project would fall under the 1947 defense cooperation agreement that explicitly ensured that neither country’s sovereignty would be impaired.\textsuperscript{150}

In spite of Ottawa’s continuous reassurances of Canada’s sovereignty along its Northern frontier, the press remained adamant. In response to the Prime Minister’s

\textsuperscript{145} “PM to Inquire If DEW Line Hits Sovereignty” \textit{Globe and Mail}, March 24, 1956; “Canada’s Sovereignty In All Joint Projects Protected: St. Laurent” \textit{Globe and Mail}, April 7, 1956.

\textsuperscript{146} Governor General Vincent Massey had been familiar with Canada-U.S. defense projects. During World War II, he had visited the joint defense projects and criticized the little presence of Canadian personnel as well as U.S. neglect of Canadian laws and customs in his report. In the early 1950s, Massey headed a royal commission that investigated the impact of American culture on Canadian life, education, and the arts and sciences.


statements in the House of Commons, the *Globe and Mail* urged a stronger assertion of Canadian ownership. Entitled “Sovereignty Is Fragile,” an April 1956 editorial argued that Ottawa had to make it unequivocally clear that the Government must not compromise Canada’s sovereignty. The *Globe and Mail* urged it to assert its sovereignty boldly in order to avoid future conflicts or misunderstandings:

Sovereignty, in a word, becomes increasingly fragile when two nations are exerting their major efforts toward mutual benefit from natural resources belonging to one of them. Later trouble will be avoided if an outright assertion of undisputed sovereignty is made the basis of such agreements. […] Sovereignty has no limited or partial existence. It exists absolutely, in respect of any specific problem at issue, or it doesn’t exist at all.151

Such sustained pressure, giving voice to sovereignty concerns and criticizing Ottawa’s reluctance to participate in the DEW Line’s construction and operation, reverberated in Parliament. Referring to newspaper articles, MP Douglass S. Harkness sharply attacked the Government for the lack of Canadian personnel along the DEW Line station, inquiring about “the extent to which our control of that area still remains in our hands [and] what steps should be taken […] to ensure that Canadian control of that area continues, is not further impaired and, as a matter of fact, is restored.”152 Directly addressing Harkness’ charges, Minister for Northern Affairs and National Resources Jean Lesage pointedly responded:

There is no doubt that Canadian sovereignty and control are recognized all along the line. […] Nothing exists which one could call United States control in the north. It is Canadian control. The R.C.M.P. [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] are constantly touring the line looking after order, peace and good behaviour on the part of everyone concerned. It is clear that Canadian law is applied and enforced, and that the control is in the hands of Canadians.153

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Despite Lesage’s reassertions, media reports painted a different picture. Trevor Lloyd commented that “Coca-Cola now flows as freely in the Arctic as ice water” when he discussed recently released journalistic reports about American influence on the regional development in the Canadian north.\footnote{154} Already in May 1955, G. V. Ferguson, the editor of the Montreal Gazette, had written an opinion piece, published in the Washington Post, titled “The DEW Line is ‘Too American’.” Ferguson argued that even though Canadians were content that the Pinetree network and the Mid-Canada Line had been constructed and were operated with substantial Canadian participation or as an exclusive Canadian project, respectively, the presence of large American military personnel instead of Canadian troops along the DEW Line resulted in strengthened public perceptions “that sovereignty assume[d] a shadowy quality.”\footnote{155} Echoing Pearson’s internal suggestion to reconsider Canada’s international commitments, Ferguson questioned Ottawa’s policies to station Canadian troops in Europe while having to rely on foreign powers to protect its North American borders.\footnote{156}

In a similar vein, MP Harkness cited extensively from a Maclean’s report about the DEW stations to suggest that the government’s assertions about Canadian sovereignty amounted to hardly more than a series of empty public reassurances:

> The suggestion that Canada is only the nominal ruler of this important part of Canada and that the United States is the real ruler is not taken seriously anywhere except on the DEW line itself. There, the truth is palpable and inescapable. […] The most experienced and responsible Canadian I met in the north was a man I would rather not identify more closely than that. I asked him bluntly: ‘Do you and your friends resent the presence of the Americans here?’ ‘No,’ he said sadly. ‘It is the other way round. They resent our presence here.’\footnote{157}
R. A. J. Phillips, a civil servant in the Privy Council Office and External Affairs Department who held the Arctic Sovereignty portfolio during the 1950s, wrapped his criticism of Canada’s lack of attention towards Arctic development in cultural terms, drawing on ideas of the North as a key feature of the Canadian experience. In a 1956 article in the *Canadian Forum* he employed frontier imaginary writing that

> a more likely signpost to the north of another generation is the growing frontier days of the Canadian west. The same wealth of resources, the same initiative, the same people will be making it. The face of the future north may not look much like the west – ever – but as in the west we shall be claiming our own heritage. We shall, too, be pushing to another sea: to the sea we share with the Russians.

Phillips remained a vocal advocate of Northern development and an internal skeptic of Ottawa’s reluctance to provide for Arctic projects. Beyond the material gains, however, Phillips continued to conceive of the North as a symbolically significant space. His calls for more funds and Canadian activity in the Arctic closely coalesced around the idea of the North’s identity-shaping potential: “Psychologically, the opening of the North through 4,000 miles from our southern border is more likely than any single conscious scheme to develop a sense of national entity and national purpose.”

The Canadian North also came to play a central role in John Diefenbaker’s campaign rhetoric in early 1957, when he distanced himself from the incumbent St. Laurent government’s Arctic policy. At his campaign kick-off in Winnipeg, Diefenbaker lambasted Ottawa for ignoring Canada’s Arctic. He tapped extensively into the Canadian cultural and historical repertoire, laying out his “Northern Vision”: “We are fulfilling the


160 “Canada Urged to Aid Labor In Far North” *Globe and Mail*, August 11, 1956.
vision and the dream of Canada’s first prime minister – Sir John A. Macdonald. But Macdonald saw Canada from East to West. I see a new Canada. A CANADA OF THE NORTH!161 Again, the North assumed the role of a transformative force, reshaping a Canada that draws upon a hybrid construct comprised of a founding figure fused with the character-molding and -enhancing features of the Arctic.

After the St. Laurent government had lost the 1957 election, Lester Pearson, now in his capacity as Opposition Leader, continued as a vocal critic of an exclusively American-run DEW Line. He advocated that Canada needed to assume responsibility over the radar stations as a measure of demonstrating sovereignty and ownership in the Arctic. Against the backdrop of a Parliamentary debate about complaints that Canadians would need to request permission from Washington in order to visit the DEW Line sites,162 Pearson urged that Ottawa “should try at every possible opportunity to show that this is our land under Canadian law and under Canadian jurisdiction.” In a similar vein, he pointed out that with respect to Northern development, resource exploitation, and potential claims by the United States or Russia, it was critical for Canada to assert its ownership of its part of the Arctic. Pearson demanded that Canada should “take over [the DEW Line stations] insofar as they continue to be useful at the earliest possible moment and put them under Canadian control.”163 Consistent with his position when he was Secretary of State, Pearson now was able to press for Canadian involvement in, if not complete operation of, the DEW Line in his new and less restrained role as Opposition

161 Original emphasis, John Diefenbaker quoted in Grace, Canada and the Idea of North, 9.
162 Northern Affairs and National Resources Minister Alvin Hamilton replied to the reports with indignation, explaining that he felt “ashamed of the fact that through circumstances beyond the power of almost anyone here we have had to share responsibilities, in fact, give all responsibility for the defense of our northern area to a friendly power” (“U.S. Polar-Curtain Shames Minister” Globe and Mail, August 15, 1958).
Leader. A Gallup Canada poll in early 1959 further bolstered Pearson’s position. Asked whether the DEW Line should have been developed and paid for by Canada, the United States, or by both countries together, an overwhelming majority of 71.5% favored a joint project. Canadians thus clearly preferred participation and rejected Ottawa’s decision to have the United States operate the radar line exclusively.

The perception that Canada had maneuvered itself into a position of being dominated by the United States’ substantive military forces on the DEW Line stations was not merely reflected in Canadian newspapers or magazines but was also recognized south of the border. Whereas some articles considered reports about U.S. dominance of the Canadian Arctic exaggerated, others attributed more weight to public perceptions. Marquis Childs of the Washington Post acknowledged sentiments that “the United States takes Canada for granted as though it were just a convenient territory like Alaska,” ignoring Canada’s “new sense of nationhood.” Recognizing Canadian resentment against a paternal posture by Washington, Childs called attention to the contentious DEW Line issue and reminded his readership that the intimate relationship between both countries needed sensitivity. “To fail to realize this,” Childs explained, “is to imperil the partnership with all that it signifies, not only for the two nations but for the Western alliance.”

As the aforementioned examples demonstrate, after Canada and the United States had agreed upon the terms and conditions of the construction in November 1954 and

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167 Ibid.
Ottawa eventually signalized in the summer of 1955 that it was not yet prepared to participate in the operation of the DEW Line, a variety of incidents, Parliamentary debates, and public reports pressured the Canadian government to address fears and concerns that *de facto* Canadian jurisdiction and sovereignty as well as the conditions of the DEW Line agreement were not being effectively observed. Whereas specific incidents concerning the construction and transportation phase caused Ottawa to bring its complaints to the attention of the U.S. State Department as it had been the case in early 1956, debates in the House of Commons provided a forum for expression of public fears about infringements upon Canada’s control of its Arctic territories. In doing so, many MPs relied upon newspaper articles and magazine reports as their source of information in these discussions, as the DEW Line project remained a classified undertaking. Journalists, therefore, functioned as a crucial element in the public debate importantly shaping perceptions of how the American presence influenced the Canadian north.

Despite these calls for Canadian participation, Ottawa neglected such sentiments and responded with categorical assurances that sovereignty was at no point threatened. The United States accepted Canadian control over its territory, Ottawa insisted, and both countries operated under the 1947 defense cooperation agreement. In fact, in January 1957, Ottawa decided even further to postpone potential Canadian participation in the operation of the DEW Line for another three years. Pointing towards its contributions in the construction and operation of the Pinetree network and the Mid-Canada Line, Ottawa stated that “it does not appear feasible for Canada to assume additional responsibility on the DEW Line in the 1960-63 period.”

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Affairs hesitated to approve this step, highlighting the political implications of not participating, while Defense carried the day as it stressed the Canadian forces’ existing commitments in Canada and overseas in addition to potential future requests by the United States. Ironically, with the emergence of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) in the late 1950s and the technological developments that allowed these missiles to be installed in submarines (Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles), the DEW Line proved obsolete almost immediately after it became operational. As it had not been designed to detect or track such ICBMs or SLBMs, the DEW Line radar chain had been overtaken by the technological arms race and, by the end of the 1950s, formed an insufficient deterrent in the Cold War struggle.

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169 Honderich, *Arctic Imperative: Is Canada Losing the North?*, 104.
V. CONCLUSION

Together with the continental integration of the Canadian and American air defense command structures into the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) at the end of the decade, the establishment of the DEW Line in the Canadian Arctic formed the predominant North American defense project between Canada and the United States during the 1950s. Throughout the course of the DEW Line negotiations between Ottawa and Washington, the issue of ensuring Canada’s sovereignty amidst a large American presence in the sparsely populated and developed Canadian Arctic constituted the central concern for Canadians.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the final agreement and the internal and public debate essentially revolved around the issues of how Canada would ensure advance consultations with the United States, maintain Canadian law and jurisdiction along the radar stations, and questions of Canadian participation in the form of personnel as a measure of exercising sovereignty. These issues formed the core of the 1953 agreement on Project Counterchange, resulting in a comprehensive catalog of terms and conditions aimed at minimizing the impact of the American presence and establishing the bilateral Military Study Group (MSG). The subsequent agreements on the construction of the DEW Line in November 1954 and the concomitant debate about Canadian participation in public and in Parliament further reflected the importance of the sovereignty question. Ottawa’s decisions to have the United States construct and operate the radar chain exclusively, subsequent reports about unauthorized construction incidents, and redrafted
transportation schemes in conjunction with the lack of a Canadian presence further increased concerns and apprehensions about potential infringements of Canada’s *de facto* control of its northern lands.

Sovereignty concerns received further importance as the Canadian Arctic assumed a central role in the self-portrayal and self-conception of Canadians. Various cultural agents, ranging from writers, painters, playwrights, or radio producers, employed Northern themes in an effort to construct and interpret a genuinely Canadian art and experience. Paintings by the Group of Seven, radio and television productions, and movies shaped the discourses of the North and provided meaning-giving and stabilizing cultural narratives. Against the backdrop of Canada’s intensified quest for a national identity following World War II and government-led efforts to stimulate Canadian culture during the 1950s, these Northern narratives became cornerstones in the cultural construction of a Canadian national identity. The North provided a distinct set of character-molding features and experiences shared by all Canadians, delimiting them from the American experience. As a consequence, the Canadian Arctic assumed meaning and significance beyond the political-military realm. As shown, conceptions of the North not only permeated the thinking of high-level officials in Ottawa’s External Affairs department such as St. Laurent, Pearson, and Diefenbaker, but also the rationale of second-tier civil servants such as R. A. J. Phillips and Escott Reid. Whereas cultural conceptions of the Canadian North influenced foreign policy decision-makers and informed their more cautious approach towards the DEW Line stations—External Affairs proved to be most sensitive to and articulate of such concerns—these conceptions ultimately played a subordinate role in the DEW Line negotiations.
In light of Canada’s ambiguous historical relationship with the United States but more importantly with respect to its more recent mixed experiences in continental defense cooperation during World War II, Ottawa’s decision to ignore concerns about the implications of a substantial U.S. presence in the north was remarkable. Ottawa’s mixed experience of joint military projects in the Canadian North during the war formed the backdrop against which the DEW Line requests were evaluated. In fact, the 1947 postwar defense cooperation agreement already contained explicit assurances for Canadians regarding fears of sovereignty infringements. In consequence, historically-seated sovereignty concerns importantly informed Ottawa’s course of action in the DEW Line negotiations with Washington.

In order to come to an understanding of Ottawa’s position towards Washington in light of the sovereignty debate, it is essential to view its decisions within the broader framework of the Canada-U.S. relationship. The tension between interdependence and asymmetry and a resulting sense of ambiguity about entering into an intimate cooperation scheme with the United States played an important role in Ottawa’s deliberation process. Canada shared the United States’ Cold War threat assessment and accepted the ensuing strategic-defense responsibilities in order to contribute its share to the continental defense architecture. The asymmetrical nature of the relationship with Washington, however, added a crucial political element to the equation. Ottawa’s dependence upon the United States in defense matters irked Canadians’ sense of their country’s national maturity, having finally shed the ties of British colonialism. Yet it was agreed that a rejection of U.S. air defense plans that Washington deemed vital for its national security was simply not a viable option. This understanding had been repeatedly articulated in the Defense as
well as the External Affairs departments. In contrast to Defense Ministers Claxton and Campney, however, it was Secretary of State Pearson who was most sensitive to concerns and resentments that public reports about an overwhelmingly American presence along the DEW Line might stir up. Whereas the United States and, most prominently, the Canadian Department of National Defense conceived of the establishment of the radar chain along the Canadian Arctic in terms of Cold War political and military strategy, the DEW Line furthermore embodied dimensions sensitive to issues of Canada’s state of national maturity, independence, and cultural autonomy. In addition to the political-strategic dimension, External Affairs, the Prime Minister, the Opposition, and Canadian media as well as cultural agents therefore viewed the construction of the DEW Line in light of its ‘psychological-cultural’ implications.

It is this melange of shared interests, an asymmetrical relationship, and a Canadian wariness about a large U.S. presence in the Canadian Arctic that had the civil leadership in Ottawa caught in an ambiguous position. As seen throughout the negotiations and establishment of the DEW Line, this dimension is most importantly characterized by a ‘commitment-capability gap’. While government ministers in Parliament, conscious of Canadian nationalist sentiments, continuously reaffirmed that measures were taken to ensure that Canadian sovereignty along the DEW Line stations was exercised and observed, their internal discussions indicate that they were aware of Canada’s limited resources necessary credibly to address internal and public concerns about an increasing U.S. penetration of Canada. Ottawa’s lacking capability to provide for the defense of its northern border fundamentally conflicted with the country’s self-conception as an independent and internationally potent nation. As a result, St. Laurent,
Pearson, and Lesage found themselves trapped, on the one hand, between their commitment to protect Canadian sovereignty and to play to nationalist feelings and, on the other, an inability to meet the financial and military demands those commitments entailed.

The Canadian debate about the establishment of the DEW Line and Ottawa’s eventual decisions to have the radar chain constructed and operated exclusively by the United States thus was importantly defined by the two countries’ intimate relationship, a link that was fundamentally shaped by a tension between an increasing interdependence and a stark asymmetry. The resulting ambiguity in Ottawa, which shared the United States’ security concerns but simultaneously took an apprehensive stand with respect to a large American presence along Canada’s Arctic borders, crucially informed the sovereignty debates within the government and was reflected in the formalized agreements between Ottawa and Washington. The concomitant ‘commitment-capability gap’, which characterized Ottawa’s position, was further epitomized by internal tensions between the Defense and External Affairs departments. The sovereignty debate surrounding the DEW Line negotiations during the 1950s thus can be attributed to an interplay between Cold War defense imperatives, the unequal nature of Canada-U.S. relations, and Canadians’ sensibility toward this asymmetry. These elements were further reinforced by a mixed record of Arctic defense cooperation during World War II and Canada’s as well as the United States’ newly obtained roles in the postwar era.

The DEW Line quickly became ineffective as the Cold War arms race fueled rapid technological advancements. The issue of Canada’s sovereignty throughout the Arctic region in the face of the United States’ stepped up defense efforts nonetheless
remained a contentious topic. With the crossing of the Arctic waters by the American tanker Manhattan in 1969, the debate about the extent to which Canada exercised its sovereignty resurfaced and shifted from the land-focused discussions during the establishment of the DEW Line to the sea, in other words, to the Northwest Passage.
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