

The Twisted Path
Canadian Defence Policy in an Age of Uncertainty and Growth

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Prologue

Canada's history forged our nation into what it is and represents today. We are an open society, with moral values, and for some, with a unique Canadian identity, recognized within the global community. The path to getting here has not been an easy one but was a twisted path in which Canadian Defence Policy and influence evolved through an age of uncertainty and growth.

Here we are in the 21st century though, at a juncture where Canada as a nation, finds its influence or importance not easily recognized. That is because we have disregarded our influence and importance that rests in our history. Our participation and sacrifices in the world, have made us what we are today, a middle power. This is something that is lost in the faulty drive to recognize Canada as a post national state.

It is in the thesis of this proposal that states; Canada has no identity, no core values, which should make us stand up and take notice. It is a statement that derides our accomplishments and prior sacrifices in which there is an allusion that we have no value. Sadly, that statement neglects our varied and interesting history, so that it must either be overlooked or forgotten today.

The history taught in my youth was one of the perspective of the birth of a nation, of significant dates, and of distinguished personages. It was important but it didn't explain how we came to be in the 20th century. Our early history was caught in the dynamic of British colonialism and its influence on Canadian life and politics. Our view of the world was Euro-centric, and one based on British tradition and political influence. It was one that most Canadians in the day were proud of. But time also demanded change as we progressed and matured as a sovereign nation.

Changed would follow the Great War (1914-1918). Canada and the British Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, India, amongst others, made significant contributions and sacrifices towards the cause. Those could nor would not go unnoticed. The initial recognition and change came with the Paris peace talks of 1919 leading to the Treaty of Versailles. It was through these talks that Canada, and the other Dominions, were given a seat at the table, beginning recognition as independent nations by the global community.

The paths from the conference eventually led to the Westminster Act of 1931 in which the Dominions were granted "total" sovereignty over their affairs. That was neither easy nor smooth as well. The ties that bound us all to Great Britain were often held reluctantly, loosened, or were sometimes held in check preventing progress. And progress was slow. That too made the path along the way a twisted course to independence and sovereignty in 1931.

Taking a twisted path held both opportunity and consequences that greatly challenged us in getting there. These channelled our ideals and identities as sovereign nations. The twisted paths taken, made us look inward, seeking ways and means to express our own ideals. This path laid the way to developing our own policies and in seeking the diplomatic ties that bolstered our national interest and outlook. It was a learning experience. Not all our efforts were appreciated or successful. There were both good times and hard times along the way as well.

A period of peace followed the Great War, but it didn't necessarily bring peace or prosperity for all in Canada. There was much social discord to resolve both at home and abroad. Canada was expected to play a role and take its place. It all came to a head in 1929 with the Great Depression.

The entire world economic system collapsed, and Canada and the world were expected to pick up the pieces. It was in this milieu in which Canada had to develop and sustain its own foreign and defence policies. One lesson from the Great War was you had to belong to the heavy wallet brigade as a sovereign nation if anyone were to take notice. But a heavy wallet was sadly lacking for Canada who now was required to fund at least part of its own defence.

It was something that Canada never had to contend with before on any great scale. The best that could be done was to develop policies that limit liabilities with little to no commitments that were affordable. It became a guiding principle from this point on. It continued throughout the Second World War and beyond to today. "Limiting liabilities" and "no commitments," would have consequences for Canada and its relations in the world, both good and bad.

What follows here then, some of the "Coles Notes" or the "Canadian Policy Notes for Dummies" for the twisted path taken. These notes are not complete. They are a condensed sketch of our history through the 20th century. There is much more to it, but they are designed to give the reader some insight to the problems, the outcomes, and consequences through an age of uncertainty and growth that arose in a nutshell. Any errors or omission are mine for which I both apologize and challenge you in advance, to read our history!

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March 17, 2024

A Prelude to War....

The Great War, a war to end all wars, is often viewed by some as merely the interlude between conflicts. For many, the seeds of the Second World War and subsequent conflicts were sown by the Peace Treaty of Versailles of 1919. Much has been written on that subject.

The often cited causes for the Second World War were debilitating collection of damaging reparations a forced sense of national guilt, and ensuing economic hardships that were perceived unfairly thrust upon the average German. This resulted in both depression and bitterness of German citizenry at the time leading to thoughts of avenging this injustice in future.¹ But the Great War affected us all still to this day. Moreover, it unsettled the balance of power and social order both militarily and economically in its aftermath.

A disruption of the social order began with it. Social discord preceded the Great War but its was finally fomented by the Russian revolution of 1917. That revolution precipitated the new kind of social crisis, "Bolshevism" in which a disaffected public desired the replacement of imperialism in Russia. Bolshevism evoked horror and loathing among the bourgeois of all countries who saw it as a threat to the common good.²

Bolshevism preached the gospel of the collapse of capitalism. It was an essential doctrine that was the basis for the stepping stone of social change and revolution. It was greatly assisted by the later collapse of the economic order in 1929. This heralded further demand for change of the social order. As this economic crisis deepened, many governments struggled against the potential for revolution.³

The fight against social revolution required economic might to invest in alternate change. But much economic might was dissipated in the Great War leaving many world powers economically bereft of funds. Many great powers lay on the verge of bankruptcy. Indeed, the international economic order was thus threatened when both Britain and Germany were equally on the brink of national bankruptcy in 1931.

It was no better in North America. The United States was likewise threatened because it was the world banker holding many loans that were posed to become paper dust. US politicians too thought their Republic was close to revolution by 1932.⁴ Canada was no less affected and also impacted.

These are worth considering in some depth. They are the bed upon which Canadian Defence and Foreign policy were made. It was a long, winding, and rocky path to which the Canadian

¹ Bell Jason. 2023. *Cracking The Nazi Code – The Untold Story Of Canada's Greatest Spy*. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower 22 Adelaide Street West, 41st Floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5H 4E3, 59

² Overy, Richard and Andrew Wheatcroft. 1989. *The Road To War*. Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, Toronto, Canada Toronto, Canada , M3B 2T6, 304

³ Overy and Wheatcroft 1989, 305

⁴ Overy and Wheatcroft 1989, 305

government had to react and adjust. It was a path in which Canada was not only learning but earning its way from which over the long term some possible lessons may have presented themselves. Particularly for a small country such as Canada, how much to do prepare for, what can be anticipated, and what is the minimal effort required to meet developing and changing world circumstances without upsetting the apple cart or bankrupting the country? The answers lie perhaps in the outcomes of influence and preparations that are not only desired by its citizens but also by its partners from time to time.

In the decades following the Great War there came political chaos and internal strife throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The war also left in its wake, a lasting hangover of grief and anger. There were high hopes for a return to normalcy in the peace that followed. It was to be a slow process marked by many grievances yet to be resolved.

Canadian politics was gravely fractured by the Conscription Crisis during the Great War. Into the mix came an aggressive farmer's movement demanding change and opportunity. Labour was disaffected and in many cases tried to seize the economy with General Strikes often marked by violence. The Winnipeg General Strike of May- June 1919 is such an example that brought the country to the brink of class warfare.

Disaffection was widespread and also found in Cape Breton that became a breeding ground for political discord and disaffection throughout the 1920s. There was desire to improve miners' living standards that was resisted by coalmine owners. In Cape Breton, this general unrest resulted in labour wars lasting four years alone. There was little doubt in this case that this was about class warfare. The unrest often descended into clashes and violence often resolved by military force with on one occasion, marked by death.⁵

The roaring 20s was a rather muted economic affair in Canada. The economy was burdened by stifling inflation. There was a need to finance Canada's long term war debt that placed a continuing burden on taxpayers and the economy. But social change was occurring in Canada. The succession within the Liberal party saw Mackenzie King at its head. Women voters were enfranchised during the war, but their voice played no significant role for change as yet. Economically two thirds of Canada's railroads went bankrupt. The government nationalized them further creating political upheaval and discord. And then there was a Pandemic of the Spanish flu that greatly impacted health but also in the recovery of the economy. The seeds of chaos and discord had been planted and fed by both greed and a need for revenge.⁶

The financial terms of the Versailles Treaty alone were malignant, leading to great distress. To some, the economic clauses imposed on Germany were both vindictive and futile. The disparity in the economic burden in the payment of these reparations was likely a probable cause for the

⁵ Frank, David. "Cape Breton Strikes 1920s". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 23 January 2014, *Historica Canada*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/cape-breton-strikes-1920s. Accessed 15 June 2023.

⁶ Bliss, Michael. 2008. "After 1918: From Chaos to Mackenzie King!" *Canada's History*. Posted October 1, 2008 . Accessed: 14 Jun 2023

[After 1918: From Chaos to Mackenzie King! - Canada's History \(canadashistory.ca\)](http://canadashistory.ca)

Second World War.⁷ The Great War was a war of the people, sustained by propaganda in which scores of millions demanded retribution be exacted to the fullest.⁸ This was the wave of sentiment that politicians could neither fight nor defend given the premises of the jingoistic propaganda war they used to sustain support throughout the war.

Public support for the war was bought on two fronts; the need to support the soldiers in the field and in the resources required to do so. The effort required great sacrifices of its citizens. That all involved investment and huge borrowing to do so. The war cost Canada alone one billion six hundred thousand dollars while Britain 35.3 billion. For Germany amongst the belligerents their debt was \$37.7 billion alone.⁹ These costs were supported by loans that had to be repaid and the pressure was on to do so that planted the seeds for great inflationary pressures and the eventual collapse of many countries' economies. It all led to the climax in the collapse of the stock market in speculation of stocks of 1929 leading to the Great Depression.

The financial clauses of the Treaty of Versailles were only superficially enforced immediately following its signing. Although about the victorious Powers appropriated one thousand million pounds of German assets, this was later offset by loans of one thousand five hundred million pounds in which Germany was able to rebuild its economy. Germany paid what it was able to pay.¹⁰

Germany saw its financial position weakened though because of the demand for pernicious reparation payments from 1919 to 1923. The mark rapidly collapsed, and inflation was rampant seeing its currency devalued and worthless.¹¹ This was further disrupted between 1926 -1929 when the United States pressured all its debtors for repayment of their debt installments due them from their war loans. Thus, US pressure had a domino effect in the world financial system, as the call for the sundry repayment of loans was passed from one debtor to the others with Germany at the bottom of the totem.¹²

Some relief was sought by Churchill who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1922 who sought the cancellation of war debts. But his suggestion was rejected out of hand by the United States who were owed overall \$10 billion dollars of which Britain was responsible for \$4 billion. Notably Britain was owed \$7 billion from Russia.¹³

Britain tried to ease the financial burden to all in face of the United States pressure on August 1, 1922. It was observed that in the Balfour Note that Great Britain would collect no more from her debtors, Ally, or former enemy, that the United States collected from her.¹⁴ It was a worthy

⁷ Churchill Winston, S. 1948. *The Gathering Storm*. HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY BOSTON The Riverside Press Cambridge, 7

⁸ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 4

⁹ Simkin, John. 1997-2020. "Financial Cost of the First World War" . Accessed 8 Jun 2023

[Financial Cost of the First World War \(spartacus-educational.com\)](https://www.spartacus-educational.com/1wwcost.htm)

¹⁰ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 9

¹¹ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 9

¹² Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 12

¹³ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 23

¹⁴ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 23

effort but the reality facing Britain came in December of 1922. A British delegation visited Washington; and in the end agreed to pay the whole of her war debt to the United States albeit at a reduced rate of interest from five to three and one-half per cent. More importantly this agreement was irrespective of receipts from Britain's debtors.¹⁵

Britain and the world's task in repaying the United States, who prospered, who also increased US trade tariffs, made repayments more difficult. Similar terms were offered to all. But in the end the terms that favoured the United States saw them all put the screws on Germany in the issue of its reparation payments. In effect Germany became the first source for all to meet these payments.¹⁶ It was the fuel for the roaring twenties for the United States that all came crashing down in 1929.

The fuel on the fire was speculation and inflation. It was the end of the third quarter of that year when extraordinary optimism, which sustained an orgy of speculation, saw the New York Stock Exchange collapse in October. With the collapse came a violent tempest that swept over Wall Street. Demands came to pay for stocks bought on margins. The intervention of the most powerful agencies failed to stem the tide of panic sales. A group of leading banks pooled resources to try and maintain and stabilize the market. It all failed.

Wealth that so swiftly gathered in paper values of prior years suddenly vanished. The prosperity of millions of Americans that had grown on a gigantic structure of inflated credit, now suddenly vanished overnight.¹⁷ The ramifications were felt worldwide. The financial system and eventual crisis could have just as easily been a cause of the repeat of the Great War. War could easily fester in this atmosphere that lacked compassion or understanding of the need to nurture a solid rebuilding of economies. leading to peaceful coexistence of former belligerents. All it did was foster hate, mistrust, and the need for revenge to restore a former sense of purpose and glory in the most insidious way, the need for world conquest.

This threat was recognized that it had to be dealt with throughout the 1930s. The threat was found in growing militarism and belligerence of many nations. The solution for some saw economic nationalism as its salvation. Self interest became the order of the day that saw economic considerations openly passed into foreign policy. This sharpened international rivalry that ironically saw the way forward for economic recovery in 1930s that was fuelled by high levels of rearmament.¹⁸ Various other prescriptions for change were also suggested; ranging from moral rearmament, racial hygiene, corporative politics, to dictatorship. But the most powerful remedy was sought in the pursuit of a New Order that involved, a restructuring of the world system.¹⁹ It was a serious threat for European powers who by the 1930s found it impossible to ignore the fact that the balance of world power was now very different.

Britain and France perceived the old order increasingly passing away into obscurity and irrelevance. Their influence gradually weakened as the United States power and influence

¹⁵ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 24-25

¹⁶ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 24-25

¹⁷ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 34

¹⁸ Overy and Wheatcroft 1989, 305

¹⁹ Overy and Wheatcroft 1989, 306

increasingly rose. On the horizon and nipping at their heels were the rise of Japan and an independent China on the other hand. Then they faced the sheer economic might of the United States to whom they were indebted. Finally, the Soviet state was rapidly overtaking the imperial powers in industrial might and military capability.²⁰

But the significant factor was Germany. It was left territorially intact following the Treaty of Versailles. Germany's male population was strong whose growth would see it outstrip the French who were bled dry during the Great War. Although both sides suffered great casualties, Germany had the greater surviving male population. France's population was less than two-thirds that of Germany. Also, French population growth was stagnant, while Germany's grew. It was estimated at one point that within a decade the age of men of military age would be in Germany's favour at a rate of two to one.²¹ Significantly Germany was disaffected by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles that they viewed both as unjust and unfair. This disaffection was also felt by other powers, notably Japan. The seeds of global discord had been sown only to bloom into the Second World War.

Into this milieu, William Lyon MacKenzie King was returned as Canada's Prime Minister in 1935. King was a proponent of appeasement since the Imperial Conference of 1937. But by the late summer of 1939, Canada saw a nationalist revival in Britain and France that began to affect both Canada's populations. With that came a rise in enthusiasm to defend democracy against fascism and aggression. This new attitude replaced a widespread isolationism.²²

War finally came in 1939 that found the British Empire fighting to preserve itself that some saw was the final stages of disintegration. Ironically, the great depression of 1929 gave the imperial structure a final lease of life as Britain fell back on the economic support of its Empire. But its strategic problems could not be easily resolved, nor could they build back better. All this left Britain lacking the means and perhaps the willingness, to play the imperial role in the same scale as she had before 1900. Regardless of Britain's relative decline, her prestige and residual strength still made her a desired friend and ally. Britain remained a substantial foe.²³

Canada came to play a leading role in lending Britain assistance throughout the Second World War. All that preceded this event was but a prelude and background to Canada's developing role. This prelude set the ground rules for the various courses of action considered or taken. It was a long, winding, and rocky path. The Canadian government reacted and adjusted its policy to changing circumstances. The government moved in policy direction as it learned along the way. Its courses of action were often tempered in tone of "limited liability or no commitments." Canada was evolving as sovereign nation while attempting to meet the challenges of national and international interests along the way that became a very fine line to tread.

²⁰ Overy and Wheatcroft 1989, 307

²¹ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 5-7

²² Overy and Wheatcroft 1989, 102

²³ Overy and Wheatcroft 1989, 103

Chapter 1 – The Influence of a Nation’s History

Colonel C.P. Stacey – The Stalwart of Canadian History as an influence

The late Colonel C.P. Stacey wrote extensively on Canadian history. A prolific writer, Stacey was often considered the Dean of Canadian history. Stacey was instrumental to documenting Canada’s participation and role in the higher direction of the Second World War in depth. His view of that history was deeply influenced by a personal connection in his attachment to Canadian Military Headquarters during the Second World War.

Stacey was pulled from academia from the history department at Princeton University, and appointed a major in the Canadian Army to be its official historian. This appointment came at the very outset and first days of the war as Stacey arrived in London. He was in effect, “the man on the spot.” It was from this moment on that Stacey chronicled the Canadian Army’s participation throughout the Second World War. His invaluable reports are still found in the archives of the Director of History and Heritage to this day.

Stacey wrote extensively and guided much of the post war research on Canada’s role because of his wealth of experience as well as his first hand knowledge as the official historian in that conflict. He was the author of *Arms, Men And Governments -The War Policies Of Canada 1939 – 1945*. His treatise documents, not only the experience, but also the policies impacting and affecting all of Canadian Forces at the time. It is the penultimate document that has been widely referred to by this author and others.

Stacey warned in “*Arms, Men And Governments*” of future government policies after 1970. In that warning he cites the potential consequences of prospective policies and the follow-on impacts to the Canadian Forces and its personnel. Stacey became concerned with the welfare, management, control as well as responsibility for Canadian Forces in future conflict and stated (those):

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“that may be faced with similar problems would do well to remember that there is a definite correlation between the concentration of its forces and the degree of national control which it can hope to exercise over them” bears serious consideration.”²⁴

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Truer words have never been spoken. So why should this subject be investigated if Stacey had already done so and warned us all too well in *Arms, Men And Governments*? History is best not

²⁴ Canada, Minister of National Defence, *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS -THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA 1939 – 1945*, C. P. STACEY, S.M., O.B.E., C.D., A.M., Ph.D., D.Litt., LL.D., F.R.S.C. ,Colonel (Retired), Canadian Army, Late Director Historical Section, General Staff, Professor of History, University of Toronto, The Queen's Printer for Canada Ottawa, 1970, 202

forgotten, and sadly it is either being forgotten or ignored by Canada in the 21st century. It is best reviewed and perhaps restated and brought to the fore for the current generation of Canadians. This generation has been sublimely thrust into the realm of Canada as the first post-national state, in which Canada has no true core identity, no true Canadian values, and its past sacrifices, no worth. These are falsehoods threatening national sovereignty, peace, and freedom.²⁵

Stacey's work is an introspection and valued foundation for further review and study that juxtaposes the past as prologue to the needs of the future. New information should be incorporated as its determined to ascertain its relevance to Canadians historically and its relevance to current times. Sometimes the past is indeed prologue to the future through the paths already taken. An interest and introspection may be useful in determining the deviations from that path to ascertain the divergent impacts to both citizens and military professionals.²⁶

Sun Tzu in his penultimate thesis, "The Art of War," stated that the duty of a nation was to overcome an enemy through wisdom and not by force alone. Beyond that he believed war as a struggle to be beyond a mere competition of wills and interests, but war was also a comprehensive conflict in which nations must embrace politics, economics, military force, and diplomacy before a conflict was precipitated.

Sun Tzu saw war as an amalgam of extreme prudence, earnestness, and seriousness. War in Sun Tzu opinion was a matter of either vital to survival or to ruin. It was not to be conducted willy nilly. In his view war must be studied thoroughly. It was notable then that Sun Tzu gave due consideration to economics as a concern. There was much wisdom in this ancient Chinese philosopher's thesis that warrants as much consideration now.²⁷

In "Arms, Men And Governments" Stacey refers time and again to Mackenzie King's intransigence concerning military spending and defence policy that lay in the Canadian amalgam of extreme prudence, earnestness, and seriousness. Mackenzie King's underlying themes of "limited liability" or "no commitments" were the foundation of his amalgam. These were the guiding principles that King adhered to, and that significantly impacted the ongoing development of his government's Canadian Defence Policy throughout the war.

Significantly too perhaps, were King's thoughts and perambulations on domestic and international matters preceding the Second World War. King was likely influenced by his own political ups and downs and those of his predecessors in the potential political outcomes that flowed from the development and influence on following policies. No man is an island after all. But King's "limited liability" or "no commitments" have also become a constant and benchmark in the determination of Canadian Defence Policy as well.

But looking back upon Stacey's warning, perhaps his view is best explained by what he observed concerning the construct of the Combined Chiefs of Staff between the US and UK, and Canada's place therein, in the broad management of the war. It developed and evolved from 1942 to 1945.

²⁵ Malcolm, Candice . 2016. "Trudeau says Canada has no 'core identity'". Toronto Sun , Sep 14, 2016

Source: [Trudeau says Canada has no 'core identity' | Toronto Sun](#) Accessed: 26 May 2023

²⁶ Murray, Williamson, and Richard Hart Sinnreich. 2006. *The Past as Prologue – The Importance of History to the Military Profession*. Cambridge University Press. 40 West 20th Steet, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

²⁷ Shihing, Yuan and AL Duyvendak (translators).1998. *Sun Tzu - The Art of War & The Book of Lord Shang* . Wordsworth Classics Of World Literature, Cumberland House, Crib Street, Ware, Hertfordshire s61 2 981, 63

The long and short of it was, Canada was never accorded a place within this organization despite its tremendous investment in treasure and personnel over the course of the war.

Canada was on the outside of the circles of power for various reasons. There may have been reasons for that, but a large part may have stemmed from King regarding higher state of affairs. He was reluctant to participate in them, always being half in or half out. King's concept of no commitment and limited liability perhaps was instrumental in placing Canada at a reluctant distance from such entanglements. Entanglements after all, had consequences entailing responsibility, finances, operations and by extension, the dreaded part, accountability, a politician's worst nightmare!

Despite some great effort to acknowledge Canada in some respects, the reigning powers in Allied administration, the United States and United Kingdom, equally desired minimizing Canada's participation in their greater councils of war. At one point the United States even suggested that Canada and its forces subordinate themselves to the United States.

The United States wished to assume supreme command of the Canadian forces well before, and several months in advance of Pearl Harbour. They had the temerity to suggest that they were only prepared to allow Canada tactical command of their own forces in remarkably few places, such as the Gulf of St. Lawrence, in the Bay of Fundy, or within 30 miles of defended ports, such as Halifax. Needless to say, the US effort was rebuffed. The Americans were reminded at that time, they were the ones sitting on the sidelines. They simply ignored Canadian sensibilities regarding Canadian sovereignty. This tableau was a highly kept cabinet secret that only came to light in 1972.²⁸

It is but one example where Canadian interests were set aside or ill-considered by others over the course of the war. In the grand scheme of things, vital interests had to be considered first, and feelings or national interest second. These mattered little in the overall execution of war, where all could be easily lost.²⁹ Regardless our position was not helped through choice based on avoidance under the guise of limited and no commitments in most strategic considerations.

But Canada in many cases, set aside its concerns and demands for the greater good of the war effort.³⁰ But this may also have had a detrimental impact as well. More to the point, Canada was kept out of the loop on many vital points.

Canada as a relatively new nation at the beginning of the Second World War, had a lot to prove as a sovereign nation. It was still in the process of transformation in which it was no longer a colony under the thumb of British rule as in 1914. Now as an independent nation within a partnership of the British Commonwealth, Canada was left with some basic difficulties in the further transformation of nationhood and sovereignty. Those problems were soon exposed as

²⁸ Richard S. Malone, *A Portrait of War, 1939-1943*, Collins Publishers, 1983, 96

²⁹ Greenhous, Brereton and Stephen J. Harris, William C. Johnston, Villiam G.P. Rawling. 1994. *The Crucible of War, 1939-1945 - The Official History of Royal Canadian Air Force, Volume III*. University of Toronto Press in cooperation with the Department of National Defence the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 33

³⁰ Greenhous et al 1994, 31

Canada worked its way to find its place in wartime coalitions as a middle power.³¹ Many problems arose from the vast differences in influence in coalitions where larger countries operated on different scales of power and interest. It was all laid bare in the competing claims that came with military efficiency and control. It was found in the daily management that often rocked the interests of national sovereignty within those coalitions.³²

Matters of influence- the Politics of Mackenzie King

Mackenzie King may be the focus of the Canadian policy of limited liability and no commitments.³³ The policy though was firmly entrenched and eventually crystallized under him. However given Canada's circumstances, there were no alternatives. Any other leader at the time would likely have adopted a similar approach. Canada was weak economically and just finding its feet diplomatically. Deep pockets were often required to effectively engage in world affairs, pockets of money that Canada did not have. But the attention of greater powers to a weaker one was often derived from something unique and perhaps something other than money on the table.

The stronger nation often looked to the intangibles and other resources of a weaker power in a developing alliance of one or more. In the diplomacy of "quid pro quo", Canada had yet to find its identity or to develop that uniqueness. Canada would find that uniqueness early during the Second World War. It was found in Canada's geo-political position and strategic importance; one as an early key negotiator, second as a go-between, and finally as a key money lender/banker in which Canada became Britain's largest partner in the beginning.³⁴ All these factors would change Canada's nature, vision, and image in future.

King's personal reticence and reluctance though for wider strategic participation in diplomatic and natural affairs of sovereign states predated the Second World War. King's views were carried either by both his personal participation and observations of several Prime Ministers at Imperial Conferences from the early part of the 20th century.

Several Imperial Conferences followed immediately in the aftermath of the Great War. Commonwealth nations gathered to discuss matters of the pestilence of war and its hardships. Their aim in part was the desire to avoid future entanglements. The conundrum for Canada was the desire to have a seat at the table without broader commitments or to maximize the benefits at minimal cost in doing so. Assuming a place at the table also involved the potential for entanglements, responsibility and accountability, something that King wished to avoid.

The potential for entanglements, responsibility and accountability would later find itself at Canada's front door, 10 September 1939 with its separate declaration of war on Germany. It was

³¹ Stacey, C.P. 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – A History of Canadian External Policies – Volume 2: 1921 - 1948 – The Mackenzie King Era*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London, 388

³² Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 136

³³ Rose, Larry D. 2013. *Mobilize! Why Canada Was Unprepared For The Second World War*, Dundurn, 3 Church Street Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5E 1M2, 100, 133, 177

³⁴ Morton, Desmond. 1985. *A Military History of Canada*. Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 10560-105 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, 181

soon discovered that such a declaration came with its own political dangers. War required oversight that was never a simple task, for entanglements, responsibility and accountability stemmed from it. These tended to enhance rather than diminish participation even if reluctantly given at the outset. This was especially so when war was conducted on a daily basis or in coalition. The management of the nation's interest often became entangled, diffused, or difficult to control. All these led to confusion and misunderstanding as much was left open to "interpretation."

"Interpretation" must also be considered based on personalities and needs of the individual leaders within a coalition. They all had differing strengths, weaknesses, and interests. These played a role in the ongoing war. Amongst the political throng was Canada's MacKenzie King, who wished to assert both his and Canada's autonomy by nature. That was his one clear pursuit in guiding Canada's independence and interests in line with his own views on external policy.³⁵

But King lacked experience or personal insight on military matters. It was one area in which he needed both guidance and advice. He was no Winston Churchill or Jan Smuts. King had very few cabinet colleagues with those qualities to choose from. But he was fortunate to have a few including Ralston and later McNaughton with such experience. But none with the experience on the scale of a Churchill or Smuts of South Africa.³⁶ These men were practitioners of war and on a grand scale. They were both students of grand and military strategy. And Churchill was both a student and writer of history.

Churchill respected experience and knowledge, especially that of his onetime adversary Smuts from the Boer War. Churchill drew upon Smuts for advice rather than his Commonwealth peers throughout the Second World War.³⁷ Although a strongly opinionated and determined person, Churchill surrounded himself with experts whose knowledge and experience he drew upon regularly but did not necessarily apply that advice. Churchill thus became his own final arbiter of military and diplomatic decision making.³⁸

King was different. He was an insular man and a power unto himself.³⁹ But this was a time to trust military matters in military hands. King had no one that he trusted enough as he always measured the political rather than the military consequences of his decisions first, especially the consequences of conscription.⁴⁰

³⁵ Granatstein, J.L. 2020. *CANADA AT WAR -Conscription, Diplomacy, and Politics*, University of Toronto Press. Toronto Buffalo London, 233-234

³⁶ Rose, Larry D. 2013. *Mobilize! Why Canada Was Unprepared For The Second World War*, Dundurn, 3 Church Street Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5E 1M2, 260

³⁷ Churchill, Winston S. 1950. *The Hinge of Fate*. Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 235-236, 428-429, 504-505 (examples)

³⁸ Lamb, Richard. 1991. *Churchill as War Leader*. Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc. 260 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10001, 175-176, 339-348, and

Packwood, Allen. 2018/2019. *How Churchill Waged War - The Most Challenging Decisions Of The Second World War*. Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS, England, 188-189

³⁹ Rose 2013 *Mobilize*, 265

⁴⁰ Morton 1985, 180

Nations often sought ways to delegate some key responsibilities of a leader. It is in some ways necessary to have a man on the ground with the necessary authority to reduce the tensions and pressures within decision making. Some Commonwealth nations routinely gave their military leaders much leeway with large powers, freedom of action, and latitude of forgiveness that would not be readily afforded in peacetime.

Coalitions in themselves, added another level of complexity as the multiple sovereign interests of the other members have to be considered. This demands a level of trust and oversight. It was a level of trust that King lacked for fear of political outcomes or consequences, for example the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan stemming to greater commitments elsewhere as the war progressed.⁴¹ The duty of a delegated authority was to ensure a nation's interest were not subsumed in the matters of war. It required the delegation of appropriate power of action to ensure their nations needs were properly or adequately dealt with. The greatest fear was that the greater power and influence as the dominant members, would see decisions taken in accordance with their own interests rather than those of the group or the sovereign interests of all as a whole.⁴² This was likely King's greatest fear that tended him to hold power and the cards of control close to his chest.

King's persona in dealing with Britain and the other Dominions, tended rightly to place an emphasis on Canadian independence.⁴³ He used nuanced overtones of non-committal, withdrawal, or distance from decisions within Empire Councils. He did so for example with the Rhineland Pact of 1925.⁴⁴ But the choreographed dance of half in-half out of limited liability or no commitments, tended to hold King's government back in any attempt to exert influence on the higher direction of the war.⁴⁵ Having a greater degree of involvement required commitment, and commitments were something that King wished to avoid.⁴⁶

King's cabinet was quite the opposite, containing several cabinet colleagues who had military background, but with where none possessed the requisite experience or qualifications to make a useful contribution to Allied strategy or in the strategic management of modern warfare. Regardless, King did surround himself with cabinet colleagues who were masters in many other fields, including politics, finance, public service, or commerce.⁴⁷ King was not averse to seeking consensus or information, but had difficulty acting on it without political consideration first. King relished power and control and was likely suspicious of intentions of others.

That suspicion also acted in the military plane as well. Many Canadians remembered King spent the whole of the First World War in the United States. King had little interest in that war or its

⁴¹ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 251

⁴² Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 136

⁴³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 62-63

⁴⁴ Churchill, Winston S. 1948. *The Gathering Storm*. Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 28

⁴⁵ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 139

⁴⁶ Stacey, C.P. 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict– Volume 2*, 35-36

⁴⁷ Malone 1983, 74

management then.⁴⁸ But in this war, Mackenzie King's was to become a champion, albeit a crafty one. His greatest accomplishment was the understanding of the needs of a country at war for many believed at the outset "this was not our war."⁴⁹ The public's attitude would change and in meeting those needs, King surrounded himself with strong men to manage them.⁵⁰

But strong men implied men who also desired power and control. King had to rely on the military senior leaders for advice. But there was little mutual respect and admiration. The Army may have little regard for his lack of military experience or empathy as a military war leader. That may have held King back for it was a great divide in which he had no shared war experience as did many of his cabinet colleagues. Then again King had no great desire to deal with the overall conduct and strategy of war. He eventually left the management of the war to others, especially the management of the Canadian Army in the field.⁵¹

No Sense of Urgency

It became evident that there was increased belligerent militarism in the world preceding the war. But there was little sense of urgency in Canada to react to these world events to prepare.⁵² Even so, as war approached Canada did slowly march to its rearmament shortly before the war.⁵³ But after all this, the first years of the war were ones of perception.

On the surface, there was little apparent danger or operations in, or around North American zone, save on the ocean approaches leading to or from the United Kingdom, or on the home front for that matter.⁵⁴ The enemy's actions in North America were mere pinpricks in the overall continuum of war. The brunt of the action appeared to be elsewhere, and by extension, so too was the government's attention.

But King's pre-war policy led to apparent indifference in limiting Canada's preparations to rebuilding its military.⁵⁵ It inevitably led to restricting Canada's military in any role overseas to limit political criticism.⁵⁶ Thus the Canadian Chiefs of Staff were forced to begin the war under restraint with limited budgets and resources. The Chiefs of Staff placed down a marker of what was needed in early 1939. It was merely the marker of what was required to catch up.⁵⁷ This situation also predated the war beginning with the parsimony of limited government budgets

⁴⁸ Malone, Richard S. 1983. *A Portrait of War, 1939-1943*, Collins Publishers, 100 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario, 74

⁴⁹ Morton 1985:180-181

⁵⁰ Malone 1983, 75

⁵¹ Malone 1983, 240-243, and Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 349

⁵² Rose 2013 Mobilize, 86-87

⁵³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 60-63, and Rose 2013 Mobilize, 256

⁵⁴ Malone 1983, 96

⁵⁵ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 86-87

⁵⁶ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 100

⁵⁷ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 188

since 1921-1929.⁵⁸ The Armed Forces needs were often considered extraneous to the government's deliberations, a millstone to be tolerated. The Chiefs of Staff status was thus low in the eyes of King and that of his government.⁵⁹

Perhaps that status and mistrust stemmed from the Great War where legions of Canadian soldiers were led to their deaths by the red tabs of the professional soldier.⁶⁰ There again lay a lingering mistrust by Canadians that that its young and their lives would once again be needlessly sacrificed and lost in the futility of frontal assaults of the Great War. Canadians remembered that those losses were led by a profession of arms, that some considered, devoid of imagination or compassion in thought and scholarship.

King also held a deep revulsion of that war and its costly mistakes despite having no military experience of it.⁶¹ Here too, Canadians were hell bent on avoiding and repeating the mistakes of the past, many sharing King's view.⁶² And yet, there remained a great thirst to support, the mother country and empire for the colonial bonds were difficult to loose.⁶³

That characterization may be far from the truth, but it was a perception, nonetheless. In the Great War's aftermath, many officers did strive for a higher degree of military learning, scholarship, and enhancement as professional soldiers. Many Canadians held the mythical view from its military past that professional soldiers were bred not trained.⁶⁴

But many Canadians regarded the "professional" soldier as an anathema for peace, so there were few limited opportunities limited by defence spending. There was never sufficient funding to provide for the needs of the Canadian Armed forces much less its professional development. Appointments to staff college were few and far between and limited only to the up and comers. And yet the seeds were planted and nurtured from those who were privileged to attend that saw the development of staff courses during the Second World War.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 86-87, 188

Morton 1985, 169-172

⁵⁹ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 128

⁶⁰ Morton 1985, 165

⁶¹ Morton 1985,, 186-187

⁶² Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 17

Morton 1985, 165

⁶³ Greenhous, Brereton and Stephen J. Harris ,William C. Johnston ,William G.P. Rawling.1994. *The Crucible of War, 1939-1945 - The Official History of Royal Canadian Air Force , Volume III*. University of Toronto Press in cooperation with the Department of National Defence he Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 20

⁶⁴ Morton 1985, 85

⁶⁵ Granatstein, J.L. 1993. *The Generals – The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War*. Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited. 34 Lesmill Road ,Toronto Canada , in which the education and experience of McNaughton, Simmonds, Pope and others attending Staff colleges, professional journals, and debates, are discussed; and

Rickard, John Nelson. 2010. *The Politics of Command – Lieutenant-General A.G.L McNaughton and the Canadian Army 1939-1943*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Canada, 13-14

At least from Mackenzie King's perspective, the Chiefs were not always assessed entirely for their military qualities. He was greatly impressed by those who gave the sort of opinion, especially regarding manpower, on what he wanted, rather than what he needed to hear. King may have preferred "yes men," rather than those who would offer him contradictory advice or argument. It is not surprising that King held his senior officers in some contempt.⁶⁶ King has been characterized by some as "He was "unmilitary," never quite getting military ranks right nor having much understanding of the military."⁶⁷

King's contempt was further solidified later during the war at the Conscription Crisis. He was likely displeased with his government's military advisers for their part. As military members of the Army Council they called and argued for more manpower which was ignored. King capable of great self-deception where political situations developed, would convince himself to believe what he thought was true rather than facts. With great political skill he not only convinced his colleagues but often the nation to get his way.⁶⁸ Even though their advice played in his favour, it did not play in the favour of National Unity. There was a great divide between English and French Canada. He saw the no-conscription promise would have to be broken and therein lay King's conundrum.⁶⁹

King's reluctance to commit placed a damper on timely decision making. Some decisions had the tendency towards an increased exposure in the employment of manpower, the coin of the realm or perhaps both. They all had to be weighed carefully. But it often left the forces behind the eight ball of catch up if an untimely decision was made.⁷⁰ But this tendency also may have led to Canadians fighting on the basis of the lowest cost option, often free riding on the defence expenditures of others just to limit Canadian liability.

King knew or example, what it would cost to defend Canada's east and west coasts. He failed to provide enough money in 1939 for the rearmament of both coasts contented to leave it protected by two destroyers, a few guns, and obsolete aircraft and more importantly, the Royal Navy.⁷¹ BY September 1939 King placed his hopes on a limited war in which he envisaged support to be sending supplies, a limited air force, and some ships to Britain's immediate aid. A large overseas army was not on the plate for the offering.⁷² The commitment grew in the end, leaving many questions unanswered, with policies to be interpreted, such that Canada's independence, sovereignty, and freedom to act were limited. Canada could have no say in many matters, and now, Canadian lives would be placed at risk as a consequence.

⁶⁶ Stacey, *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 129

⁶⁷ Rose 2013 *Mobilize*, 81

⁶⁸ Malone 1983, 75

⁶⁹ Stacey, *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 129

⁷⁰ Greenhouse, Brereton and Stephen J. Harris, William C. Johnston, William G.P. Rawling. 1994. *The Crucible of War, 1939-1945 - The Official History of Royal Canadian Air Force, Volume III*. University of Toronto Press in cooperation with the Department of National Defence the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 14 – The RCAF overseas as an example

⁷¹ Rose 2013 *Mobilize*, 257

⁷² Rose 2013 *Mobilize*, 259

Thus, the forfeiture of decision making based on limited liability-no commitments and deferral, had consequences that were paid in blood, treasure, and risk. These may have been rooted in Mackenzie King's personality and policies as they evolved throughout the 1920s and 1930s. King's leadership and management style left an indelible mark for future prime ministers to follow. It lies in an enduring strategy that many Prime Ministers have since adopted, that if you leave or ignore a problem or crisis long enough, perhaps it will simply go away.⁷³ It is often forgotten that indecision will always be paid in blood.⁷⁴

Chapter 2 – Pivotal Change - Mackenzie King and the 1923 Imperial Conference

Mackenzie King was not the sole arbiter of Canadian policy of limited liability-no commitments. That policy was embedded in Canadian Defence and Foreign Policy shortly after the end of the Great War. It was a policy personally witnessed and acted on by King in the Chanak Affair in 1924.⁷⁵

There had been an expectation by Great Britain, the Empire's great benefactor, that Canada and the other Dominions would support Britain unconditionally in their war with Turkey.⁷⁶ And with each Dominion's growing independence, Canada and other self-governing parts of the British Empire were expected to pay their own way. Neither defence nor diplomacy could any longer be conducted on the cheap.⁷⁷

Canada was as yet a small and developing nation. It had few resources to totally fund its own requirements much less those of external obligations. The policy of limited liability-no commitments thus became a consideration and concern of all political parties as Canada grew in stature and independence. The genesis of Canada's limited liability-no commitments policy likely predated the Great War.

The Dominions were colonies that came under the umbrella and protection of Britain's defence spending. But the path ahead for Canada and the other dominions became clearly evident at the autumn Imperial Conference of 1923 that met in London.

Here in this gathering of Commonwealth nations came the first discussions concerning Dominion economy. It was also at this conference where the principal activity was concerned with the rights of the Dominions, in which ended with the determination of rights regarding the

⁷³ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 256

⁷⁴ The Staff Canwest News Service. 2010. "Timeline: Canadian deaths in Afghanistan." Posted March 22, 2010, 12:07 pm. [Timeline: Canadian deaths in Afghanistan | Globalnews.ca](https://www.globalnews.ca/timeline-canadian-deaths-in-afghanistan)
Accessed: 18 Feb 2024; and

CBC News Online. 2005. CBC News Online. 2005. "CANADA'S SUBMARINES - Fire on HMCS Chicoutimi." Last Updated May 5, 2005 [CBC News In Depth: CANADA'S SUBMARINES](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canadas-submarines), accessed; 18 Feb 2024

⁷⁵ Stacey, C.P. 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – A History of Canadian External Policies – Volume 2: 1921 - 1948 – The MacKenzie King Era*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London, 42

⁷⁶ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2, 42-43*

⁷⁷ Morton 1985, 85, and
Rose 2013 Mobilize, 111

formation of each Dominion's own foreign policy.⁷⁸ But inherent in that were the costs of burden sharing, how much would be retained by the mother country versus how much the dominions should bear.

Mackenzie King, as Canada's representative, argued vigorously that the protocols of Empire only served to limit the rights of the Dominions in pursuit of their own foreign policy. It was an anathema to all there that only Britain had the right within the Empire to negotiate and sign treaties on each members' behalf.⁷⁹

The Conference carved out and later affirmed the right for each Dominion to determine an independent foreign policy, subject though to a number of provisos. First when a Dominion took its own course, the party doing so must ensure that no other within the Commonwealth would be injured. Concurrently, it was also agreed that the British government would not commit another Dominion government without its consent.⁸⁰ It was a forward move along the path towards full independence, ultimately leading to the Statute of Westminster of 1931.

Much was gained by each Dominion. It moved power away from centralized control of the British government and towards greater independence of the Dominions. It paved the way to the Balfour Declaration of 1926, in whose path followed subsequently, the Statute of Westminster in 1931.⁸¹ It was the key pivotal year that brought change toward greater autonomy leading to full sovereignty of each Dominion within the Empire.⁸² It also brought to bear expectations that the Dominions would also bear a reasonable share of the burdens and costs.⁸³

King left the 1921 Conference with some long lasting deep impressions. Winston Churchill was then minister responsible for the Colonial Office at the time. Churchill had his own ideas on how his office would operate and, cooperation with the Dominions, was not one of his virtues. Thus, King had concerns with Churchill's administration and intent.

King was of the opinion that Churchill's administration of the Colonial Office was a complete disaster. It was also particularly hard for the Dominions to accept him. Churchill appeared to flaunt one proviso in particular. It had been promised that the British government would not commit another Dominion government without its consent.⁸⁴ Many still hoped for the object of a common Empire foreign policy based on consultation.

⁷⁸ Wikipedia. 2023. "1923 Imperial Conference." last edited on 13 February 2023, at 10:23 (UTC). Accessed 7 Jul 2023, [1923 Imperial Conference - Wikipedia](#)

⁷⁹ Wikipedia. 2023. "1923 Imperial Conference." last edited on 13 February 2023, at 10:23 (UTC). Accessed 7 Jul 2023, [1923 Imperial Conference - Wikipedia](#)

⁸⁰ Wikipedia 2023. 1923 Imperial Conference

⁸¹ Wikipedia 2023. 1923 Imperial Conference

⁸² Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 85-86

⁸³ Morton 1985, 85

⁸⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 26

Regrettably in the aftermath of the Imperial Conference of 1921, no such undertaking had been undertaken although the idea was approved. It was an agreement in word only, with no substance in effect, and open to broad interpretation. The failure lay with the Conference in which it failed to clearly produce any arrangements for such continuous consultation. Thus, the agreement was in effect; null, void, and ineffective.⁸⁵ Without an agreed to protocol, Churchill interpreted it differently.

King with a suspicious mind, was apprehensive of imperial schemes. Such schemes and intrigues threatened Canada's hard won autonomy. There was no apparent conspiracy to wrest control from the Dominions in an ongoing battle between centralization and autonomy. The problem lay in the casual attitude of the Colonial Office when dealing with its Dominions.⁸⁶

Churchill and his colleagues under Lloyd George merely regarded the dominions of the Empire as a "public convenience" whose existence was to do their bidding.⁸⁷ Few in authority in London recognized or regarded Canada's newly installed prime minister was very apprehensive of imperial schemes. It was King's apprehensions at this conference that should have suggested to his British colleagues that perhaps, this was one Prime Minister the British government should have handled with kid-gloves.⁸⁸

King's suspicion grew even deeper later, in the aftermath of the Chanak Affair, in which Turkish forces threatened British troops then stationed in Turkey after the Great War. It was the British expectation that Canada and the other Dominions would lend immediate support and aid.⁸⁹ But the trouble for King stemmed from the precedent set at the 1918-1919 Peace Conferences. The Dominions were granted a seat and a voice at the table. It was their opening to participation in the wider councils of nation states. That hard fought and sought for seat was threatened by the steps taken by Britain.

In the effort to conclude the Chanak Affair expeditiously, the British broke with the precedent set in 1918-19. Negotiations with the Turks proceeded without the participation of the Dominions, known as the Lausanne episode of 1922-1924. It was important as it effectively it marked the end of the experiment in associating the British Dominions with British foreign policy.⁹⁰

The exclusion of the Dominions from participation in the resulting negotiations and treaty was a grave mistake. If the British truly desired a common imperial policy and if it was an aim worth pursuing, then surely they should have invited the Dominions and India to take part. As it was, it marked a departure from this precedent that had an adverse effect upon the unity within the Empire. It made it all the easier for King to establish an isolationist course for Canada.

⁸⁵ Stacey, C.P. 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – A History of Canadian External Policies – Volume 2: 1921 - 1948 – The MacKenzie King Era*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London, 26

⁸⁶ Greenhouse et al 1994, 20

⁸⁷ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 43

⁸⁸ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 27

⁸⁹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 43

⁹⁰ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 42

Mackenzie King and many Canadians felt the British had indeed used the Dominions as a public convenience of their foreign policy. On the other side of the coin, the British keenly felt that Canada and the Dominions let them down by not automatically supporting this minor war with the Turks.⁹¹

The British however either failed to realize and account for the fact that the Dominions were now largely responsible for their own foreign policy and accountable to their own people. Quite possibly too, there was strong British desire not to let the trappings of Empire go. Both reasons failed to recognize the independence of the dominions. It required that they must seek approvals through their individual parliaments as collectively, they were now accountable and responsible to these bodies for approvals and actions.

The status quo of “empire” no longer applied. This was not the days of old when Britain was at war, the colonies too were at war. This was in fact a new era, a new era in which Great Britain had negotiated and agreed to. It was a pivotal moment that they failed to understand. There was to be no more automatic deference to the mother country. The chicks had left the roost and now they had to be dealt with as equals. In essence the habits and expectations of old died hard, and with that, it only bolstered King’s penchant for isolationism. Consequently, there now was born a higher degree of paths leading to no commitments with limited liabilities for Canada.

Considerations for the Future - a Prelude to War

In the aftermath of the Great War, Canadian government authorities acknowledged that there were problems regarding national sovereignty within military alliances.⁹² These could easily arise in unanticipated ways. They foresaw new paths and opportunities for foreign engagement in diplomacy ahead. But there was a more immediate threat emanating from British rule and empire as it adjusted to the evolving Dominions in their thrust for independence..

O.D. Skelton, Kings Foreign Affairs advisor attended the 1926 Imperial Conference, and observed in its aftermath that any commitment to British military arrangements would place limitations on Canadian freedom of action. Notably at this conference, the Canadian Chiefs of General and Naval staff were also invited to attend the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) , a subcomponent of such meetings.⁹³

Great Britain desired the Canadian Chiefs of General and Naval staff attend when convened to discuss mutual cooperation and coordination. Skelton disliked the idea of Canadian participation at the CID. He pointed out that the CID was a British Government committee and not a genuine imperial body like an Imperial Conference.⁹⁴ Such participation could easily lead to undesirable consequences threatening Canada’s hard won independence. The government chose not to participate further.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 43-44

⁹² Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*,132

⁹³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 132

⁹⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 132

⁹⁵ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 132

The problem was very evident to Canada as a nascent middle power. Participation in these bodies placed difficulties in the way for Canada. There was a concern that being taken seriously and having its independent voice heard, would somehow be lost in the drive to a common end. It was a fear that the voice of a small power would be subsumed by the “larger” ones’ interests. Nonetheless Canada’s eventual contributions were significant for a small country and rising middle power.⁹⁶

In later years Canada learned the hard way, that the effort in the Second World War, was essentially directed by an Anglo-American committee, who dominated the direction of the war. Perhaps this was justified by the greater contribution of military forces and industrial might. But Canada’s outright contributions were no less small or insignificant. Still Canada’s combined contribution in men, materiel, and financial support was subsumed under the broader umbrella of Anglo-American relations. It was in the subsuming that Canada’s contributions to the final course of Allied victory were lost and unrecognized as.⁹⁷

[BLOCK START].

Pouring out blood and treasure in accordance with plans over which it had no control.

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The management of grand strategy evolved following the United States entrance into the Second World War, December 7, 1941. The cause that precipitated their entrance is well documented. It led to two great powers though dominating events in forming strategy as Canada’s role grew smaller. With that relationship established, it was now expected that the smaller allies in the coalition would follow without question.

For Canada, this became clearly evident in which its opinions, interests, and sensibilities were overlooked or deferred over the course of the war. Canadian sensibilities were offended time and again. Regardless of the significant contributions in men, finances, and materiel, Canadian participation in the broad councils of war, were particularly ignored.⁹⁸

Regardless there were very valid reasons for Canadian reticence despite its sovereign interests. It was generally recognized that too many cooks spoil the broth in the matter of military efficiency.

⁹⁶ Canada. Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War. Report No. 48 Historical Section (G.S.) Army Headquarters – 5 Mar 52*. Directorate of History, National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, Canada

[Canada and the Higher Direction of the Second World War - Canada.ca](#), 1 (4/49)

⁹⁷ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 1 (4/49)

⁹⁸ Bryce, Robert B. 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War – The International Operations of Canada’s Department of Finance 1939-1947*. Carleton Library Series 204. McGill-Queen’s University Press. Montreal &Kingston- London-Ithaca , 392

It was a must that the concentration of power be in the fewest number of hands possible. Thus, matters of national sovereignty were knowingly subsumed in coalition warfare lest it reduce that efficiency and aid the enemy in the long run.⁹⁹

Canadian military authorities may have recognized that within coalitions, one country's interests could easily be lost in the mire of internecine battles emanating from the struggles between the two dominant powers.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the national interests of the two dominant powers often did take precedence and predominate any discussion during the Second World War. It was also feared that the interests of the component parts would either be ignored or set aside.

The real struggle was ensuring the needs and interests of sovereign governments within coalition were brought to the forefront for consideration and discussion. Canada and others were predisposed towards continual compromise thus ensuring that they were at least heard, and not overlooked.¹⁰¹ An example of where Canada was overlooked is found in the Canadian Army's operations in Sicily.

The Canadians were first to land and operate there. But the truth was hidden because of censorship that kept the accomplishment hidden from the Canadian public. Canadian military feelings were deeply aggrieved by this slight. There was an explanation provided by the British War office. Their press release on the venture actually sublimated the Canadian accomplishment under the guise of "British forces" in the describing of the landings in Sicily. The British took credit for the accomplishment.¹⁰²

Some Canadian military leaders paid a tremendous price for standing up to these authorities.¹⁰³ Their position was not helped by MacKenzie King, Canada's Prime Minister, whose policy preceding and during the war was one of "no commitments." It was a policy that likely did not support his military authorities overseas. These authorities had to deal and negotiate through entanglements as King was unprepared to support the conflict at its outset.¹⁰⁴

Without King's full confidence or backing, Canadian military authorities were often left to struggle with their British colleagues who considered them to be inferior.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, these

⁹⁹ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 2 (5/49)

¹⁰⁰ D'Este, Carlo. 1983. "Decision In Normandy." Konecky & Konecky, 72 Ayers Point Rd. Old Saybrook, CT 06475. This edition published by special arrangement with E.P. Dutton, Inc. , 212-214

¹⁰¹ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 2 (5/49), and Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 388

¹⁰² Malone, Richard S. 1984. *A World in Flames 1944-1945, A Portrait of War; Part Two*. Collins, Toronto, Canada, 21

¹⁰³ Rickard, John Nelson. 2010. *The Politics of Command – Lieutenant-General A.G.L McNaughton and the Canadian Army 1939-1943*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Canada, xiv, 5

¹⁰⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 132, 254-255

¹⁰⁵ Fraser, David . 1982. *Alanbrooke*. ATHENEUM, New York, 188-189,

Viscount Montgomery Of Alamein. Bernard Law, 1958, *The Memoirs Of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery Of Alamein*, K.G. St James's Place, London: Collins, 184

Cooper , Anthony . 2020. *Sub Hunters – Australian Sunderland Squadrons In The Defeat Of Hitler's U-Boat Menace 1942-43* . First published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America Fonthill, 2020 , 44-45

officers were often considered as lacking in leadership, professionalism, or resolve that were a hindrance to the cause.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it was easy to conclude they required removal and replacement by British leadership or guidance.¹⁰⁷

King's policies prior to the war likely prevented or diverted many lesser but important and tangible preparations.¹⁰⁸ This intransigence may have had an impact on the British view concerning Canadian resolve, the state of its military preparations, and the sincerity of its diplomacy as well.¹⁰⁹

The Past Shapes the Future

Canada's changing status evolved in the world between 1914-1919. Canada and the other dominions could no longer be ignored. This evolution was predicated on their active participation and contributions made in the Great War. Their sacrifices demanded a voice. A precedent into the management war came with that sacrifices as well as greater participation in the coalition of nations all stemming from the Great War.¹¹⁰

A greater change to the recognition of Canada and the British Dominions came with the election of Lloyd George as British Prime ministers who was discontented by his general's management of the war. Lloyd George was predisposed to assume the direction of the war as the responsibility of the political leaders and not to leave these matters solely in the hands of his generals.

Regardless it wasn't until the autumn of 1917 that an agreement was made with his French counterpart to establish a Supreme War Council to oversee the conduct of the war. Membership to the council was limited to the British, French, Italian, and US leaders.¹¹¹ All these significant changes occurred as a result of the direct participation in the Great War. It led to expectations that all nations would enjoy that pleasure.

So, most important, a consequence from the Great War was in the end a recognition of the leaders of the smaller Allies and dominions. They were subsequently invited to the council to end the war of all wars. Of significance in the Supreme War Council was the inclusion of

¹⁰⁶ Harris, Arthur, Marshal of the R.A.F. G.C.B. O.B.E A.F.C. 2015. *BOMBER OFFENSIVE*. A Greenhill Book, Lionel Leventhal Ltd. , Frontline Books. An imprint of Pen& Sword Ltd., 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS, 1988 , Copyright © Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998, 63-64

¹⁰⁷ Rickard, John Nelson. 2010. *The Politics of Command – Lieutenant-General A.G.L McNaughton and the Canadian Army 1939-1943*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Canada, xiv-xv

¹⁰⁸ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 12
Rose 2013 Mobilize. 133

¹⁰⁹ Rose 2013 Mobilize. 257

¹¹⁰ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 3 (6/49)

¹¹¹ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 3 (6/49)

representatives of the smaller powers, and perhaps most importantly to them, was as equals,. Thus, the impetus for change began, to which Canada and the other Dominions, eventually availed themselves of. This resulted in their achievement of independence , a voice, and eventually, the control over foreign policy and use of their military forces. Change was gradual and did not happen over night. It was a stepping stone along the way that culminated in the Westminster Act of 1931. That Act sealed the deal to grant the dominions autonomy thus full self governance in the matters of military, foreign, and domestic policy.¹¹²

Canada was responsible for the management of its own domestic policy in 1914 at the start of the Great War,. A subtle change came in foreign policy for which Canada had no responsibility. Nor did it have responsibility for treaty making or for making declaration of war. Canada was merely regarded as a British colony, subordinate to Britain's wishes.

However, over the course of the Great War, LGen Arthur Currie pressed for and established an increasing autonomous position for his Canadian Corps on behalf of his government. Currie proved to be a thorn in the side of his British colleagues. They had to endure him to maintain some consensus amongst the Dominions who were also pressing them to get their way at times during the war. All had invested heavily in men, materiel, and finances. Now, all desired a greater say on how it all would be managed in future. The stakes and sacrifices already made were high, paving a path leading to full autonomy.¹¹³

It became the job of Canada, as well as its appointed commanders, to see those gains in rights, status, and sovereignty, safeguarded and not lost. These gains were not to be disabused or diminished in any way. It became an underlying friction in the management of the war. It became especially so later in the Second World War, whose objectives were hindered by the government's policy of no commitments and limited liability. The groundwork of no commitments and limited liability were cast following the Great War in the premierships of Mackenzie King (1921 - 1926, 1926 - 1930, 1935 – 1948) and R.B. Bennett (1930-1935).¹¹⁴

1926 Imperial Conference- The Prelude to Balfour Agreement and Westminster Act of 1931

The fifth Imperial Conference held in London from 19 October to 22 November 1926, was notable for the Balfour Declaration. This declaration firmly established a key principle to the effect that all the dominions were now equal in status. It also established all as autonomous communities within the British Empire. They were no longer subordinate to the United Kingdom. A new term came into effect to describe this community as the "Commonwealth" that was officially adopted to describe the relationship.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 4 (7/49)

¹¹³ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 5-6 (8-9/49)

¹¹⁴ World Atlas. 2023. "List Of Prime Ministers Of Canada." 31 May 2023

[List of Prime Ministers of Canada - WorldAtlas](#)

¹¹⁵ Wikipedia. 2023. "1926 Imperial Conference." last edited on 12 May 2023, at 01:42 (UTC).. Accessed 8 Jul 2023

[1926 Imperial Conference - Wikipedia](#)

Mackenzie King was Canada's representative at this conference just two short weeks after his election as Prime minister in 1926.¹¹⁶ King was in a mellow mood following his recent victory. He approached the conference in a conciliatory mode, quite the contrast to his prior visit in 1923. King had one expectation. It was that of resolving constitutional issues concerning the role of Governor General within the Dominions.¹¹⁷ King's concern followed in the aftermath of a clash with former Governor General Byng on a constitutional and parliamentary matter.¹¹⁸ Unlike 1923, King now considered himself to be an experienced and successful leader.

The definition of the nature of imperial ties to all concerned became the conference's most pressing matter. There remained an outstanding issue of imperial constitutional history notably, Resolution IX of the Imperial War Conference of 1917. The nature of the autonomous relationships within the Dominions was had deferred at that time. It had been promised that a detailed consideration of the constitution of the Empire would be given a special conference to be held after the war. Almost a decade had passed. The promise conference never happened. South Africa's Prime Minister General J.B.M. Hertzog demanded action. Hertzog desired that free nationhood be granted, with equality with every other member of the Commonwealth.¹¹⁹

The Dominions could no longer be denied their due. In the aftermath of the eighth meeting within the conference, a motion was set by Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister of Great Britain. A motion was passed to refer the question to a Prime Ministers' Committee on Inter -Imperial Relations. This committee was presided by Lord Balfour, a former Prime Minister, who was now Baldwin's deputy.¹²⁰

King also desired an end to the situation in which the position of Governor General was viewed as an agent of the British Government. He desired that the Governor General to be exclusively the representative of the Sovereign and not the British government. It was an old issue; that had been previously discussed at the Imperial War Cabinet in 1918.¹²¹

Mackenzie King's chief personal interest regarding the position of Governor General was deftly dealt with. It was considered a personal matter between King and Byng. Had Mackenzie King pressed the matter and forced a decision from the conference to deprive a Governor General's right to refuse a dissolution, he would likely have met with strong opposition.¹²²

In the end the conference recommended that the Governor General no longer be the channel of communication between London and the Dominion governments. A change was directed that saw a new channel responsible for such exchanges, seeing communications conducted from government to government directly.

¹¹⁶ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 83

¹¹⁷ Williams, Jeffrey , 1983. *Bing of Vimy – General and Governor General*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto - Buffalo, 305-308

¹¹⁸ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 85

¹¹⁹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 85

¹²⁰ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 85

¹²¹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 87

¹²² Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 87

The position of Governor General though was protected. Its value was as a conduit for the exchange of information between governments in this new channel of information sharing. Therefore, it was necessary for a Governor-General to be supplied with copies of all documents of importance in order to be kept as fully informed on behalf of His Majesty the King in Great Britain in matters of Cabinet business and public affairs.¹²³

It was as a Governor General (GG) that an incumbent retain this function lest be hindered in performing an important constitutional function. It was regarded as a position of trust in perhaps the GG became deciding factor in decisions requiring prudence. There are matters of public interests of the people of a sovereign country, which require an unbiased opinion free from political influence of any party. This may come say, something as simple, to the appropriate time in granting requests for dissolution, prorogation, or any other such matter.¹²⁴

The keys to the importance of the position of Governor General lay with independence and impartiality which Byng, King's nemesis, found to be a tight precarious line to walk. But in the end, King had a long memory of what he regarded as Byng's interference in the election of 1922. It was the issue of "independence and impartiality" where King was at odds with Byng who saw it as his duty to a democratic institution that went beyond perceived personal loyalty that King felt his due.¹²⁵

Significantly the findings of the Balfour report were ratified 15 November 1926¹²⁶ laying the foundation for the Statute of Westminster in 1931. The British Parliament passed the Statute into law, and it became a founding document for the modern Commonwealth. Canada remained linked to Britain politically, but now legal power shifted from Britain to Canada to its parliament and prime minister. This shift quickly led to the establishment of Canada's own foreign policy and more importantly, its own diplomatic corps.¹²⁷

R.B Bennett – Five Tumultuous Years

R.B. Bennett, the newly elected Canadian Prime Minister, was Canada's representative at the imperial conference of 1930. It was here where the Statute of Westminster was drafted and later passed December 11, 1931.¹²⁸ Canada and the Dominions in large measure gained their independence from Britain. It was the final act from the Balfour Report of 1926, where the recommendation for "equal in status" was constitutionally implemented. This was a milestone

¹²³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 87

¹²⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 87, and Wikipedia. 2024. "Prorogation in Canada." [Prorogation in Canada - Wikipedia](#). Last edited on 19 June 2023, at 00:24 (UTC).

¹²⁵ Williams 1992. *BYNG OF VIMY*, 301-310

¹²⁶ Wikipedia. 2023. "Balfour Declaration of 1926." last edited on 2 May 2023, at 02:36 (UTC).

[Balfour Declaration of 1926 - Wikipedia](#)

¹²⁷ Tattrie, Jon. "Balfour Report". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 29 January 2020, *Historica Canada*. [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/balfour-report](#). Accessed 19 June 2023.

¹²⁸ Boyko, John and John R. English. "R.B. Bennett". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 19 March 2021, *Historica Canada*. [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/richard-bedford-viscount-bennett](#). Accessed 19 June 2023.

achievement that gave the Dominions full legal freedom with some exceptions of their choosing.¹²⁹

A sad aspect to this Imperial Conference was the onset of the Depression. The Depression dominated discussions amongst the participants during the 1930 conference. The economic troubles of the moment were of far greater importance than constitutional questions. This was certainly true of the thoughts and motives of R.B. Bennett.¹³⁰ Bennett's first priority was to achieve preferential status for Canadian produce. He desired trade, particularly in the British market. He saw trade with Britain as an opportunity to ease the burden and to provide impetus for Canadian economic recovery.¹³¹

But Bennet's efforts were poorly received. He was asking far too much and, in the eyes of the British government at least, he was proposing a common market amongst the Dominions that was inequitable. The sore point lay with other Dominions' goods in which Canada could trade freely but with the proviso that Canadian producers would be protected. Canada was also seeking trade beyond the Commonwealth and not the exclusion or limits on foreign goods. Bennet proposed that such importation be allowed as long as it did not threaten the high standard of living that Canadians enjoyed. Bennet was principally looking for a stable market for Canadian wheat.¹³² In the end Bennett offered all a preferential access to the Canadian market in exchange for a like preference in theirs.¹³³

It did not go down well, particularly with the British. They saw free and open commerce with all comers as a threat to the lifeblood of the empire. It seemed that Bennet had asked for too much and was giving too little in return. He failed to understand that the United Kingdom's existence largely depended on its external trade. It was unlikely that the United Kingdom would offer any such a concession in policy to make a change or any adjustment that would jeopardise a large part of that trade.¹³⁴ It was a hard lesson to be learned. An independent nation must look to its own interests first.. It is often reduced to a matter of a quid pro quo within the discussion and its consequent results or agreements.

Domestically Bennett had a great deal on his plate. The country was far from stable both fiscally and socially. Canada was on the tail end of much unrest during the 1920s. The social order of the country was in jeopardy facing instability, chaos, and despair. The government was burdened with the legacy of the Great War's debt. The expedient to pay for it, income tax, remained, a legacy that continues to this day. There were periods of highs and lows that promised hope and recovery, that Canada would prevail and come out of it. But then, the early seeds of recovery

¹²⁹ McIntosh, Andrew, and Norman Hillmer. "Statute of Westminster, 1931". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 29 April 2020, *Historica Canada*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/statute-of-westminster. Accessed 19 June 2023.

¹³⁰ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 135

¹³¹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 137-138

¹³² Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 138

¹³³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 137-138

¹³⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 138

were shattered by a calamitous world wide event, the crash of the stock market in 1929 leading to the Great Depression.

Canada felt the Depressions' impact most acutely. Ironically, the Depression also greased the skids towards the next war. The skids greased the way to animosity in Germany who were disabused by the outrageous demands for reparations for the Great War. It provoke political ill-will and the need for revenge.¹³⁵ The financial clauses of the Treaty of Versailles were only superficially enforced immediately following its signing. Although the victorious Powers appropriated about one thousand million pounds of German assets, this was later offset by loans of one thousand five hundred million pounds that assisted Germany who was able to rebuild its economy. Germany paid what it was able to pay.¹³⁶

But then Germany's financial position deteriorated and weakened despite the loans that helped momentarily. The weight of its reparation payments from 1919 to 1923 exacerbated its fiscal position.¹³⁷ The mark rapidly collapsed, and inflation was rampant seeing the German mark devalued and become worthless.¹³⁸ This was exacerbated further between 1926 -1929 by the United States who pressured all former belligerents for repayment of the debt installments that became due from its war loans. Thus, the pressure had a domino effect that passed from one to another with Germany at the bottom of the totem.¹³⁹ Due to the sense of German injustice and actual suffering from this policy, the seeds of a future war were sown.¹⁴⁰

In the meantime, apart from the swarming morass of pain and despair on the global scene, Bennett's government tried to relieve the suffering of Canadians from the impacts of the Depression. Among his many initiatives his government passed the Unemployment Relief Act, 1930. This Act created jobs in which \$20 million for public works was invested. He later extended his outreach beyond the cities and towns to assist the farmers with a similar initiative through the Unemployment and Farm Relief Act, 1931. That act too provided a means to aid more infrastructure construction that was a direct relief to both farmers and the unemployed.¹⁴¹

But the best of Bennett's efforts was met with calamity beyond his control. The farmers of western Canada had been devastated by a collapse in prices. This was further exacerbated by two catastrophic events, a drought, and a plague of grasshoppers. Bennett's government tried to alleviate the pain which made the granting of farm loans far easier through the *Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act*. Bennett went on in an attempt to stabilize wheat prices by creating the Canadian Wheat Board in 1935. This board was charge with selling Canadian wheat abroad.

¹³⁵ Bell Jason. 2023. *Cracking The Nazi Code – The Untold Story Of Canada's Greatest Spy*. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower 22 Adelaide Street West, 41st Floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5H 4E3, 115,146,172-174

¹³⁶ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 9

¹³⁷ Bell 2023, 236-243

¹³⁸ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 9

¹³⁹ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 12

¹⁴⁰ Bell 2023, 155, 191-192

¹⁴¹ Boyko and English 2021. R.B. Bennett

He went one step further in an attempt to increase trade, by hosting the Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa in 1935. Although it eventually resulted in a 60 per cent increase of sales of Canadian goods sold in Britain with bilateral trade agreements elsewhere, it was not enough to assure his government's re-election in 1935.¹⁴²

Bennett's government achieved much good on behalf of his fellow Canadians. He reorganized the banks, promoted sound monetary policies, and establishing the CBC. Bennett thus helped to preserve and enhance the Canadian identity amongst his many other accomplishments.

Regardless the Depression worsened under his tenure despite Bennett acting early to deal with it. As prime minister, he did all in his power to stem the tide of the economic downturn. However, his main difficulty lay in the failure of sustaining a coherent program to satisfy the Canadian public. His persuasive powers in the British Empire to adopt preferential tariffs did bring some economic relief to Canada, but it did not go far enough to satisfy the electorate. At times Bennett appeared indecisive and ineffective. Sadly by 1934, he became increasingly isolated from both the electorate and his party. He faced major dissent from all sides.¹⁴³

Bennett's attention may also have been drawn elsewhere. He had to consider Canada in a changing world scene, which was becoming increasingly militaristic and belligerent, and its impacts on Canada. This was reflected by the deteriorating international situation abroad. Defence suddenly came on his horizon especially that of military or quasi-military questions between Canada and the United States.¹⁴⁴ In that time Churchill mused:¹⁴⁵

[BLOCK START]

Up till the year 1934, the power of the conquerors remained unchallenged in Europe and indeed throughout the war "There was no moment in these sixteen years when the former allies, or even Britain and France with their associates in Europe, could not, in the name of the League of Nation and under its moral and international shield, have controlled by a mere effort of the will the armed strength of Germany.

[BLOCK END]

Churchill recognized 1934 as a turning point in which the world through the League of Nations could no longer control Germany or its re-militarization. This was bolstered by the rise of fascism within Europe, and not just Germany alone.¹⁴⁶ The world was becoming increasingly hostile and belligerent year by year. This hostility and belligerence fueled economic injustices that exacerbated fiscal difficulties for some. The banking systems place great demands of

¹⁴² Boyko and English 2021. R.B. Bennett

¹⁴³ Boyko and English 2021. R.B. Bennett

¹⁴⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 154-155

¹⁴⁵ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 15-16

¹⁴⁶ Shirer, William L. 1984. *The Nightmare Years, 1930-1940, A Memoir of a Life and Times*. Little, Brown, And Company. Boston-Toronto, 83-86

repayment of loans and debts, particularly Germany. The pound of flesh approach was applied which national economies could ill afford. Churchill remarked:¹⁴⁷

[BLOCK START]

“Nothing was reaped except ill will....Thus the safeguard of a long peace was cast away.”

[BLOCK END]

The seeds of war had been sown. It was time to take measures to rebuild national defence and a time to build diplomacy for peace. It was a time to prepare for new roles in the world and call for assistance. And like it or not, Canada was soon approached for help.

In Anticipation of War

Canada was approached by the British government several years prior to the Second World War. The Royal Air Force (RAF) had very early designs on Canada as a possible training area into the late 1930's. The British and the RAF anticipated this need in the event of war. Canada was considered a safe haven, especially for pilot training that prompted negotiations for a shared program in 1936.

Negotiations began for training of Royal Air Force personnel in its great open spaces. It was a small project that was negotiated through 1938 and finally agreed to in 1939 that held promise for air training in future. But the declaration of the Second World War intervened before the first trainees ever arrived in Canada and the project renegotiated once more.¹⁴⁸ It was the antecedent of what was later to become the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) in Canada and what was known as the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) in Britain..

The negotiations for air training went far beyond the training of aircrew. It was just the tip of the iceberg that included requirements for airfields, access to open spaces and training areas as well. The British also sought contracts to bolster its defence industry requirements in the event of war.¹⁴⁹ Canada was reluctant to assist this requirement in the beginning given the poor contractual and economic returns as well as the state of its industrial capacity.

These early negotiations, well before the start of the Second World War, led the RCAF to purchase land in the eventuality of its need. Debert, NS in particular was one such location where land was purchased. ostensibly for the potential construction of an aerodrome. The land was purchased in the fall of 1938.

Based on the initial RAF negotiations from 1936-1938, land had been procured in anticipation of the program. Such purchases likely influenced the BCATP's Aerodrome Committee later in the final selection at the start of the war. The choice of Debert became an obvious one; the money had already been spent; the land already purchased.

¹⁴⁷ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 16

¹⁴⁸ Granatstein and Morton. 2003 ,178

¹⁴⁹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 198,206

The background behind all the hubris of defence spending was the sad fact that the world had become an increasingly belligerent and a hostile place. The need for preparation was seeded by the rise of fascism and its ambitions for world dominance. It was an environment in which retribution and expansionism held sway. In the interim between the two wars, crisis after crisis befell the League of Nations, the organization designed to contain conflict amongst nations and resolve disputes. It was based on peaceful coexistence as a mechanism to resolve conflict. It failed in its noble goals.

The winds of war were prevalent for all to see. It was evident from the Italian campaign in Ethiopia, a civil war in Spain, disgruntlement in the Far East, Japanese aggression in China, the treaties between Germany and Italy, the revolution in Spain, the German and Russian military experiments, all pointed to a coming war. It was evident to Britain that its defence planning based on a 10 year rule that assumed peace was no longer valid. An increase was warranted. Failure to act would leave Britain largely defenceless against the coming aggression and thus it was abandoned as early as 1932.¹⁵⁰

Appeasement was attempted to forestall the inevitable. It failed and war still loomed on the horizon in 1939. The path to war was all documented day by day, month by month in the daily news.¹⁵¹ The Germans were not dissuaded by any diplomatic paths to peace. Revenge had always been the basis of their plan as early as the end of the Great War.¹⁵²

The long interim between the two conflicts was merely regarded it as pause between wars. Although Germany was militarily weak, the Allies chose not to act at times when they could have influenced events prior to 1938. Hitler rightly sensed they had to no stomach or desire for war and pressed his luck to the chagrin of his generals.¹⁵³

End of an Idyllic Sojourn - First Steps

In the spring and summer of 1939, Canada and the world only hoped for the best, yet feared the worst. Still there were some bright spots in Canada that summer. One welcome diversion from the inevitable was the Royal Visit to Canada of their majesty's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (the Queen mother. Their storied visit occurred between 17 May and 15 June.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 50-51

¹⁵¹ Kee, Robert. 1993. *The World We Left Behind: A Chronicle of the Year 1939*. Weidenfeld, London ,1-2

¹⁵² Bell 2023 *Cracking The Nazi Code*, 62-63

¹⁵³ Ferenczi, Thomas X. 2021. *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich - 1933-1939*. Fonthill, the United Kingdom,130, 141

¹⁵⁴ Kee 1993. *The World We Left Behind*, 229

The Royals arrived in Canada that May to much fanfare, receiving warm welcomes wherever they travelled. The Royal Visit was a whirlwind tour with a side trip to the United States. By 15 June, the Royals made final stops in Nova Scotia at Pictou where they travelled by rail from New



Glasgow to Antigonish. Their visit soon ended thereafter. They sailed from Halifax and less than three months later, Canada and the world were at war.¹⁵⁵

It didn't seem so though on August 30, which was a typical summer day in the Strait of Canso area. It was a balmy 27C. It had not rained in days. But there was uncommon activity there.

On 30 August 1939, lead elements of the Pictou Highlanders arrived in Guysborough County. It was the beginning of a coming wave of military personnel to the county. Many military personnel of all Canada's Armed Services descended upon the Canso Strait Area and the eastern shore, most notably at Mulgrave and Port

Hawkesbury. It was just one of the many units mobilized that month. That activity proved ominous.

Winston Churchill's "The Gathering Storm" warned of the impending dangers. His persistent warnings, amongst other notables, were disparaged.¹⁵⁶ They were cast aside many times over in the court of public opinion. Churchill was considered a war monger. His warnings were largely ignored or discounted by world leaders until later proven in action, word, and deed by the late summer of 1939.

The public always held a vain hope for peace, that war could be avoided, and that any impending disaster could be averted at all costs, even through appeasement. Peace was the option truly desired. It was paid in kind through a treaty that ostensibly guaranteed peace in our time. But in the end, war was only delayed, it was the inevitable, and was the expected reality.

¹⁵⁵ Feltmate, Peggy . 2011 .*White Head Harbour, Guysborough County, NS - Its Stories, History and Families*. Toronto Canada, 2011 (fourth printing 2017), 99

¹⁵⁶ Shirer, William L. 1984. *The Nightmare Years, 1930-1940, A Memoir of a Life and Times*. Little, Brown, And Company. Boston-Toronto, 83-86

Hitler eventually attacked Poland on 1 September. Two short days later, Great Britain and France were at war with Germany. Behind the scenes, Canada made its vain last diplomatic efforts. The Canadian government cabled peace appeals to Germany, Italy, and Poland 26 August 1939.¹⁵⁷ Mackenzie King's diplomatic efforts had no effect.¹⁵⁸ What was to be, came to be.



National Defence Canada, Directorate of History and Heritage, DNS -29021 Aerial view of Naval Establishments at CFS Debert, ...

The Canadian 1938 land purchases were likely the forerunner that foretold the expansion of Canada's own air force in the deteriorating peace of the late 1930s. These purchases hint at the security and defence policy considerations of the day, that highlights that these security considerations pre-dated the war.¹⁵⁹

But so too were the reasons to prepare and later to forgo any agreement between Canada and Great Britain in 1938.

They are as familiar today as they were then. Negotiations lapsed, and nothing was agreed upon simply because of money, contributions, control, resources, and Canadian content.¹⁶⁰ In the end any agreement with the British was viewed by both Mackenzie King and the Canadian public to be inconsistent with the policy of "no commitments."¹⁶¹

Still, the prior purchase of land for an airfield in 1938 eased the way eventually for an airfield at Debert. It was one less thing in the growing pantheon of decisions, meaning that Debert and other areas would eventually play a significant role in the coming war.

It was also the beginning of the end of the Great Depression for many Canadian communities. Many would soon feel an economic boon as the result and succor of increased defence spending. And for many Canadians Britain's declaration of War 3 September 1939 and Canada's own

¹⁵⁷ Byers, A.R. (Ed.) 1986. *The Canadians at War 1939.45 2nd Ed.*, Reader's Digest Association (Canada Ltd), 215 Redfern, Westmount Quebec, H3Z 2V9., 12

¹⁵⁸ Ferenczi 2021., 247-248

¹⁵⁹ Air Force. 2010. "CFS / RCAF Station Debert Nova Scotia Canada." Copyright © AEROWAREdesigns 2010, Accessed: 13 December 2010

Source: <http://www.rcaf.com/Stations/stationsDetail.php?CFS-RCAF-Station-Debert-66>

¹⁶⁰ Hatch, F.J. 1983. *Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan 1939-1945*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 7-15

¹⁶¹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 223

separate declaration seven days later on the 10th became the beginning of the trials in six long years in the cauldron of war for many a young Canadian.

Chapter 3 – The Winds Of War 1938-1939 – Waking Up to Reality

Looming Threats

Canada, ill prepared for the Second World War, found its defence and security needs sorely lacking throughout the 1930s.¹⁶² This sorry situation was compounded by successive governments whose parsimony, reduced defence spending, and budgeting saw its military abandoned throughout that time on the altars of economy and efficiency. That tack might have been justified given the depression, whose priorities alone, directed government's interest elsewhere. It all led to program deferrals with no commitments. As such, continued reduced defence spending often resulted in neglect or disinterest to adequately fund Canada's own defence requirements. This occurred at a time of increasing belligerence in an ever increasing hostile world that was obviously in turmoil. But it was done, and done at risk, when the evidence suggested otherwise.¹⁶³

And favorable impression on the outside world. The day before, President . Canada was such an example.

The depression that began in 1929 had a great impact on Canada's economy. Public revenues declined noted in a free fall from 1929 from a high of \$460 million to 311 million some four years later. The government of then R.B. Bennett (1930-35) attempted to redress the issue. He did so through policies of retrenchment that saw sharp reductions in the already small expenditures on National Defence. In fiscal year 1930-31, expenditure on militia, naval, air and associated services was \$23,732,000. That allocation fell in 1932-33 to \$14,145,000. These small budgets were also tasked to serve some small provisions for unemployment relief and public works construction.¹⁶⁴ There was little surplus to engage outside needs.

The turning point for Defence came with the general election of 1935, that saw Bennett defeated by Mackenzie King and his return to power for a third mandate. King's re-election came at the height of the Ethiopia crisis. But both Canadians and the government had no thirst for foreign entanglements, so MacKenzie King essentially ran and governed with a policy of no commitments. Still King was very aware that as late as 1936, the country was being drawn:

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¹⁶² Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 12

¹⁶³ Ferenczi, Thomas X. 2021. *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich - 1933-1939*. Fonthill, the United Kingdom, 30-169

¹⁶⁴ Stacey, *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 1

“into international situations to a degree that I myself think is alarming.”¹⁶⁵

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King's fears did have an impact of Canadian defence policy.

King's government began to take measures to repair the gaps in the nation's defences. It began with a very modest program that initially saw no big bump to defence spending. In fact, the 1936-37 estimates for that fiscal year totalled \$29,986,749; a figure slightly less than the allocation of \$30,112,589 for the previous year. But it was in his reallocation of appropriations that benefitted the services. The estimates for the Militia rose by \$1,367,926 to \$12,018,926; those for the naval service doubled, to reach \$4,853,000. The appropriation for the air service (including, however, civil air operations) jumped by \$2,500,000 to reach \$6,809,215.¹⁶⁶

Tensions were rapidly rising around the world with conflicts in Ethiopia, Spain, and China. In Europe reoccupation of the Rhineland was particularly concerning,¹⁶⁷ By 1938 it all came to a head with Germany's annexation of Austria with domino consequences, something that had been prepared long in the offing.¹⁶⁸ The annexation of Austria led to Germany setting its eyes on Czechoslovakia with the annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938.¹⁶⁹ The final blow for Czechoslovakia came in the declaration of the Slovak state. Czechoslovakia had been effectively absorbed by Germany by March 14, 1939.¹⁷⁰ Few believed Hitler's continued assurances for peace and that his territorial desires were now satisfied.¹⁷¹ The line in the sand was Poland who was assurances of military assistance in the event of invasion.¹⁷² Germany then invaded September 1, 1939, that precipitated the Second World War.

[The Canadian Worry-Homeland Defence](#)

The lack of Canadian preparation was very evident as the war approached. This was especially so along Canada's two principal coasts where its maritime and trade interests became of immediate concern.

Canada's most feared threat in the event of war was in fact along the east and west coast. Here occasional seaborne nuisance raids were anticipated. These threats had to be planned for and

¹⁶⁵ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 2

¹⁶⁶ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 3

¹⁶⁷ Ferenczi 2021, 51

¹⁶⁸ Bell 2023 *Cracking The Nazi Code*, 200-203, 236-237

¹⁶⁹ Ferenczi 2021, 42-48, and

Beevor, Antony. 2013. *The Second World War*. Back Bay Books. Little, Brown And Company. New York Boston London Hachette Book Groups Hachette Book Group 237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017. May 2013, 53-61

¹⁷⁰ Wikipedia. 2023. "Occupation of Czechoslovakia (1938–1945)." Last modified 26 October 2023, at 23:26 (UTC). [Occupation of Czechoslovakia \(1938–1945\) - Wikipedia](#)

¹⁷¹ Shirer, William L. 1984. *The Nightmare Years, 1930-1940, A Memoir of a Life and Times*. Little, Brown, And Company. Boston-Toronto, 319-323

¹⁷² Ferenczi 2021, 185-186.

dealt with by all three services, Army, Navy, and Air Force. It involved all three in planning as elements of the enemy's capabilities impacted all.

Although Canada is bounded by three oceans, the Arctic was discarded from the calculus of defence requirement considerations. The Canadian Arctic was never considered an area of credible threat. It was viewed as an impenetrable obstacle at the time and therefore largely ignored. Canadian homeland defence was left to the Armed Forces to resolve each in their own way.

Anticipation - The RCAF

STRANGE SHIP RAISES FEARS OF FISHERMEN

Two-Masted Craft, Low
in the Water, Re-
ported by Voluntary
Police

Saint John, N.B., Sept. 14.—A radio warning to all shipping in the Bay of Fundy was sent out from the Red Head wireless station to-day, after fishermen reported to Marine Agent H. F. Morrissey last night that they had sighted a craft which might have been a submarine.

Fishermen told Morrissey they had sighted the vessel—which they said was low in the water and appeared to have two masts—two miles south east of Grand Manan.

The place where it was reported seen is about 50 miles southwest of Saint John harbor.

Fishermen along the New Brunswick coast have been organized into a voluntary police group, with one of their duties to report any suspicious craft or occurrences to coast officials.

Those who reported sighting the craft yesterday said it soon disappeared.

Air power was the solution to the RCAF's assessment of the situation. Canada was faced with a tremendous strategic problem to consider to which aviation technology was applied. With some 3.9 million square miles of territory to protect, only some 528,000 square miles were seen as critical approaches requiring active surveillance.¹⁷³ The Airforce's solution rested upon aviation technology.

Canadian territory presented a massive area to defend. Considering another perspective, the east coast, west coast, and arctic approaches totalled some 151,019 linear miles alone at the shoreline. Hidden in this seemingly boundless area, was a myriad of routes, with many sheltered spots, inlets, and so on.¹⁷⁴

The problem of the day centred on a consideration of air-borne attack. These approaches could be used by a well-placed enemy with a view to strike vital points. It was a complex problem that posed threats to Canada's seaborne trade, ports, industries, and cities. This is what the

advent and rapid technological advancement, in which the evolution and development of aircraft, truly portended.

Aircraft could now easily surmount geography, distance, time, and space. Aircraft could also carry tremendous loads over great distances, which was constantly evolving. The advancements in what became a large variety of air borne threats, clearly demonstrated the ever-changing number of sources or opportunities available to an enemy.

Despite the limitations of existing technologies, limitations could be easily overcome. Other means were available to a potential enemy such as overseas bases, or even aircraft launched from

¹⁷³ Coggon, Allan. 2004. *Watch and Warn*. Trafford Publishing Victoria, BC, Canada, 2004 2nd ed., 12.

¹⁷⁴ Wikipedia, Geography of Canada

Source: [Geography of Canada - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Canada)

Accessed: 30 Nov 2020

ships.¹⁷⁵ Thus, threats greatly concerned defence planners. There were far too many threats with far too few resources to deal with them all.

The enemy had long range aircraft at its disposal quite capable of one-way missions. But the potential threat was considered low throughout the war. Post-war analysis though concluded otherwise:

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“The development of long-range bombers, ... produced in the Second World War very realistic fears of a sudden air raid, particularly from the North...A study of a globe or a polar projection map indicates that the air distance from Norway to the Soo is practically the same as to New York, and Norway.... that the direct route of approximately 3000 miles passes over terrain where observers would be few and far between and winter nights long”.¹⁷⁶

[BLOCK END]

Fortunately, strategic long-range aircraft with roundtrip capability was never available to Germany. That development was greatly hindered by their lack of strategic materials and the demands of inter-service rivalry for them.¹⁷⁷

But a long-range strategic capability remained on the German drawing boards until the end of the war. But there always remained a possibility that such a strike, launched from and returning to German bases, existed, right to the bitter end. It remained one consideration that in the desperation of the turning tides of war, the enemy could launch a one-way, suicide mission.¹⁷⁸ Consequently, large military commitments were required in Canada, thus compounding the difficulties in Canadian defence planning and allocations. And these commitments and planning also extended to the Army in Canada.

Anticipation - The Army

For the Army, immediate mobilization was the solution in August 1939. The government set in motion preparations for the Army's defence of the country. But those preparations truly began in

¹⁷⁵ Coggon 2004. *Watch and Warn.*, 2

¹⁷⁶ Oglesby, R.B. 1950. *REPORT NO. 34, ARMY HEADQUARTERS 24 Jan 50 Canadian-American Co-operation in the Defence of Sault Ste. Marie, ~1941-1944* (released and declassified July 1986) , . Canada, National Defence Headquarters Ottawa, Directorate of History 4/40 Source: [Canadian-American Cooperation in the Defence of Sault Ste. Marie, 1941-1944 - Canada.ca](#), Last modified: 2018-10-09

¹⁷⁷ Griehl, Manfred. 2004. *Luftwaffe over America – The Secret Plans to Bomb the United States in Second World War.*, Greenhill Books, Paperback Edition 2016. Frontline Books – Pen & Sword Ltd. 47 Church Steet, Barnsley, S. Yorkshire, S70 2AS, translated by Geoffrey Brooks., 170-175

¹⁷⁸ Griehl 2004. 174, 193-194.

earnest that August. In truth, the government mobilized all of its reserve units the same day, 26 August.¹⁷⁹ Amongst the first mobilized were its artillery reserve units.

There were too few artillery units and far too many vital areas to protect. Regardless of the difficulties, it was concluded that three vital areas had to be immediately protected on Canada's east coast; two in Nova Scotia at Halifax and Sydney, and the other, at St John's New Brunswick.

Halifax was a key strategic location, considered second in importance to Liverpool, UK because of its location, refineries, docks, and troop embarkation points. It was also the location of vital stores held at the joint services magazine as well as an airport at Dartmouth.

Two threats were apparent for these vital areas. First, there was the physical threat of sabotage by the enemy, enemy aliens, or fifth column forces. The other threat emanated from the amassed potential of enemy forces either by air or by sea.

Both coasts faced similar challenges. It meant that preparation was always in a state of flux of continual planning under constantly changing conditions throughout the war.

The nation was ill-prepared for war in 1939. The Depression had taken its toll on the Canadian economy and support for any defence spending was very limited prior to the need. In an attempt to balance the books like many subsequent Canadian governments, Mackenzie King attempted to do so by cutting military expenditures. In 1933 the Canadian defence budget had fallen drastically to \$13 million. The result was that by 1939 the country was unable to defend its own coasts effectively.¹⁸⁰

Canada may not have been prepared for war, but it was prepared psychologically and politically to enter the fray without serious division or objection. But it came at a cost of MacKenzie King's no-commitment policy in the intervening years. The neglect of the military and other defence considerations prevented many important preparations from being made.¹⁸¹ There was a cost to deferral that became evident in many aspects of Canada's management of its interest during the Second World War.

Anticipation - The Royal Canadian Navy

The RCN's activities in the first nine months of the war were limited to protecting Canada's east coast and the approaches towards the West Indies. Canada's main responsibility at the time was with the organization of convoys. Two trained Royal Navy officers were dispatched from the UK to assist the RCN in that matter at Halifax.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Byers, A.R. (Ed.) 1986. *The Canadians at War 1939-45 2nd Ed.*, Reader's Digest Association (Canada Ltd), 215 Redfern, Westmount Quebec, H3Z 2V9., 12

¹⁸⁰ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 12

¹⁸¹ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 12

¹⁸² Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 310 (337/710)

The British Admiralty looked to Canadian participation from the very outset of the war. It was looking forward to the cooperation it enjoyed in 1914. But it was in the matter of “cooperation” that King and his government balked. King took a half in/half out approach at the initial stages.

The British Admiralty sent a memorandum September 6, 1939, to prod the Canadian government. They requested Canadian cooperation by placing its six destroyers under Admiralty orders. Given Canada’s past history and precedence of the Naval Act of 1911, Chief of the Canadian Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Percy W. Nelles, was quite prepared to accede to this request and advised his government to do so. This initial request was not passed, and neither was a subsequent request on 11 September 1939 although the RCN had been on active service since the first of September.¹⁸³

Mackenzie King was trying to limit his government’s exposure and commitment within the war.¹⁸⁴ “How much, how little?” But the gaining pressures of the day forced some decisions. Finally, some initial relief was offered by an order in council, 14 September that granted authority for the Canadian destroyers

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"to cooperate to the fullest extent with the forces of the Royal Navy".

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King’s decision in forestalling Canadian action requested by the Admiralty was a fundamental one. King and his government wished to reserve the right to decide whether or not to commit its naval forces regarding any specific theatre or operation. That decision must be theirs. But "co-operation" was never truly defined that left the employment and commitment of Canadian forces wide open to British interpretation.¹⁸⁵

Enemy activities in a nutshell until 1940, were largely confined to waters around the United Kingdom (UK). The U-boat threat around Canada’s East coast thus seemed both manageable and contained. That illusion was about to be burst by the summer and fall of 1940 when U-Boat activity increased around the Canadian approaches particularly after Dunkirk.¹⁸⁶

The Germans gained access to ports in the Bay of Biscay following the fall of France. This geographic fact brought the U-boat threat 1000km closer to the North American coast both in transit time and distance.¹⁸⁷ The quiet time for Canada ended 14 October 1940 when U99 and other set sail to wage war of the North America coast. It’s first victim was Convoy SC-7 out of

¹⁸³ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 308-309 (335–336/710)

¹⁸⁴ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 258

¹⁸⁵ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 308-309 (335–336/710)

¹⁸⁶ Edwards, Bernard. 2014. *Donitz and the Wolf Pack*, Pen & Sword Maritime, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS (first published 1996 by Arms and Armour Press), 21

¹⁸⁷ Edwards 2014. *Donitz and the Wolf Pack*, 21

Sydney, NS. Thirty five ships set sail of which 20 were lost.¹⁸⁸ It became increasingly evident that coastal and maritime defence were vital. The government was not idle in that regard prior to 1940.

Newfoundland also posed a unique opportunity for Canada. It was the first time, where the main Canadian, naval fighting force was concentrated, and more importantly, under Canadian command. It was also the one task that could be directly related to the defence of Canada and Canadian interests.¹⁸⁹ All was neither easy nor rosy for Canadian prospects regarding freedom of command and control in that theatre though. The Canadian assumption of responsibility was not smooth, there would be interlopers grasping for dominance and control in that theatre of operation.

The RCN's experience demonstrated the growing areas of Canadian responsibility and interest that would come with the war. Many areas had to be considered. It was both an eye opener and a lesson soon to be learned.

Canada's Declaration of War 10 Sep 1939

Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939. To many Canadians this date also marked the end of the Great Depression. A significant change and circumstance was to occur for many Canadians. In part it was to become a time of high adventure and drama, that for many, came to be the defining moment of their lives. But for the most part, the war ended economic destitution for it open the doors of investment and employment to all.

Great Britain declared war on Germany one week earlier than Canada. Canada's own and separate declaration was anticipated, but a suitable time was taken for appearances sake. Canada in this slight delay demonstrated its sovereignty and independence.

The interim also provided Parliament time for debate, to conduct a parliamentary vote, to ingest the consequences of such a decision, and finally to consider the public's desires before taking the country to war. Canada and the other Commonwealth nations eventually followed Great Britain's lead. In the end King adhered to a policy of:¹⁹⁰

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in matters of this kind, as the representatives of the people ... voice of the nation; parliament shall decide

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Canada's decision was taken with care and forethought.

¹⁸⁸ Edwards 2014. *Donitz and the Wolf Pack*, 34-47

¹⁸⁹ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 311 (338/710)

¹⁹⁰ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 197-198

Mackenzie King also took some diplomatic steps to forestall war with Hitler and Italy in the vain hope his diplomacy could persuade them from bringing a wider calamity upon the world.¹⁹¹ Those efforts failed but it wasn't from a lack of trying.¹⁹²

This delay in the declaration of war marked a firm change in Canada and in its maturation as a nation state. It highlights its growing independence, forethought in decision making, and the concerns of public interests required in its commitments as well. But in the end Canada quickly mobilized not only its military might but also the entire state and its economy as the means to conduct war.¹⁹³

In the meantime, Canadians anxiously awaited their government's decision. Many flocked to recruiting centres to join up to do "their bit." An influx of humanity soon arrived from near and far in the hurry to join up. People moved about in common cause and with purpose. Strangers from all parts of Canada, even different parts of the world, were brought together for the fight and the trials and tribulations ahead. The war seemed to unify Canadians to a common cause.

Such a movement within Canada's population was unprecedented. The great mobilization brought together men and woman of differing backgrounds and circumstances as they were recruited either for military or industrial service. The sudden presence of uniformed men and women was the simple reminder to all, that Canada, was indeed at war.

But there was more to it than joining up. The scope varied but people weren't just joining up for military service, many moved to jobs that needed filling! In "Doing their bit" was the stimulus both for the government and people to act in which a death knell fell on the Great Depression.

The country's mobilization towards war meant full employment across the Canadian economy. The war proved to be a boom! Also, the influx of people from all walks of life, locked in a common purpose, poised to break Canadian insularity.

New faces and strangers soon gathered in the staid communities and establishments across Canada. The newcomers posed a significant challenge. Community traditions and cycle of life, which had remained unchanged like the rising and the setting of the sun for generations, were about to be tested. But this influx also fueled prosperity!

The war brought both prosperity and nuisance that placed pressure on Canadian communities for space and resources. The growth of the Canadian military, the sudden rise of recruitment, and the concomitant demand for facilities and space required to grow and train, was most challenging. But still many communities rose to meet that challenge as many greatly benefitted both in seen

¹⁹¹ Toronto Telegram. 1939. Canada Must Remain Cool In Face Of Crisis Abroad Mackenzie King Asserts. August 31, 1939. [5061_088_096-001-007.pdf](https://collections.museedelhistoire.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5061088).

Source: <https://collections.museedelhistoire.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5061088>

¹⁹² Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 215-219

¹⁹³ Dingman, Harold. 1939. "Canada Placed on War Footing in Rapid Moves. *Globe and Mail*, 2 Sep 1939

Source: [5054_839_085-068-022.pdf](https://collections.museedelhistoire.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5054_839_085-068-022.pdf)

Accessed: 14 November 2023

and unseen ways. The mass migration of Canada's young and old, from places near and far, was an indication of how quickly Canada mobilized for war.

But at the highest levels of government, there remained great concern for how deeply Canada would be involved immediately prior to the war.¹⁹⁴ King set the tone at the sitting of Parliament in January 1939. He lost no time in presenting his convictions of the growing state of the seriousness of the world situation. Inevitably he laid the foundation that if Britain was at war, Canada would be too.¹⁹⁵ Making a case and laying the foundation was not a commitment though. When pressed later by the British who asked for a clarification that Canada was behind them in whatever course they make take, King made no statement of support in the House.¹⁹⁶ King held firm. He held his cards close to his chest hoping that war could be averted by saying nothing.

Greater and deeper involvement in the evolving war would come later. This ensured that certain limits to the government policy of containment would be through limited liability and no commitments. It happened that despite King and his government's reluctance to commit fully and openly, public opinion played against them all as public opinion favoured greater involvement.¹⁹⁷ King's problem then became a balancing act and a fine line for the government who did not wish growing involvement.

Early desires

Mackenzie King's expectations for managing the war from the onset was to limit Canada's involvement, especially of its armed forces.¹⁹⁸ King, as did many Canadians, never relished the thought of war. But King did not appreciate what the sacrifice of Canada's "active" service during the Great War portended.¹⁹⁹

In the spring of 1919, newly elected Prime Minister Mackenzie King took a trip overseas where he met Sir Arthur Currie. Currie conducted King across the battlefields where Canadians fought and died. Most were major decisive battles in which Canada never lost a gun. It was a record no other army had. King was impressed by Currie's description that suggested military prowess, resolve, and strength of the citizen soldier to do one's duty that likely influenced him later.²⁰⁰ That record suggested that Canada could get by with very little in the beginning and still achieve great results. Regardless, the open sores and suffering of the Great War were still all too recent. Thus, King and so too, the public, desired a limited Canadian role at least in the beginning.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 215

¹⁹⁵ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 237

¹⁹⁶ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 242

¹⁹⁷ Berton, Pierre. 2001. *The Great Depression*, Anchor Canada, A division of Random House of Canada Ltd. (Paperback edition), 499

¹⁹⁸ Berton, Pierre . 2001. *The Great Depression - 1929-1939*, 499

¹⁹⁹ Stacey 1977. *Canada And The Age Of Conflict Volume I*, 238

²⁰⁰ Stacey 1977. *Canada And The Age Of Conflict Volume I*, 238

²⁰¹ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 100-101,132-133

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was the sop designed to that end. Canada's sole major contribution was allegedly to be the BCATP, the "aerodrome of democracy" for the training of Allied aircrews on Canadian soil.²⁰² Regrettably to King's dismay, matters did not unfold as intended.

King signed the BCATP on 17 December 1939, coincidentally his birthday, three and a half months after the declaration of Canadian hostilities.²⁰³ But King's desire for limited participation would all be for naught. All of Canada's armed forces and industry were eventually engaged and employed toward winning the war because of a change of circumstances and public opinion.

Almost a year to the day of the signing of the BCATP, a contingent of the Canadian Army was dispatched overseas 16 December 1940 in four waves.²⁰⁴ The Royal Canadian Navy was not idle in the meantime as it too was engaged assisting in convoy duties right from the outset of the war. Canada's war effort instead of being limited, was continually growing, and expanding. The despatch of the Army overseas was the cherry on the cake in the realm of rising commitments overseas that Mackenzie King wished to avoid.

To his chagrin, it came to his knowledge only after the contingent was despatched, that the British desired that Canada's major contribution to be solely the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. There was a need in the air training of personnel set out in discussions between 19-26 September 1939. Had that been known with King's full knowledge subsequent to these discussions 10 days earlier, King would have never sent the Army overseas at that time.²⁰⁵ But once in, it was difficult if not impossible to reverse course.

Other considerations

The task of defending the country was enormous given Canada's limited resources. It led the government to look elsewhere and towards the generosity of others. This was found with those who had similar strategic interests; particularly in North America. Amongst the first looked too was the United States for assistance along the west coast. But regrettably US policy limited any intervention because of its isolationism and a declaration of neutrality.²⁰⁶ But there was also a very strong US public attitude against intervention.

The seeds of US discontent were planted well before the Great War. It was further cultured between 1918 and 1939 that hindered any great interest or support. That led to the declared American isolationist policy of neutrality.²⁰⁷ That attitude limited any possible assistance both politically and diplomatically.

²⁰² Hatch, 1983., 1-2

²⁰³ Hatch, 1983., 1

²⁰⁴ Stacey, C.P. Major, Historical Officer. 1940. CMHQ Report #1. *First Report of Historical Officer, Canadian Military Headquarters*. 2 Cockspur Street, London, England, 31 Dec 1940

²⁰⁵ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 274

²⁰⁶ Parrish, Thomas. 2009. *To Keep The British Isles Afloat – FDR'S Men in London, 1941*. Smithsonian Books, HarperCollins Publishers, 10 East 59th Street, New York, NY 10022. 42-43, 72

²⁰⁷ Cooper, John Milton, Jr. 1990. *Pivotal Decades – The United States, 1900-1920*, 237-238

The Canadian Chiefs of Staff thus, were confronted with a problem, one that left them dealing with on their own, protecting Canada's coast line and sea approaches. They recognized one fact; most British naval forces were concentrated in areas other than the Pacific. They concluded that the Canadian West Coast was theoretically more exposed than the Atlantic seaboard. And as a matter of course, would be more vulnerable to the anticipated isolated hit-and-run attacks by submarines, surface craft, or even amphibious raiding parties.²⁰⁸

As the government was unprepared to invest in Defence, the best the Service Chiefs could do was plan for any eventuality and prepare as best they could with what they had at hand. So, the senior officers of the three Canadian services on the East and West Coasts met irregularly and informally to discuss joint defence plans and matters of common interest.

One such meeting held 18 July 1938 took Canada's defence organization to a higher level. In this meeting, the Joint Staff Committee formalized an arrangement to establish Joint Service Committees at Halifax, Nova Scotia; Saint John, New Brunswick; and Victoria, British Columbia.

The three Joint Service Committees became responsible for coordinating matters of local defence. Their concerns not only included coastal defence, but also a wider range of needs in their respective jurisdictions. The wider considerations included the protection of defence establishments, certain vital points; such as, along railways and canals, oil depots, drydocks, cable landing-places, wireless stations, and hydro-electric plants to name a few.

Significantly, the committees reported to the Joint Staff Committee on measures for coordinating local defence, and each committee member remained responsible to the head of his own service.²⁰⁹ This was clearly indicative of a high degree of inter-service cooperation in planning. Such planning also gave due regard to the requirements of mutual support and priorities, even if "protected" by geography and the defence investments and possibly the defence policies of others.²¹⁰ Canada was on its own and had to be prepared to defend the homeland on its own merits.

Canadian domestic security interests appeared to be neither immediate nor pressing problems. It was only in the early summer of 1940 that the defence of Canadian territory appeared to be truly threatened. Only then did it become a true concern.²¹¹ Until that time, geography appeared to guarantee Canada's security, but that guarantee was lost with the defeat of the British and Allied Armies on the continent in Europe at their evacuation at Dunkirk. With that withdrawal came the

²⁰⁸ Stacey, *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 130

²⁰⁹ Stacey, *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 130

²¹⁰ Cunningham, D.H. 1949. *Army participation in measures taken by the three services for the security of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the lower river during the period of German submarine activity, 1942-45*. Report No. 30, Historical Section (G.S.) Army Headquarters, 18 November 1949. Canada. National Defence. Directorate Of History And Heritage. Last edited: 9 October 2018, [Army participation in measures taken by the three services for the security of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the lower river during the period of German submarine activity, 1942-45 - Canada.ca](#)

²¹¹ Cunningham 1949. Report No. 30

possibility of invasion and defeat of Great Britain.²¹² More importantly Germany had access to the Channel ports that increased the range of their U-boats.²¹³ This meant that the enemy could now bring all its focus, power and might directed towards Canada. This drove a reassessment of the strategic requirements within our borders.²¹⁴

The Army actually contributed heavily to the defence of Canada. The main effort was found in supplying internal security forces, and by manning fixed defences. Much was done to create a quick reaction force that provided mobile reserves, to be employed in the counterattack in the event of attack on coastal areas.

In those early months of the conflict, the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) chief task was the defence of Canadian coastal waters. However, this task was soon overshadowed by other matters that became more pressing. The RCN's primary role soon and quickly evolved in the coming Battle of the Atlantic to convoy protection. The U-boat issue became so pressing that it was Churchill's most dreaded fear.²¹⁵ He declared the Battle of the Atlantic in order to resolve it.²¹⁶ The RCN's focus now was clearly the protection of transatlantic shipping that was a heavy burden.

The Battle of the Atlantic hung in the balance and remained in doubt from the spring of 1941 to the end of 1943.²¹⁷ It fell to the Royal Canadian Air Force to assist the RCN in its defence of Canadian coastal waters. That assistance lay in the provision of bomber reconnaissance and escort aircraft in cooperation. It took the pressure off to assist the Royal Canadian Navy and its assets to guard our coastal waters and transiting convoys.²¹⁸

The Canadian Chiefs of Staff held the view that no invasion of Canada was possible so long as Britain held out. But there was the possibility that Britain would be invaded and then conquered. This possibility dangled over their heads. The Canadian Chiefs had no choice but to look forward. They believed that in the eventuality if Britain fell, the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force would probably be based in Canada. But their concerns also took them further afield from considerations of assets to a strategic view of the importance of Iceland that was ripe for conquering and for the utilization by the German as a potential base. Their challenge in all this

²¹² Edwards, Bernard. 2014. *Donitz and the Wolf Pack*, Pen & Sword Maritime, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS (first published 1996 by Arms and Armour Press), 21

²¹³ Helliwinkell, Lars. 2014. *Hitler's Gateway to the Atlantic – German Naval Bases in France-1940-1945*, Seaforth Publishing- Pen & Sword Ltd., 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS, 1988, (Translated by Geoffry Brooks), 16-24, 48-49

²¹⁴ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 131

²¹⁵ Doherty, Richard. 2015. *Churchill's Greatest Fear – The Battle of the Atlantic 3 September 1939 to 7 May 1945*. Pen & Sword (Military), 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS, xvi

²¹⁶ Churchill, Winston S. 1950. *The Grand Alliance*. Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 122-123

²¹⁷ Roskill, Stephen. 2013. *Churchill And The Admirals*. Pen & Sword Military, 4 Church Street Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS 228-231

²¹⁸ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 131

was quite simple, to provide an adequate defence against probable scales of attack without lessening the effort in their one decisive theatre of war, Great Britain.²¹⁹

Economics Sets The Tone For Action

When nations are faced with the failure of politics and diplomacy, their survival may depend upon the prudent use of military force.²²⁰ Ultimately war and the use of military force, may be constrained by economics. Economics is fundamental to a nation's capacity and ability to wage war. That capacity and ability are found in desired measurable outcomes.²²¹

Economics is therefore a limitation to ambitions. It is a basis upon which nations are obliged to consider for the efficient utilization of resources, and appropriately, in the deliberation of war.²²² It may form a foundation of alliances and in the allocation of scarce resources, of what is brought to the table of an alliance, and how it is to be paid for, equitably.²²³

The resources during the Second World War, apart from manpower and military might, were largely based on agricultural and industrial capacity. The Achilles tendon for Great Britain and the *schwerpunkt* for German strategy, lay in Britain's dependence on imports for foodstuffs and war materiel. Thus, both the perseverance or destruction of Britain's merchant marine and its capacity to carry goods across vast distances lay at the heart of its survival and ability to continue to wage war.²²⁴ Therefore, there is no doubt of the importance of economics during the Second World War.²²⁵

Canada as a Purveyor of Goods and Services

Canada had a huge role to play both as an ally and as a supplier of goods and services to Britain during the war. Canada was a key purveyor of agricultural goods, a financier, and a key source of war materiel in the very early days of the war. Consequently, these directed preliminary defence considerations and dispositions.

Canadian strategic and commercial interests in 1939 were founded on trade and access to world markets. These placed an emphasis specific to the defence of both its east and west coast ports. These were sensitive areas, which had to be protected as they were vulnerable to any enemy's potential actions. Canada's interests also extended southwards especially along its east coast

²¹⁹ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 131

²²⁰ Clausewitz, Carl Von (Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret).1993. *On War*. Everyman's Library, A BORZOI Book published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, New York, USA and Random House of Canada Ltd, Toronto, Canada, 731-737

²²¹ Sandler, Todd, and Keith Hartley. 1995. *The Economics of Defense*. Cambridge University Press. Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, Great Britain, 10-11

²²² Shihing, Yuan and AL Duyvendak (translators).1998, Sun Tzu, 63

²²³ Sandler and Hartley 1995, 19-51

²²⁴ Williams, Andrew. 2003. *The Battle of the Atlantic – Hitler's Gray Wolves of the Sea and the Allies Desperate Struggle to Defeat them*. Basic Books – A member of Perseus Book Group, 103-105

²²⁵ Shihing, Yuan and AL Duyvendak (translators).1998, Sun Tzu, 63

towards markets in the West Indies and Caribbean. It was these small nations that supplied trade goods, minerals, and oil that were necessary for both industrial production and the war effort.²²⁶

The Caribbean and West Indies posed a conundrum as a strategic interest for Canada. Lloyd George once proposed in the aftermath of the Great War that Canada take over its administration. Lloyd George's suggestion established at the very least, a view towards Canada strengthening an already existing interest there, principally as a key trading partner.²²⁷

The West Indies and the Caribbean in particular were key to Canadian food and energy security. There were other strategic resources as well. Canada offered in exchange trade in meat, commercial goods, and tourism.²²⁸ So a connection and interest to the Caribbean were well developed before the war.

All these led Canada to a consideration of its own strategic approaches especially as the way to the Caribbean lay along its east coast through the Strait of Canso.²²⁹ Any particular areas, approaches or assets associated with that trade had to be given some modicum of protection. This placed a definite focus and priority towards Canada's east coast, interestingly, towards the Strait of Canso in particular. The Strait proved to be a vital choke point in of itself.²³⁰

Apart from the Caribbean and West Indies, the Strait of Canso, was a key strategic gateway leading to or from the island of Cape Breton. Sydney was home to a steel plant, vital to Canada's war production. Cape Breton was also a major supplier of coal to the country. All manufactured goods, steel, coal, passed through there on the key link and transportation rail hub.

The transported goods crossed the Strait of Canso between Mulgrave and Port Hawkesbury on a railway ferry moving goods and vital supplies. The Strait was also an open gateway to marine traffic. It was through the Strait of Canso that Canadian National Steamships and other marine interests passed on their way to the Caribbean and American ports in their travels south. Finally, it was also a communication hub in which vital world communications passed on trans-Atlantic cable links located there at Hazel Hill NS.

To improve Canadian economic prospects and trade relations, five ships, "The Lady Boats," were designed and built for the Canadian National Steamship (CNS) line in the 1920s. Some of the Lady Ships carried cargo and passengers through the Strait on their way south to the Caribbean. They were the pleasure cruisers of the day outfitted with great opulence to attract

²²⁶ Morton 1985, 185

²²⁷ MacMillan 2003, 47

²²⁸ Hanington, Felicity and Captain Percy A. Kelly, M.B.E.1980. *The Lady Boats – The Life and times of Canada's West Indies Merchant Fleet*, Canadian Marine Transportation Centre, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada, 13-15

²²⁹ Hanington and Kelly. 1980. 23

²³⁰ Madigan, Gerry. 2019. *The Canso Defence Area - The Second World War on the Home Front*, Shubenacadie E, NS, Canada, (ISBN 978-0-9959203-3-0), 23 Augusts 2019. madiganstories.com. 10 (11/205)

paying passengers. But it was always a tough go for them, as the ships were built and put into service just as the Great Depression hit Canada.²³¹

There were two lines for the fleet for the provision of service to the West Indies. The western line made its home port at Montreal and the eastern line at Halifax. “Western” and “Eastern” do not mark the dispositions of the ships at their home ports in Canada. They reflect a designation of the routes taken by the fleet through the Caribbean.

The western route departing from Montreal ventured down the St Lawrence and then turned in the Gulf toward the Strait of Canso. Their path took the boats through the Strait onto the broad Atlantic in their journey to the Caribbean.²³² These ships would have been familiar sights as they passed through the Strait of Canso whose passage is now limited by the Causeway and Canal.

All these assets had to be protected to ensure the free flow of goods and services either east and west or north and south as they were all vital to Canada during the war. More importantly, commerce broadened Canadian diplomatic interests and focused concerns beyond its borders. And with that came commitments and liabilities that could not be ignored. In effect these brought outside interests under the consideration and consequently, the protection of the Canadian defence umbrella.

Luckily, the enemy’s activities in a nutshell until 1940, were largely confined to waters around the United Kingdom (UK). The U-boat threat around Canada’s East coast thus seemed both manageable and contained. That illusion was about to be burst by the summer and fall of 1940 when U-Boat activity increased around Canadian approaches particularly after Dunkirk.²³³

As the Germans gained access to port in the Bay of Biscay following the fall of France, the U-boat threat was now 1000km closer to the North American coast. It greatly reduced transit time and distance.²³⁴ This was beneficial strategically. A U-boat could now remain on station longer and also it increased their number at sea at any one time allowing German tactics to evolve.²³⁵

The quiet time for Canada ended 14 October 1940 when U99 and other set sail to wage war off the North America coast. It’s first victim was to be Convoy SC-7 out of Sydney . Thirty five ships set sail of which 20 were lost.²³⁶ It became increasingly evident that coastal and maritime defence were vital. The government was not idle in that regard prior to 1940. The march to war began August 1939.

A Wave of Military Might Unleashed

²³¹ Hanington and Kelly. 1980. 13

²³² Hanington and Kelly. 1980. 23

²³³ Edwards, Bernard. 2014. *Donitz and the Wolf Pack*, Pen & Sword Maritime, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS (first published 1996 by Arms and Armour Press), 21

²³⁴ Edwards 2014. *Donitz and the Wolf Pack*, 21

²³⁵ Williams 2003. *The Battle of the Atlantic*, 64-67, 83

²³⁶ Edwards 2014. *Donitz and the Wolf Pack*, 34-47

Canada anticipated the coming war by several weeks. The armed forces were mobilized well before, commencing in Nova Scotia 30 August 1939 for example. The lead elements of the Pictou Highlanders were in the vanguard of the country's activity, arriving in Guysborough County Nova Scotia. It was the harbinger of things to come.²³⁷ Shortly after young and old alike, men and women, would come from all parts of the country either to join up or to fill roles in Canada's growing defence needs.²³⁸

This was the first taste of military activity though that was prevalent in the Canso Strait Area and the eastern shore of Nova Scotia. Areas immediately impacted were at Mulgrave and Port Hawkesbury.

The Pictou Highlanders also later occupied quarters at Hazel Hill NS. The Highlanders rented some space from the Commercial Cable Company to house a total of 25 men.. The Commercial Cable Company itself was a vital point and a key communication link between the old and new world.²³⁹

Another Canadian sphere of strategic interest and influence much closer to home was Newfoundland, then the one remaining British colony in continental North America.

Newfoundland posed a unique opportunity for Canada. It was the first time, where the main Canadian, naval fighting force was concentrated, and more importantly, placed under Canadian command. It was also the one task that could be directly related to the defence of Canada and Canadian interests.²⁴⁰ All was neither easy nor rosy for Canadian prospects regarding freedom of command and control in that theatre though. Canada's assumption of responsibility was not smooth. There would be interlopers grasping for power, dominance, and control in that theatre of operation. Lend lease complicated matters with the gift of 50 old destroyers from the US prior to their entry in the Second World War. The USN assistance in convoy duty also muddied matters with its provisions regarding command. The USN complicated full control.²⁴¹

Adm King (USN) became de facto chief in the area as a condition of the US loan of its 50 destroyers. Adm King took it upon himself to direct RCN resources where in some cases he had neither jurisdiction nor responsibility without Canadian concurrence. The US also sought to displace Canadian interest by seizing control of some bases bought and paid for by Canada that were initially destined for RCN and Canadian servicemen. Thus, Canada's future sovereign interests in its relationship with Newfoundland were potentially impacted. The Canadian cabinet paid little heed to the subtext of these moves indicating their little understanding particularly of

²³⁷ Madigan 2019. The Canso Defence Area, 10

²³⁸ Feltmate, Peggy . 2011. *White Head Harbour – Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, Its Stories, History and Families*. Toronto, Canada, 2011 (4th printing 2017), 104-106

²³⁹ Canada, National Defence, Dead Files 46-4-2, "S&T Services, Accommodation for Troops, Strait of Canso Area, 321.009 (D265) Correspondence, Reports, Returns, Requests, Etc. RE ACCN for Troops in Strait of Canso Area, D/15 Sep 1939 / 16 Mar 1940," Initial Dispositions and Accommodations worked out by 25 Sep 1939, 4/97

²⁴⁰ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 311 (338/710)

²⁴¹ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 311-314 (338-341/710)

Canadian naval interests. The matter was finally resolved by a naval conference of June 1943 that was reluctantly attended by Adm King (USN).²⁴²

Adm King (USN) posed difficulties for Rear-Admiral Murray (RCN) who was eventually placed in command April 30, 1943. Murray's command assumed the responsibility for the protection of convoys to and from the British Isles, north of New York City and west of the 47th meridian. Murray's command was always subjected to scrutiny by the United States who retained general strategic control of the Western Atlantic. Any action or moves within that area thus required the concurrence of the commander of the U.S. Eastern Sea Frontier. This created no end of difficulties for Murray's command.²⁴³

The ocean area in which Murray had a direct concern, suffered continual interference and direction from the commander of the U.S. Eastern Sea Frontier in its ongoing operations. Regardless for the first time, the Royal Canadian Navy had responsibility for actions in a specific theatre. The RCN had assumed command responsibilities commensurate to the contribution it had long been making to the Battle of the Atlantic.²⁴⁴ But accountability and control for those actions within this mixed control system remained both difficult and tortuous.

It was propitious that when this change was made, the bitterest phase of the Battle of the Atlantic was nearing its end. The tide had turned in May 1943, where at least 41 U-boats were sunk.²⁴⁵

In retrospect, the world had changed and Canada's place in it changed too. Change was not gradual; it was dramatic as the previous cases demonstrate. The war pointed new areas for Canada's in which Canada as a nation would have to assert itself. Change would alter the nature of discourse both at home and abroad. Change would also alter the perception of Canada as a nation. Change was inevitable

Into the Maw of War

The Second World War had a great impact on Canada and the lives of Canadians. The war changed everything. Mobilization went far beyond military mobilization. It required the coordination and control of industry, productivity, and economy that affected all Canadians.

The major impact of the war saw full employment soon across the land, and with it, the end of the Depression. Prosperity came, something not felt in a generation! This prosperity though also placed Canada on a footing of "Total War."²⁴⁶ It was a new state of the nation's economy as it steadily gravitated to greater commitment and liabilities. It was a byproduct of participation that occurred despite Mackenzie King government's reluctance to "get involved."²⁴⁷

²⁴² Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 311-314 (338-341/710)

²⁴³ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 314 (341/710)

²⁴⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 314 (341/710)

²⁴⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 314 (341/710)

²⁴⁶ Wright, Gordon. 1968. *The Ideal of Total War 0 1939-1945*. Waveland Press Inc, Prospect Heights, Illinois, USA

²⁴⁷ Pierre Berton, *The Great Depression - 1929-1939* (Toronto: Doubleday, 2001), , 499, and

The greater story of the Second World War goes beyond the mobilization of its military forces and requirements. What is often lost are the concomitant impacts on the Canadian economy but more importantly its other impacts on Canadian industrial capacity and the balancing of resources therein. Its tentacles were often felt through Canadian manpower, industrial, economic policies, and surprisingly, in social policies as well. The war footing caused a fundamental paradigm shift in all aspects of Canada's transition to a modern economy and middle power in the 20th century. That didn't necessarily happen over night. But the war certainly set Canada on a significant path for change.²⁴⁸

The war brought both prosperity and nuisance that placed pressure on Canadian communities for space and resources. The growth of the Canadian military, the sudden rise of recruitment, and the concomitant demand for facilities and space required to grow and train, was most challenging. But still many communities rose to meet that challenge. Many greatly benefitted in seen and unseen ways.

The Depression deeply affected the psyche of an entire generation. A family could have a job one day and easily be on the dole and destitute the next. The Depression was total devastation that laid to waste hope. Hope for the future was lost in the lack of employment or in the closures of local factories or businesses. Canada's economy steadily declined and became moribund.

The depression was an uneasy time, a time of fear, a time of desperation and of great worry. An air of pestilence prevailed that would not dissipate until the country's economy was once again back on track. To those who lived through the dirty thirties that recovery seemed a long way off.

Year after year, Canada's population languished interminably under the weight of desperation from the government's parsimony and lack of opportunity. Ironically change finally came with government spending during the war. Until that spending happened, the decade of the 1930's was a dark place of want and despair that became firmly entrenched in the collective memory of many Canadian families.

The flood gates of public spending opened, and so too did the mood of the nation. The doors to prosperity opened for many small rural communities a tremendous economic boom. It was the government spending on national defence that broke the back of the Great Depression. Prosperity gained momentum throughout the Second World War. Public spending changed the face of Canada.

The influence of proliferate and targeted public spending was one "lesson learned" for many in government and in public service at the time. It was not without its critics though. John G. Diefenbaker, a future Prime Minister, had a lot to say about public spending over the course of

Canada, Minister of National Defence, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS -THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA 1939 – 1945, C. P. STACEY, S.M., O.B.E., C.D., A.M., Ph.D., D.Litt., LL.D., F.R.S.C. ,Colonel (Retired), Canadian Army, Late Director Historical Section, General Staff, Professor of History, University of Toronto, The Queen's Printer for Canada Ottawa, 1970, 137-145

²⁴⁸ Brady, Alexander, and F.R. Scott. 1943. *Canada After The War – Studies in Political, Social, and Economic Policies for Post-War Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945), 348pg

the war.²⁴⁹ But the impacts of social and economic change that came with public spending were clearly evident and could not be ignored either.²⁵⁰ It was a lesson not lost on the government of the day. It was one way in which government's recognized the benefits that also arose from "liability and commitment." It was an influence that was also well observed by all Canadians at the time. One that was deeply felt on a personal level. Canadians suddenly found employment and for many, were no longer destitute.

Public spending and concomitant investments favoured a continuance of such fiscal policies and direction well after the war. Canadian investments not only paved the road to victory; but they also paved the way ahead for Canada's post war future. Fiscal policy became a government policy instrument. There was a value to "liability and commitment." But it would prove to be a two edge sword that had to be carefully balanced.

It was evident too many Canadians, that September 10, 1939, the day Canada declared war on Nazi Germany, which ended our government's fiscal parsimony, marked the end of the Great Depression. A country that had been unable to find work or succour for about one fifth of its population during the Dirty 30's and Great Depression, suddenly and miraculously found work for all during the war! And "All" included women, young boys and girls, and old men.²⁵¹ Canadian manpower and social policy, as well as the views of politicians and Canadians, would evolve and change both during and after the war.²⁵² Canada had changed indeed!

Chapter 4 – The Winding Road of Policy and Change

Setting The Way

Mackenzie King, a most adversarial member of the Commonwealth, was a reluctant supporter of Britain at the beginning of the Second World War.²⁵³ The other Commonwealth members expected a spirit of mutual support, consensus, and cooperation within the group. But King was autonomist by nature.²⁵⁴ King tended to forge his own path eschewing the one Robert Borden proposed for the Commonwealth following the Great War.

Borden's vision was simple . The Commonwealth would ideally be an organization based on solidarity, of one voice, forged with a common purpose based on consultation.²⁵⁵ Borden's policy aim therefore was geared with an emphasis toward mutual cooperation within the group and for

²⁴⁹ Anon. 1943. "Debert Described As An Efficient Camp, Ralston Says NS Development Best In Dominion Is Said Effectual, Answers Diefenbaker Who Says Choice Of Site Is Little Short Of A Disgrace." The Montreal Gazette, 1 June 1943, 6 also found at:

[5022_708_039-022-001.pdf](#)

²⁵⁰ Madigan, Major Gerry D. CD, MA (Retired), .2013. *The Crucible for Change: Defence Spending in Debert, Nova Scotia, during World War II*. THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE JOURNAL VOL. 2 | NO. 1 WINTER 2013

²⁵¹ Berton, Pierre . 2001. *The Great Depression - 1929-1939* (Toronto: Doubleday), 503-504

²⁵² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 397-398 (426-427/710)

²⁵³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 242

²⁵⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 89

²⁵⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 138

its unity of purpose.²⁵⁶ This also implied policies of common views and commitments for the common good. It was based on traditional ties to Britain that bound all whether in matters of defence or economy. Borden's vision was premised on the Dominion's contributions in blood and treasure during the Great War.²⁵⁷

King desired otherwise. King tended to an independent path in his design of Canadian policy. King was much more aloof and belligerent towards his colleagues. As such, King tended to distance himself from engaging on political matters with his Dominion peers on either national or international interests.²⁵⁸ He was wedded to his concept of "no commitments" or no foreign entanglements.²⁵⁹ King's objections lay with the potential of "commitments" that he saw as jeopardizing in the path of Canadian sovereignty and independence. He also weighed his political welfare in these matters as well.²⁶⁰

His force of character emphasized the need for Canadian independence. In this was fixed certain overtones of withdrawal or hesitancy.²⁶¹ These traits tended to hold his administration back from any real desire to either hold or gain influence or power in the higher direction of the war. After all, that would entail "commitments." King had competent men around him, but none had the force of character, nor background, nor inclination to buck him.²⁶² That was on one level, on another was the lack of institutional support or structure.

There were no formal structures built into the Commonwealth that would bring the Dominion ministers into the British Cabinet in the event of war or calamitous event. Any such arrangements were always made on an ad hoc basis and dealt with crisis by crisis at the time. These involvements were also avoided along the way as it would mean a surrendering of sovereign gains.²⁶³

The Dominions' struggle for independence was finally resolved through the Westminster Act of 1931 that granted total independence and sovereignty.²⁶⁴ What was not lost was the requirement for a new method or organization designed to deal with it all. Initially it was considered that it could be achieved through participation in an Imperial War Cabinet in matters of defence, but Canada deferred participation in such a body.²⁶⁵ Regardless, that was something war later would not allow; time for due process, proper consideration, agreement, and implementation. That was on an international basis. Canada had difficulty with the organization of defence within its own house to adequately deal with the needs and issues of such a conflict.

²⁵⁶ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 41-42

²⁵⁷ Stacey 1977. *Canada And The Age Of Conflict Volume 1*, 204 & 239,

²⁵⁸ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 27, 35-38, 62, 71-72

²⁵⁹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 223

²⁶⁰ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 89

²⁶¹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 89

²⁶² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 139

²⁶³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 71-72

²⁶⁴ McIntosh, Andrew, and Norman Hillmer. "Statute of Westminster, 1931". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 29 April 2020, *Historica Canada*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/statute-of-westminster. Accessed 19 June 2023.

²⁶⁵ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 132

Thus, when war came, King's own ministers were unsupported by anything in parallel to the Committee on Imperial Defence or its sub-committees as in the United Kingdom. Canada also had little in the way of military intelligence or an organization from which it could draw its own analyses or conclusions. It had very few trained staff officers schooled by the Imperial Defence College and what it did have, were already committed to great matters.²⁶⁶

But perhaps the root problem lay with King himself at this political juncture. His problem was where to place Canada in its relationship within an Alliance. The assumption was that coordination within the High Command would be based on the same pattern made with Britain and France already in the Great War.²⁶⁷ It all had to be sorted out.

Delegates from all parts of the empire met in London between October to December 1939 at the beginning of the war. They gathered too flesh out the details and to exchange information. The Canadian representative, Minister Of Mines and Resources, the Hon. T.A. Crerar also visited war factories and defence installations in Britain and France at this time. Crerar assessed their situation with a view for possible Canadian assistance later.²⁶⁸

Crerar learnt much of Britain's and France's war plans from these visits. In those plans Crerar was shown how they planned to defeat Germany on land, sea, and air. It was a tepid first step that promised exposure not only to a meaningful role for Canada. But it also brought with it commitments for Canada if that path was pursued further. Crerar had entered the inner sanctum, but Mackenzie King warned him off. King reminded the British that Crerar's delegation was not attending the Imperial War Cabinet if that was British Prime Minister Chamberlain's intent.²⁶⁹ The tone for Canada's place and its expectations had now been set by King for the course of the war.

After the fall of France in 1940, Britain and its Dominions were left to fight alone. The importance of the Canadian effort came to the fore that summer of 1940 in which an expansion in Canada's war effort was noted. Canada's economic aid and importance now loomed larger in British calculations more than any time at this point in the war.²⁷⁰ Whether he liked it or not, Mackenzie King's commitments were likewise growing, and as time went on, became difficult to contain.

But after the threat of invasion had passed in 1940, Britain proposed the organization of the war effort on an international basis. They now proposed to revive the War Council and intended to invite the Dominion Prime ministers to attend. An invitation was also to be extended to Allied governments in exile, the various High Commissioners for each country, and the Free French..

²⁶⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 139

²⁶⁷ Canada. Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War. Report No. 48 Historical Section (G.S.) Army Headquarters – 5 Mar 52.* Directorate of History, National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, Canada, 8-9 (11-12/49)

Canada and the Higher Direction of the Second World War - Canada.ca

²⁶⁸ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 9 (12/49)

²⁶⁹ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 9 (12/49)

²⁷⁰ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 11 (14/19)

Canada disapproved of its institution. Mackenzie King felt it was nothing more than a façade and a sign of weakness. The British government essentially dropped the idea.²⁷¹

King's reluctance or truculence to participate was an opportunity lost. Canada's early importance to Britain suggested its importance and the need for a greater interest and participation. As a consequence, Canada lost an important place and voice at the table. In later years, the need to be there, would become both obvious as well as problematic. There would be a vacuum in its place in the management of the war.

Canada indeed lost a place at the table and with it, a voice that should have been heard at critical moments of the war. King's actions relegated Canada to a very low tier in its place as a middle power when clearly it was about to or already punching above its weight.²⁷²

MacKenzie King did his utmost to avoid participation in an Imperial War Cabinet. He preferred to remain in Ottawa to manage the war from there. Argument after argument was made by King to avoid any entanglement thereto to which the British finally acquiesced, perhaps to their pleasure! Some critics maintain that King played right into their hand, which allowed the British to carry out their policies without immediate referral to any Dominion government. Thus, the British were favoured with the generous help of Dominion assistance and resources that were able to use freely. It had an impacts on the employment of Canadian service personnel as well as on Canadian policies and interests.²⁷³

King had placed himself on the outside of the lines of influence, power, and control. Canada was effectively on the sidelines of War Policy that effectively excluded King from any direct influence. Once the British made a policy, it was essentially a 'fait accompli' to which the Dominions were then expected to bite the bullet, acquiesce, and carry on.²⁷⁴

Still there remained much discussion for the need of an Imperial Conference during the war. King finally and reluctantly agreed to attend one in 1941. By this time all the Dominions were clamoring for information. Some wanted to formalize the organization. King truculently had no such desire. Regardless it is important to note that despite all the efforts to obtain information throughout the war, it was Churchills policy as well as influence that kept the Dominions out of the loop and fully informed. Perhaps his situation might have been avoided had King agreed to some participation early on in 1940, but that opportunity long slipped away through his fingers.²⁷⁵

Canada's wider participation likely would not have matter or made much difference in any case. Even if Canada offered officers and staff of pre-eminence and caliber required to manage at the geopolitical and strategic level, these were in very short supply. It was very doubtful that their presence would have been welcome in any case. Great powers with the great battalions, fleets,

²⁷¹ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 11 (14/19)

²⁷² Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 11 (14/19)

²⁷³ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 2 (5/49), Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 388, and

Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 311-314 (338-341/710)

²⁷⁴ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 13 (16/19)

²⁷⁵ Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War*, 14 (17/19)

air forces, with the greater monetary commitments, were less likely or willing to relinquish much power and control.²⁷⁶

Regardless, the Canadian government's attitude regarding participation in these upper councils is difficult to assess. What we do have are the insights from King's behaviour, musings and decisions around various issues that arose from time to time. These render a picture of his attitude on matters impacting his domain, Canada.²⁷⁷ King remained wary of motive and intent leading to wider commitment and liability.

Setting The Tone- An Opportunity Lost

British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, attempted to set the tone for the Commonwealth and the war in a dispatch sent to the Dominion Prime Ministers, September 21, 1939. Chamberlain apprised them of his government's expectations. He also alluded to his War Cabinet's proposal for a system of collaboration where each Dominion Prime Minister appoint a designated Cabinet colleague. He also recommended a brief visit of these delegates for discussions of urgent matters.

The British War cabinet also recommended that this delegate be accompanied by both civilian and relevant service chiefs. There were not only urgent military but also economic and supply matters to discuss. More importantly it was suggested that these delegates remain in Britain as liaison officers to deal with various civil and military branches in matters of economics and supply on an ongoing basis.²⁷⁸

MacKenzie King replied to Chamberlain's appeal in a letter 4 October. His reaction was an expression of distaste to these suggestions and an overall dislike of Commonwealth machinery. Regardless, King acquiesced to the need for a meeting and sent Mr. T. A. Crerar, the Minister of Mines and Resources, to London in his stead. But King also discouraged the idea of anything like a Commonwealth conference. He wrote:

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"While we recognize that it would be helpful to discuss common questions also with Ministers from other parts of Commonwealth who might be in London, we do not consider, in view of difficulty of arranging for simultaneous presence in London of Ministers from all the various parts of Commonwealth and of necessity of making Mr. Crerar's visit brief, that it would be desirable to make this an essential condition of the arrangement."²⁷⁹

[BLOCK END]

²⁷⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 140

²⁷⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 142-143

²⁷⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 143

²⁷⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 143-144

So began King's machinations for distancing. It would have an impact in coming events. It may have been very understandable at this stage of the war why he did so. It was his policy to limit commitments. Following through on Chamberlain's suggestion though opened the door to wider commitments that King either wished to limit or to avoid altogether. King hoped that the war would soon be over and the need for mutual support and greater cooperation dissipate. That was not to be unfortunately

In any case, it was all likely window dressing on Britain's part as well. Their definition of "liaison" with its Dominion Governments at the beginning of the war was not to be an inclusive arrangement. Britain was disinclined of inviting the Dominion Leaders to participate and serve as part of a "Supreme War Council." That invitation would likely limit its own freedom of action while matters were fully discussed. And deliberation in timely fashion mattered. Britain also was not inclined to convene a meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers on the model of an Imperial War Cabinet of 1917.²⁸⁰ And yet, Britain came to rely heavily on the Dominions for help.

But Dominion needs and opinions as sovereign nations, always limited participation in an "Imperial War Cabinet." First and foremost, in the calculus of their concerns, were the needs of their electorate. So, it simply became a matter of common courtesy of keeping them informed. The problem was "how"? And on the face of it, King too appeared disinclined to participate in any meaningful way.

Regardless Mackenzie King's government soon decided to send one division overseas to aid Britain. On September 1, 1939, the "Canadian Active Service Force" was organized.²⁸¹ Then the Minister of National Defence publicly confirmed September 28, that the 1st Canadian Division was to be sent overseas.²⁸² But who would command it? His minister of National Defence, Norman Rogers, suggested the recall of Andrew McNaughton from the NRC to do so. King welcomed Rogers' suggestion and in an interview with McNaughton October 6, King was able to get a measure of the man.

King was pleased with McNaughton as a choice. McNaughton was a man after his own heart, who also sought to limit liabilities. He suggested to King that the Canadian war effort should focus on war production to arm and equip the troops to spare human lives. It was an emphasis King liked as it ultimately served to avoid another conscription crisis.²⁸³

But events transpired that simply dashed that aspiration. Commitments became impossible to avoid. In the last weeks of 1939 and the early days of 1940, Canadian land, and air forces began arriving in Britain.²⁸⁴ It was the beginning of the Canadian military build up overseas. In that

²⁸⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 143

²⁸¹ Stacey, Colonel C. P. (O.B.E., A.M., Ph.D.).1948. *The Canadian Army 1939 – 1945 - An Official Historical Summary*. Published By Authority Of The Minister Of National Defence, Edmond Cloutier, C.M.G., B.A., L. Ph. King's Printer Ottawa, 1948, 3

²⁸² Stacey 1948. Canadian Army 1939-1945. 4

²⁸³ Rickard 2010, 34, and

Granatstein and Morton 2003, 177

²⁸⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 145

arrival, it became necessary to ensure their needs, safety, and welfare were met on an ongoing and continuing basis. Military questions soon were raised as matters of national importance with their arrival.

Minister of National Defence, Norman Rogers was dispatched to London in April 1940. He visited with a view to inspect the Canadian Forces lodged there and to discuss various outstanding issues with the British government. There was considerable discussion as to the basis on which a Canadian Corps might be set up in England. But the British soon directed the conversations towards economic and financial matters.²⁸⁵

The real issue was the requirement and need for ongoing dialogue and consultation. It was something that King was neither prepared nor willing to undertake. King's attitude was not only directed to Great Britain but was also one taken with the Commonwealth. It was surprising given that it was the Commonwealth and Great Britain who stood alone fighting the indomitable German war machine throughout 1940 and 1941.²⁸⁶ This situation required more of a direct hand rather than a *laissez faire* or limiting approach set by the Canadian government.

The better example of what was required is found by the concerns raised by Australian Prime Minister, Mr. R. G. Menzies that fell out of his visit to London in early 1941. Menzies attended meetings of the War Cabinet while there. He found the existing situation very unsatisfactory. In Menzies's opinion, the war, was being left far too much to Churchill's personal direction. He was genuinely concerned, because even while in London, he found it hard even to obtain strategic information of direct interest to Australia. Menzies's characterization of the events around him was merely a clear statement of facts to which he shared in writing with Mackenzie King, Fraser of New Zealand, and Smuts of South Africa. It was a view that should have been of concern to all of his Commonwealth peers.²⁸⁷

Menzies returned to Australia through Ottawa arriving there on May 7, 1941. He was on record and in favour of holding an early Imperial Conference, with some direct representation of Australia in the British War Cabinet. He discussed his views with King while in Ottawa. But King deferred and was not convinced of the need. In fact, King railed against any suggestion for such an arrangement.²⁸⁸

King cited Menzies' own experience clearly indicated to him, Dominion representation in London was not an especially useful idea. King went on to state quite frankly, that the domestic consequences of Prime Ministers leaving their own Dominion might prove serious domestically. Indeed, as it happened, Menzies lost his re-election very shortly after his return to Australia. That proved to King that gallivanting about the Empire was imprudent and fatal politically when domestic needs should have been given precedence.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 145

²⁸⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 145

²⁸⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 146

²⁸⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 146

²⁸⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 146

But Menzies argued with King that some imperial council was needed to decide questions of strategy. King did not share this view and counterargued that he could not offer advice on such questions without expert assistance. And “expert” assistance would require a huge entourage to his country’s loss and its needs at home.²⁹⁰

The true justification is recorded in King’s diary that;

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"any Prime Minister, going to England, would have to bring these advisers with him. If they were in England, they would be out of Canada, where they would be most needed. Also, that, even then, I would be separated from my colleagues. I could not say what division might arise in the Cabinet or in the country while I was away."²⁹¹

[BLOCK END]

King may have been right and “frequently referred to it afterwards as an example of what happened to Prime Ministers who spent too much time abroad.”²⁹² But both he and Menzies failed to understand that you can’t be all things to all nor everywhere. There was a need for delegation and authority in this war. It was one more thing that King was reluctant to do; let power and control slip from his hands. King may have had the impression that he personally would have to be in attendance continuously at these appointments at the Imperial War Cabinet. Incredulously he never considered sending a delegate in his stead, with full authority to act, if necessary, as an option.²⁹³

King was overly concerned with his domestic problems, as well as with power, and control.²⁹⁴ Granted there were serious issues at home during the war that demanded his attention, especially Quebec. But there was no need to let responsibilities toward his troops lapse or be overridden for lack of immediate representation on the ground! Were all his advisers truly needed at home in Canada? King made it so, effectively by his policies, and perhaps because he failed to consider the value of his military advisors. He distrusted their professionalism, patriotism, or their advice time and again in the first place!²⁹⁵ This is an insight of a man, a micromanager who controlled all levers with a view of holding all strings of power unto himself. And that’s the true nature of politics but was it appropriate in a time of war?

²⁹⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 146

²⁹¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 146-147

²⁹² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 146-147

²⁹³ Stacey, C.P. 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – A History of Canadian External Policies – Volume 2: 1921 - 1948 – The MacKenzie King Era*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London, 317-319

²⁹⁴ Granatstein, J.L. and Desmond Morton. 2003. *Canada and the Two World Wars*. Canada. Toronto, Ontario: Key Porter Books , 175-177

²⁹⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 139

The Early Days Remembered

One afternoon, September 10, 1939, some boys and young men gathered in a local field in Montreal to play baseball. It was on this idyllic summer day that Canada made its own separate declaration of war with Germany

It was a peaceful sunny afternoon in Montreal that saw its young and old come together, to fill in time and play ball. It was a common sight to see its young spontaneously gather as there were few opportunities for many. Most were waiting for the next job, as the Depression lingered on. Time weighed heavily for the older unemployed lads. There was little else to do but play ball. For the younger lads, it was a time to impress and to earn respect of their elders. The ballfield was their field of honour. Activity through sports was a time to forget the misery of everyday life, a time to enjoy a rare moment of pleasure and comradery.

But there were ominous clouds on the horizon and in that anticipation for worse to come. Word came down that very afternoon that Canada had declared war on Germany. It was as if a wet blanket dampened their youthful exuberance that smothered their joy at play. Silence and a grim determination soon took hold on the crowd that quickly dispersed. The field was immediately emptied of the older players who left and who proceeded en-masse to join up at local recruiting centres.²⁹⁶

The field was abandoned and left to the younger boys to enjoy. It happened all so fast one young lad remembered.²⁹⁷ An ominous silence pervaded the field of play. A surreal sense of profound loss had descended upon those young boys left behind. It was a loss that was soon felt by many Canadian families during the war; the loss of innocence and of peaceful times.²⁹⁸ Thus began the great rush to join up.

The way was paved through the National Resources Mobilization Act, (NMRA) that resulted in increased manpower for service requirements.²⁹⁹ This was also bolstered by increased investment in defence spending just prior to the war.³⁰⁰

Recruiting for the whole of Canadian Forces soon proved successful. Their size and numbers rapidly grew in their expansion from 1940 onwards. It was prevalent amongst all components of the regular and reserves forces of each service.

²⁹⁶ Madigan, Major Gerry D. CD, MA (Retired). 2016. *At the Crossroads of Time The Story of Operational Training Unit 31, RCAF No. 7 Squadron, and RCAF Tiger Force at Debert, NS*. madiganstories.com, 21-22

madiganstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/At-the-Crossroads-of-Time-Gerry-Madigan-edition-1.pdf

²⁹⁷ Madigan, Vincent Gerard. 2012. "Impressions of the depression and the start of WWII." Telephone interview by son Gerry Madigan, March 28, 2012

²⁹⁸ Madigan, 2016. *At the Crossroads of Time*, 23

²⁹⁹ Wikipedia. 2024. "National Resources Mobilization Act." This page was last edited on 20 January 2024, at 21:13 (UTC).

³⁰⁰ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2, 200-201,208,220*

There was a great willingness to serve at least in the beginning. There was no need for Canada to consider conscription for overseas deployment at that time. Those serving in Canada under the NMRA were protected from service overseas. But by the spring of 1941 some difficulties were beginning to be encountered. Military manpower projections forecasted a great shortfall of men.

Ministers for the three services made a broadcast appeal regarding their separate manpower requirements April 8, 1941. A shortfall of 116,000 recruits was forecasted during 1941 alone; broken down as 72,000 for the Army, 35,000 for the Air Force, and 9,000 for the Navy. Recruiting now became an urgent matter especially for the Army.³⁰¹

Regardless, attempts were made to alleviate the military's manpower crunch. Non-combatant roles and trades were soon open to women so that the men filling those could be fed into the frontlines. In 1941 general-service enlistments for the Canadian Army, including conversions from N.R.M.A. and enlistments in the Canadian Women's Army Corps, numbered 93,529. The army's situation improved somewhat in 1942 when 130,438 Canadians enrolled for service. This was the largest for any calendar year of the war. It bested the high of the 1940 enrolment of 121,823. It was the peak but that saw dramatic decline by 1943.³⁰²

The cauldron of war created casualties. Their numbers cited in "wastage" placed an increasing demand for manpower. The military's demand for manpower also had larger impacts and ramifications directed to Canadian industry and agriculture. They too had manpower requirements that also needed to be addressed and balanced. It became a serious problem.

The needs of C.D. Howe, Minister of Munitions and Supply, provides a case in point. Howe's manpower requirements in primary production and heavy industry were in short supply. He reported shortfalls particularly in mining, base metals, steel, and lumber. Howe estimated his requirements for essential war industry to be 910,000 persons alone. If he was to make headway in war production, an additional 100,000 workers were needed, especially if Canada was to undertake new production.³⁰³

To note approximately 1.1 million Canadians served in the Armed Forces during the Second World War. The requirements for domestic manpower for industry were approximately the same amount. The army of manpower demanded by industry proved to be quite the strain on Canada's limited resources based on its small population at the time.

So, by 1942 the needs of "manpower" were pressing. An estimated 50,000 men and women were required monthly for the needs of the armed forces and war industry. By 30 April 1943, Canada's military manpower requirement proved desperate. Consideration was given to a rapid and drastic curtailment of civilian industry. A large scale transfer of men and women from their existing employment to more essential occupations was anticipated. It became essential to draw down at least 11 per cent of the labour force in the area deemed "non-essential" industries. Approximately

³⁰¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 399 (428/710)

³⁰² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 399 (428/710)

³⁰³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 405-406 (434-435/710)

27 per cent of the male labour force could then be redirected from non essential and other sectors to essential services. Further consideration was also given to withdrawing workers from what was considered the lessor efficient but essential sectors of agriculture as well.³⁰⁴

Such was the need to balance Canada's manpower requirements, that action was taken during 1943 for measures to control employment. These measure resulted in a succession of Compulsory Employment Transfer Orders issued by the Minister of Labour, from May to November 1943. The number of workers eventually interviewed and registered under these Orders was 99,453 that was completed by March 15, 1944. Not all employees were re-assigned. It happened that only 15 per cent of the workers covered in the seven orders issued were actually transferred to other industries. Of this 15%, 575 were subsequently transferred to farms, another 481 to coal mines, 361 to other mining operations, and 869 to lumbering and logging. The large bulk of 13,073 were then transferred to high priority industries.³⁰⁵

It was in the recognition of these policies and needs, that Canada found that it had slowly and sublimely moved to a "Total War" footing. Total war was a transformation of society based both on revolution and evolution identified by the changing state of politics, of societal norms, and in the mood of citizens and their psychology. It all transformed a nation's intellectual and cultural life.³⁰⁶

A state of total war thus complicated King's government's need for "limitation and no commitments. Total war in the end implied total commitment and management of the nations resources towards one single task, winning the war. For Canada, the boon to the Canadian economy, also influenced and revolutionized its attitudes to the post war both in economics and social change.³⁰⁷ There were no commitments or limitations under this footing. It was the exact situation that King wished to avoid that was now difficult if not impossible to extricate from.

Perhaps had a different attitude and a more robust policy engagement existed at the beginning of the war, the inevitable slide to wider commitments may have been forestalled. It also may have modified or forestalled Canada's placement on the sidelines in the realms of power, control, and management of the war. It was the short sighted engagement of cherry picking Canadian efforts, promises, and engagements that led to a creeping increase of commitments. In the long run it complicated policy engagement and interactions amongst the other nation states. When you were a player you had to be an active player lest be benched.

³⁰⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 407 (436/710)

³⁰⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 409 (438/710)

³⁰⁶ Wright. 1997. *The Ordeal of Total War* ., 234-267

³⁰⁷ Madigan, Major Gerry D. CD, MA (Retired), .2013. *The Crucible for Change: Defence Spending in Debert, Nova Scotia, during Second World War*, THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE JOURNAL VOL. 2 | NO. 1 WINTER 2013, 13-27, and

Brady. Alexander and F.R. Scott 1945. "Canada After the War – Studies in Political, Social and Economic Policies for Post-War Canada." Toronto, The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited

Women's Services and the Labour Crunch

Placing Canada on a total war footing had other consequences that brought with it great change in Canadian society and values. One of the most significant was the changing role of women in the labour force. Women played a huge role to easing Canada's labour crunch during the war. As early as August 1939, 638,000 women were "gainfully employed" on Canada's industrial front. This was the beginning of a wave that peaked by October 1, 1943, when employment soared to 1,075,000. A woman's presence was also extended into the area of agriculture as well. The work of men on family farms was ultimately supplemented by 750,000 women that not only fed a nation but its Allies as well. The face of labour had changed significantly, that was never to be the same again.³⁰⁸

Regardless of a willingness and enthusiasm to serve in the Canadian labour market, the government approached the question of enlisting women in the forces with great trepidation. Significantly Great Britain had already organized a women's auxiliary corps well before the outbreak of war. Canada had chosen not to do so. Regardless Canadian women were just as anxious to serve too! A change of heart only came in 1941, when the first hint of manpower shortages in the Army emerged.³⁰⁹

In fact, this manpower shortfall went well beyond the Army. It soon became evident that all three services had experienced a vast range of manpower shortages and skills. It crossed all boundaries of inter-service requirements of Canada's manpower problem. As early as March 1941, senior personnel officers of the three services consulted together. This consultation eventually resulted in a combined recruiting campaign. Significantly all three service ministers made a joint broadcast.³¹⁰ Canadian military service had now been opened to the young women of this country, and that truly changed the face of labour. This opening and the breaking down of barriers portended great issues for the future. Beyond inclusion to serve, it opened the doors to discuss wage parity and women's equality from the post war era to this day.

³⁰⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 416 (445/710)

³⁰⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 416 (445/710)

³¹⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 417 (446/710)

Chapter 5 – The Canadian Roles during the Second World War

1939 to 1943 - The Management of the War

Commonwealth sensitivities mattered little to Winston Churchill in his calculus of war. He kept them out of his inner sanctum. Commonwealth concerns were often set aside but mostly for various legitimate reasons. It was a barrier for many to overcome in order to have their concerns and interests heard. But some created their own barriers as well.

First and foremost, to both King in Canada and Churchill for Britain was a common view to opposing the establishment of an Imperial War Cabinet. This would introduce many more players and irons in the fire. It was an unnecessary burden of managing several interests that could have diverted all away from their main aim, the defeat of the Axes powers. It would also imply that the Commonwealth Premiers would be expected to assume a fuller role, hence increased liability, commitment, and responsibility. King's views on this were shared previously with his Commonwealth Colleagues as well as the British government. King was dead set against it.³¹¹

King wished to remain outside of such an organization, not even wishing to delegate a subordinate to that job. Any such involvement would also further complicate Churchill's management of the war. Churchill had already crafted the structure in which he would operate as his own Minister of Defence.³¹² Thus he wished to avoid any further complications of addressing Premier's opinions or interests. His situation and the war were already complicated enough in the management of both his political interests and service chiefs.³¹³ No more irons in the fire were desired than what was absolutely necessary.

There was also a line in the sand. Churchill for his part felt that "a Minister other than the Prime Minister" should be available to attend the British War Cabinet." Assuming that prime ministers were at the table meant that a power vacuum was left in their respective states for a goodly time. Churchill also felt that the majority of Commonwealth Premiers neither favoured nor desired 'personal attendance' at the Imperial War Cabinet. He also concluded that such an arrangement may potentially jeopardize his nation's security interests through their interference that would not be acceptable to the British public.³¹⁴

³¹¹ Churchill 1949. *Their Finest Hour*, 13, 15-17

³¹² Lamb, Richard. 1991. *Churchill as War Leader*. Carrol & Graf Publishers, Inc. 260 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10001, 45-46 ,and

Packwood, Allen. 2018-2019. *How Churchill Waged War – The Most Challenging Decisions of the Second World War*. Frontline Books. Pen & Sword Ltd. 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS England, 5-13

³¹³ Hannable, William S. 1998. *Research Studies Series, Case Studies In The Use Of Land-Based Aerial Forces in Maritime Operations, 1939-1990*, Air Force History & Museums Program, Washington, D.C. September 1998, 3-14 and

Kemp, Paul. 2004. *Convoy! -Drama in Artic Waters*. Castle Books, 101-102,

³¹⁴ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 147

Churchill was a man who actively sought and willingly accepted responsibility and power. He was not one prepared to share it.³¹⁵ He saw that a permanent attendance of the Commonwealth Premiers at the table of a War Cabinet was a hinderance rather than some help. It would place greater burdens and complications to his management of the war. He perceived that decision making would become unwieldy and serve to diminish his authority.³¹⁶ On King's part, such a move was likewise viewed as a threat to Canadian Autonomy. It might lead in the end to commitments without any parliamentary authority, or in his words as spoken to Menzies Premier of Australia, as:

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“ responsibility without power.”³¹⁷

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King though understood the need for facilitation, collaboration, and cooperation. But he strongly felt that Canada had a different and more important role to play in that regard. King concluded that Canada's role lay in supporting and maintaining the soundest possible relationship between Britain and the United States at the time. He promoted the “linchpin” or interpreter” theory in which Canada functioned as the go-between between these two great powers.³¹⁸ He used the argument against his participation in a War Cabinet or for his attendance Imperial Conferences, as his presence in North America was crucial in a crisis. He used that exercise and logic from leaving Canada to attend meetings in London.³¹⁹ King overestimated his importance in that regard, but he began to have his doubts.

MacKenzie King while on a western tour in Canada in June and July of 1941, determined that a trip to Britain to confer with Churchill was desirable. He informed his War Committee on 29 July of his intentions. But there came a drastic change of situation that shook the foundations of King's perception of his role and importance as the great interpreter between Britain and the United States.³²⁰

A bitter shock came to Mackenzie King on the 6th of August when a message was received from Churchill through the British High Commissioner, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald. Churchill notified King that he intended to meet President Roosevelt off the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador. Churchill in fact was already *en route*. The whole affair was arranged without King's prior knowledge nor input and it would not be the last time either. Canada from that point on would

³¹⁵ Churchill Winston, S. 1949. *Their Finest Hour*. HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY BOSTON The Riverside Press Cambridge, 15-17

³¹⁶ Churchill 1949. *Their Finest Hour*,13

³¹⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 147-148

³¹⁸ Stacey 1977. *Canada And The Age Of Conflict Volume I*, 228

³¹⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 149

³²⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 149

always be treated as the “junior” partner.³²¹ King found it most disturbing that a meeting was to take place without his prior knowledge almost in Canadian waters.³²²

This omission may have been indicative to both Churchill and Roosevelt who considered that King was a small fry. Further perhaps, it was a case of Canadian sensibilities be damned, for Newfoundland was still at that point, a British colony, and a part of Britain’s territorial waters.³²³ But at this time, Newfoundland was under Canadian protection. It was a matter of common courtesy to King that he should have been, at the very least, been informed directly rather than diplomatically. King and his government were becoming increasingly disturbed by the tendency of the two great powers to exclude Canada from their councils.³²⁴

King angrily confided to his diary,

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““I feel that it is taking a gambler's risk . . . the apotheosis of the craze for publicity and show. . . . At the bottom, it is a matter of vanity. . . . Neither the Prime Minister of Britain nor the President of the United States should leave their respective countries at this time.”³²⁵

[BLOCK END]

King’s greater anger was with the fact that he and the Canadian government were left out of both the grand design and in the discussions. They were not even allowed to be bystanders in their own pond. He expressed that anger to British High Commissioner, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, August 12, 1941, on the very day Macdonald delivered Churchill and Roosevelt’s statement on the Atlantic Charter to him. MacKenzie King stated point blank to Macdonald that Canada was being ignored.³²⁶

King’s venom went further to express his initial thoughts to Macdonald regarding Allied communication. Nothing was perfect in King’s mind but until that point:

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“... we had no reason whatever to complain about not being consulted.”

[BLOCK END]

³²¹ Morton 1985, 190-191

³²² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 149

³²³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 149

³²⁴ Canada. Department of National Defence. 1986. *Canada And The Higher Direction Of The Second World War. Report - No. 48 Historical Section (G.S.) Army Headquarters – 5 Mar 52*. Directorate of History, National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, Canada, 15 (18/49)

[Canada and the Higher Direction of the Second World War - Canada.ca](http://Canada.and.the.Higher.Direction.of.the.Second.World.War.-Canada.ca) ,

³²⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 150

³²⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 150

Now King complained bitterly that the very opposite had taken place. He cautioned Macdonald that:

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““It was the way in which the British lost their friends, wanting them in foul weather and ignoring them in fair. So long as they got their own way that was all they wanted.”

[BLOCK END]

Regardless, King did not pursue the matter further in the end.³²⁷

This slight provocation and snub had Mackenzie King reconsider his position regarding liaison and communication with Great Britain. He proposed to his War Committee of going there soon for his own visit for a “Conference of Prime Ministers.” Prime Ministers Menzies of Australia and Fraser of New Zealand were already there. King realized that the two great powers had left both he and Canada out of their councils, that Canada had become increasingly irrelevant.³²⁸ Now, a change of attitude on “Commonwealth” questions mattered.³²⁹ King eventually went to Great Britain with his own designs and agenda, but that trip did not go as planned.

Regardless of King’s apprehension regarding the Commonwealth relationship and the management of higher levels of policy, there was a practical requirement for consultation. It was a continuing process in practice conducted day to day in wartime.³³⁰ There was always a flow of information from London, and from other Commonwealth capitals. These were often put before King’s Cabinet War Committee in Ottawa for consideration. But often as not, some direct consultations were required, but did not take place when they were both obvious and desirable. Most communication breakdowns tended to occur at times of stress or urgency especially in matters of vital military interests to the Dominions regarding the military direction of the war.³³¹

It was often a question being kept informed when Churchill’s prevailing attitude, and influence tended to limit information sent out. Churchill’s reasoning are found quite early in this diary entry for Christmas Day 1940:

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“No departure in principle is contemplated from the practice of keeping the Dominions informed, fully of the progress of the war. Specially full information must necessarily be given in respect of theatres where Dominion troops are serving, but it is not necessary to circulate this to the other Dominions not affected. Anyhow, on the whole an effort should be made not to scatter so much deadly and secret information over this very large circle. . . .³³²

³²⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 150

³²⁸ Morton 1985. *A Military History of Canada*, 182, 191

³²⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 150-151

³³⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 151

³³¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 152

³³² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 153

[BLOCK END]

To Churchill it all boiled down to a matter of security and keeping vital informational and its flow limited to as few as possible.³³³ That was a laudable aim but in the wider realms of war, especially with Allies, there was always a requirement of keeping its members informed. It was a question of how much information would he relinquish and at what time. Canada's participation in D-Day was such an example.

King complained to Churchill on a visit to London in early 1944 that he learned more from the New York Times on this issue compared to what was divulged to him through official sources. The Times reports proved to be inaccurate though, but it points to the sources of information that were sought and what was available to Canada to fill the void because of the limitations of "official" channels at the time.

King did not necessarily require the exact details of the plan with an overall layout of its dispositions. But as a minimum, he required and also needed to know at least, in a general way, how and where Canadian service personnel were to be employed. Churchill promised a reply but that reply came only on 6 June when a Mounted Police constable on duty at Laurier House in Ottawa knocked on Mr. King's bedroom door in the small hours and announced D Day.³³⁴

In the course of history, it might be argued that Churchill provided sufficient information to King to justify King's prime ministerial responsibilities. For Churchill though, the control of information also represented power.³³⁵ The problem may have been in King's view, that it wasn't robust information suited to his domestic requirements. The information that was provided did not adequately meet the duties of care inherent in those prime ministerial responsibilities. Nevertheless, information was received from London during the war, and these were indeed in the form of official communications from the United Kingdom. Various channels of communications were constantly employed even though there were many limitations on the nature of the information sent. Canada received far more information than she was able to impart; and this was due to its membership in the Commonwealth network.³³⁶ But was it ever enough?

MacKenzie King and Military Advice

MacKenzie King's access to military advice came by appointment of some senior military officers to his war cabinet in November 1941. The Cabinet War Committee appointed several senior officers to the committee promoting them from Major General to the higher rank of Lieutenant General. Any civilian member attached to the committee was also given the

³³³ Packwood, Allen. 2018/2019. *How Churchill Waged War - The Most Challenging Decisions Of The Second World War*, 11-12,20

³³⁴ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 154

³³⁵ Packwood 2028-2019. *How Churchill Waged War*, 15-16

³³⁶ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 155

equivalent civilian status and ranking. This was probably both a necessity and an expedient necessary to exercise the government's wishes in the broader councils or war. This enabled the appointees to deal with their peers as equals and not as subordinates in outside councils of war or military office. But a passage in Mr. King's diary for 13 December 1944, when the war was nearly over, was most telling. It would appear that King still held these officers in something very much like contempt.³³⁷

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"I ruled out having the Chiefs of Staff present as it leads to controversy between myself and officials and to their witnessing controversy between the Cabinet which I think is wholly wrong. It has been Heeney who has arranged these meetings himself as he says just to give the Chiefs of Staff a "look-in" and let them feel important. This is all well enough if it does not result each time in increasing the public expenditures. The proceedings made it apparent that they were not needed and by their not being present, the discussions were shortened."

[BLOCK END]

The passage also makes very clear that King neither desired nor wanted military advice. He lacked trust and faith in their abilities.³³⁸ Moreover by his own admission, he had no great desire for increased commitments or expenditures that may result from their participation. Perhaps the characterization by some that "He was 'unmilitary'" made him feel that he was never quite understood or liked by the military.³³⁹

King himself never quite understood military ranks or precedence. Nor did he have much understanding of the military as his policies towards them were viewed with some disdain.³⁴⁰ This view is understandable given his less than stellar reception of the troops overseas on August 23, 1941.³⁴¹ His reception there suggested that he might as well have stayed in Canada.

³³⁷Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 129

³³⁸ Malone, Richard S. 1983. *A Portrait of War, 1939-1943*, Collins Publishers, 100 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario, 237

³³⁹ The Evening Telegram. 1940. "Mackenzie King Has Never Done Duty By His Country He Never Will-- It Is Not In Him-- Premier Hepburn." Toronto, Friday, January 19, 1940

Source: [WarMuseum.ca - Democracy at War - Search results](#)

Accessed: 14 Nov 2023

³⁴⁰ The Evening Telegram. 1940. "Mackenzie King Has Never Done Duty By His Country He Never Will-- It Is Not In Him-- Premier Hepburn." Toronto, Friday, January 19, 1940

Source: [WarMuseum.ca - Democracy at War - Search results](#)

Accessed: 14 Nov 2023

³⁴¹ Malone, 1983, 74,237, and

Stacey, C.P. Major Historical Officer. 1941. *Visits of RT. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King to Canadian Troops in England*. The Director, Historical Section, General Staff, National Defence Headquarter, Ottawa, Canada CMHQ Report 47 , 13 Sep 1941 [cmhq047.pdf_1-4/8](#)

Perhaps King's disdain and mistrust of the military grew even stronger after this visit to England 20 August to 7 September 1941. He inspected the troops on several occasions first, at Aldershot, 23 August 1941. It was a sports day and King was late in arriving. The troops were not on parade but kept waiting in the rain as it poured down. King's party was then met by impatient and disgruntled troops. The speech that he prepared was not well received. The senior officers present put it down to it being a "relaxed" occasion where discipline was not necessarily strictly enforced. King in the end pre-empted and shortened his trip returning to Canada 7 September 1941.³⁴²

King made another visit to Canada Corp Area to open the Leatherhead By-pass, 28 August. It was an important road work built by Canadian sappers in which Churchill was in attendance. Churchill on this occasion pressed King for decisions on the formation of an Imperial War Cabinet. King stated that such a formation was undesirable and reiterated the same upon his return to Canada.³⁴³ It would seem that his appearance on the ground led to increasing commitment and pressure from Churchill. And perhaps that is a reason why King wished to avoid an "Imperial War Cabinet." It would lead to commitments and consequences that King was not prepared to bear.

However, while there, King stated that there would be no restrictions placed on the employment of Canadian troops overseas. He was prepared to trust the judgement of his general officers on the ground and support them, as necessary. King looked to his military advisors for their advice and counsel at least on the surface of things. As such King was prepared to accept military advice and their guidelines in the employment of Canadian Forces overseas.³⁴⁴

But his displeasure with military advice came later at the height of the conscription crisis. King was displeased with his advisers as military members of the Army Council. Ironically their advice played greatly in his favour.³⁴⁵ But in the end, this advice was tempered by party politics, hints of conspiracy, and then, Canadian public opinion that all seem to contrive against him.³⁴⁶

There were other influences that King and his cabinet colleagues considered on "military" thinking. They all shared a common world view of Canada's safety net based on geography. Our geographical position seemingly placed a cocoon of distance and wilderness protecting Canada from any real harm or threat. It was an assumption held from the Great War.³⁴⁷ This geographic mindset influenced Canada's pre-war defence planning in that Canadian territory was allegedly protected in time, distance, and space.³⁴⁸

The geographic factors suggested for Canadian defence that it could be ignored and deferred. It left defence to flounder in the interests of others, particularly the naval power of the United

³⁴² Stacey 1941. MacKenzie King Visit,, 2-4/8

³⁴³ Stacey 1941. MacKenzie King Visit, 8/8

³⁴⁴ Stacey 1941. MacKenzie King Visit, 5/8

³⁴⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 129

³⁴⁶ Stacey, C.P. 1976. A Very Double Life - *The Private World of Mackenzie King*. MacMillan of Canada, Toronto Ontario, 202-203

³⁴⁷ Oglesby, R.B. 1950. *Canadian-American Co-Operation In The Defence Of Sault Ste Marie, 1941-1944*. Report No. 34, Historical Section (G.S.) Army Headquarters, 24 January 1950. Canada. National Defence. Directorate Of History And Heritage. Last edited: 9 October 2018, [Canadian-American Cooperation in the Defence of Sault Ste. Marie, 1941-1944 - Canada.ca](#) 2 (4/40)

³⁴⁸ Greenhouse et al 1994, 17

Kingdom and that of the United States.³⁴⁹ Both had geopolitical ambitions, strategic interests, and designs for global expansion or empire.³⁵⁰ If the British and American navies controlled the two great oceans, then the danger of any invasion on Canadian territory was assessed to be virtually nonexistent and therefore the very thought of war was considered inconceivable as late as 1938.³⁵¹

Canada's alliance with Britain and her contiguity to the United States were considered adequate safeguards of Canadian territory. The investment of any great sums in a Canadian defence capability was deferred, and as such, is the Canadian default position.³⁵² Hence it was assumed that the protection of the investments by Britain and the United States in their own strategic interests would likewise secure Canadian interests.³⁵³ It would seem that “free-riding” would become a long entrenched Canadian trait.³⁵⁴ Regardless, this was also a two edge sword. It must be remembered that whoever pays the piper, also calls the tune. This attitude would come back to bite Canada during the war in the matters of influence. Sadly, Defence has not been considered

³⁴⁹ Cunningham 1949. Report No. 30, 1 (4/20)

³⁵⁰ Kennedy, Alex. 2021. “Issued in secrecy off Newfoundland 80 years ago, the Atlantic Charter changed world history.” CBC News, Aug 17, 2021 5:30 AM ADT | Last Updated: August 18, 2021, [Issued in secrecy off Newfoundland 80 years ago, the Atlantic Charter changed world history | CBC News](#), Granatstein and Morton 2003, 219 & 282

Simons, Graham M. 2020. *The Secret Plan to Overthrow The British Empire – War Plan Red*. Frontline Books an imprint of Pen & Sword Books Ltd, Yorkshire – Philadelphia, 7-112

³⁵¹ Morton 1985, 178

³⁵² Selected citations:

- Rossignol, Michel. 1998. *REPLACEMENT OF SHIPBORNE AND RESCUE HELICOPTERS*, Government of Canada, Depository Services Program, 94-3E, Prepared by: Political and Social Affairs Division, Revised 19 October 1998, 12pg. Source: <http://dsp-psd.tpsgc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/CIR/943-e.htm> (Delay) Accessed; 12 November 2008
- CBC News . 2000. “GTS Katie finally arrives”. Aug 10, 2000 10:21 AM ADT | Last Updated: August 10, 2000, Source: [GTS Katie finally arrives | CBC News](#) (Example of consequences of deferral or delay in purchasing of AOR)
- McColl, Alex. 2019. “Commentary: Alternative Saab Fighter Could Save Navy By Dodging Extravagant F-35s. Chronicle Herald, Posted: Sept. 14, 2019, 4 a.m. | Updated: Sept. 14, 2019, 4 a.m. |, Source: <https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/national-perspectives/commentary-alternative-saab-fighter-could-save-navy-by-dodging-extravagant-f-35s-352103/>, Accessed: 15 Sep 2019 (Deferral and delay)
- Jacques, Jason Senior Director, Christopher E. Penney, Lead Analyst: Financial Analyst, et al. 2019. “Fiscal Analysis of the Interim F-18.” Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Ottawa Canada, 28 February 2019, pbo-dpb@parl.gc.ca (Justification for the short term)
- Pugliese, David . 2019. “Warship rejected by DND years ago will now be the backbone of Canada's future navy.” Ottawa Citizen in National Post, February 8, 2019. Source: [Warship rejected by DND years ago will now be the backbone of Canada's future navy | National Post](#) (Delay and Deferral)
- Nardi, Christopher. 2023. “Canada's Way of life in jeopardy as governments fail to take security issues seriously – Mark Norman.” National Post, 10 March 2023. Source: [Canada's way of life in 'jeopardy' as governments fail to take security issues 'seriously': Mark Norman \(msn.com\)](#) . Accessed: 11 Mar 2023
- Editorial. 2023. “More red flags on defence.” Postmedia News, 3 Dec 2023. Source: [EDITORIAL: More red flags on defence \(msn.com\)](#). Accessed: 4 Dec 2023

³⁵³ Granatstein and Morton 2003, 188-189

³⁵⁴ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 130

an urgent government priority of late, an attitude that has been widely criticized that Canada is no longer a serious country.³⁵⁵ Most Canadians by 2023 favoured an increase in defence spending to NATO targets.³⁵⁶

Regardless, Canada's military leaders were not devoid of power or influence within their own spheres of professional knowledge and action in past.³⁵⁷ They had the forethought to use their initiative within their own limited means to plan Canada's defence with what little they had. Their strategic considerations were based on the foundation of policies of other nations as well as geography. Canada's natural position in time, distance, and space were considered in their threat assessments, analyses, planning, and organization.³⁵⁸

Canada with relatively few professional officers in all three services, had a very small number trained in matters of strategy.³⁵⁹ Those that were trained, were far busier resolving local problems in the creation of large military forces. The employment of their British Staff College or Imperial Defence College training was never devoted to matters of grand strategy.

Canadian military training, tradition, and thought processes were based and firmly ensconced in the militia tradition. Although McNaughton was Canada's Chief of General Staff (CGS) for seven years and was in a position to encourage professional development and learning, and a highly educated man, he chose not to do so. McNaughton believed otherwise that professional training was not the sole source of moulding or developing of senior commanders. In his mind the Great War was fought and won by Canadian men who were amateurs, and not permanent army. Sir Arthur Currie was proof of that in his mind. But McNaughton ignored that Currie and other Canadian commanders although amateurs, conducted war in a professional manner that was developed and learned on the job.³⁶⁰

Regardless even if professional learning was extant within the hierarchy of the Canadian Army, it is doubtful that King would have utilized that learning to any great effect. King was a man who neither understood nor catered to the military mind. Mackenzie King was a man of letters who had not experience the Great War as a soldier. He was not highly regarded by his peers for lack of military experience.³⁶¹ His calling lay elsewhere in government both during and after the

³⁵⁵ Robson, John. 2023. "Cutting \$1B from Defence Budget Yet More Proof that Canada Is No Longer a Serious Country." *The Epoch Times*, 1 October 2023. Source: [John Robson: Cutting \\$1B From Defence Budget Yet More Proof That Canada Is No Longer a Serious Country | The Epoch Times](#). Accessed: 2 Oct 2023

³⁵⁶ Chini, Joey. 2023. "Most Canadians OK with upping Defence Spending to Reach NATO targets – Nanos.", *CTV News*, 8 May 2023. Source: [Most Canadians OK with upping defence spending to reach NATO target | CTV News](#). 8 May 2023

³⁵⁷ Granatstein, J.L. .1993 .*The Generals – The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War*, Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 370pg.

³⁵⁸ Granatstein, J.L. 2023. The In-between – After the Great War and before the Second, Canada's defence relied on the small Permanent Active Militia. *Legion Magazine*, January/February 2023, 40-43

³⁵⁹ Greenhouse et al 1994, 16

³⁶⁰ Rickard 2010,33

³⁶¹ *The Evening Telegram*. 1940. "Mackenzie King Has Never Done Duty By His Country He Never Will-- It Is Not In Him-- Premier Hepburn." Toronto, Friday, January 19, 1940

Great War; that were in politics, industry, and academia.³⁶² He was regarded as one who would not cut any great figure in uniform. Thus, King held a deep-seated lifelong distrust of the army. His natural affinities were with men of peace and of letters.³⁶³

But military matters would play a very important role and come to haunt King throughout the Second World War where military affinity and trust were required. At the very early outset of the war, future Governor General George Vanier recommended that Canada place its division under direct command of the French. A full understanding of the consequences and options opened to that suggestion may have been useful.

Vanier envisaged that the Canadian Division would operate within the constraints of the visiting forces act while so employed in France. But Vanier also desired the same level of independence and status as the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), New Zealand (NZ) and other commonwealth nations had that were also under British Command.³⁶⁴

Significantly a key difference was found under the operations of New Zealand's commander (Freyberg). Freyberg was given a wide latitude and freedom of action. He acted on behalf of his government to employ the forces as he saw fit in the circumstances without further reference to them.³⁶⁵ Freyberg was also authorized in emergency to "make decisions as to the employment" of his force quite independently.³⁶⁶ Canadian authorities never enjoyed such liberal freedom of action.

King had stated that there would be no restrictions placed on the employment of Canadian troops overseas. He was prepared to trust the judgement of his general officers on the ground and support them, as necessary.³⁶⁷ But this promise did not stand up well in action with the employment of Canadian airmen.³⁶⁸

Lester Pearson, a future Prime Minister, wrote a memorandum concerning communication and use of forces in Great Britain. There was an imbalance regarding military cooperation flowing from the broad interpretation of the visiting forces act. He felt that Canada was being kept out of the loop. At the end of April 1940, Pearson composed two memoranda, one of which he firstly communicated to the Minister of National Defence during a visit to Great Britain. Pearson's

Source: [WarMuseum.ca - Democracy at War - Search results](https://www.war-museum.ca/democracy-at-war/search-results)

Accessed: 14 Nov 2023

³⁶² Stacey 1977. *Canada And The Age Of Conflict Volume I*, 114-115

³⁶³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 139

³⁶⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 140-141

³⁶⁵ Rickard 2010, 45

³⁶⁶ Wikipedia. 2023. "Bernard Freyberg, 1st Baron Freyberg." Last edited on 25 August 2023, at 20:15 (UTC)..

[Bernard Freyberg, 1st Baron Freyberg - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Freyberg,_1st_Baron_Freyberg)

³⁶⁷ Stacey 1941. MacKenzie King Visit, 5/8

³⁶⁸ Anthony Cooper , *Sub Hunters – Australian Sunderland Squadrons In The Defeat Of Hitler's U-Boat Menace 1942-43* . (First published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America Fonthill, 2020), 42

concern arose out of the Norwegian episode and the application of the Visiting Forces Acts to that situation and the employment of Canadian Forces.³⁶⁹

Secondly, Pearson later raised the question of consultation and communication between the Canadian and British governments in wartime. He specifically questioned the flow of information on military plans and operations as they pertained to the Canadian Forces to its government. The premise was that information wasn't flowing as freely or communicated when required. Canada had a need to know, at least the outline, if not specifics of some actions that might be necessary or taken.³⁷⁰

Pearson felt that the situation was a result of the government's intransigence on foreign policy and defence. Matters concerning Canadian servicemen and women were largely left unaddressed regarding their employment, which was often taken without consultation with Canadian representatives. If not properly addressed and rectified, Pearson felt the role of Canadian airmen was nothing more than unpaid "Hessians."³⁷¹

According to Pearson the nub of the problem was because:

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"... the Canadian government itself was "largely responsible" for this, in the light of its peacetime avoidance of consultation on foreign policy and defence."³⁷²

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In other words, the Canadian government's own policy seemingly chose to either ignore or look the other way when it came to its responsibilities regarding its men and women overseas. They chose to leave it to others in the hope they would do the right thing by Canada.

What Pearson rightly feared, was that without government oversight or intervention at appropriate times, Canadian soldiers, sailors, and airmen would be placed in a position of duress of where to fight and under adverse conditions. Without prior consultation or agreement of Canadian military authority there would be no recourse for amendment or change. Pearson saw this as a mercenary, which disliked to no end, evening stating it unequivocally as a role being nothing more than :

[BLOCK START]

"unpaid Hessians."³⁷³

³⁶⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 140-141

³⁷⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 140-141

³⁷¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 140-142

³⁷² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 140-141

³⁷³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 141-142

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Pearson therefore recommended that Canada participate in Britain's war cabinet under Chamberlain. It was a recommendation that King wished to avoid and was likely rejected out of hand. So, a great opportunity was missed by Canada in 1940, the consequences of which left Canada outside the major councils of war.³⁷⁴

Even then, British authorities were also loathed to consider an expanded liaison with its Commonwealth partners. It was agreed amongst the many premiers and British ministers that the time was not propitious to create a Supreme War Council on the 1917 model with Commonwealth prime ministers in attendance. Rather it was suggested that it was more appropriate to have their representation conducted through appointed ministers. These Commonwealth ministers would gather from time to time for occasional meetings of the war cabinet, with the liaison staff leaving London largely responsible for day-to-day management of operations.³⁷⁵

Regardless in the end this suggestion became the antecedent of Canadian diplomatic liaison with other entities during the war. Communication and its control were firmly ensconced entirely through the government of the United Kingdom by this protocol.³⁷⁶ It didn't matter, for Mackenzie King had no great interest in participation even prior to the beginning of the war and held fast to his philosophical bent long after as well.³⁷⁷ And with that Canada missed the boat for a greater role and wider participation commensurate with its coming investments of time, treasure, and lives.

The situation changed dramatically following the defeats in France and Flanders by June of 1940. Great Britain was virtually on its own, defenseless, having lost most of its arms at Dunkirk. Canada along with the Commonwealth partners and Britain were now adrift, alone to contend with Hitler's onslaught, and now Italy's armed forces too. The Dominions were Britain's most single important asset from 1940-41. Regardless this did not change Canada's relationship regarding the higher direction of the war in any significant or meaningful way.³⁷⁸

It wouldn't have mattered in any case, for along with the defeat in France and Flanders, came a change of British leadership. Winston Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as prime minister. Churchill and King agreed on one point. Both opposed the establishment of an Imperial War Cabinet but for separate and varying reasons.³⁷⁹ Churchill was a man who relished authority. He would rather accept responsibility than share it. He concluded that a permanent presence of

³⁷⁴ Roberts, Andrew. 2008. *Master and Commanders – How Roosevelt, Churchill, Marshall, and Alanbrooke Won the War in the West*. Allen Lane an imprint of Penguin Books, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England, 449

³⁷⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 143

³⁷⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 143

³⁷⁷ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 133

³⁷⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 145

³⁷⁹ Churchill 1949. *Their Finest Hour*, 13, 15-17

Commonwealth ministers would render his War Cabinet unwieldy. He also felt it would dilute his authority that would create additional complications for him.³⁸⁰

In some respects, King's reasoning was much like Churchill's. He too was one who relished power and control. He was also one to protect Canada's sovereign interests not to be usurped by outside control. King felt participation in an Imperial War Cabinet would be a threat to Canadian autonomy. It might involve implying Canadian commitments without any real authority, something he wished to avoid. For domestic purposes, King was caught on the horns of a dilemma trying to keep the country unified. He faced troubles in serving the varied demands thrust upon him as a partner in war, while concurrently satisfying the opinions and demands of his constituency and political base.³⁸¹

Strategic Considerations and Influences Closer to Home 1939- 1940

Strategic interests transformed Canada over the course of the Second World War. Some things had never been considered before; for example, the defence of surrounding territories or approaches. Extraordinarily Iceland came within the special consideration of Canadian Home Defence. Iceland was regarded as a potential staging area for a German amphibious invasion both of Canada and North America.³⁸² It was also of interest to Britain for use both as an operating base and as a staging area for other operations and the ferrying of aircraft.³⁸³

Iceland's strategic value lay more in the potential threat of its use as an air base. It was envisioned that long-range aircraft could be launched against North American cities and industrial complexes to profound effect from there. Albeit long range German air resources were limited in number. But there threat lay in the possibility of the potential of a successful attack. Such an eventuality would likely have prompted a shift in German aircraft production from tactical to strategic air power.³⁸⁴ The potential alone would have prompted the development and improvement of these types and new variants with new and improved range with new carrying weight of bombs. Any such enhancement of new capabilities thus posed greater threats to our eastern seaboard and its military and industrial facilities.³⁸⁵ Just like that, Canadian interests grew affecting it industrially, militarily, and economically!³⁸⁶

³⁸⁰ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 147-148

³⁸¹ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 8, 147-148,

³⁸² Griehl, Manfred. 2004. *Luftwaffe over America – The Secret Plans to Bomb the United States in World War II*, A Greenhill Book, Frontline Books, an impression of Pen & Sword Books Ltd. 47 Church Street, Barnsley, Yorkshire, S70 2AS (2016), 38-40

³⁸³ Christie, Carl A. 1995. *Ocean Bridge – The History of RAF Ferry Command*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, and Buffalo, 122-127,

Churchill 1948. *The Gathering Storm*, 600

Greenhouse et al 1994, 375

³⁸⁴ Hogg, Ian V. 2015. *German Secret Weapons of the Second World War – The Missiles, Rockets, Weapons & New Technology of the Third Reich*. , A Greenhill Book (1999) , Frontline Books, an impression of Pen & Sword Books Ltd. 47 Church Street, Barnsley, Yorkshire, S70 2AS (2016), 58 and

Griehl 2004. *Luftwaffe over America*. 40-41

³⁸⁵ Griehl 2004. *Luftwaffe over America*. 170-175, 193-194

³⁸⁶ Oglesby, Major R.D. 1950. "Canadian-American Co-operation in the Defence of Sault Ste. Marie, 1941-1945." Report NO . 34 HISTORICAL SECTION (G . S .) ARMY HEADQUARTERS, 24 Jan 1950, 4/40 [ahq034.pdf \(canada.ca\)](#),

The events of 1940 leading to the Battles of Britain and Atlantic and later, Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, had a chilling effect on Canada's War Cabinet Committee stoking concern and fear. The Committee's anxiety concerning home defence was stated as early as 9 July, where perceived threats extending well beyond Canada's borders and boundaries were evident. The Committee decided that without military input or advice;

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"no further commitments involving the despatch of forces or materials outside of Canada should be made, without their full consideration."

[BLOCK END]

Specific authority to do so was deliberated on 26 July.³⁸⁷ It was only coming to light that a nation's interests often reach far beyond the confines of its natural borders and that in the end, it would entail an investment of one kind or another.

General Crerar, CGS, for his part attempted to ease that fear in his assessment of the Icelandic threat. He perceived that if invaded and conquered it would take time to develop Iceland and converted into a Nazi base. So, imminent threat of invasion was non-existent. Crerar's assessment was for the benefit of the Cabinet War Committee at its meeting of 26 July 1942. But Nazi air power remained a dagger pointed at our heartland, nonetheless.³⁸⁸

General H.D.G. Crerar, the newly appointed Chief of General staff at the time, was a well respected man. He was one of the few military general officers whose intelligence was held in high regard within the inner circles of Ottawa. Crerar briefed the Cabinet War Committee on his findings based on his recent visit to Britain and that of his vice chief of staff to Washington. All centred on the likelihood of the invasion of Canada should Britain fall. Crerar's findings suggested that likelihood was improbable, but he also warned of the very threat of raids, especially along Canada's east coast.

Crerar recommended that the east coast be strongly defended by three brigade groups amounting to some 15000 men as it was the one facing immediate threat. In the event of any raids, he anticipated the assistance of the United States to deal with them. Consequently, he recommended defence preparations with a deeper alliance and liaison with the United States. General Crerar also recommended that a military attaché be despatched to keep his American allies fully informed of developments.³⁸⁹

The threat to Canada's east coast was dealt with forthwith resulting in dispositions and the building of coastal defences. Beyond that Canada began building and reinforcing its coastal

³⁸⁷ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 131, and Granatstein, J.L. 2020. *Canada at War – Conscripted. Diplomacy, and Politics*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 143

³⁸⁸ Oglesby 1950 AHQ 34, 9/40

³⁸⁹ Granatstein 2022. *Canada at War*, 143

defence with a radar chain beginning in 1940. It was a slow process. It would take two and a half years before the coasts were adequately defended by anti-aircraft guns alone.³⁹⁰

It may have been a prudent and plausible course of action taken by men for “no further commitments involving the despatch of forces or materials outside of Canada “. They were responsible for the overall conduct of Canada’s war and to their duty toward public safety. But that action may have had some unintended consequences as well. It impacted the distribution of men and materiel resources both within and outside Canada. It also cast a certain inflexibility that may have contributed to the manpower problem around the Conscription crisis as no moves could be made without the Committee’s approval or authority. It might have also indentured and bound those resources to Canadian territory and thus removed a flexibility of action in their redistribution when the critical time came.

Nevertheless, General Crerar, now Chief of the General Staff, who had once emphasized the probability of dangerous raids, saw it come to pass in which all of Canadian military might was applied.³⁹¹ Those raids came from the sea in 1942. The Battle of the Gulf of St Lawrence brought the war closer into Canadian shores towards the heartland. All of Canada’s preparations and tremendous commitments in time and money were brought to bear in dealing with this German assault. It opened the eyes of the nation of what was necessary to protect Canada’s strategic interests. It would also move Canada towards new commitments of new relationships with the United States and an evolution of the old with Great Britain.

The Radar Chain in Defence

Canada had a growing problem, too few men and far too many demands. It had to seek alternate ways and means to fill the growing holes in the manpower requirement. One of those was through the application of technology. Canada had a vast coast line to defend, and it was impossible to be everywhere. It needed a watchman and that watchmen proved to be radar as one part of the solution.

The construction of a radar chain was suggestive of the importance of technology as applied by Canada in its defence during the war. There were two phases to the implementation of Canada’s radar defence chain alone that was indicative of the monumental task in achieving these

³⁹⁰ Nicholson, GWL (Maj) .1945 *The Anti-Aircraft Defences of the Atlantic Coast. Army Headquarters Report 004*, 19 February 1945. Directorate Of History and Heritage, Ottawa. 15 Oct 1986 [Anti-aircraft defences of the Atlantic coast - Canada.ca](https://www.history.gc.ca/anti-aircraft-defences-of-the-atlantic-coast-canada.ca), 5/86

³⁹¹ Cunningham, D.H. 1949. *Army participation in measures taken by the three services for the security of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the lower river during the period of German submarine activity, 1942-45*. Report No. 30, Historical Section (G.S.) Army Headquarters, 18 November 1949. Canada. National Defence. Directorate Of History And Heritage. Last edited: 9 October 2018, [canada.ca/content/dam/themes/defence/caf/militaryhistory/dhh/reports/ahq-reports/ahq030.pdf](https://www.history.gc.ca/content/dam/themes/defence/caf/militaryhistory/dhh/reports/ahq-reports/ahq030.pdf)

defensive dispositions. The first phase involved the selection and construction of the sites. The second phase was making them operational that involved the training and manning of them.³⁹²

Much was accomplished between planning, conception, and construction of the radar chain. Siting of these units had to be completed on the East and West Coasts of Canada first. For the radar chain, equipment orders had to be placed. Staff had to be trained, and on site construction begun. The first stations only became operational in 1942 and the last station completed in 1944.³⁹³

It seemed that all of Canada's defence preparations coalesced and were firmly in place by 1942. It all pointed to how inadequately Canada was prepared for war.³⁹⁴ It also pointed to the impacts of a defence budget on a shoestring that in the end, required total mobilization of its industry and manpower to overcome the deficiencies in the lack of adequate preparations.

But new bases were prepared and opened in the Maritimes and Newfoundland and the threat dealt with.³⁹⁵ The radar detachments were integral to those preparations. Heretofore though the enemy concentrated in Atlantic waters with minimal risk to home defence. But their entry into the Gulf of St Lawrence was a game changer. Their presence in the Gulf suggested an urgency to get things done. One of those urgent measures was the institution of a radar chain.

Thirty radar sites alone were located around Canada's east Coast. They had different functions involving:

1. High flying early warning radar
2. Chain Home Low flying early warning radar
3. Ground Control Intercept Radar
4. Microwave Early Antisubmarine , surface Radar, and
5. United States SCR270/271 Radar.

No 5 RCAF Radar Squadron on Canada's east coast was one such unit as a detachment of the Chain Home low flying early warning radar system.³⁹⁶ Canada drew upon its universities from which it selected and trained the officers and radar technicians for this much needed service. Training was also conducted Research Enterprises Limited at Scarborough and a Royal Air Force (RAF) School at Clinton, Ontario. The recruits were posted to their duty stations once they graduated from this system.³⁹⁷

"Essential Eyes and Ears" - The Aircraft Detection Corps

³⁹² McLachlan, WW . 2003. *Royal Canadian Air Force Personnel on Radar in Canada During Second World War*, Publisher WW McLachlan, 2003, pg. xx-10

³⁹³ McLachlan 2003, pg. xx-10

³⁹⁴ Rose 2013 Mobilize 257-258

³⁹⁵ Hugh A. Halliday, **Eastern Air Command: Air Force, Part 14**, Legion Magazine, 1 March 2006

³⁹⁶ McLachlan 2003, pg. xx6-7

³⁹⁷ McLachlan 2003. xx2

The other part of the solution to protecting Canada's east and west coast beyond the application of radar was found in the engagement of its citizenry through the Aircraft Detention Corps to fill the gaps.

Aviation presented Canada with a tremendous strategic problem to consider with some 3.9 million square miles of territory requiring surveillance, with some 528,000 square miles specifically considered critical approaches.³⁹⁸ It was a massive area to defend. Looking at it from another perspective, the east coast, west coast, and arctic approaches totalled some 151,019 linear miles alone at the shore. Hidden in this seemingly boundless area was a myriad of routes, with many sheltered spots, inlets, and so on.³⁹⁹ The problem of the day centred on a consideration of air-borne attack. These approaches could be used by a well-placed enemy with a view to strike vital points. It was a complex problem that posed threats to Canada's seaborne trade, ports, industries, and cities.

Aircraft could now easily surmount geography, distance, time, and space. Aircraft could also carry tremendous loads over great distances, which was constantly evolving. The advancements in what became a large variety of air borne threats, clearly demonstrated the ever-changing number of sources or opportunities available to an enemy.

Despite the limitations of existing technologies, limitations could be easily overcome. Other means were available to a potential enemy such as overseas bases, or even aircraft launched from ships.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, threats greatly concerned defence planners as there were far too many threats with far too few resources to deal with them all.

One threat of great concern was "long range aircraft." This threat lent the possibility of engagement of targets of strategic opportunity throughout Atlantic Canada. That threat was seen as emanating either out of Norway or France, especially in 1944. A warning was given as a heads up to various commanders to plan accordingly, even though the tide of war had turned in our favour by that time.⁴⁰¹

The enemy with long range aircraft at its disposal was quite capable of one-way missions. But the potential threat was considered low during the war. Post-war analysis though concluded otherwise:

"The development of long-range bombers, ... produced in the Second World War very realistic fears of a sudden air raid, particularly from the North...A study of a globe or a polar projection map indicates that the air distance from Norway to the Soo is practically the same as to New York, and Norway.... that the direct route of approximately 3000

³⁹⁸ Coggon, Allan. 2004. *Watch and Warn*. Trafford Publishing Victoria, BC, Canada, 2004 2nd ed., 12.

³⁹⁹ Wikipedia. 2020. "Geography of Canada." Accessed 30 Nov 2020 This page was last edited on 23 January 2024, at 05:27 (UTC).

: [Geography of Canada - Wikipedia](#)

⁴⁰⁰ Coggon 2004, 2

⁴⁰¹ Canada, National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, Dead files 142.61B86009(D2) (B.B.S. 1-2), OP Orders, instr. for 86 Coast Bty at Forts Beacon and Melford Jan 42/Feb 45, Pg. 40 of 75

miles passes over terrain where observers would be few and far between and winter nights long”.⁴⁰²

Fortunately for the Allies, a strategic long-range aircraft with roundtrip capability was never available to Germany. That development was greatly hindered by their lack of strategic materials and inter-service demands on them.⁴⁰³

As Canadian resources were finite and fragile during the Second World War, they had to be measured carefully and used wisely. It became clear early on that the military would require help to safeguard Canada.

Canada was truly fortunate. There was an upwelling of public feelings in which, duty and national desire existed to assist in anyway possible. Many Canadians simply wished to do their part. Regrettably, not all were able to join the armed forces for various reasons. Some would have to serve in the vast arrays of needs in reserved occupations, manufacturing, agriculture, mining, and specialized trades. But they could take a meaningful and active part in the war effort through this crucial activity.

A letter issued 26 March 1940 by Air Vice-Marshal (AVM) George M. Croil, (RCAF), provided some preliminary guidance to the establishment of the ADC. AVM Croil was a visionary. He had foreseen the need for the ADC and its civil volunteers.⁴⁰⁴

The Aircraft Detection Corps was vital war work, guarding our coasts from Newfoundland’s Cape Race to Baffin Island. Not only was the east Coast protected, but also northward and westward in land as far as British Columbia’s Queen Charlotte Islands. The ADC became the essential eyes and ears of our home-front defence forces. Moreover, the Corps was chiefly made up of unpaid civilian volunteers.⁴⁰⁵

Such a move to gainfully employ its civilian population, placing young and old alike on a war-footing, ultimately watching all land, sea, and airborne approaches, cemented Canada’s path to “Total War.”

The Winds of War 1940-1941 Brings a New Troublesome ‘Dance’ Partner

The advent of the Second World War introduced a new phase in Canadian history regarding external relations. This was especially true in the evolving relationship with our nearest neighbour, the United States. The transition to strategic partnership for Canada as a growing nation was never easy nor smooth.

A foreign policy gulf existed between the United States and Canada. The US adopted an early isolationist position concerning the growing conflict in Europe. Canada was directly opposite. As

⁴⁰² Canada, National Defence Headquarters Ottawa, Directorate of History, REPORT NO. 34, ARMY HEADQUARTERS 24 Jan 50 Canadian-American Co-operation in the Defence of Sault Ste. Marie, ~1941-1944 (released and declassified July 1986) , pg.4/40

⁴⁰³ Griehl 2004. *Luftwaffe over America* , 170-175

⁴⁰⁴ Coggon 2004, . 2-3 & 10

⁴⁰⁵ Coggon 2004, 2004, x

a Commonwealth member it was much more closely aligned to the policies and values of Great Britain. Canada entered the war one week after a formal declaration by Great Britain. The United States remained neutral and distinctly a non-belligerent.⁴⁰⁶ The United States, looking on hoping to avoid any involvement in the growing conflict, seemingly standing on the sidelines, also somewhat aloof to Great Britain's peril and the World's urgent needs.⁴⁰⁷

The seven day delay in Canada's separate declaration was fortuitous for both Canada and Great Britain. The American public was largely isolationist and had no great desire for any foreign entanglements following the Great War.⁴⁰⁸ The American public wished to ensure US neutrality in this ever growing and dangerous conflict.⁴⁰⁹ In the meantime, the week delay of Canada's own declaration of war served to play an important role in assuring US cooperation in one vital area, the purchase of aircraft.

Mackenzie King assured his American colleagues September 5, 1939, that Canada was for the moment, at peace. This had the attendant consequence in which Canada was not for the moment subject to their application of the Neutrality Act. So technically the United States was not selling weapons to a nation at war or to a belligerent.⁴¹⁰ It was an important technicality. Canada was able to receive in the intervening few days, delivery of vital aircraft which could not legally be sent either to Britain or France. They were expedited north on a technicality that Canada was still a neutral country.⁴¹¹ It was a first step towards a broader US engagement and involvement in the war.

For his part, the lack of aircraft was the one thing that Roosevelt feared most for his nation's own defence. It was an opinion based on observations of its use and importance in the Great War and more recently, in Spain and its civil war. Moreover, American intelligence estimated that German aircraft production amounted to 18000 aircraft per year. American air power was practically non-existent at this time.⁴¹²

Roosevelt saw the destruction and chaos rained down upon the great capitals of Europe in 1939-1940. He knew that war with Germany was inevitable but American public opinion, and the Neutrality Act kept the United States on the sidelines. It was the key problem that he faced in

⁴⁰⁶ Baime, A.J. 2014. *The Arsenal of Democracy. FDR, Detroit, and an Epic Quest to Arm an America at War*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Boston/New York. 66-67

⁴⁰⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 327 (356/710), and

Parrish, Thomas. 2009. *To Keep The British Isles Afloat – FDR'S Men in London, 1941*. Smithsonian Books, HarperCollins Publishers, 10 East 59th Street, New York, NY 10022. 42-43

⁴⁰⁸ Cooper, John Milton, Jr. 1990. *Pivotal Decades – The United States, 1900-1920*. W.W. Norton & Company- New York -London, 357-376

⁴⁰⁹ Baime 2014, 66

⁴¹⁰ Parrish 2009, 42-43

⁴¹¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 327-328 (356-357/710)

⁴¹² Baime 2014, 67

managing the Lend- Lease program and the Neutrality Act in provision of aid to Britain while keeping the United States out of the conflict.⁴¹³

American legislators were keenly aware of developments and troubles in Europe. Much had preceded the war that drew their attention to the possibility of a coming conflict. They noted Germany's increasing bellicosity, its increasing territorial demands and aspirations, and arms build up. Their militarism and its potential consequences were evident in their abrogation of the Treaty Of Versailles. Yet American legislators remained unwilling to do anything about it, preferring to remain neutral and let Europe take care of its own mess. And to ensure that end, they created the Neutrality Act designed to remain out of international affairs by limiting arms sales.⁴¹⁴ But that Act was tested to the limits in Spain where both Italy and Germany interfered militarily where the fate of a democratic nation was at stake and the morality and inflexibility of the Neutrality Act questioned.⁴¹⁵

In the end, whether Spain remained a democratic state or not, was irrelevant, and not a concern to many Americans. The growing arguments of intervention were vented in the press of the day. Some US legislators argued that arms be sent to the democratic Loyalists in Spain; others argued against it. With US support as the prime reason for President Roosevelt's armaments program, many Americans saw such that this all entailed a larger military, belligerency, and greater entanglement in events beyond US shores. Most Americans demanded that any such armaments program only be used for the defence of the country and on one's own shores.⁴¹⁶

The variance of opinion within the American diaspora complicated both the interpretation, use and eventual application of the Neutrality Act. It all boiled down to the popularity of the cause. In Spain there was a fight between democracy and fascism. Many saw it as a duty to support democracy and wished the US to sell arms to the Loyalists to support their cause.⁴¹⁷

No enthusiasm was given to Britain's needs, even tepidly. American goodwill was limited when it came to Great Britain in its hour of need. There may have been political and cultural factors at play here especially from the US Irish diaspora who had no love for Britain.⁴¹⁸ Joseph Kennedy , the Irishman from Boston was US Ambassador at the time. Kennedy did his utmost to keep the US out of the war.⁴¹⁹

Britain was weak and isolated. Too many she was on the brink of defeat and supporting her, a futile effort.⁴²⁰ It was well known in American circles that Britain's Achilles heel was the sea lane, its lifeline in imports. Britain's continued existence and wellbeing were threatened by the

⁴¹³ Baime 2014, 117-118

⁴¹⁴ Parrish 2009, 42-43

⁴¹⁵ Parrish 2009 , 41-43,72

⁴¹⁶ Kee, Robert. 1993. *The World We Left Behind: A Chronicle of the Year 1939*. Weidenfeld, London, 42-43

⁴¹⁷ Kee 1993, 73

⁴¹⁸ Simons 2020. *The Secret Plan to Overthrow The British Empire*, 17-25

⁴¹⁹ Stevenson 2000 *Intrepid*. 70,73, 79-80

⁴²⁰ Stevenson 2000 *Intrepid*, 79-80, and

Simons 2020. *The Secret Plan to Overthrow The British Empire* , 9

need to import 50,000 to 60,000 tons of food stuffs alone to feed her people. This tonnage was separate from its requirements for arms and other stores required in modern warfare.⁴²¹

King and Roosevelt had no contact during the first seven months of the war. Regardless, the United States was keenly aware of the stakes should Britain lose. The Neutrality Act was eventually modified so that belligerent powers could purchase goods in the United States with conditions attached. Title to goods had to be taken before they were shipped. They were to be transported only in the vessels of the belligerent powers. And finally, all purchases were on a "cash and carry" basis.⁴²² It was here that Canada came to play a key role on behalf of Great Britain as its principal agent, negotiator, and financier between the US and Great Britain during the war.⁴²³

Regardless, there was no assurance that Great Britain would survive. This possibility lent Canadian and American interests towards a consideration of mutual defence in those very early years of the war.⁴²⁴ Therefore, informal preliminary discussions began with Canadian and American military officials over dinner July 11, 1940. Senior leaders of both countries considered two major topics. First; US representatives inquired on the extent to which the United States might be able to assist Canada by 'providing equipment and supplies.' Secondly, the group went on to discuss common action that might be taken for defence in North America in case of the demise of Great Britain.

Canadian officers were far from pessimistic concerning Britain's chances of survival. They stated unequivocally that the defence of the United Kingdom was vitally important both to Canada and the United States. Britain was the buffer, which ensured the war was limited to Europe and not extended to North America. They only foresaw small raids against the eastern seaboard. The Canadians requested that any materiel assistance currently earmarked for the United Kingdom be affirmed and not diverted to Canada at that time.⁴²⁵

This marked a pivotal point in history on two important points. In the first instance, it was a serious change and redirection in Canadian American relations. It was the first occasion where its senior military leaders gathered to discuss matters of mutual defence. Secondly, it foretold of evolving Canadian defence relations and sphere of influence in future, in Canada's shifting of orbit from UK to US influence.

Concerns that Great Britain was about to fall existed not only in military circles but also within the political realm of Canada and the United States. It was widely discussed within the executive

⁴²¹ Kee 1993, 42-43

⁴²² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 328 (357/710)

⁴²³ Bryce 2005. [Canada and the Cost of Second World War](#), 13, 16, 72-73, 100-101, 110, 301-302

⁴²⁴ Granatstein, J.L. 1993. "The American Influence On The Canadian Military, 1939-1963" In Hunt, B.D. and B.D. G. Haycock, *Canada's Defence – Perspectives on Policy in the Twentieth Century*. Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., A Longman Company, Toronto, Canada, 129-130

⁴²⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 333-334 (362-363/710)

and political branches of both countries. Public opinion and hope began to falter. By July 1940, Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, along with a growing number of Canadians, became increasingly concerned that Britain was about to fall. This downward slide occurred notwithstanding Canadian military judgment and assurances.⁴²⁶

King and many Canadians assumed that Canada was to be Germany's next target because of its small population and abundant natural resources. Both Canada and the United States recognized this threat.⁴²⁷ It happened that President Roosevelt took the first step in inviting King to discuss the issue. Roosevelt and King officially met at the border town of Ogdensburg, New York August 17-18, 1940. Roosevelt during this visit outlined a plan to create a joint board to oversee the defence of both nations. Most importantly this plan was not just for the duration of the current crisis but was also designed for use post-war. Roosevelt's plan eventually led to the creation of a permanent body, the Permanent Joint Board on Defence.⁴²⁸

There were other issues addressed beyond mutual defence. The United States saw a role for Canada as a possible channel of communication and influence between the United States and Britain. King's government was not satisfied with the state of relations with the United States though and was looking for means toward improving that.⁴²⁹

The military liaisons between the two countries had greased the movement toward mutual cooperation and discussions considerably improving relations by mid-August. But despite that effort there remained no established machinery for continuous consultation on defence matters at a high level.⁴³⁰

The "Ogdensburg Agreement" was an important turning point for Canada. Apart from the issue of mutual defence, it also marked US recognition of Canada as an equal and sovereign nation. More importantly, the United States desired Canada take a proactive role to use its influence with Churchill. There was an offer on the table for its "destroyers-for-bases deal." This involved the transfer of 50 destroyers to the Royal Navy that they wished expedited.⁴³¹ But an even greater change was forthcoming because of Ogdensburg and the Hyde Park Agreement. It was a pivot point in which the United States replaced the United Kingdom as Canada's senior defence partner.⁴³²

There were issues of quid pro quo in the matter of land deals, bases etc. that Canada negotiated unilaterally on Great Britain's behalf. Canada did this on its own accord without reference to

⁴²⁶ Wikipedia. 2023. "Ogdensburg Agreement". Last modified on 21 November 2022, at 17:26 (UTC). Accessed January 15, 2023, [Ogdensburg Agreement - Wikipedia](#)

⁴²⁷ Granatstein 1993. *The American Influence On The Canadian Military*. 130-131

⁴²⁸ Wikipedia. 2023. "Ogdensburg Agreement".

⁴²⁹ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 336 (365/710)

⁴³⁰ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 336 (365/710)

⁴³¹ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 336-337 (365-366/710), and

Wikipedia.2024. "Destroyers-for bases deal." This page was last edited on 11 February 2024, at 12:34 (UTC).

[Destroyers-for-bases deal - Wikipedia](#)

⁴³² Granatstein 1993. *The American Influence On The Canadian Military*. 131

Churchill or his government. King was pleased with his work, but Churchill was not. Churchill felt no great enthusiasm concerning what had happened at Ogdensburg. In point of fact, he was miffed with King's effort on his behalf.⁴³³ King had tread on "colonial" matters and prerogatives of the British government.

However, Mackenzie King tried to smooth over his faux pas acting without British approval or consent. In a speech to Parliament made 12 May 1940, he stated:⁴³⁴

[BLOCK START]

On August 20, Mr. Churchill announced in the British House of Commons the decision of the British government "spontaneously and without being" asked or offered any inducement" to offer the United States sites for naval and air bases. in the British possessions in the western hemisphere. I should like particularly to draw the attention of the house to one sentence of Mr. Churchill's announcement of the decision of the British government. "In all this line of thought," he said, "we found ourselves in very close harmony with ' the government of Canada."

[BLOCK END]

King went on to justify Churchill's approval:⁴³⁵

[BLOCK START]

September 13, and which was first made public in the United Kingdom, Mr. Churchill was kind enough to use the following words : I am very glad to have this opportunity of thanking you personally for all you have done for the common cause and especially in promoting a harmony of sentiment throughout the new world. This deep understanding will be a dominant factor in the rescue of Europe from a relapse into the dark ages .

[BLOCK END]

Churchill's comments lacked enthusiasm for King's effort. They had the appearance both of gratefulness yet of reproach. Churchill's post war memoirs gave credit to Lord Lothian for the success of the "destroyer-cum-bases negotiations."⁴³⁶ Neither King nor Canada were acknowledged. It was a rocky beginning to becoming proactive and acting independently. Perhaps something that Mackenzie King was unlikely to forget.

⁴³³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 341 (370/710)

⁴³⁴ MACKENZIE KING, RIGHT HON. W. L. 1940. THE OGDENSBURG AGREEMENT REPRINT FROM SPEECH. House of Commons Official Report . May 12, 1940. OTTAWA : Printed by- Edmond Cloutier , Printer to the King's. Most Excellent Majesty, 1940 , 2

Source: [5061_137_096-004-017.pdf](#)

⁴³⁵ MacKenzie King Ogdensburg 1940, 7

⁴³⁶ Churchill 1949. *Their Finest Hour*, 555

“Ogdensburg Agreement”

At the heart of the issue for Churchill was likely the “Ogdensburg Agreement.” It became the seedbed upon which a Permanent Joint Board’s on Defence between Canada and the United States was established. This board began immediate studies relating to sea, land and air problems including personnel and materiel which likely irked Churchill most.⁴³⁷ These were areas that he considered his prime bailiwick and not ones to be shared lightly with others.

The “Ogdensburg Agreement” was entirely a political matter, which was arranged by statesmen. The professional heads of the fighting services had nothing to do with it.⁴³⁸ Secondly because of the extreme informality of the proceedings, there were no formal treaties or agreements of any sort signed. The authority for the Permanent Joint Board on Defence came to be through a simple press release.⁴³⁹

But to add to its formality, Canada published it in its Treaty Series and then incorporated it in an order-in-council. All these steps were taken to ratify and confirm the Prime Minister's action at Ogdensburg. The United States simply regarded the arrangement as an executive agreement that was not subject to ratification by its Senate. As such, the arrangement was never submitted to that body. Thirdly, the new Board was not, and never became, an executive body of any sort in both countries.⁴⁴⁰

The “Ogdensburg Agreement” marked for better or for worse, a new beginning in Canadian American relations.⁴⁴¹ It marked the beginning of a movement from a British to an American order of influence in Canada and its relations within the world order.

The Board enjoyed its most important period while the United States remained neutral. It was an important conduit until events changed. That change began shortly after the U.S. entered the war December, 7 1941 marking a decline of the Board’s importance. Military liaison between the two countries changed and now conducted at the level of the respective Chiefs of Staff who became more important as a point of contact. The functions of the Board began a slow decline. The Board met repeatedly during 1942, thereafter meetings became less frequent, and beyond that, less frequent still. There was only one formal recommendation from the Board made after 1943.⁴⁴² The joint coordinating function of the board was often ignored. Thus, Canada was often bypassed on key decisions.

The United States was dissatisfied with the progress made on its requirements for air bases in Newfoundland. They were also concerned with the German naval actions in the Gulf of St

⁴³⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 339 (368/710)

⁴³⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 341 (370/710)

⁴³⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 339 (368/710)

⁴⁴⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 339 (368/710)

⁴⁴¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 339 (368/710)

⁴⁴² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 348 (377/710)

Lawrence in 1942. These prompted Roosevelt to act unilaterally and deliberately to get the Canadian government to move.⁴⁴³

There was a somewhat similar episode concerning the Alaska Highway. The President and the Secretaries of War and Navy were advised that the highway was needed to defend American territory in Alaska. President Roosevelt considered the matter a *fait accompli*. Roosevelt made a solitary decision bypassing the Permanent Joint Board whose sole purpose was keeping the Canadian government in the loop on key matters between the US and Canada. Roosevelt allocated \$10 million for the project from his emergency fund on 11 February. The President simply assumed that direction and arrangements would be made with Canada through the Permanent Joint Board. He also assumed that his direction presumed Canadian concurrence. All the key essential decisions were made well before the matter was referred to the Board and without Canadian participation at all.⁴⁴⁴

Canada was to learn one valuable lesson from this experience. It was the harbinger that the United States would move quickly where its interests were concerned without reference to its partners. Secondly was a hard one. Canadian appeals or interests carried little weight within the halls of power in the United States.⁴⁴⁵

The Waltz begins

The Canadian position as a minor player would be cemented when Churchill and Roosevelt met off Argentina, Newfoundland in 1941. Here the two issued their Atlantic Charter. Canada was not invited. Mackenzie King, once regarded as the matchmaker, negotiator, and go-between of the two powers, may now have been punished by Churchill for his actions in the Ogdensburg agreement. On the other hand, that agreement may have been simply regarded by the United States and Britain that Canada was no more than a junior and submissive partner in their relations.⁴⁴⁶ It was an attitude that was to prevail throughout the course of the war.

But Roosevelt's growing presumption of "assumed Canadian concurrence" on all matters was a cause for great resentment. It all brewed up in the matter of joint planning. Key was the Permanent Joint Board's 7th Recommendation that oversaw the preparation of two Basic Defence Plans during the war. The first was the "Joint Canadian-United States Basic Defence Plan — 1940", known as "Basic Plan No. 1" dated October, 10 1940. "Basic Plan No. 1" was designed to meet the urgent needs of that moment with the assumption that the UK had lost the war in 1940 with the subsequent transfer of the British Fleet to North America. This plan also acknowledged the potential for conflict by the "aggression by an Asiatic Power," Japan.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 348 (377/710)

⁴⁴⁴ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 348 (377/710)

⁴⁴⁵ Morton 1985, 229

⁴⁴⁶ Morton 1985, 182

⁴⁴⁷ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 348 (377/710)

The strategic situation changed significantly by the end of 1941. Great Britain was still on her feet and fighting. Japan openly declared war on the United States by its actions on Pearl Harbour December 7, 1941. The "Basic" Plan required revisions in light of all these developments.

The Joint Board Staff was already working on a revision to Basic Plan 1. The new plan was known as "Joint Canadian-United States Basic Defence Plan No. 2", shortly referred to as ABC-22. The implementation of this plan was complicated by US/UK Staff in solitary conversations. These occurred between the United Kingdom and the United States preceding Pearl Harbor in early 1941. Canada was not party to these discussions that eventually precipitated some discontent. That plan became known as ABC-1. ABC-22 was ancillary to ABC-1. The aim of ABC 1 was designed where the United States and the Commonwealth would be partners in a war. The sole object was to defeat the Axis, and not merely to prevent the Axis from conquering North America. ABC 1 broadened the scope of strategic intent, but Canada was totally bypassed.

Within this new scope and strategic intent, was found an American assumption. Canada was to be a part of the new plan, while conceding the strategic direction of its forces to the United States. There was a precedent for doing so in the application of the initial agreement in Plan No. 1. But the situation was poorly handled. The assumption of assumed "Canadian concurrence" and then bypassing or ignoring the Canadian government was not well received. Canadian sovereignty once again was largely ignored.

The Royal Canadian Navy was particularly annoyed with this American proposal. It would see an end of Canadian strategic control of its naval forces. Further it would see American control over its operations and its eventual limitation to coastal and inshore patrols. Inshore waters of Canada and Newfoundland were to be commanded by American officers. RCN naval units would be commanded by Canadian officers. Canadians would retain operational control and command until such time as United States forces outnumbered them.

It was a proposal that infuriated the Royal Canadian Navy to no end. The navy subsequently raised some vital key points of concern. Foremost was its complaint that the RCN would not be able to move a vessel from one coast to the other without U.S. authority. The RCN also pointed out that the British Admiralty had always recognized that Canada possessed strategic control in her coastal areas.⁴⁴⁸ Canada was being treated more and more as a mere pawn on a chess board between the two major players, its alleged partners, the United States and Great Britain.

The Canadian Section of the Board, and the higher authorities to whom it reported, were not prepared to accept these American proposals. In the end, Canadian Chiefs of Staff were willing to agree to the strategic direction of the United States. However, that direction was provided under the stipulations that it was subject to consultation and only exercised with the concurrence of the Government of Canada. It would be applied, under the same conditions visualized in the 1940 plan, which was a "defensive plan." ABC 1 as such, was beyond that scope of the original

⁴⁴⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 349-350 (378-379/710)

strategic intent. It was an offensive plan that required the attention and direction of the Government of Canada.⁴⁴⁹

The Canadian Chiefs of Staff explained their position to the Ministers of National Defence on April 22, 1941, in which they advised most strongly against accepting the American Plan. The proposal in their opinion ultimately rendered the United States with unqualified strategic control of Canadian Armed Forces, thus threatening Canadian sovereignty to boot!

There were long discussions with the Americans in the intervening weeks. The Canadian Army member of the Board was convinced that the U.S. representatives actually wanted not only strategic direction of Canadian forces but also tactical command.⁴⁵⁰ The issues were eventually sorted out.

The resolution of these issues contributed to an understanding later in the war, that the basic principle of it was for Allied cooperation in the coming campaigns. The first and penultimate concern was that "administration and discipline" was to remain under national control. This was distinct and separate from operational command. Operational command was a matter conceded to a Supreme Commander. Regrettably, the value and importance of this principle was not made clear enough to the War Plans Division in Washington in 1941. Canadian authorities sensed this attitude, and thus were initially cautious about accepting American command.⁴⁵¹

In contrast to prevailing Canadian sensibilities, was the American point of view. In 1939 King George and Queen Elizabeth conducted a highly successful 7,000-mile tour through Canada. As a part of their Royal Visit a side trip to the United States was organized, and on the evening of 7 June, they crossed the border by train at Niagara Falls. It was the first visit in history by a British Sovereign to the United States.⁴⁵²

The visit was not all a bed of rose and welcome. There were some sour notes in the United States visit that worried and harboured concerns with its potential success. Amongst this was a select group of US citizens who held a deep distrust and intent of the Royal Visit that all hinged on American neutrality.

The New York Times wrote afterwards it had been 'a chancy business.' Many amongst the ruling media felt that not far below the surface of American political opinion, the visit struck:

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'a suspicious nerve where the British are concerned.'⁴⁵³

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⁴⁴⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 350 (379/710)

⁴⁵⁰ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 354 (383/710)

⁴⁵¹ Stacey, ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 354 (383/710)

⁴⁵² Kee, Robert. 1993. *The World We Left Behind: A Chronicle of the Year 1939*. Weidenfeld, London, 229

⁴⁵³ Kee 1993, 229

Many Americans recalled the events of the Great War when British orders-in-council infringed on US rights as a neutral. And given that country's entry into that conflict, many more Americans and politicians strongly felt it was Britain's sole policy was to use United States as a catspaw. Many asserted that:

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'...the British are never polite to us except when they want something.'⁴⁵⁴

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Such sentiments ran deep within the American establishment. And yet given their history and concern, this same US establishment felt no moral compunction at interfering in the sovereign issues of another nation if it suited their aim at the time. That was evident in the planning and building of a highway through Canadian territory. It was this same neutral nation for the most part of the Great War, the United States, which complained about an action by British Orders in Council. Those orders affected their sovereign interests, while years later, this same nation, interfered in the sovereign issues of another, Canada's in, and without concern or reservation.

This "disregard" continued unabated at the Anglo-American staff conversations in Washington early in 1941. These conversations spawned the ABC-1 Report that in the end rattled the Canadian military establishment and its sensibilities. Subsequently there came a call from the army's Canadian Chief of General Staff to create a separate mission in Washington. Its purpose would be simple, to represent Canada's needs and interest separately from the British mission that was created that same year. The United States envisaged though that Canada was to be represented solely through the medium of this British Joint Staff Mission in the event of their entry into the war.⁴⁵⁵

Great Britain separately established its own military mission in Washington early in April 1941. That mission eventually became the British Joint Staff Mission. General Crerar, then Chief of the Canadian General Staff advised the Minister of National Defence 22 April that a separate Canadian military mission was advisable. He was given the go-ahead to pursue the matter with his US counterparts the very next day.⁴⁵⁶

The American response to Crerar's suggestion was mixed. The United States State Department had no objection to a Canadian mission. But resistance to the idea came from the War and Navy Departments. These sundry departments felt such a mission was unnecessary given that in their opinion Canada was sufficiently represented through its participation on the Permanent Joint Board on Defence. They also cited the representations of the service attachés in Washington and Ottawa that they opined surely met all Canadian needs.⁴⁵⁷ These two departments either conveniently ignored the higher needs of Canadian sovereignty or dismissed out of hand Crerar's

⁴⁵⁴ Kee 1993, 229

⁴⁵⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 354 (383/710)

⁴⁵⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 355 (384/710)

⁴⁵⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 355 (384/710)

request without any attachment of importance or urgency to the matter. In a backhanded way, Canada was being told to watch its place and stay out of the way.

Mackenzie King pursued the matter with the Americans on the advice of his War Committee, August 18, 1941. King pointed out to his American counterpart that this seriously troubled him. He requested that the US reconsider, but the US War Departments stuck firmly to their guns citing:

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"that foreign political considerations inimical to our military interests should not be allowed to determine the attitude of the War Department".⁴⁵⁸

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This set the tone for the remainder of the war in which Canada was clearly regulated to the sidelines where it was expected to remain and play a submissive and secondary role. It set a precedent in which Canadian Commanders and their government continually fought for the interests, not only of their service personnel, but also in some cases, for Canadian sovereignty. It was the price to pay for "no commitments/limited liability" for into the vacuum of dithering or non-committal, other forces were open to enter and direct the play of the game.

Chapter 6 – The Royal Canadian Air Force

The Winding Road

Canada throughout the Second World War was left unassured of its future. The world was in complete disarray as it was thrust into the maw of war. The situation was unclear and often chaotic. Canada's military and citizenry were mobilized, and no one knew from day to day, what would come, or how their lives would be affected.

It was a witch's cauldron of uncertainty in which Canada made her way seemingly managing from day to day, from crisis to crisis, which often seemed insurmountable. And yet, she did, quite successfully. People adapted, governments too, and life went on. In many respects Canadian lives got better. The Depression was over, people were gainfully employed, and life changed. There was hope in the air for the future too.

But some things presented significant challenges, lessons that had to be learned, and regrettably, somethings fell to the wayside as well. The "wayside" as a consequence was not a matter of inattention or neglect but was one that arose from lapses in working things out, particularly in the application of policy. It wasn't intentional as no one had the knowledge, clairvoyance, or insights to adequately foresee the fall out from the things "left undone." There was a price to pay for the government's "no commitments/limited liability" policy. Dithering and non-committal left a vacuum where other forces openly entered and directed the play of the game.

⁴⁵⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 355 (384/710)

This was particularly true when it came to military matters. In peacetime with a relatively small, naval, air, or permanent army and militia forces, the policy matters were simple and contained. These were internalized within Canada's borders, national interests, and influence. But the Second World War changed all that. Canada was no longer a colony under the direction of Great Britain as it had been during the Great War. Canada was now responsible for her own decisions on an international scale. Consequently, there were urgent needs of all her armed forces to consider and direct, needs that could not simply be left to the direction of others. And it was in this sphere that Canada failed to learn that you can't simply leave to others to do right by you, especially with regard to its armed forces. The Royal Canadian Air Force is a case in point.

The Statute of Westminster of 1931

Nationhood is something that has to be learned. There is no template for it that guides the machinations to government or policy. The circumstances are unique for all even where a common root exists such as in the parliamentary system. Individual circumstances of geography, trade, finances, and diplomacy are the confluence to adjustment of a nation towards managing its own interests. Consequently, there is no true hand book. It all must be learnt from scratch and dealt with along the way.

Outcomes will be different for all even if a common interest exists such as in the Commonwealth. And those outcomes will flow in unintended ways as well. The experiences of the Dominions as they evolved from the Statute of Westminster of 1931, provides some insight into the nuances and consequences of change imposed by a nation's sovereignty.

The Statute of Westminster of 1931 changed the political landscape for Britain and its Dominions. It changed the association and nature of that relationship. All Dominions gained their sovereignty and control over both domestic and foreign policy. It greatly expanded their interests and in the end their liabilities and commitments as well. It opened the door to expectations and to wider participation amongst a global throng of interests. These interest had to be interpolated and reacted to. This was especially so in the rise of militarism in the 1930s just as they gained their sovereignty, to which they not only had to prepare for, but to anticipate as well.

Thus, the accession of the Statute prompted a necessary change of attitude by all. Dominion interests were now filtered through anticipation of national interests, one which they now jealously guarded to preserve and control. It became a fine balance of how much they would participate in world events. But change, tradition, and expectations were not easily rendered in practice as former colonial states. There were expectations and residual duties to the "Mother Country" to consider as well. Letting go of Britain was never easy.

The test for Canada- The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP)

Canadian control of foreign policy was to be tested in the coming war especially in the establishment of the BCATP. The plan tested Canadian independence and nationalism,⁴⁵⁹ that would eventually come to have consequences for the RCAF overseas during the war.

The Plan was preceded by heated and intense negotiations before it was signed December 17, 1939. Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, British and other candidates came to Canada to train. The output from the plan flowed to the needs of the air war in Britain. There was a strong desire that Canadians and other Dominions that their citizens serving overseas would do so, in national squadrons, and under their own commanders. There was much concern regarding the graduate outflow from the program. There was a resolve to define and protect the national identity and service of each participant in the plan.⁴⁶⁰

Herein lies an important aspect of the Plan, Article XV specific to national identity and employment after graduation. The Dominions sought a method to be agreed upon that would ensure that such a process would be considered. All hoped that the government of the United Kingdom would initiate those inter-governmental discussions to that end.⁴⁶¹

King and his cabinet held a strong desire for such discussions that would eventually see Canadians serve in national units formed overseas. Canada was willing to back that, in so far as funding, maintaining, and manning these units.⁴⁶² A laudable goal, but one difficult to implement given that Canada did little to foster a modern air force prior to the war. Defence policy to do so was parsimonious to say the least.

Pre-war Training, Cooperation, and Issues – A Preamble

The needs of modernity were either neglected or deferred for all of Canada's armed forces. The one tip of the hat toward modernity and preparedness was towards pilot training of the RCAF. It was a very small tip in that Canada sent one or four candidates to Cranwell in Britain for training annually. Canada was one amongst the Dominions who followed this path⁴⁶³ It was the nucleus of the potential for future growth and RCAF leadership.

Britain set the number of candidates from the Empire as of 1932 at 33 annually. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State, Northern Ireland, Newfoundland, and Southern Rhodesia all vied for positions in this program. Generally, each Dominion was allotted

⁴⁵⁹Mayne, Dr. Richard Oliver, CD. 2016. "A Test of Resolve Article XV, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and a Crusade for National Recognition." RCAF Journal - SPRING 2016 - Volume 5, Issue 2, 19

[A Test of Resolve: Article XV, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and a Crusade for National Recognition - RCAF Journal - Royal Canadian Air Force - Canada.ca](#)

⁴⁶⁰ Mayne, A Test of Resolve Article XV, 19

⁴⁶¹ Mayne, A Test of Resolve Article XV, 19

⁴⁶² Mayne, A Test of Resolve Article XV, 22

⁴⁶³ Halliday, Hugh. 2015 "CAN/RAF: The Canadians in the Royal Air Force." RCAF Journal - SPRING 2015 - Volume 4, Issue 2,

[Can/RAF: The Canadians in the Royal Air Force - RCAF Journal - Royal Canadian Air Force - Canada.ca](#)

up to four candidates per annum (two per entry) with some exceptions where some territories were limited to one. But in the end, it accomplished little as many Canadian candidates chose to stay in Britain afterwards accepting either permanent or limited commissions to foster their flying careers.⁴⁶⁴

It came to be that RCAF operations overseas were in constant state of turmoil. Command and control of Canadian personnel and their employment while under active service was under stress from the lack of trained personnel in all categories of trades and training. Some 232,632 men and 17,030 women eventually served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the war. A grand total of 93,844 of these served overseas. But rather than posted to RCAF units, the majority were largely embedded in the RAF in the first instance. Of this number, the RCAF suffered 14,541 fatal casualties, of which 12,266 were the result of flying operations and 1906 were caused by training accidents under RAF command.

Towards the end of the war at the beginning of 1945 almost exactly one-quarter of the aircrew of Bomber Command were in fact Canadian. Significantly as at August 1944, nearly 60 per cent served in units of the Royal Air Force.⁴⁶⁵ The Canadian presence was ubiquitous and yet, Canada and the RCAF leadership had little control over those personnel. It was only resolved in 1943. All this stemmed from the unresolved issues of national identity from the very beginning of the BCATP.

The following questions have been raised in that regard:

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Why did it take so long for the Canadian identification policy ("Canadianization") to become effective? The question is the more pertinent in that, as we have seen the Canadian government was aware of the issue in 1939, and it caused vast difficulty in the final stages of the negotiation of the original British Commonwealth Air Training Plan agreement. Why did the arrangement then so painfully arrived at prove to be not the end of the question but only the beginning of it? ⁴⁶⁶

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Some of the problem lay with the Canadian government's own policy and Mackenzie King's desires in the first instance:

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⁴⁶⁴ Halliday 2015. CAN/RAF

⁴⁶⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 305 (332/710)

⁴⁶⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 306 (333/710)

“...the Canadian government rendered the solution of those problems much more difficult when they allowed the British government to shoulder what would be the major share of the cost of the R.C.A.F.”⁴⁶⁷

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Canada’s problems arose in part from King’s policy of “no commitments,” limited liability, and in the end, the pursuit of low cost options, all piggybacked on Canada’s participation in the war. It was in this unwillingness to bear the total costs Canada’s total obligations that proved problematic. It led to management by default by Great Britain who took the lead, and in that, came their reluctance to relinquish control at the appropriate moments.⁴⁶⁸

Thus, a tension of control was established that extended to fiscal responsibility, command, and control as well as national policy, which had to be contended with over the course of the war. Canadianization of RCAF personnel and units overseas; was never satisfactorily resolved and remained a bone of contention to the bitter end notwithstanding the conclusion:

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“Major Power recalls that the Ottawa discussions began with Captain Balfour having doubts about the Canadian views, but the final result was satisfactory to the Canadian government.”⁴⁶⁹

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It was difficult to ascertain what “satisfactory” meant as most issues were left unresolved and at loose ends. These seemed to be discussed and negotiated ad infinitum over the course of the war. It is all reflected in the history of the period in which the story of the Royal Canadian Air Force overseas, and its subsequent relations to the Royal Air Force and the British Air Ministry, are inextricably linked with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.⁴⁷⁰

Regardless, Royal Canadian Air Force No. 6 Bomber Group was finally formed in Britain in 1942. The Group played a major role in Bomber Command for the remainder of the war.⁴⁷¹ But

⁴⁶⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 306 (333/710)

⁴⁶⁸ Madigan, Gerry. 2022. *THE PATH TO VICTORY WAS NEVER STRAIGHT NOR TRUE -Defence Activities in Canada during the Second World War*. Double Dagger Books Ltd ,Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 25-31

⁴⁶⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 300 (327/710)

⁴⁷⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 252 (276/710)

⁴⁷¹ MacLellan, David. 2018. “The Canadian Factor: The Importance of Canadianizing Our Aerial Forces in WWII.”

Esprit de Corps Magazine (Volume 25-01): [April 20, 2018](#)

[THE "CANADIAN" FACTOR: The Importance Of Canadianizing Our Aerial Forces In WWII — espritdecorps](#)

up until the point Group was formed, all Canadian air force personnel were absorbed directly into the ranks of the Royal Air Force as they streamed from the BCATP.

But perhaps No. 6 Bomber Group existed in name only, as most of its needs for aircraft and ground personnel were provisioned through the RAF. Not one single aircraft in the group in 1942 belonged to Canada. These were bought and paid for by the British Government who resisted Canadianization.⁴⁷²

In one sense it was easy to understand the British reluctance to do so as perhaps their interests were only protecting their investment and assets. But that reason defies one of the tenets of the BCATP in that its graduates were to be identified with their respective Dominions. For Canada's part, Mackenzie King was reluctant to pursue this tenant with his British counterparts.⁴⁷³ Consequently all Canadian graduates of the BCATP were initially absorbed by the RAF as required.

Perhaps the failure was ultimately rooted in Canada's fiscal policy. Fiscal policy regarding its armed forces procurements was privy to deferral, delay, blended aims, or outright cancellation that may have been factors. Canadian fiscal policy failed to provide sufficient resources to adequately fund the RCAF and others in the 1930s.⁴⁷⁴ The key to a modern air force lay not only in the procurement of modern aircraft but it also required an investment in those that were required to maintain them. It required an increased defence budget. Canada did little to that end.

That failure in the 1930s did little to build any case for Canadianization in the long run for there was no air force to build on. King's policy of limited liability also hurt his case which in the long run may have hindered Canadian sovereignty and interests before and during the Second World War.⁴⁷⁵

British Commonwealth Air Training Plan – No Commitments /Limited liability runs askew

The Royal Canadian Air Force overseas, its relations to the Royal Air Force, and ultimately to the British Air Ministry, are inextricably linked to the history of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. It was after all Mackenzie King's panacea solution. The BCATP was to be Canada's main war effort in the haste to avoid commitments.⁴⁷⁶ It was supposed to be the penultimate contribution to the war, and ultimately, Canada's chief military contribution, which would thus relieve it from further commitments to Britain elsewhere.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² MacLellan 2018. *The Canadian Factor*.

⁴⁷³ MacLellan 2018. *The Canadian Factor*.

⁴⁷⁴ MacLellan 2018. *The Canadian Factor*.

⁴⁷⁵ MacLellan 2018. *The Canadian Factor*.

⁴⁷⁶ Stacey, C.P. 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – A History of Canadian External Policies – Volume 2: 1921 - 1948 – The MacKenzie King Era*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London

⁴⁷⁷ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 252 (276/710)

It didn't pan out that way. There were undercurrents within King's own military establishment that contrived against him. Air Vice-Marshal Croil, the Chief of the Air Staff argued for the need of a wider activity in the prosecution of the air war as early as 23 November 1939. Croil's position was the R.C.A.F:

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"should participate in overseas war activities and not be restricted entirely to Home Defence and training activities".⁴⁷⁸

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Even in the early days following Canada's declaration of war September 10, 1939, the military establishment assumed, amongst others, that an all Canadian Air Force would eventually see its formation overseas as part of a Canadian expeditionary force.⁴⁷⁹ The hope was that it would be an all-Canadian national force paralleling in its own way as did the Canadian Corps in the last war.⁴⁸⁰ Alas that was not to be.

King wrote to the United Kingdom's High Commissioner describing plans for the expansion of personnel for the RAF's needs. In this letter King expressed a Canadian commitment for the employment of the RCAF as:⁴⁸¹

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"It is the desire of this Government that Canadian Air Force units be formed as soon as sufficient trained personnel are available overseas for this purpose, such squadrons to be manned by and maintained with Canadian personnel at the expense of the Canadian Government..."

[BLOCK END]

King's desire became stillborn. The stumbling block to achieving anything lay within the requirements of setting up the British Commonwealth Training Plan (BCATP) itself. The establishment of the BCATP absorbed most of RCAF's resources. It left little or nothing to spare for action upon which to build and sustain an independent Canadian formation overseas. The RCAF with only twenty squadrons in 1939; comprised of eight regular and 12 auxiliary squadrons, was in a considerable state of unreadiness. All squadrons were understrength; moreover, only one squadron was modernly equipped. The remaining squadrons were left with aging obsolescent aircraft that were far from first-line machines.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 253 (277/710)

⁴⁷⁹ Greenhouse et al 1994, 17

⁴⁸⁰ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 292

⁴⁸¹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 292

⁴⁸² Greenhouse et al 1994, 13

There was much more to an air force than aircrew. There was the wider requirement for ground crew in large numbers to complete an air force and provide the full compliment required for total "Canadian" squadrons. It was simply beyond Canada's means and the RCAF's capacity to do so in the early days of the war.⁴⁸³ Canadian plans in 1939 were thus limited.

The starting point for the RCAF overseas was in an Army Cooperation Wing with a headquarters and three squadrons cooperating with the Canadian Army. This start was to be expanded with formations and units to be formed "progressively." Those units would be formed as the BCATP developed, trained, and graduated personnel. In any case, Canada desired that it have an "Overseas Command Headquarters in the field."⁴⁸⁴

It was envisaged that the R.C.A.F. would continue to operate under the R.A.F. Eventually a Canadian bomber group headquarters would be formed under RAF command with three wing headquarters and six bomber squadrons. This expansion would also include a fighter group headquarters; similarly organized with three wing headquarters and comprised of six fighter squadrons.⁴⁸⁵

These were laudable but unsustainable objectives. It was all too much for the resources and personnel at hand. For in truth, the establishment of full Canadian units was constrained by the resource issue right from the outset of the war. But a solution had to be found to preserve Canadian sensibilities and identity. Thus, Air Vice-Marshal Croil, the Chief of the Air Staff contrived a proposal for an exchange of personnel for his proposed formations and units. Croil's proposal sought that his Canadian instructors and staff be released from the Air Training Plan and exchanged with R.A.F. personnel for service in the field.⁴⁸⁶

The devil was in the details of Croil's proposal of 23 November 1939. Croil put forth:⁴⁸⁷

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As the proposed R.C.A.F. effort in the Training Scheme is equivalent to the maintenance of at least 50 squadrons in the field, it is not unreasonable to ask the R.A.F. to co-operate in arranging and financing a token R.C.A.F. Overseas Force.....

"(c) That the squadrons be equipped by the R.A.F.

"(d) That the R.A.F. meet all cost of the formations and units as if they were R.A.F. formations and units, paying the personnel at R.A.F. rates.

"(e) That the R.C.A.F. pay the personnel the difference between R.C.A.F. and R.A.F. rates.

"(f) That the R.C.A.F. pay the cost of transporting exchange personnel to Canada and R.A.F. (for) R.C.A.F. personnel overseas."

⁴⁸³ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 292

⁴⁸⁴ Greenhous et al 1994, 13

⁴⁸⁵ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 253 (277/710)

⁴⁸⁶ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 253 (277/710)

⁴⁸⁷ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 253 (277/710)

[BLOCK END]

It was a situation of quid pro quo of goods and services until Canada was up to speed and able to fully support an independent air force of its own. The proposal was agreed to but left a lot to be desired as it was open to broad interpretation of when and where “Canada” came up to speed. By placing Canadian service personnel totally within RAF units, yet paying the salary difference for their service, still left many Canadian servicemen and women open for employment, as to when, where, and how in a manner that the RAF saw fit. This employment was often done without prior consultation or any recourse to redress through a Canadian chain of command.

This tended to distance Canadian oversight in the management and control of its service personnel. It also placed the Canadian government, and the RCAF by extension, in a master servant-slave relationship in the matter of governing its own forces. As such Canadian authorities were often left out of the loop time and again. It also created a disjunct that led to problems between RCAF and RAF headquarters regarding the outright management, promotion, service discipline, formation control, and career development of the individual Canadian service personnel.⁴⁸⁸

Croil and the Canadian government relied upon Great Britain’s goodwill and understanding to do the right thing by a sovereign government over the course of the war. It was very much the same for the other Commonwealth partners under the BCATP.⁴⁸⁹ But perhaps the sign of things to come in who was ultimately in charge, came in the moniker ascribed to the “Training Plan” by Britain. It was known as the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) there. This left an impression that Britain was totally responsible for, bearing the full costs of the program. In the end, Canada forgave much of the debt and bore the entire cost of the program thus easing Britain’s balance of payments post war.⁴⁹⁰

Early Negotiations

Negotiations regarding the BCATP were never easy or smooth. There were arguments and misunderstanding in the implementation and management of a plan that began even before the war. There were discussions between Great Britain and Canada regarding air training in Canada as early as 1936 leading up to the days preceding war in 1939. MacKenzie King desired this to be the major Canadian opportunity and interest. Sadly, discussions broke down. It was mainly

⁴⁸⁸ Greenhous et al 1994, 14

⁴⁸⁹ Anthony Cooper , *Sub Hunters – Australian Sunderland Squadrons In The Defeat Of Hitler’s U-Boat Menace 1942-43* . (First published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America Fonthill, 2020), 43-45

⁴⁹⁰ Bryce 2005. [Canada and the Cost of Second World War](#)301-309, and

Braham, Capt (N) (Ret’d) M. and Julia Beingessner. 2013. “The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.” Research Paper #20. The Friends of the Canadian War Museum, November 2, 2013

Source: [RP20 BCATP debt forgiven absorbed by Canada.pdf](#)

due to doctrinal differences and costs on both parties. Neither side was capable or willing to envisage practical solutions to resolving both problems and issues pre-war.⁴⁹¹

Matters were left unresolved at a very early stage. An appreciation of the key issues should have been considered and expressed collegially with one voice. A variance of opinion and direction from within the RCAF, as well as from a government that fostered indecision, resulted in incomplete plans.⁴⁹² The concomitant consequences resulted in holes in policy, structure, employment, administration, command, and control. A common purpose and resolve in the coming growth and expansion of the RCAF was necessary rather than resolution on the fly.

In reality Canada was not in any position to either meet or demand any great expectations. This early action was just the first phase of its overseas air force policy. Its desire was laying of conditions leading to the largest possible contribution to the air war against Germany. Secondly with some apparent consensus, it laid foundations for the development of its national air force overseas.⁴⁹³

The first inkling of a problem in the current iteration began as early as late 1939. The United Kingdom sent a mission to Ottawa under the leadership of Lord Riverdale. Riverdale's sole object lay in the coordination of the arrangements for the Air Training Plan. Riverdale was instructed specifically to coordinate the plan not only with Ottawa but also the other participating Commonwealth Partners. The United Kingdom's ultimate aim was that graduating Dominion trainees would be enlisted in the Royal Air Force for their use from the outset. This proposition was unanimously rejected by all Dominions.⁴⁹⁴

Riverdale's mission also attempted the imposition of its own leadership in the management of the "Plan." A point was put forward that the training organization should be directed and controlled by officers of the Royal Air Force (RAF) not the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). The mission's reasoning was that they thought the RCAF was too small and largely inexperienced for the job.

Riverdale's mission suggested that a Director General, from the already experienced staff of the Royal Air Force of high rank be appointed instead. This proposition was objectionable to the sensibilities of Canada and the RCAF. Riverdale soon found out Canada's position. Canada sought in the original agreement that a provision be the administration of the Plan would be entrusted to the RCAF. Management was to be subjected to a closer consultation with a strong liaison staff in Ottawa where the interests of the other partners were safeguarded.⁴⁹⁵

Lord Riverdale's mission had a point in one regard, the RCAF was relatively small. The launching of the training plan would commit a large portion of Canadian resources towards managing an ongoing task for which Canada was largely unprepared. Ultimately it created

⁴⁹¹ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 13

⁴⁹² Greenhouse et al 1994, 16

⁴⁹³ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 264 (288/710)

⁴⁹⁴ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 293

⁴⁹⁵ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 293

several problems on two fronts. One, Canada found difficulty in dispatching any fully self-contained air contingents analogous to the Army to the United Kingdom. Second, the coming Canadian graduates of the plan would be left in a lurch of how they were organized in the field, as to who commanded them, and who had a final say over their destinies.⁴⁹⁶

Consequently, due to the inability to do both, the management of the BCATP and manning independent Canadian Air units overseas, saw much left to the RAF to do so. Young Canadian airmen would essentially become the output to fulfill the RAF's needs for enlistees.⁴⁹⁷ In the end, the final decision on "arrangements" was deferred and left outstanding for later negotiations that would eventually have a great impact on the eventual Canadianization of the RCAF in the field.⁴⁹⁸

It would all brew up over command and control. On the one hand it was all about costs and who deserved a larger share in the management of the plan. And then more importantly, it was about who would have oversight, or command and control of Canadians in the field.

The dithering especially on costs, was to prove unfortunate for the government. AVM Croil (RCAF) considered the financial formula for the creation of his bomber, fighter formations and units. Regrettably, he did not put forward any of this to the government. It left a full consideration of the matter vague and in limbo. Perhaps it was because of the government's fear of financial commitments that he did not pursue the matter at this stage. And perhaps that there was so much to do in the early days that it was left aside in consideration of other urgent matters. However, the failure to consider the full costs of a growing RCAF was to complicate the pursuit of the ideal of a national air force overseas later.⁴⁹⁹

The BCATP, with its investment in infrastructure, set in motion an economic boom in Canada as the government procured and built the facilities.⁵⁰⁰ We can see that effect in the evolution and build-up of the BCATP itself. The BCATP program encompassed building 56 flying establishments with 13 ground/support establishments. Two billion dollars (\$2.2B) were spent on the BCATP throughout the war. Canada's contributed \$1,617,955,108.79 or approximately seventy-two per cent of the air training cost. The United Kingdom contributed \$54,206,318.22 in cash and additionally provided equipment valued at \$162,260,787.89 for a total contribution of \$216,467,106.11 or about ten per cent of the overall cost. Australia contributed \$65,181,068, (three per cent of the cost), and finally New Zealand who contributed \$48,025,393 (two per cent). Materiel was also provided through Lend-Lease valued at \$283,500,362, roughly thirteen per cent of the total.⁵⁰¹

Clearly Canada bore the lion's share of the burden and responsibility, but it also reaped the benefits too. A country that had been unable to find work or succour for about one fifth of its

⁴⁹⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 254 (278/710)

⁴⁹⁷ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 294

⁴⁹⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 254 (278/710)

⁴⁹⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 253 (277/710)

⁵⁰⁰ Madigan, Major Gerry D. CD, MA (Retired), .2013. *The Crucible for Change: Defence Spending in Debert, Nova Scotia, during World War II*, THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE JOURNAL VOL. 2 | NO. 1 WINTER 2013

⁵⁰¹ Hatch, 1983, 195-196, TABLE A-3 -Summary of BCATP cost and contributions

population during the Dirty 30's and Great Depression, suddenly and miraculously put to work all its citizens during the war! And "All" included women, young boys and girls, and old men.⁵⁰² The War was truly an economic miracle that had not gone unnoticed!⁵⁰³

In one way Mackenzie King got what he wanted. Canada maximized benefits from the Plan while limiting liability/no commitments. But it would prove costly in the long run as Canada spread its wings to move towards Canadianization of units overseas.

Chapter 7 – Canada's Lost Children- Canadianization

Synopsis of Canadianization – Policy and Impacts

Policies matter as direct expressions of government intent. They are the guidelines to the paths ahead in attaining specific ends. But they must be backed up in thought, considerations of desired outcomes, and the means that will attain them. The means are typically fiscal, or in simple investment, either in cash, non-cash privilege, or discounts that support the basis of a "policy." These become the position of strength either to defend or adjust shortfalls, missteps, or extravagance later. No policy is ever perfectly founded in reality.

Mackenzie King desired that during the war Canadians would serve in national units especially those formed overseas. Canada was willing to back that, in so far as funding, maintaining, and manning these units.⁵⁰⁴ That these units would have an "Overseas Command Headquarters in the field was a policy outcome also desired."⁵⁰⁵ They would be formed as soon as sufficiently trained personnel became available overseas for this purpose. Such squadrons were to be manned and maintained by Canadian personnel at the expense of the Canadian Government.⁵⁰⁶

The road to Canadianization of the RCAF overseas was paved with good intentions. As early as October 31, 1939, negotiations began between the British and Canadian governments. Prior to these discussions, Britain previously looked to Canada as a place for its air training requirements.⁵⁰⁷ Those discussions were the antecedent of what was later to become the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) in Canada and what was known as the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) in Britain. The BCATP was supposed to be Canada's main war

⁵⁰² Berton, Pierre . 2001. *The Great Depression - 1929-1939* (Toronto: Doubleday), 503-504

⁵⁰³ Alexander Brady and F.R. Scott, *Canada After The War – Studies in Political, Social, and Economic Policies for Post-War Canada* The Canadian Institute of International Affairs (The Macmillan Company of Canada Lt, Toronto, 1945), 3

"if we are not now to take thought for the future we can expect nothing but backsliding to the bad old ways of the inter-war period. As to the claim that thinking of the post-war future slackens the war effort, nothing could be paltrier. People are bound to think of the future. Only the promise of better things to come sustains us in war. If this promise is not to be frustrated and our high hopes disappointed, we must be prepared to discuss now in a realistic manner the modifications of our institutions necessary to fulfil man's aspirations for a "better world".¹

⁵⁰⁴ Mayne, A Test of Resolve Article XV, 22

⁵⁰⁵ Greenhouse et al 1994, 13

⁵⁰⁶ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 292

⁵⁰⁷ Granatstein and Morton. 2003, 178

effort.⁵⁰⁸ But providing for a fully equipped and maintained air force was simply beyond Canada's means and the RCAF's capacity to do so in the early days of the war.⁵⁰⁹

Over the course of these discussions, it became evident that the British had entirely different perceptions and goals of what that would entail. The British assumed that Canadians and other Dominion graduates from the Air Training Plan would simply be absorbed into the R.A.F. Further they assumed that their administration, command, and promotion would now become matters solely for the R.A.F. Policies matter. But often as not, issues were kicked down the road for later consideration.⁵¹⁰

It was here that policy as a direct expression of government intent often failed. For often as not the paths were not fully considered or adequately resourced from the outset. Canadianization of the RCAF overseas is a case in point. Its troubles in doing so were predicated by government inattention, inadequate funding, or budgeting prior to the war.⁵¹¹ Successive government intransigence to adequately prepare even for the eventuality of war, led to its lost children in the RAF later.

The differences and perceptions of what was and what was to be would eventually become evident in the role out of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). Names chosen to identify program are often telling. Canadians identified the program as the BCATP, which was similarly identified as the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) by the British.⁵¹²

Perhaps the coming tensions concerning Canadianization are reflected in the differences in those nomenclatures that predisposed participants to argue over command, control, and finances both in the short and long term. Canada truly desired an independent air force in the coming battles. But the government had done little or nothing to create or even to provide the basis for creating one even before the war. So, it was no wonder that the British saw Canada and its Dominions as the purveyors of manpower. That output from the program would be fed directly into RAF units to fill the growing needs in the air war ahead.⁵¹³

War on the Horizon

William Lyon Mackenzie King had been Canada's prime minister for close to a quarter-century, on two occasions, one from 1921 to 1926 and the other, 1926 to 1930 at this point. He was a

⁵⁰⁸ Stacey, C.P. 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – A History of Canadian External Policies – Volume 2: 1921 - 1948 – The MacKenzie King Era*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London

⁵⁰⁹ Stacey 1981. *Canada and the Age of Conflict – Volume 2*, 292

⁵¹⁰ Greenhouse et al 1994, 35-36

⁵¹¹ Rose 2013 Mobilize, 86-87

⁵¹² Ward, Chris. 2009. *6 Group Bomber Command – an Operational Record*. Pen & Sword Aviation 47 Church Street, Barnsley South Yorkshire, S70 2AS , 1

⁵¹³ Dunmore, Spencer, and William Carter. 1991. *REAP THE WHIRLWIND The Untold Story of 6 Group, Canada's Bomber Force of Second World War*. McClelland & Stewart Inc. , The Canadian Publishers, 481 University Avenue Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E9 , 35-36, and

Ward 2009. *6 Group Bomber Command*, 1

political force to reckon with. He served as Prime Minister through the war from 1935 and then, beyond to 1948.⁵¹⁴ He was a man of political perseverance, cunning, and experience both in peace and war. But King was a man of peace who wished to avoid any conflict.⁵¹⁵ Still, he was keenly aware that the world was drifting toward a war in the late thirties. It was one that he wished to avoid. Regardless, King pondered what role would Canada play if conflict ever came.⁵¹⁶

The Canadian government began a renewed emphasis on national defence spending in general by 1934. Military aviation was given particular attention, and yet this interest was not given the same level of gravitas as the British Government. There was a sense of urgency amongst many Britons as tensions in Europe mounted. Still, Royal Canadian Air Force appropriations increased modestly but not enough to provide a foundation for an independent force in the field should the need arise.⁵¹⁷

The Munich Crisis brought matters to a head for Canada in 1938 where the lamentable state of affairs of the RCAF was finally recognized. The harsh reality was much of Canada's military capabilities were obsolete, and what did exist was based on a diminutive force structure that predominated the Army and Navy as well.⁵¹⁸

Parliament released the purse strings and approved an unprecedented \$60 million appropriation for defence spending in 1939. The government approved \$23.5 million for the RCAF. An operational air force of eleven permanent and twelve auxiliary squadrons was envisaged. It seemed ambitious but this RCAF force was solely dedicated to the minimum needs of home defence. The government had made no provision for any expeditionary force reinforcing the RAF at that time.⁵¹⁹ Given the numbers that eventually graduated under the BCATP, graduates were directed by default to the needs of the RAF as a manpower pool, Canadians in particular.

The pertinent issues to Canada around Canadianization centred on a recognition of Canada's effort and contribution and the very nature of the role. Canada had no desire to be a purveyor of manpower without recognition of its sovereignty and control over its men and women serving overseas. These were not to be provided nor used willy nilly without thought or care. There was a duty of care implied in the use which their employment was not to be abused. Canadians in their own right, desired that their servicemen and women be clearly identified. In the public's view "Canada" had to be stamped on them to identify Canadian service. Further the public wished that service be marked by the establishment of Canadian formations preferably Canadian

⁵¹⁴ Dunmore and Carter 1991., 35-36

⁵¹⁵ Toronto Telegram. 1939. Canada Must Remain Cool In Face Of Crisis Abroad Mackenzie King Asserts. August 31, 1939. 5061_088_096-001-007.pdf,

Source: <https://collections.museedelhistoire.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5061088>

⁵¹⁶ Dunmore and Carter 1991. 35-36

⁵¹⁷ Bashow, D.L. 2005. *No Prouder Place- Canadians and the Bomber Command Experience 1939-1945*. Vanwell Publishing Ltd., St Catherines Ontario, 19-20

⁵¹⁸ Bashow, D.L. 2005. *No Prouder Place*, 19-20

⁵¹⁹ Bashow, D.L. 2005. *No Prouder Place*, 19-20

led and staffed. All this was difficult to reconcile within the need for British Command that in some parts was deemed necessary for victory.⁵²⁰

But Canada failed to provide the necessary financial support to do so from the very outset of the war. King was conflicted between his patriotism and his need for fiscal caution. This conflict set the stage for problems along the way.⁵²¹ Mackenzie King's desire for a small scale participation in the war was to be thwarted by the participation in the BCATP and the growing commitments and obligations that would stem from it. King had only envisaged a small scale effort while British required and desired otherwise. In the end the scale of the plan led to a massive participation by Canada and an enlarged scale of forces oversea that Canada was quite frankly quite unprepared to undertake.⁵²²

Complexities

There were complexities around the issue of the BCATP, who would pay for it and what to do with the surplus of Canadian candidates emanating from the program that could not be easily posted to a Canadian squadron. These squadrons were few and far between in the early stage of the war. The British solution was to post Canadian graduates to RAF squadrons, and they would pay for them.⁵²³

King's strongest desire was that Canadians would be posted to Canadian units overseas. That desire was stifled over its cost and the largesse of the undertaking, which was estimated to cost \$750 million annually and generating a force of 75 squadrons. An ambitious plan if it was able to be carried out but it was a plan stifled due to the lack of ground personnel in supporting it!⁵²⁴

King entered the war naively assuming that Canada could get away with minimal costs and exposure of liability. His policy and desires though had financial consequences far beyond his grasp and reach of understanding in the beginning.⁵²⁵ These would contrive to greater expectations, disappointment, argument, and costs in the long term because of his parsimony regarding costs and fear of liability in the beginning. The opposite occurred leading to greater costs and liability as the war progressed.⁵²⁶

King's original enthusiasm for the concept of the BCATP was one based on hope. King hoped Canada's participation in the Plan would see Canada wage war but without the consequence of heavy casualties. His hope was also placed in that the war would be limited. It was both a vain and naïve hope. Eventually and despite the hope for a short war, many young Canadians out of the BCATP would serve in the RAF and in Bomber Command. It was Britain's one offensive

⁵²⁰ Nuttall, Leslie. 1990. "Canadianization And The No. 6 Bomber Group R.C.A.F." PhD Thesis University of Alberta, Department Of History Calgary, Alberta, viii

⁵²¹ Dunmore and Carter 1991, 38

⁵²² Nuttall 1990, 3

⁵²³ Nuttall 1990, 4-5

⁵²⁴ Nuttall 1990, 6

⁵²⁵ Nuttall 1990, 8

⁵²⁶ Morton, Desmond. 1985. *A Military History of Canada*. Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 10560-105 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, 225-226

tool that could be immediately brought to bear in an air offensive against Germany.⁵²⁷ It was Churchill's only offensive tool available. There was nothing else in the quiver at the time.⁵²⁸ Consequently, Bomber Command with a very high casualty rate had further consequence for Canadians serving there. Bomber Command had the highest casualties of any British formation in the war.⁵²⁹ So ended King's naivety regarding a relatively bloodless war with limited liability and of limited/no commitments.

Into the Breach – The Small Step to RCAF Headquarters (Overseas)

The Canadian government's wish for an "Overseas Command Headquarters in the field,"⁵³⁰ finally bore fruit in some first steps early 1940. It began with No. 110 Squadron that was dispatched overseas.

No. 110 Squadron was a small start, but it set in motion the conditions for the establishment of an RCAF Headquarters in the United Kingdom. This Headquarters came into being New Year's Day 1940. But up until that time, an air liaison staff did exist and already located in London since 1919. Regardless, it was all smoke and mirrors for that Headquarters had little power.

The RCAF's Air Liaison Officer in Britain at the time was Wing Commander F. V. Heakes. Heakes continued as Air Liaison Officer until 7 March when replaced by Group Captain G. V. Walsh, now appointed Officer commanding R.C.A.F. in Great Britain.⁵³¹ It was mutually understood that the RCAF would operate under R.A.F. control for the time being. But it was also understood that the RCAF would eventually operate its own bomber group headquarters with three wing headquarters and each organized with six bomber squadrons under Canadian command. This headquarters would also be responsible for its own fighter group headquarters, similarly, organized with three wing headquarters and six fighter squadrons under it.⁵³² But that was far in the future. In the meantime, the RCAF was left to sort out an ongoing working relationship with the RAF that was ill-defined from the outset.

Legally, Group Captain Walsh's (RCAF) relationship with the Royal Air Force, was guided by precedents that already existed between the Canadian and the British Armies. These precedents existed in the Visiting Forces Acts of 1933. But trouble brewed from the very beginning. There was a distinct difference of opinion regarding the employment of the RCAF both in the United Kingdom and on the Continent in the sundry interpretations of that Act.

The RAF proposed that R.C.A.F. units arriving in the United Kingdom would immediately pass under the command and control of RAF senior officers. After much discussion between Canada House and the Dominion Office, the Air Ministry issued an Order (8 March 1940)

⁵²⁷ Nuttall 1990, 23

⁵²⁸ Harris, Arthur, Marshal of the R.A.F. G.C.B. O.B.E A.F.C. 2015. *BOMBER OFFENSIVE*. A Greenhill Book, Lionel Leventhal Ltd. , Frontline Books. An imprint of Pen& Sword Ltd., 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS, 1988 , Copyright © Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998, 52-53

⁵²⁹ Nuttall 1990, 23

⁵³⁰ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 253 (277/710)

⁵³¹ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 254 (278/710)

⁵³² Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 253 (277/710)

acknowledging in principle the Canadian order in council. In these circumstances, No. 110 Squadron, when it did arrive in England on 25 February 1940 immediately passed onto RAF control where it was ostensibly placed in combination with RAF forces for deployment to the continent.⁵³³

RAF authorities pointed out that the relevant Canadian order in council provided that Canadian ground and air forces should "serve together" with British forces in the United Kingdom. Therefore; they determined that these units should be placed "in combination" while moving onto the Continent, as early as 3 February 1940:

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"in the circumstances in which Air Forces are operating, it is unnecessary and not realistic to maintain any distinction between those in the United Kingdom and those on the Continent of Europe".⁵³⁴

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This placed difficulties before the newly promoted Air Commodore Walsh, especially regarding his own interpretation of the Visiting Forces Act. Walsh's oversight through RCAF Headquarters was limited. He would have little, if any recourse, to command and control RCAF personnel beyond his own headquarters. The bulk of his force largely passed directly into RAF control upon arrival in Britain. Significantly the RAF were not required to advise RCAF Headquarters just how Canadian personnel were employed under their command.

Air Commodore Walsh issued July 5, an Order of Detail that directed 110 Squadron was to act in Combination with the Air Forces of the United Kingdom. They were placed under the command of the Air Officer Commanding, No. 22 Group further diminishing Walsh's diminutive command and ultimately, his ability to gain oversight. The squadron would serve there until otherwise directed. The unit was now under the operational command of the A.O.C. No. 22 Group.⁵³⁵ It would become exceedingly difficult to wrest control from the RAF as they gained ground from that point on.

R.C.A.F. Overseas Headquarters - Precedents, Trials And Tribulation

Canada rapidly began building up its forces in the United Kingdom with a view to the expansion of the Royal Canadian Air Force overseas. The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan had achieved its aim in providing a surfeit and surplus of aircrew to the cause.⁵³⁶ There were few precedents available to guide administration or to channel the legal requirements of such a force overseas. It was all a new experience for Canada for it had never had such a large air force under development. It was all new ground. The expedient taken by Canadian authorities

⁵³³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 254 (278/710)

⁵³⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 254 (278/710)

⁵³⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 254 (278/710)

⁵³⁶ Hatch 1983., 177

was in the path of least resistance. That path was found in precedent to the one followed by the Canadian Army Overseas. It would guide how the R.C.A.F. Overseas was to be commanded and administered under Article XV and the Visiting Forces Act.⁵³⁷

This path though presented a few problems. In the long run, the Canadian Government desired that its forces be under command and control of its own overseas authorities. The path followed by the Canadian Army (Overseas) set the tone in which ostensibly exercised total command and control. But even the Army had difficulty in that regard.⁵³⁸

The RCAF lacked a full compliment of support elements that were required to make units totally self sufficient. Thus, the RCAF relied heavily on the RAF for ongoing support. In the meantime, the excess in Canadian aircrew arriving from the BCATP were funneled through to RAF units it as reinforcement staff for the RAFs own needs. Canada had yet to train and deploy the necessary supporting elements for its own administrative, maintenance, logistics, medical staff, etc. This was a necessary foundation for the eventual Canadianization of its units in the field .

The reality on the ground in early 1940 was this, R.C.A.F. units were considered as "Serving together" with R.A.F. units in the United Kingdom. The authority for these Canadian elements in matters of supply, accommodation and "medical, technical and like auxiliary services" rested with the Royal Air Force. The RAF then assumed Dominion re-enforcements to be acting in combination, hence understood to be subject to RAF discipline, promotion, and administrative control. That was problematic for Canada and the other Dominions.⁵³⁹

There was an acknowledgement by the various authorities that this arrangement was subject to such adaptations as deemed necessary by the Senior Officer at R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Great Britain. Also acknowledged was the control of training Canadian elements in theater was ultimately a Canadian responsibility of R.C.A.F. Overseas Headquarters.⁵⁴⁰

The concept was the basis of the R.C.A.F. Overseas Headquarters' existence. But the Headquarters was not an operational headquarters, and as such did not possess the wide powers of administration, discipline, and general supervision, parallel to those of Canadian Military Headquarters, London. Canadian Army units in Britain preserved their identity and could appeal to its traditions of two wars to its defence.⁵⁴¹ The RCAF did not have that precedence of history nor tradition; that would come though when time came to form a "Tiger Force" in the plans to defeat Japan.⁵⁴² So, theory and practice proved to be a different matter and the agreement broke down in time.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 255 (279/710)

⁵³⁸ Rickard, John Nelson. 2010. *The Politics of Command – Lieutenant-General A.G.L McNaughton and the Canadian Army 1939-1943*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Canada, xiv-xv

⁵³⁹ Greenhous et al 1994, 14,28, 46-47, 167

⁵⁴⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 255 (279/710)

⁵⁴¹ Morton 1985, 202

⁵⁴² Madigan 2016 *At the Crossroads of Time*, 154-156

⁵⁴³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 255 (279/710)

The erosion of Canadian Command and Control over its own elements was precipitated in the Canadian Government's eventual drive for economy. The effort was regarded by C.G. Power, Air Minister as the "penny-pinching" of pompous politicians who never clearly understood the RCAF's problems.⁵⁴⁴

The one Canadian unit overseas at the time was No. 110 Squadron. The Canadian government assumed at the time, that the current arrangement implied that this squadron was to be equipped at British expense. The British government assumed otherwise. Their interpretation of the relationship was, Britain would provide the aircraft and other equipment, but was to be reimbursed by Canada. The matter may have begun over a discussion of finances, but it ended in a wider discussion of employment and policy for the RCAF serving overseas.⁵⁴⁵

The Canadian Cabinet War Committee finally decided on a fundamental policy October 9, 1940. Air Minister Power, put forth a recommendation from the Air Staff proposing the R.C.A.F. headquarters overseas be abolished. His Air Staff wanted it reduced to a mere liaison office. The Air Staff wrongly assumed that Canadians graduating from the Air Training Plan would simply be absorbed into the R.A.F. Further they incorrectly assumed that their administration, command, and promotion would likewise be matters solely for the R.A.F.'s consideration. Power's proposal created an uproar within Cabinet for it did not go over well. The War Cabinet held wide spread disapproval for such a distasteful proposal.

Specific reference was now made by them to the Riverdale letter. Cabinet stressed the importance of the "identification" of Canadian airmen and ultimately the Canadianization of the RCAF overseas. Evidently, the Canadian government had little faith in its own Air Staff's proposal and considered it totally unacceptable. They had no wish to have their Canadian airmen merely scattered broadcast fashion throughout the Royal Air Force and moreover, remote from Canadian association or control.⁵⁴⁶

Perhaps the Air Staff was being realistic with their proposal. There were limits to what could be done by Canada in the short term. The RCAF was indeed totally reliant on the RAF in the field for administrative and auxiliary support. Full Canadianization of its forces overseas was both impractical and out from consideration at that time. The Air Staff wished to be practical by their willingness to let RCAF airmen filter through to the RAF as replacements, but quickly found out their government was not! Regardless, that is exactly what came to pass very soon.⁵⁴⁷ The Air Staff had to save face. A practical solution was sought that would satisfy Cabinet's' sensibilities. This came at a time when the RCAF's senior leadership underwent change.

Saving face- A Change of Leadership

⁵⁴⁴ Morton 1985, 202

⁵⁴⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 256 (280/710)

⁵⁴⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 257 (281/710)

⁵⁴⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 257 (281/710)

Air Vice-Marshal L. S. Breadner succeeded Air Vice-Marshal Croil as the newly appointed Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), May 29, 1940. He served as CAS until December 31, 1943.⁵⁴⁸

Air Vice-Marshal Breadner urged his Air Minister for some action. On October 12, 1940, he requested negotiations should be undertaken at once with the United Kingdom. Breadner wished to advance the formation of some RCAF squadrons overseas in one form or another. Breadner later put forth the conditions of this request in a memorandum for his minister's submission to the Cabinet War Committee for their consideration November 5. It stated:⁵⁴⁹

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"completely manned and equipped Canadian Squadrons" was not practicable because the Air Training Plan provided aircrew only ' and no groundcrew; because there had been difficulty in meeting the demands of both the Air Training Plan and the Home War Establishment for equipment and personnel; and because the cost "would be an enormous financial strain detracting from Canada's other war efforts".

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Breadner was suggesting that at least a token of recognition be sought from Great Britain in designating certain units within the RAF as RCAF squadrons. If this proposal was unacceptable to them, alternatively to at least, designate some as 'Canadian' R.A.F. Squadrons.⁵⁵⁰

But preliminary meetings had already occurred at lower levels with the Air Ministry. These meetings were discussions conducted amongst representatives of all the Dominion air forces in Britain. There were no bilateral agreements or discussions with their respective governments. However, R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Great Britain was represented at a meeting on 31 October that likely weakened Breadner's case.⁵⁵¹

The British Air Ministry argued against Canadianization and or any Dominion recognition for that matter. Their case was that "considerable difficulty could be anticipated unless the postings were centrally controlled."⁵⁵² And with control of postings also came the overall control, administration, oversight, and management of the entire enterprise.

It was provisionally recommended that the Royal Air Force be given full authority in the matter of the posting of Dominion air force personnel sent overseas. There were a number of provisos though.

First concerned a proviso "in posting" Dominion personnel. Priority must always be given to the existing requirements of the fully formed 100% Dominion Squadrons. Second that priority be given to Squadrons, identified with the Dominions, formed under the Empire Air Training

⁵⁴⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 530 (559/710)

⁵⁴⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 258 (282/710)

⁵⁵⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 258 (282/710)

⁵⁵¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 258 (282/710)

⁵⁵² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 258 (282/710)

Scheme. To the latter proviso the Air Ministry agreed that a "400" block of numbers would be used to designate all Dominion squadrons.⁵⁵³

The staff work of the "man on the ground" likely took the wind out of the sails of their respective Dominion Governments as well as the Canadian War Cabinet in particular for a time. The issues appeared to be largely resolved, controlled, and managed by the respective air representatives and R.C.A.F. Headquarters Overseas.

Despite the rosy start, there remained British reluctance to expand on the RCAF and Canadianization in the field beyond the agreed to 25 Squadrons and that of the three all-Canadian squadrons already in England then in existence.⁵⁵⁴ Their only concession made, was their willingness to identify RCAF personnel with a Canada shoulder patch on their uniforms. For all intents and purposes, RCAF personnel were essentially drafted into the RAF as replacements.⁵⁵⁵ Lester Pearson's fear that Canadian airmen would be used as mere Hessians came to pass.⁵⁵⁶

For the time being there was no moving the United Kingdom on the limits it set above. Minister Ralston then in London. Ralston was advised 18 December that the Cabinet War Committee accepted his proposals for an agreement, asking for a future review of the position and organization of Canadian aircrew who could not be absorbed into R.C.A.F. squadrons. It was a complex situation that questioned and required resolution to Canada's satisfaction.

Although Cabinet accepted Ralston's proposals for an agreement, that agreement was subject to future review. It was dependent on the developing and evolving position and organization of Canadian aircrew later. Cabinet raised an issue on December 23rd in a signal regarding the text of the agreement which he had initialled with the Secretary of State for Air.

The War Committee once again reconsidered the proposal on 26 December. They asked for further clarifications. It was in the matter of the provision of replacement of R.A.F. men drawn from the Air Training Plan. Paragraph 6 of Ralston's proposal was an elaboration of how British groundcrew would eventually replace Canadians in the B.C.A.T.P. The result of this agreement found the need for an increase to RCAF establishment. It concerned Cabinet that an additional increase to Canadian ground personnel establishment would require an estimated 7500 new personnel. Ralston confirmed that to be the case. The War Committee gave its final approval on 2 January 1941, and what was known as the "Ralston-Sinclair Agreement" finally signed in London on the 7th of January 1941.⁵⁵⁷

The "Ralston-Sinclair Agreement" may have resolved one issue, but it left matters of employment of the Canadians in "major operations" uncertain in the interim. Canadian negotiators wished to avoid alarming the British on this sensitive question. Regardless, the

⁵⁵³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 258 (282/710)

⁵⁵⁴ Morton 1985, 201

⁵⁵⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 260 (284/710)

⁵⁵⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 140-142

⁵⁵⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 260-261(284-285/710)

Canadian government clearly stated its position, that its 25 R.C.A.F. squadrons serving in combination with the R.A.F., did so under the Overseas Visiting Forces Act. Tacitly the government assumed the employment of its RCAF forces on any *major question* of policy would be referred to them through Canada House or its RCAF Headquarters overseas. Matters of routine operations though, need not be referred to the Government of Canada for their perusal. The government envisaged its squadrons would come under immediate control of the higher R.A.F. formations. This design was similar to that envisaged for the Canadian Army, a Corps, or a Canadian division employed in a U.K. Corps within the British army. Thus, control on the day to day management of RCAF personnel was left to the British and RAF.⁵⁵⁸

Commented [GM1]: Italicized for emphasis

The Government of Canada also assumed that there would be exchanges of senior RCAF and RAF personnel ostensibly for the development of Canadian officers. The government desired its own personnel gain the necessary experience thus qualifying them for higher command overseas. There was no long term wish for Canadian senior R.C.A.F. personnel to remain relegated to training activities in Canada or the duration of the war.⁵⁵⁹ This development was a key component necessary for the Canadianization of the RCAF overseas. But the RAF balked at this and did its best to limit command and control opportunities for all its Commonwealth partners.

Australia also aspired for its senior RAAF officers' development. They too desired Australian officers be appointed to command roles within the wider RAF. But British attitudes towards "colonials" were hard to die.⁵⁶⁰ The head of the RAAF, Air Marshal Sir Charles Burnett, a former British citizen, quashed such aspirations. Burnett was previously an Inspector-General of the RAF, an appointment he held until 1940 when he was appointed Chief of the Air Staff of the Royal Australian Air Force.

Burnett's appointment to a senior post in the RAAF was controversial. There were several issues aside from British nationality, but the Australian government's choice of a British officer over an Australian deepened resentment in many quarters of the RAAF. It may have been done with the best of intentions. Prime minister Robert Menzies, truly believed that Australian officers lacked the necessary experience.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 260-261(284-285/710)

⁵⁵⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 261 (285/710)

⁵⁶⁰ Rickard 2010, 221.

-Greenhouse et al 1994 , 20,47,50

-Fraser, David . 1982. *Alanbrooke*. ATHENEUM, New York, 188-189,

-Viscount Montgomery Of Alamein. Bernard Law, 1958, *The Memoirs Of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery Of Alamein*, K.G. St James's Place, London: Collins, 184

-Cooper , Anthony . 2020. *Sub Hunters – Australian Sunderland Squadrons In The Defeat Of Hitler's U-Boat Menace 1942-43* . First published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America Fonthill, 2020 , 44-45

-Harris, Arthur, Marshal of the R.A.F. G.C.B. O.B.E A.F.C. 2015. *BOMBER OFFENSIVE*. A Greenhill Book, Lionel Leventhal Ltd. , Frontline Books. An imprint of Pen& Sword Ltd., 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS, 1988 , Copyright © Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998, 63-64

⁵⁶¹ "Charles Burnett (RAF officer)", Wikipedia, accessed 11 December 2022, [Charles Burnett \(RAF officer\) - Wikipedia](#).

But such postings were few and far between. Regardless some limited arrangements were made for a few Australian exchange postings per year. Many rank and file RAAF officers, like their Canadian peers, ached to go overseas for operational experience. But there was only a single independent RAAF Australian flying boat squadron overseas. Thus, vacancies were strictly limited. Almost all of the RAAF's most eligible officers therefore saw out their service without exercising command in operations of war. This was due mostly to a conflict of interpretation within the RAF command structure over its application of the EATS agreement to Dominion personnel.⁵⁶²

Canadian Expectations and British reply:

Canada invested significantly in its air force at the outset of the Second World War. With that build up, Air Minister Ralston had high expectations that his Canadian senior officers would receive a respectable proportion of operational appointments for the RCAF overseas. The shortfall in expectations lay in the fact that the RCAF was being built from the ground up, there was no intellectual or leadership depth.⁵⁶³ That all had to be built too.⁵⁶⁴

British Air Minister, Sir Archibald Sinclair was more guarded in response to Ralston's expectations:

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"I am in full agreement with what you say as to the purpose of the suggested exchanges between senior officers of the Royal Air Force and senior officers of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and as to the desirability of arranging that in so far as suitably qualified Royal Canadian Air Force officers are available, they should be given commands and staff appointments, not only in stations and groups in which Canadian squadrons would normally be serving, but also in the Commands and at the Air Ministry. It would be our endeavour to arrange that such appointments were given to Royal Canadian Air Force officers in numbers fully proportionate to the number of R.C.A.F. squadrons overseas. We will also endeavour to arrange that where practicable, R.C.A.F. squadrons will be grouped together in the same stations and in the same groups,

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It was a polite way of Sinclair's saying no to Ralston and Canadian aspirations found in the last line:

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⁵⁶² Cooper, Anthony, 2020. *Sub Hunters – Australian Sunderland Squadrons In The Defeat Of Hitler's U-Boat Menace 1942-43* . First published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America Fonthill, 44-45

⁵⁶³ Greenhouse et al 1994, 16

⁵⁶⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 261 (285/710)

⁵⁶⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 261 (285/710)

I am sure you will appreciate; the first consideration must be to retain the high degree of mobility which is essential to operational efficiency.”⁵⁶⁶

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Sinclair had simply kicked the issue down the road for later consideration. Notwithstanding Canadian aspirations, what else could he do? The reality was Canada had little trained staff much less and air force in kind or the structure of one. As it was, Canada was still simply building one up from the grassroots. The Canadian government largely resigned itself to that reality seeing a goodly portion of R.C.A.F. graduates of the Training Plan serving in R.A.F. squadrons. But Canada held its hopes on the future.⁵⁶⁷

The seed for the future was found in the current existing 25 Squadrons that were already on the ground. It was here that the hope to build the structure for the future lay. King’s government with high hopes optimistically assumed these squadrons would be filled totally by Canadians within a year.⁵⁶⁸ But in the reality of fighting a war with a high casualty rate and the continuing requirement for replacements placed a different spin on reality. The United Kingdom paid little more than lip service to what Canada perceived as part of the bargain. The Canadian Air Minister later called the process:

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"a long history of struggle and discussion.”⁵⁶⁹

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The long struggle resulted with very few Canadians having recent experience of air combat at a senior rank. So, few were readily available or groomed to take on the responsibilities of command as senior leaders. But the kicker and source of the problem lay in financial arrangements and Canada’s fiscal parsimony throughout the 1930s, as well as the early days of the Second World War. The chickens had come home to roost!

King’s indifference and drive for economy as well as war on the cheap held several shades of grey with implications and qualifications:⁵⁷⁰

1. Canada had unrealistic expectations that Great Britain would absorb the costs associated with both its airmen and air force overseas that was a great burden on their Treasury

⁵⁶⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 261 (285/710)

⁵⁶⁷ Greenhouse et al 1994, 35-36

⁵⁶⁸ Greenhouse et al 1994, 35

⁵⁶⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 261 (285/710), and

Morton 1985, 201

⁵⁷⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 262 (286/710)

2. The national aims that Canada was pursuing could have been fully realized only through a national air force
3. that a national air force needed to be fully funded to remain under Canadian control was neither recognized nor perhaps understood by King
4. The expectations were at odds with the reality on the ground, which was a source of confusion and consternation for both parties.

The Canadian government's position would have been greatly strengthened had it undertaken the full financial responsibility for its airmen overseas, which it didn't initially.⁵⁷¹

All this contrived to ensure that any progress in producing genuinely Canadian squadrons would be slow at best. In the meantime, what was to become of Canadian arrivals in the United Kingdom? Were they to be administered by the R.C.A.F. Overseas Headquarters on the basis of the Visiting Forces Act? Or perhaps it was better to turn them over to the Royal Air Force directly for both administrative and operational purposes? And what of the 25 squadrons proposed under "Article 15" who were filled by the other B.C.A.T.P. personnel from Canada, while maintained and armed by Great Britain?⁵⁷² There was no simple solution as it was a tangled mess.

Air Commodore Stevenson (RAF) proposed and recommended that all RCAF personnel resources be turned over to the RAF for operational and administrative purposes. The Canadian reaction was to accept it in principle. But with that, control of RCAF personnel and the air force, lapsed from Canadian hands. It would ultimately descend into a fight for the Canadianization of units later.⁵⁷³

Regrettably, Canada was not on firm ground, as it was unwilling or unable to provide for all its personnel, administrative functions, or ground, and operational requirements. Canadian units therefore had to rely on the RAF for support. It once again stemmed from King's requirement of "economy," or war on the cheap. It was also found in his conditions for Canada's participation in the BCATP which in the end likely cost Canadian lives unnecessarily as they were left to British control and oversight. The RCAF neither had command nor control of anything much less those resources in the very beginning.⁵⁷⁴ It would now become an uphill battle to regain control.

Rather than settling the issue then and there, Canada's Air Council approved Stevenson's recommendation in principle in April 1941. It all boiled down to a matter of control. Canada's Air Minister still had no great desire to see current R.C.A.F independent operational units overseas passing from Canadian control. He reserved judgment on that, and then passed the matter to the War Committee for further consideration.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 262 (286/710)

⁵⁷² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 262 (286/710)

⁵⁷³ Morton 1985, 202

⁵⁷⁴ Cooper, Robert B. 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War – The International Operations of Canada's Department of Finance 1939-1947*. Carleton Library Series 204. McGill-Queen's University Press. Montreal & Kingston- London-Ithaca, 42

⁵⁷⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 262 (286/710)

There was not only reluctance regarding “control” solely on the Canadian side of the equation but there was also equal concern on the British side as well. It was especially the case when it came within the purview of management and operations of the BCATP. A number of schools had been transferred from the Royal Air Force to Canada.⁵⁷⁶ The number of schools so transferred increased in number over time. Operational control of these schools was treated as “in combination.” RAF units were then placed under the R.C.A.F. when posted to the various commands in which they eventually served.⁵⁷⁷ The British equally shared a concern over the use and employment of their personnel as well.

A Compromise

A compromise to the BCATP was reached in 1941. The parties agreed to common ground by British authorities with their Canadian counterparts. All came to a head that May, when Canadian plenipotentiary, Air Commodore G. O. Johnson, former Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, was sent to Britain. Johnson was sent overseas for a period of duty with the R.A.F. Specifically, Johnson was tasked to discuss two questions of importance with the Air Ministry. One involved control of the schools within the BCATP and secondly, the 25 Canadian squadrons and RCAF personnel posted overseas.⁵⁷⁸

Air Commodore Johnson yielded one key point to his British colleagues. R.C.A.F. squadrons should be administered entirely by the RAF. Johnson essentially wished to excise the existing RCAF headquarters in London away from any such function in future. RCAF headquarters would now be hamstrung by this and limited solely to a liaison function. Regrettably, Johnson was unaware of the War Cabinet Committee's decision of October 9, 1939.⁵⁷⁹ Of course, the United Kingdom was amenable to this oversight in Johnson's position. He was after all, acting on behalf of the Canadian government. The matter was settled to their satisfaction in their view.⁵⁸⁰ But it lingered on.

The matter was finally put to bed June 12, 1941. Air Commodore Johnson, with Stevenson's concurrence, sent his Chief of the Air Staff in Ottawa a draft memorandum of agreement. In summary this memorandum acknowledged the Canadian administration of the R.A.F. schools in Canada. More importantly, a concession was granted that the United Kingdom was given administration of Canada's three squadrons under RAF control. Further, the agreement acknowledged that the R.C.A.F. was authorized to post R.A.F. personnel while employed in Canada. On the other side of the coin the R.A.F. was authorized to post all overseas members of the R.C.A.F. The one exception, was to those serving at RCAF Hq overseas.⁵⁸¹ In the end, the public record suggests that the administration of the three original overseas squadrons was

⁵⁷⁶ Hatch 1983, 61 (83/242)

⁵⁷⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 262 (286/710)

⁵⁷⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 263 (287/710)

⁵⁷⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 257 (282/710)

⁵⁸⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 263 (287/710)

⁵⁸¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 263 (287/710)

indeed transferred to the Air Ministry without any formal decision taken by the Canadian government and that all were administered in line with Johnson's draft agreement.⁵⁸²

The answer to a key Canadian demand for control overseas was in the quid pro quo of control within the BCATP. This solution was the bargaining chip that resulted in concessions to Canada concerning control over these schools. The assignation of control in Canada was balanced against Canadian concessions concerning its squadrons overseas.

What a mixed bag of unforeseen impacts. The rights to administration was a stumbling block. It was a potential impediment and an effective tool to block future control and the Canadianization of units overseas. The matter of posting personnel was a lever for the United Kingdom. Incoming RCAF personnel thus became grist for the mill in the interim and employed whenever and wherever as a matter of RAF choosing. But for Canada once this agreement was signed, the rights of control to all RCAF personnel in the UK, less its RCAF HQ overseas, was indeed forfeited, until Canadianization was finally resolved. The signing of what amounted to an interim agreement of sorts, was disadvantageous to Canada later. It also had a huge difference in consequences and effect.

RAF personnel serving in Canada in training squadrons did not suffer the same degree of operational danger or consequences as their RCAF peers serving in the UK and elsewhere despite some losses. But it was not the same scale as operations overseas. The Canadian Headquarters' role was limited if not restrained in controlling those losses. The headquarter had no say in the use of Canadian personnel. This quirk of RAF command and control was common amongst all Commonwealth personnel who served there whether they be RNZAF, RAAF, SAAF etc.

Further, the United Kingdom was loath to place its personnel under command of any other country, particularly Canada.⁵⁸³ They wrested control of the training problem from Canada, treated facilities as their own and interfered in the transfer of same to Canada at appropriate times.⁵⁸⁴ Much of this attitude was due to the British reluctance to serve under colonials.⁵⁸⁵ Several senior British commanders had a low opinion of Dominion service personnel who they considered inferior and were for the most part, an uneducated lot.⁵⁸⁶

A Memorandum of Understanding

⁵⁸² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 263- 264(287-288/710)

⁵⁸³ Hatch 1983, 72-73 (94-95/242)

⁵⁸⁴ Madigan, Major Gerry D. CD, MA (Retired). 2016. *At the Crossroads of Time The Story of Operational Training Unit 31, RCAF No. 7 Squadron, and RCAF Tiger Force at Debert, NS*. madiganstories.com, madiganstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/At-the-Crossroads-of-Time-Gerry-Madigan-edition-1.pdf, 149

⁵⁸⁵ Greenhouse et al 1994, 20

⁵⁸⁶ Harris, Arthur, Marshal of the R.A.F. G.C.B. O.B.E A.F.C. 2015. *BOMBER OFFENSIVE*. A Greenhill Book, Lionel Leventhal Ltd. , Frontline Books. An imprint of Pen& Sword Ltd., 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS, 1988 , Copyright © Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998, 63-64

Regardless, the nub of the consensual agreement between Britain and Canada rested on finances; basically, an I.O.U notebook based on the accounts rendered for services provided. It was a case of an over-simplification of accounting functions. Canada assumed all costs for the RAF while so employed in the BCATP, with a settling of accounts later. In the meantime, the RAF reciprocated in kind bearing Canada's costs for Canadian Units and services overseas. After a balancing of accounts, a cost recoverable arrangement rendered payment to whoever was owed based on the difference between the two.

The relationship between the R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F. Overseas was summarized in the draft Agreement as:⁵⁸⁷

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All R.C.A.F. squadrons and units in the United Kingdom, or other theatre of war, to which they have been moved with the concurrence of the Canadian Government, including Nos. 400, 401 and 402 Squadrons which are financed by Canada, and the 25 squadrons to be organized and financed by the United Kingdom Government in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement . . . dated 7th January 1941 shall be administered by the Air Ministry of the United Kingdom through the appropriate R.A.F. formations, without prejudice to the terms of the said Memorandum of Agreement.

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Subsequently R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Britain was "re-organized as a Canadian Air Liaison Mission through this agreement. The agreement was submitted to the Canadian Air Ministry, but it was never approved. The Canadian High Commissioner in London noted at the time that such an agreement was a loss of important prestige in this stillborn arrangement. The High Commissioner rightly observed that it diminished the role and importance of Canada's RCAF HQ Overseas in the eyes of its RAF overseers.⁵⁸⁸

Regardless the die was cast. Canadian interests and its headquarters overseas was ignored. It was accomplished through deferral, questioning of responsibility, and by never achieving a final resolution. Perhaps it was indifference on the government's part to resolve and draw the line. Perhaps it was also a matter on not shaking the boat at a critical time. Regardless the end of it all saw the operational shift into the British orbit. In the end, factual command and control was tacitly handed to RAF control. It would become exceedingly difficult to rest control from Britain in future as the intensity of the war grew. Strategic matters easily diverted attention elsewhere. But the command and control issue was essential and should have been ironed out and agreed to in the first place. They were not, and thus left any mutual understanding open to broad interpretation on both sides.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 263 (287/710)

⁵⁸⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 263 (287/710)

⁵⁸⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 263-264 (287-288/710)

Canada effectively lost control of its three existing Canadian Units overseas and the 25 squadrons to come. Canada was military and economically unprepared when war came in 1939 and that had consequences. This was largely due to a government's policy of no commitments and limited liability that saw minimal investment in any military capability until it was far too late. Canada was ready in only one most essential political pre-requisite; its government, parliament, and people were prepared in their willingness to participate and make sacrifices.⁵⁹⁰

Chapter 8- Intransigence and A Government's Tardy Concern

Minister Power's concerns

Despite Canada's growing contributions to the war, by 1941 the fact of the matter was the vast majority of Canadian personnel overseas remained under RAF command and control. But in light of increasing Canadian input, there came a government's demand for recognition. This recognition was fundamental to its oversight in the command and control of its own men and women overseas.⁵⁹¹

In a letter to Prime Minister MacKenzie King June 23, 1941, Minister Power wrote that well over 5000 young R.C.A.F. men were in Britain or spread across various war zones. He went on to say these men were a moral if not a legal responsibility of the Canadian government. He went on to categorize them as:⁵⁹²

1. men of the three original squadrons
2. graduates of the Air Training Plan, who upon embarkation from Canada were then handed over to the R.A.F, and finally
3. a group of "radar" technicians, who came entirely under British control.

The impediment to full Canadianization and thus full control of all these assets in the United Kingdom was in his opinion due the lack of the provision of ground crew. Minister Power alluded to this in his sketch of the 25 Canadian squadrons that were nominally Canadian.⁵⁹³

More over Power had a gut wrenching reaction to the facts that Canada not only lost command and control over his charges but also control in the matter of their fates.⁵⁹⁴ He had concluded that BACTP graduates and transferred radar men were completely cut off from Canada. Power fretted about responsibility, care, supervision, and due diligence owed them by their government. It disturbed him to no end, that he gave his cabinet colleagues a number of examples one of which was:⁵⁹⁵

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⁵⁹⁰ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 12

⁵⁹¹ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 264 (288/710)

⁵⁹² Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 264 (288/710)

⁵⁹³ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 264 (288/710)

⁵⁹⁴ Greenhous et al 1994, 43-47, 94-95

⁵⁹⁵ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 264 (288/710)

“Saturday's press carried a despatch that a flying boat crashed off the coast of Portugal with six Canadians on board. We don't know who they are, or why they are there. What makes it more tragic is that under [the present] set-up our Air Force Headquarters in London know no more than we do.”

[BLOCK END]

Minister Power also conveyed these concerns to his British counterpart; Captain Balfour, at a meeting 8th July 1941, regarding the commissioning of RCAF personnel.⁵⁹⁶ Power reiterated his government's concern regarding its moral responsibility to the general conditions and welfare of its men and women serving overseas.⁵⁹⁷ Further he expressed the point that all members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and their connection with their Home Government, must be more than just a token gesture.

Balfour was sympathetic but firmly stated that there can only be one direct chain of command. Sadly, neither Power nor his Commonwealth colleagues around the table challenged this assumption. It was an underlying assumption that Britain had no moral duty or obligation to its Commonwealth partners in keeping them informed on the welfare of their citizens.⁵⁹⁸ The lot and fate of all Commonwealth airmen ultimately fell into British hands.

A Canadian Bomber group came into existence a year following this meeting. In the meantime, RCAF airmen were channelled into RAF and other units in which the government had no power or control.⁵⁹⁹ This channel likely ensured potential for higher casualty rates than would otherwise have been the case. It is most likely reflected in statistics where nearly 10,000 R.C.A.F. officers and men were lost in Bomber Command's great offensive against Germany.⁶⁰⁰

Regardless, Power desired that the British Air Ministry make available places for the development of his senior staff so they may eventually lead an effective air force. The British Air Ministry was reluctant to do so. The Air Ministry again made a case that RCAF Senior Officers, Wing Commander and below would have to do their time to gain operational experience.⁶⁰¹ This experience was the prerequisite before they could effectively lead at a senior level. Power countered that he did not wish to see any senior positions denied to Canadian Airmen simply because they were Canadian for the lack of that experience.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 267 (291/710)

⁵⁹⁷ Greenhous et al 1994, 44-46

⁵⁹⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 265 (289/710)

⁵⁹⁹ Greenhous et al 1994, 79

⁶⁰⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 266/(290/710)

⁶⁰¹ Greenhous et al 1994, 95

⁶⁰² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 266/(290/710)

Canada was not alone in taking such a position. Australia also raised similar points. Power was on the receiving end of what the Australian government likewise faced, a certain reluctance to develop a cadre of experienced Commonwealth personnel lest the RAF be forced to place their forces under "foreign "command and control."⁶⁰³

Australia and New Zealand were in a better bargaining position when dealing with Britain regarding the employment of their airmen. Australia and New Zealand had previously signed an agreement with Britain on December 17, 1939. They all agreed to the principle that on embarkation for service with the Royal Air Force, their airmen were to be attached to the RAF.

It was a subtle difference. Canada did not attach its personnel in the first instance. Canada chose the alternate option to employ RCAF personnel within the rules of the Visiting Forces Act and Article 15 of the BCATP. Australia and New Zealand attached their personnel to the RAF in accordance with their separate agreement. Canada did otherwise. Perhaps trouble would have been avoided had Canada applied the same formula as the other Dominions from the beginning.⁶⁰⁴

Canada attempted later to clarify administration of RCAF personnel by:⁶⁰⁵

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"On embarkation for service with, or in conjunction with, the Royal Air Force, officers and airmen will . . . receive from the appropriate Royal Air Force paying authority the pay, allowances, etc., of the rank and branch (or group) in the Royal Air Force corresponding to that held in the Royal Canadian Air Force. . . ."

[BLOCK END]

It was a circuitous and unintelligible explanation that was open to broad interpretation. The RCAF went on to clarify the intent by obtaining a legal opinion from the Judge Advocate General (JAG) in Ottawa. The JAG suggested that the Canada/British agreement implied Canadian aircrew were to be discharged from the R.C.A.F. at the point of embarkation in Canada, and then to be simultaneously enlisted in the R.A.F. This opinion if acted upon would have created division of identity and service amongst the BCATP graduates. It was eventually decided to employ the attachment process to the RCAF graduates like the other two Dominions. Had that been done in the beginning, it would have eliminated many of the problems that now presented themselves in the first place.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ Anthony Cooper, *Sub Hunters – Australian Sunderland Squadrons In The Defeat Of Hitler's U-Boat Menace 1942-43*. (First published in the United Kingdom and the United States of America Fonthill, 2020), 44-45

⁶⁰⁴ ⁶⁰⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 266-267/(290-291/710)

⁶⁰⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 267/(291/710); and

Bomber Command History Forum. 2022. "RAAF Deaths Photographic Archive of Headstones and Memorials WW2 by Spidge." Last Modified: December 27, 2022. ([1](#)) [Bomber Command History Forum](#). | [Facebook](#)

⁶⁰⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 267/(291/710)

Canada in particular did not have a leg to stand on at this time. In the prewar years, Canada invested little in the education of its military personnel in the inter-war period. Any such investment was discouraged and positions, though highly prized, were limited to a selected few.⁶⁰⁷ Thus few were left to lead at a senior level for the lack of experience and investment.

A lack of depth and experience

Canada had neither the depth nor breadth of experience required of its military in the coming war; an area sorely neglected after the Great War.⁶⁰⁸ There were broad problems of a geopolitical strategic nature that had to be considered and planned for. Canada with only limited staff, required a strategic view that had to be attuned to the early warnings around them that could not be ignored.⁶⁰⁹

Money or investment to prepare and plan for eventualities, was lacking. Permanent force members of the Army were fully engaged in training on limited budgets that were next to nil, prior to the Second World War. They were expected to procure, repair, or replace equipment on extremely limited budgets. The lack of funding or pay resulted in managing staff and the few billets on a shoe string. Militia units could never count on a full turn out because of poor pay or the expenses associated with 'service,' especially in the highland units. So, Canada's military traditions and interests became small in scope and never strategic. It was all a matter of survival. In more modern times of the 1990s "Decade of Darkness", it was akin to shifting the deck chairs on the Titanic while she sunk.

British officers on the other hand came from a different background, the caste of officer and gentlemen. Not that all were well moneyed, but their families new that opportunity was based on education and that education was found in a private schooling. It was the old boys' network and school tie system that bound many together. And those attracted to a military vocation, often found their way into the military school system, again at considerable cost and expense to their families.

Once commissioned though, many British junior officers found that they could not afford to serve in England. There were high attendant costs found at home, so many made their way to India or elsewhere within the Empire for experience, where it was significantly cheaper. It all bred a certain shared common experience. Their Commonwealth peers of shop keepers, bank

⁶⁰⁷ Greenhous, Brereton and Stephen J. Harris ,William C. Johnston ,Villiam G.P. Rawling.1994. *The Crucible of War, 1939-1945 - The Official History of Royal Canadian Air Force , Volume III*. University of Toronto Press in cooperation with the Department of National Defence the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 16

⁶⁰⁸ Morton, Desmond, 2000, "Canada's Military Experience in the Twentieth Century"" in *Canadian Military History Since the 17th Century*, edited by Yves Tremblay, (Ed), 361, Proceedings of the Canadian Military History Conference Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 31-38; and

Hayes, Geoff 2000, "Pondering Canada's Army Leadership in War and Peace."" in *Canadian Military History Since the 17th Century*, edited by Yves Tremblay, (Ed), 361, Proceedings of the Canadian Military History Conference Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 223

⁶⁰⁹ Bell 2023 *Cracking The Nazi Code*, 162, 200-201

clerks, and weekend warrior shared no such experience. In the end the colonials were often regarded with suspicion and indifference.⁶¹⁰

Other issues of Importance

Attitudes also came to play in the affairs of Dominion and British relations during the war. It had an impact in the other issues as well. This was especially true regarding public relations and opinion. Canada wished to have the operational actions of its RCAF personnel recognized. It was the public relations aspect in which the British were reticent to acknowledge. The deeds and actions of its many individual Commonwealth partners were subsumed in detail in British press releases and other acknowledgements. Their sacrifices and accomplishments were often disguised under the euphemism of “British forces” to which many were embedded.. Perhaps it was a colonialist attitude that played a role in the deference by some to the mother country. It was often a matter of keeping one’s place and not rocking the boat that prevailed. And yet there were some who felt that Canada and the Dominions received far too much credit and press.⁶¹¹

It was all lost in the heterogenous make up of the RAF. BCATP candidates were fed into the RAF as replacements and in the genuine cooperation of winning the war and in team building too. It matter little that there were 25 existing “Canadian” Squadrons within the RAF’s order of Battle. These units were also a mish mash of Commonwealth and RAF personnel that largely staffed the gaps within the RCAF structure. The RCAF truly existed in name only. Consequently, when time came for a clear recognition within ongoing operations, the credit fell to the RAF by default.⁶¹²

Minister Power still argued for the greater recognition of the RCAF contribution as it would greatly assist in recruiting at home. But the RAF clung to the principle of anonymity amongst its allies thereby grabbing all the credit for itself. The RCAF position in the matter was tenuous given that the Visiting Forces Act; rather than strengthening its case, diminished it. BACTP graduates were placed immediately at the disposal of the RAF upon posting to England in 1941.

In the greater scheme of things Power was not averse to participation and feeding the RAF as required though. He was open to forming units and filling these with RCAF personnel. Employment overseas and elsewhere required that they serve wherever the war and RAF’s needs

⁶¹⁰ Bernard Law, Viscount Montgomery Of Alamein, *The Memoirs Of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery Of Alamein, K.G.* (St James’s Place, London: Collins,1958), 20-22),

David Fraser, *Alanbrooke*. (ATHENEUM, New York, 1982), (see Imperial Defence College 93,103-108 and McNaughton, 188-189, 422),

Hisdal, Howard, 2000, “Canadian Generals and British Troops: Command Difficulties in 1944” in *Canadian Military History Since the 17th Century*, edited by Yves Tremblay, (Ed), 235, Proceedings of the Canadian Military History Conference Ottawa, Ontario, Canada,

Larry D. Rose, *MOBILIZE! Why Canada Was Unprepared for the Second World War*, Dundurn, Toronto, 2013 (see College and Shunning), and

Alistair Horne With David Montgomery, *The Lonely Leader Monty 1944-1945*. (Macmillan London,1994), 246

⁶¹¹ Hays Bomber Offensive 2015, 63-64

⁶¹² Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 267-268/(291-292/710)

may take them. All he wanted beyond recognition, was that Canadian authorities be kept apprised of; where, how, and when RCAF members were employed in whatever theatre of war. More often than not, this simple request was ignored as well.⁶¹³

Minister Power argued for greater Canadian participation in command positions within the existing operational structure. He needed senior appointments for his coming Canadian Squadrons. He was refused by the RAF. The RAF insisted that any senior appointment; Group Captain and above, must be filled by an experienced wing commander, with at least one complete operational tour under the belt. The RAF made no exceptions for Canadian requirements.⁶¹⁴ And yet there were experienced Canadian Wing Commanders with at least one tour who were held back from these appointments.⁶¹⁵

Regardless, Power saw progress with his Canadianization Plans that summer of 1941. Eleven of 13 his newly created Canadian Squadrons were commanded by RCAF Officers. He saw a considerable expansion in the RCAF presence overseas. By the end of 1941, there were 18 new Canadian squadrons; fighter squadrons, one coastal fighter squadron; one army cooperation squadron; three coastal reconnaissance squadrons; three night fighter squadrons; one intruder squadron; and four bomber squadrons.⁶¹⁶

It was quite an array, but it was all misleading. Behind it all were 1037 aircrew filling the positions, 499 of whom were actually Canadian. The holes were filled by others. It was also disheartening that of the 8595 recent Canadian BCATP graduates, the vast majority were funnelled to fill RAF ranks.⁶¹⁷

The growing butcher's bill in the air war over Europe was extracting a toll and vacancies had to be filled quickly, particularly in Bomber Command.⁶¹⁸

The problem was that although BCATP graduates may have been trained to "wings" standard while in Canada, they still required additional advanced training overseas. The advanced training was conducted in the United Kingdom in preparation for duty in the front-line squadrons. The aircrew posted to advanced Operational Training Units were left to their own devices in crewing

⁶¹³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 267-268/(291-292/710)

⁶¹⁴ Greenhouse et al 1994,95

⁶¹⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 268/(292/710)

⁶¹⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 269/(293/710)

⁶¹⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 269/(293/710)

⁶¹⁸ Longmate, Norman. 1983. *THE BOMBERS The RAF Offensive against Germany, 1939-1945*. HUTCHINSON:

London Melbourne Sydney Auckland Johannesburg, 1983, 116,131,179,182

Harris, Sir Arthur GCB,OBE,AFC - Marshall of the Royal Air Force. 2015. *Bomber Offensive*. Front Line Books, Pen & Sword Books Ltd. 47 Church Street, Barnsley, S. Yorkshire, S70 2AS, 90-119, 144-164

Iredale, Will. 2021. *The Pathfinders – The Elite RAF Force that Turned the Tide of WWII*. United Kingdom: Penguin Random House

Bowman, Martin W. 2016. *Nachtjagd, Defenders of the Reich 1940-1943*, Pen & Sword Aviation. 47 Church Street, Barnsley s. Yorkshire S70 2AS

Cooper, W. 2013. *Air Battle of the Ruhr – The RAF Offensive March- July 1943*. Pen Sword, AVIATION (1992), 47 Church Street, Barnsley s. Yorkshire S70 2AS

up before posted to an operational unit. It was not possible to organize advance training along the lines of a national entity. There was an insufficiency of experienced trained instructors, operational aircraft, space, and airfields to support it all.⁶¹⁹

Politics also held sway. Prime Minister Churchill insisted on bringing the growing offensive temporarily to a halt in November 1941. Churchill was concerned with the high loss rate suffered by the R.A.F. both in fighters and bombers. He thought it necessary to call a respite to rebuild. So, he temporarily halted operations that eventually paid dividends in fewer training accidents and better-trained aircrew. But this pause did not play to Canada's advantage; for in the mill of training, no thought was given to organizing trainees into national crews. Further R.C.A.F. aircrew were not arriving overseas in the proportions required.⁶²⁰

The other Dominions appreciated and understood Canada's stance. Australia's aim was much the same. But Australia did not wish to rock the boat. It recognized that Canada was in a rather better position to do something about it. New Zealand informed the British government at an early date that it did not wish to restrict the posting of New Zealanders to national squadrons. New Zealand had no interest in forming its own unique squadrons if this adversely affected the efficiency of the R.A.F.⁶²¹ The net result was a communal lack of consensus pushing for sovereign rights. Consequently, the fight for sovereign rights were often put aside for the duration and good of the war effort.

Australia had a unique view of how Canada could advance the common cause with her influence though.⁶²²

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Canada, whose aspirations and problems were basically the same as Australia's, achieved a considerable part of her aim but was favoured by her geographical position; by almost complete concentration of effort on the European war; a relatively high industrial capacity; an economic strength which enabled her to accept a large part of the financial burden of her air effort; a much larger and more balanced contribution of air personnel; a greater participation by her senior air force officers in both military and administrative fields; and a prompt, sustained and pertinacious attack by an adequate group of liaison officers in the various commands against any tendency which threatened to defeat the aim.

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⁶¹⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 269/(293/710)

⁶²⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 269/(293/710)

⁶²¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 270 (294/710)

⁶²² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 270 (294/710)

The carrot and the stick for Canada as Australia saw it; lay with its economic influence.⁶²³ It was perceived as a great advantage for attaining its ends. It was a lever, but its successful use was both spasmodic and limited.⁶²⁴

Despite holding the carrot and the stick, the RAF simply ignored Canadian needs that could have been easily met through the offset in the exchange of appropriate personnel. Rather they used their position to post RAF personnel into what were essentially Canadian billets. Significantly Canadian personnel were readily available within their ranks to do so. It was controlled at the Group level in which the RAF held the reins, on the reasoning that posting appropriate Canadian personnel would be an inconvenience to them.⁶²⁵

The RAF and British Air Ministry stalled on Canadianization for various reasons citing a lack of trained leaders. Leadership and that Canadian squadrons lacked the support train required for fully manned Canadian Squadrons, were the roadblocks to Canadianization on one level. Political will was the one on the other. Also evident was a certain reluctance, if not lack of respect by certain RAF leaders, who did not favour relinquishing any of the reins, that also delayed Canadianization to a great extent.⁶²⁶

It was constantly alluded to that Canada lacked the brainpower to command its own air force.⁶²⁷ And yet it was this same Canadian brain power that helped Britain secure loans with the US and culminating in lend-lease that sustained them through the war. It was the same Canadian brainpower that developed many scientific and technical apparatus that also sustained the Allied effort in the war.⁶²⁸

Sadly, RAF management over RCAF personnel under their control led to many regrettable temporary stoppages placed on Canadians leaving England. Many Canadians were denied leave that ultimately may have contributed to their deaths while under continual service within the needs of RAF command. Consider that even a temporary reprieve of leave at home in Canada may have saved some of these lives.⁶²⁹ Regardless, the case of Canadianization of units overseas and administrative control were proving difficult and moving at a snail's pace to the government's consternation and frustration.⁶³⁰

⁶²³ Greenhous et al 1994, 21, 38

⁶²⁴ Bryce, Robert. 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 72-73

⁶²⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 272 (296/710)

⁶²⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 273-274 (297-298/710), and

Harris, Marshal of the R.A.F. Arthur, G.C.B. O.B.E A.F.C. 1986, *BOMBER OFFENSIVE*, A Greenhill Book, 1986

Copyright © Sir Arthur Harris, 1947, 1998, 64

⁶²⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 273-274 (297-298/710), and

Harris Bomber Offensive 2015, 64

⁶²⁸ Bryce, 2005

⁶²⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 273-274 (297-298/710)

⁶³⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 273-276 (297-301/710)

Despite the ongoing trials with “Canadianization,” the current agreement under the BCATP quickly came to a head as the agreement was scheduled to expire March 31, 1943. A new agreement was re-negotiated in 1942 well in advance to ensure its continuity.⁶³¹ Then a certain level of disruption was experienced within the BCATP as the United States entered the world conflict after the attack on Pearl Harbour.

Churchill had negotiated with the US for certain elements of air training with the US between 1939-1940. Many instructors and students within the BCATP were US citizens. Now that the US entered the war, many desired a transfer to their own country’s forces to facilitate its air training and air force requirements.⁶³² It was an unnecessary additional burden as issues were worked through, and sorted out, while Canadianization remained on the table.

Canadianization proved to be a tumultuous bun fight between Great Britain and Canada to the bitter end. AVM Breadner (RCAF) returned to Canada in February 1942 from a Canadianization mission overseas. Although matters were largely unresolved as he left; Breadner made a lasting impression his British counterpart, Air Marshall Sutton. Sutton issued a confidential letter to all RAF commands stating:⁶³³

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Canada is a Dominion and as such is no less entitled to a separate and autonomous Air Force than is the United Kingdom. This right she has temporarily surrendered in the interests of war efficiency, accepting the fact that unity of organization and of operational command is essential in the prosecution of total war.

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Growing Costs A Lead To Growing Accountability, Liabilities, And Responsibilities

AVM Breadner’s (RCAF) Canadianization mission was a victory of sorts. There was at least one senior leader within the RAF acknowledging Canada’s sovereign rights and interests. Air Marshall Sutton went on to exhort RAF leadership that they should spare no effort with Canadianization of the RCAF overseas. This effort not only encouraged its morale but also it encouraged esprit de corps. But there remained considerable friction between exhortation and reality of implementation. There was an underlying spirit within the RAF that delayed, rather than expedite, the issue.

Canada’s case for Canadianization was bolstered by the renegotiated cost sharing arrangements with Great Britain. The BCATP was a personnel drain on the RCAF. A large portion of RCAF support personnel were held in Canada to run the BCATP. It left few available for posting to Canadian units overseas. Then there was the problem of Canadian parsimony in paying its own way that also contributed greatly to delay and resistance for change within the RAF.

⁶³¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 277 (303/710)

⁶³² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 278 (304/710)

⁶³³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 286 (313/710)

It all came to a head in the autumn of 1942. The Air Member for Finance in the Canadian Air Council, Air Commodore K. G. Nairn, returned from a visit overseas. Nairn voiced the opinion, that from the point of view of efficient administration and the welfare of Canadian personnel, it was desirable that Canada assume the whole cost of RCAF operations overseas.⁶³⁴

Canada finally took the opportunity to assume the cost of its overseas R.C.A.F. squadrons and personnel. The Cabinet War Committee, as part of a general reorganization of financial arrangements with the United Kingdom, approved in principle a change commencing 1 April 1943. Canada then assumed full responsibility for equipping and maintaining the agreed to thirty-five R.C.A.F. squadrons in the United Kingdom.⁶³⁵

The operating costs of the thirty-five R.C.A.F. squadrons overseas was estimated at \$287 million for that year alone. Secondly, it was also acknowledged that certain miscellaneous establishments would also cost Canada an additional \$60 million more. Further Canada now took full responsibility for the pay and allowances, clothing, and other personal necessities, of all Canadian aircrew either serving in the RCAF or the R.A.F. That alone amounted to another estimated cost of \$35 million. And finally, Canada acknowledged, the pain and suffering of those injured or lost while on operations. Those obligations alone amounted to potential capitulation charges of about \$15 million.⁶³⁶ Canada's case for Canadianization was thus strengthened by its assumption of the total costs and responsibility for its forces overseas.

That was only the beginning that saw Canada take on many economic challenges on behalf of Great Britain. Some argue that Canada was Britain's biggest partner in the war. True the US juggernaut came to Britain's rescue in the end, but Canada was there as its life support from the very beginning. Working often behind the scenes, unacknowledged, whose efforts often laid the foundation and ground work for Britain's economic succor and sustainment during desperate times, a fact that many Canadians are still unaware of. But Canada also did her best at avoiding costs in the very beginning that detracted from its importance.⁶³⁷

In the end Canada's spent \$18 billion alone to support the war effort, \$10.5 billion of which was added to the national debt. On the other hand, the war was an economic boom for Canada as well. The national product reached \$11.8 billion in 1945. GDP would continue to rise in the post war years as well. Meanwhile Britain, a once powerful economic power, had gone irreversibly into debt. Britain's economic demise was eventually foiled by Canadian efforts through the Hyde Park agreement. It was found in the essential element of trade balance that kept Canadian-American trade and settlements in balance. It was through the economic easing of foreign exchange demands that kept Britain afloat. In a grand gesture after the war, Ottawa wrote off \$3.5 billion in British debts. It was one generous gesture that Canada made to sustain and assist Great Britain that was in dire economic circumstances.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 287 (314/710)

⁶³⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 287 (314/710)

⁶³⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 287 (314/710)

⁶³⁷ Morton, 1985, 180-181

⁶³⁸ Morton, 1985, 224

A Peak is Reached

1943 marked a major turning point in the history of the RCAF. The BCATP had reached its peak in its expansion and, at last, the RCAF overseas was about to come into its own. No.6 Bomber Group RCAF was finally stood up. This bomber group had been envisaged as early as July 1941, but here it was two years later that it was finally organized under RAF operational command and control. It was organized around three bomber stations with satellite and sub-stations. Additionally, 11 squadrons were added later in the year. That was followed with transfer of three squadrons from the RAF and No. 405 from the famous No. 8 (Pathfinder) Group.⁶³⁹

No 6 Bomber Group (RCAF) experienced its own round of teething problems though. The foremost of which was in the serious lack of trained and experienced senior leaders. But it did exist. Many RCAF members currently serving in the RAF had that experience. Reluctantly the RAF found it difficult either to relinquish them or they were simply too difficult to locate. Canada in the meantime, had taken an expedient measure sending many of its senior officers as trainees overseas. An Operational Training tour was arranged with a quick tour of operations. It got this cadre “experience” before posting to senior command positions within No 6 Bomber Group. Surprisingly, these fast-tracked senior officers did quite well to the surprise of the RAF. And finally, at the end of 1943, all R.C.A.F. bomber squadrons were commanded by Canadian officers. This expedient also served a lot of long serving RCAF members overseas who had been bypassed in the process.⁶⁴⁰

The second problem encountered was the lack of Canadian RCAF ground support staff. These units within No 6 Bomber Group were initially supported by RAF personnel. Nearly one-half of its ground strength (4937 individuals, including three Women's Division officers and 87 airwomen) were R.C.A.F.

An effort was made early 1943 by the Canadian government who notified Bomber Command that between February and June some 10,000 Canadian ground crew would be sent overseas. The RAF was now free to transfer its R.A.F. ground personnel. Over the course of 1944 great strides that saw Canadian personnel eventually replacing their RAF counterparts such that by the end of 1944, the non-flying personnel strength of No. 6 Group was 83 per cent Canadian and remained close to that figure for the remainder of the war.⁶⁴¹

Finally, was the matter of equipping the RCAF overseas. It seemed that the RCAF staff got the dregs and cast-offs of RAF equipment. The RAF was responsible for equipping these squadrons to which they often provided obsolescent equipment. This was a matter of greatest concern to the R.C.A.F. Overseas ' Headquarters.

⁶³⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 288-289 (315-316/710)

⁶⁴⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 290-291 (317-318/710)

⁶⁴¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 291 (318/710),

and Greenhouse et al 1994.48 (Table 1)

Air Marshal Curtis approached the Air Ministry many times to have his R.C.A.F. Hurricane squadrons re-equipped with Spitfires. He also desired that the Wellington and Halifax squadrons be re-equipped with Lancaster bombers. Finally, he extended his wish list to those Canadian squadrons equipped with Lysanders and Tomahawks, to be re-equipped with Mustangs. To his credit AM Curtis pointed out that casualties were heavier in squadrons using obsolescent aircraft. It was here that Canada suffered its greatest losses, perhaps unnecessarily, as many young Canadian lives were wasted from want of better equipment.⁶⁴²

The often fatal consequences to Canadian airmen came from their government's policies, indifference, and lack of pre-war preparation. RCAF aircrews were left to the tender mercies of the RAF. This would have dire consequences for some that weren't immediately apparent on the face of it. As there was no oversight, RCAF members serving within the RAF found pressures on them to serve beyond a normal tour of operations. These pressures arose not only from RAF administrative control but also from the demands of war to fill vacancies created by casualties and loss. RAF control essentially oversaw their movements, employment, and career progression. But the pressure also arose psychologically from the peer pressure of mixed nationalities of those serving with squadrons and bomber crews. The bonds of brotherhood were firmly established in which disruption of the whole was threatened even by the loss of one in the break up of a team. So, there were extraordinary both psychological and service pressures placed on all crew members regardless of nationality. No one wanted to let the side down!⁶⁴³

The RAF could employ people at will, without the benefit of relief. Canadianization though brought some oversight. By 1943; before any Canadian airman was posted for a second tour, the Canadian government finally intervened with a policy regarding any airmen selected by the RAF for a second operational tour. The member was made to go to RCAF headquarters where his rights were read to him. A waiver was required and had to be signed by the airmen regarding notification of his options if he elected for the second tour.⁶⁴⁴

Early September 1943, Canadian Minister of Air, Chubby Power made a concerted effort for special leave arrangements set in Canada for tour expired Canadian airmen. Power wanted to repatriate his men for eight weeks leave. This leave was to be followed by a posting to an operational training unit in Canada as an instructor where their experience would have been of benefit to all. Power made these arrangements without consultation to AVM Harris, Commander in Chief of Bomber Command.

Not surprisingly, Harris was opposed to Power's interference and immediately put forth conditions. Harris insisted that no posting as an instructor to either an O.T.U. or HCU be longer than 12 months, thus both interfering and disregarding Canadian interests. Harris had directly interfered; not only with the rights of a Canadian Minister of the Crown, but also with the sovereign rights of the Government of Canada. It was something that he should have been censured on. Harris went on to further modify the conditions of service.

⁶⁴²Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 291-292 (318-319/710)

⁶⁴³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 292 (319/710)

⁶⁴⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 292 (319/710)

No such leave would be considered unless a member serve least one year in theatre. This nullified leave on the basis or exchange of an “operational’ tour,. In short it meant that the number of operational sorties to complete a tour, was rendered moot. Harris effectively extended the tour length, and by extension; the dangers, exposures, and losses that came with operations. And finally, that such leave be done on a rotational basis, on a one for one replacement basis, of tour expired candidates, for recent graduates was likely problematic and difficult to achieve given the demands of a constant rise in wastage during the war.. He was especially adamant that any requirements for personnel within No. 6 Group be conducted tit for tat, Canadian for Canadian (unsaid -without expectation of any RAF assistance).⁶⁴⁵

Harris not only interfered with the internal operations of the RCAF overseas but also with Canadian government policy as well. His wishes were directions to a Canadian Minister of the Crown, who was solely answerable to the Canadian public, and not to Bomber Harris! Canadian lives were thus used as pawns for his requirements while sustaining and replacing his growing losses.

Harris had not suffered any backlash or same level of censure as he had when he spoke on the air campaign on Germany He did so on his own accord and without his own government’s prior knowledge, consent, or approval.⁶⁴⁶ Apart from speaking his own mind, Harris wasn’t averse to using emotional extortion in getting his way. He along with Portal manipulated Canada into an agreement that extended tours lengths because of British manpower shortages found in:⁶⁴⁷

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The matter ‘should be brought to a showdown in the highest quarters’ and if the Canadians refuse to fall into line their wishes should be ignored.. ‘Sir Charles Portal agreed, asking that it be made clear to the Canadians that their refusal to come into line with us will mean the reduction of the bomber effort. Their refusal would stand on record for all time.’

[BLOCK END]

Sadly, Harris was allowed to get away with it. Canadian aircrews became mere dunnage for Britain’s needs. That speaks volumes for the stand of their own “record for all time.”

Chapter 9 - The Final Curtain

With the end of the war in sight, a conference was held in Ottawa February 1944 to discuss the next steps for the RCAF. Negotiations began between Captain Balfour (UK), Minister Power (Canada), and AM Leckie (RCAF) for the final plans in the war against Japan. It would be a

⁶⁴⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 292 (319/710)

⁶⁴⁶ Globe and Mail. 1942. “Bomber Chief Called Over the Coals.” August 4, 1942. New York Times Special to The Globe' and Mail, Copyright London
Source: [5144_827_004-057-006.pdf](#)

Accessed; 10 Mar 2024

⁶⁴⁷ Greenhous et al 1994.104

turning point for Canada. Canada was to be a partner in the coming Tiger Force with its own autonomous air force.⁶⁴⁸

The British Air Ministry was perturbed by Canada's determination as they had plans and expectations for the continued use of the RCAF under its umbrella. But Canada made it quite clear, that the end of the war also ended any agreements made under Article XV of the BCATP. Canadian airmen would be withdrawn from the RAF, repatriated to Canada as soon as possible, and employed elsewhere as the Canadian government deemed fit.⁶⁴⁹

As part of Canadian participation, its air force would be all Canadian equipped, manned, and paid for. It was made firm to the UK representative that there would be no struggles of the sort of Canadianization as in the UK. In fact, it was made quite clear that the Canadian Tiger Force would totally be under Canadian command and control.⁶⁵⁰

The "Tiger Force" was proposed by Winston Churchill in 1944 at the Quebec Conference. It was a proposal made to President Roosevelt in September that year. Churchill proposed that Great Britain transfer between 500 to 1000 of its heavy bombers, to the Pacific theatre to assist the United States in the final invasion of Japan.

Churchill vowed to release this force only after victory in Europe was achieved. President Franklin D. Roosevelt quickly accepted Churchill's generous proposal.⁶⁵¹ The wheels for creating a "Tiger Force" were set in motion. The final decision for this force was made on 20 October 1944.

The initial planning for the Tiger Force envisaged a formation of twenty-two squadrons in three bomber groups. The Royal Air Force (RAF), the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and a number of miscellaneous nationalities from existing squadrons of Bomber Command were to provide the bomber groups for this Tiger Force. The miscellaneous group included the Royal Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF), and South African Air Force (SAAF).⁶⁵²

Canada was about to contribute a significant portion of the resources required for the "Tiger Force." A significant portion meant a significant role whose contribution demanded Canadian leadership and oversight. A Canadian hand was necessary. The Royal Canadian Air Force by this time had become a professional and a very well trained force. The RCAF ranked the fourth largest air force amongst the Allies. Canadians were no longer amateurs but leaders in the employment of air power.

⁶⁴⁸ Greenhous et al 1994. 101

⁶⁴⁹ Greenhous et al 1994. 101

⁶⁵⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 55-56 (68-69/710)

⁶⁵¹ Anon.2008. "Lancaster's Of Tiger Force- Canada's Contribution to Tiger Force." www.lancaster-archive.com, June 2008, Accessed: August 13, 2010 . http://www.lancaster-archive.com/lanc_tigerforce.htm

⁶⁵² Lancaster's Of Tiger Force. June 2008

The RCAF had largely operated under the umbrella and control of the RAF during the Second World War in Europe. It was a most unpopular umbrella and one to be avoided in future. Canada had built a tremendous air arm as a weapon of war. Its achievements alone paid for a prominent role in the Tiger Force. More importantly, there was a need to ensure that Canada maintained a voice, marking its own policies, and thus ensuring its ideals were carried out and given due weight in the councils of the Allied war.⁶⁵³

Above all was that Canada's sovereign choices and interests were safeguarded in the prosecution of the war against Japan. Canada now chose to exercise full sovereignty and independence that as a sovereign nation, was conducted in the certain knowledge of the attendant risks involved in the final phase of the war. Canada had grown into a fully fledged and independent nation in securing its own course by its own means. It was now a middle power to be reckoned with that marked a significant change in the Canadian character.

The Tiger Force was to have been deployed in 1946. Training began in earnest upon the return with the first arrival of RCAF (Overseas) that summer of 1945. The Lancaster bomber, its prime instrument of war, was only an interim measure. All RCAF Lancaster bombers in the Tiger Force were destined for replacement eventually with newly built Canadian Avro Lincolns.

Re-equipment was to take place once the number of Lincolns coming off the production lines was achieved in sufficient number.⁶⁵⁴ It never happened. The surrender of Japan on 2 September 1945 rendered the point, the requirement, and the "Tiger Force", moot. The Tiger Force disbanded soon after. It was no longer required. By late 1944, victory was just a matter of time.

May 1945 brought joy and relief with the Victory in Europe. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki some months later, August, led to Japan's unconditional surrender. The war finally ended with the signing of the article of surrender on the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945. But that surrender also brought with it, a new threat, nuclear war.

Japan's surrender though rendered the Tiger Force's purpose and that of many of the bases, stations and establishments in Canada, moot.⁶⁵⁵ There came a rush to demobilize and decommission many defence establishments.

The Rush to Close

Peace arrived at last September 1945 with Japan's formal unconditional surrender. Hostilities finally ended. Many Canadian defence facilities were no longer required. Demobilization proceeded as quickly as possible. But "Peace" was also a two-edge sword. Without any purpose for a continued war establishment, the economic boom that came with it soon dried up. Where once there was a frenzied pace, now lay only silence and a slow decay.

The prospects facing many small Canadian communities, soon dried up. Many were once very dependent on Canadian war spending. Their situation seemed dire the fall of 1945. The prosperity

⁶⁵³ Globe and Mail. 1945. "Canadian Fliers Ready For Pacific, Slemon Reports", July 9, 1945. Accessed: 13 November 2014. <http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5134516>

⁶⁵⁴ Lancaster's Of Tiger Force. June 2008

⁶⁵⁵ Lancaster's Of Tiger Force. June 2008

and boom of the war was all but gone. Many small Canadian communities languished after the bust! And the bust came ever so quickly.

But preceding that and also in the aftermath of the war, the government had learned a very valuable lesson. Defence spending brought prosperity. Government had a role to play through policies that enhanced and sustained the economy. So too, did the private sector.

At the back of their minds loomed the recent experience of the Great Depression and the public censure that the government received by its laissez faire approach taken in managing that disaster.⁶⁵⁶ Nobody wished to endure that ever again!

Still hope, confidence, and prospects remained high. There was a prosperous economic outlook despite the large industrial draw-downs in war production and the rapid demobilization of Canada's armed forces. That hope came from Canadian exports that were far above the level required for full employment in 1946. Those prospects were forecasted to remain so. But the government thought a buffer was necessary to ease the future transition to a peace time economy. Many measures were taken to ease its transition to peace. The means were evident in preventing social dislocation by the institution of unemployment insurance plans and by developing generous social welfare policies.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁶ Alexander Brady and F.R. Scott, **Canada After the War – Studies in Political, Social, and Economic Policies for Post-War Canada**, The Canadian Institute of International Affairs, The Macmillan Company of Canada Lt, Toronto, 1945 (@1943), Pg. 3,

⁶⁵⁷ Brady and. Scott. 1945, Canada After the War

Cragg, Kenneth C. 1943 "Far-Reaching System Told By Mackenzie." *Globe and Mail*, 17 March 1943, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100-006-005 149 War European 1939 Canada Post War Social Source: <http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063669>
Accessed: 19 April 2012

Anon. 1944. "SOCIAL CHANGES REQUIRE MOST INTELLIGENT STUDY." *Hamilton Spectator*, 22 March 1944, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100 017 004, 149 War European 1939 Canada Post War Social Whitton Source: <http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063723>
Accessed 19 April 2012

Anon. 1944. "Postwar Planning Information." *Saturday Night*, 16 May 1944, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100-017-003, 149 European 1939 Canada Post War Social Source: <http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063722>
Accessed: 19 April 2012

Anon. 1944. "The Political Implications Of Family Allowances." *Toronto Telegram*, 20 July 1944, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 084 016 019, 149 War European 1939 Canada Labour Family Bonus Source: <http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5053637>
Accessed: 19 April 2012

The Tough Questions

The average Canadian was very concerned with the transition to peace. The war left many asking some deep social questions on the use of taxpayers' money. Many questioned the Government of Canada's policies and demanded answers.

Canada's Gross National Expenditure (GNE) in 1943 was approximately \$11 billion. The Government turned a \$1 billion loan to Great Britain into an outright gift, which represented 9% of GNE. Looking at it from another perspective, that gift represented 24% of \$4.1 billion of government spending that year.⁶⁵⁸

The seeds for change in Canadian public policy were thus sown during the war. The public had no desire to return to darker days. But the future remained bright. Looking ahead then to 1946, the domestic market was strong and demand for goods and services continued to increase as they became available.⁶⁵⁹ There was pent-up demand after the many years of scarcity, saving and privation during the War years. The world had to be re-built. Canada continued to be a bread basket and a source of raw materials for the post war reconstruction. Thus, prosperity seemed assured, and Canada's future looked bright indeed!

Chapter 10 – A Bold New World

The late C. P. Stacey documented clearly and precisely the impacts of the Second World War to Canada. In his 1970's opus "Arms, Men And Governments, The War Policies Of Canada, 1939 – 1945," Stacey paints a picture of what Canada accomplished industrially, economically, socially as well as militarily.

Whitton, Charlotte C.B.E. 1945. "We're Off To Social Security Confusion." Saturday Night, 29 March 1945, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 100 017 002, 149 War European 1939 Canada Post War Social Whitton
Source: <http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5063721>
Accessed: 19 April 2012

⁶⁵⁸ Crozier, Robert. 1999. Canada, Statistics Canada, Conference Board of Canada., "Section F: Gross National Product, the Capital Stock, and Productivity, Series F14-32, Gross national expenditure, by components 1926 to 1976", 1999, 53 pg.
Source: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-516-x/pdf/5500096-eng.pdf>
Accessed: 7 July 2012

⁶⁵⁹ Anon. 1946. "Minister of Reconstruction Confident Regarding Future." Hamilton Spectator, 11 February 1946, Canadian War Museum Archives, accession number 898-817-881, 149, War European. 1939 Canada Post War Economics Howe
Source: <http://collections.civilisations.ca/warclip/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5062612>
Accessed: 5 March 2012

We tend to overlook that history because once written, some would allude, it is best forgotten, that it doesn't matter. Too many Canadians sadly, this attitude, one of neglect regarding our vibrant history, prevails. But our history does matter.⁶⁶⁰ Our collective history clearly demonstrates where Canada has been, what it has achieved, where its strengths and weaknesses lie, and what these strengths and weaknesses pose for our future. Our history is fundamental as a foundation to our society, and also as the pivot for renewal to our future in the 21st century. It should neither be ignored nor taken for granted lightly.

Canadian history, therefore, should neither be discarded, rewritten, re-imagined, or whitewashed for the convenience of some political whim or social expediency. Both the good as well as the open sores must be considered if we are to progress and evolve. These also make us what and who we are as Canadians; open to discussion, free to live our lives, free to worship, free to move, free to be who we are. These are truly what defines our core values as they change too.

Contrary to what poses as conventional thinking, Canada does have core values and a national identity. They would have you believe:⁶⁶¹

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“There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada,” concluding that Canada is “the first post-national state.”

[BLOCK END]

It is a re-imagining of Canada through an elitist and idealistic lens, it is not a view shared by all Canadians.⁶⁶² It is time to relook at our history and remember at its core, who we are.

Canada is not the post-national state as some believe.⁶⁶³ This attitude is a falsehood and is the source of the great divisions currently extant in Canada. It is a philosophy used to sow doubt about who we are and to divide and conquer us all. Canada has a place in history.

The vision of the “post-national state” leaves us rudderless, directionless, and without clear guidance. There is still hope for the future, but it is one in which Canada must assume responsibility for its existence and in preserving its core values to ensure its place in the world. It is one in which the true Canadian identity of inclusivity, unity, and the dignity of human spirit prevails. These soon to be forgotten values go back many years and were clearly demonstrable during the Second World War and the latter half of the 20th century.

Past as Prologue

⁶⁶⁰ Murray, Williamson, and Richard Hart Sinnreich. 2006. *The Past as Prologue – The Importance of History to the Military Profession*. Cambridge University Press. 40 West 20th Steet, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA, 1

⁶⁶¹ Malcolm, Candice . 2016. “Trudeau says Canada has no ‘core identity’”. Toronto Sun , Sep 14, 2016 Source: [Trudeau says Canada has no ‘core identity’ | Toronto Sun](#) Accessed: 26 May 2023

⁶⁶² Malcolm 2016.no core identity

⁶⁶³ Malcolm 2016.no core identity

At the beginning of the Second World War, Canada remained in the shadow of the Depression. The economy had not yet fully recovered and was struggling. Its population was bereft of hope and was suffering deeply from want.⁶⁶⁴ But that soon changed with the declaration of war. Canadian industrialists, hungry for orders, put Canada's industrial might into the production of war materiel. It brought with it unprecedented employment. There was a hope that this war effort would become the primary Canadian contribution.⁶⁶⁵ It mobilized the entire country that set Canada on the path to change both as a nation and socially. That change was found in unlikely policies that cast a long shadow after the war.

One of Canada's first major policies that had an impact, and did cast a long shadow, was the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). The BCATP was seen as "the primary Canadian contribution" to the war. What flowed from that initial "contribution" were the growing and expanding contributions of the Army, Navy, and Airforce. It was the ever increasing commitments made by Canada that saw it grow and in which social change occurred. Ironically, the philosophy of "Primary Canadian Contribution" was underscored by a policy of limiting commitments.

"Limiting commitments" proved a confounding factor in the wider management of the war and on the lives of many Canadians as well. For as commitments grew, steps were taken that either controlled or altered their lives. All that became very evident through rationing, in gainful employment, and finally in the conscription crisis that altered the mood and opinion of the country. All these "contributions" had to be somehow managed politically and economically. In the end, the government was blinded to recognizing important consequences for Canada. The growing responsibilities and liabilities led to an onward path leading to total war.

"Commitments" impacted Canada's social fabric as well. The economic factor may have been a panacea for getting out of the doldrums of the Depression, but that didn't happen all at once. But the doldrums were dispersed as the money flowed. Canadians now had money to spend. Their quality of life improved. Goods may have been limited but good times were explored in other ways. The war opened the doors to the exploration of societal norms, sexual proclivity, and ultimately, identity.

The war changed Canadian society. The changes were fostered through the following means; production and industrialization, an expanded workforce that included woman's labour and contributions, politics, and advancing technology. But it was distinctly found in the changes to social norms and attitudes that were adapted that stemmed from all this. The more liberal attitude likely became a basis for social and the cultural catalyst for sexual liberation and freedom in Canada later.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁴ Berton, Pierre . 2001. *The Great Depression - 1929-1939* (Toronto: Doubleday), 503-504

⁶⁶⁵ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 485 (514/710)

⁶⁶⁶ Owens, Calla M. 2018 . "Behind Closed Doors: The Expansion of Female and Male Sexuality During the Second World War in Canada." Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in History, Acadia University, April 2018, 6

Social values and norms also changed through the mass movement of humanity that was fueled by better monetary circumstances, the engagement of all citizens in the war effort, and by removing the traditional barriers that prevented women from serving in industry and the military. It opened the doors to equal opportunity that led to the demands of equal pay for equal work.. In this milieu, both men and women increasingly challenged social convention and norms.⁶⁶⁷ But the broader impact was in the change of prevailing attitudes that led to exploration and greater sexual freedom. Many chose to live their lives to the fullest, never knowing whether they would live from one day to the next.

A mass migration overseas either to or from Canada also provided a means to mixing the gene pool. Canadian servicemen alone married some 27000 war brides while serving overseas. They were a fertile lot; not only in marriage at home or abroad, but also in producing some legitimate and illegitimate children along the way.⁶⁶⁸ In the end, the bulk of the war brides overseas, some 27,000 with 9,000 children, awaited repatriation with their Canadian husbands at war's end.⁶⁶⁹ But there were also waiting families for many at home. Some reunions were joyful, others painful with the family breakdown of those lost in post traumatic stress. Others simply could not reconcile their differences or change in the time lost as a couple.⁶⁷⁰ The glass walls of societal norms and stability had been shattered paving the way for the liberations of the Boomers to come.

But all this was predicated on one of two things, a return to good times, and wealth that ironically flowed from the war. Not only had the human capital grown as a consequence, but also wealth stemming from enforced savings. A pent up demand was set in motion that followed in the wake of full employment as well as in the lack of consumer goods. There was no place to spend all that excess cash in any case.

It all exploded post war later in the 1950s with a housing, baby, and a mining boom, which was fanned by an increase in immigration. It fundamentally changed Canada in all its aspects and outlook.⁶⁷¹ Demonization of booze had evaporated. Commodities that had one been scarce

⁶⁶⁷ Owens 2018 Behind Closed Doors , viii

⁶⁶⁸ O'Connor, Joe .2017 "Dutch love-child fathered by First Nations' Canadian veteran finds lost identity, gets citizenship." National Post, 3 March 2017
Source: read:<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/dutch-love-child-fathered-by-first-nations-canadian-veteran-finds-lost-identity-gets-citizenship>
Accessed: 5 March 2017

⁶⁶⁹ Madigan, Gerry. 2016. "They that go down to the sea in ships" - The Life and Times of Captain Morris O'Hara (Isaacs Harbour, NS), Master of Lady Nelson during the Second World War." Guysborough Journal July 22, 2016. *madiganstories.com* , 47

⁶⁷⁰ Broadfoot, Barry. 1985. *The Veterans' Years – Coming Home from the War*. Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver/Toronto Canada., 85-146, and
Young, Scott. 1989. *Home for Christmas- and other stories*. A Young & Hogan Book for Macmillan of Canada, A Division of Canada Publishing Corporation, Toronto, Ontario, Canada , 1-4, 5-10, 53-58, 73-83

⁶⁷¹ Maclean's. 1999. *Canada in the Fifties – From the Archives of Maclean's*. The Penguin Group, Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2, 384pg.

during the war, particularly nylon, were now in great abundance. It was all fostered by the introduction of plastics that not only transformed but also revolutionized the Canadian economy from its the old glass-and metal base to a new consumer-disposable one.⁶⁷²

The returning veterans' exposure to life in Europe brought with it a significant change in Canadian attitudes that was a world and continental view. It was a view based on their service and their expectations and their place in Canada not only for their future but their children's as well.

There were both highs and lows arising from Canada's economic boom. That boom wasn't to be easily achieved pre-war though. It required investment and those opportunities were few. However, one hope lay in a potential of pre-war defence spending and investment in Canada, Britain's in particular. British authorities remained reluctant to place orders in Canada without certain conditions.

Canada would have to first share in those orders.⁶⁷³ Canadian authorities were just as reluctant to do so. They too required Britain place concurrent orders that materially reduced unit costs.⁶⁷⁴ Regardless, it mattered little. Canada was industrially ill prepared for war in any case. Industrial capacity had to be built, or an expansion and labour found to meet the growing needs.⁶⁷⁵ Neither will nor the urgency to do so did not exist until war was precipitated by Germany's invasion of Poland. It was the start of what was a foundation for Canadian prosperity in its post war future.

In the beginning a foundation was laid

Despite the significant economic role Canada played in the British war effort, Canada remained unprepared for war in 1939. The government had no plan for the organization of wartime production. Action was quickly taken by Prime Minister Mackenzie King. King tasked Mr. Power, his Minister of Pensions and National Health, with drafting a bill to establish a supply department September 6, 1939. That plan was put before parliament and received Royal assent on September 13th. It was the very beginning of Canada's war effort on the Homefront.⁶⁷⁶

Significantly, the action to establish a War Supply Board took place 4 days prior to Canada's official declaration of war. Clearly neither supply management nor industrial capacity was on the horizon prior that declaration. The interim measure of a War Supply Board was later assumed by a Defence Purchasing Board on November 1, 1940.⁶⁷⁷

Canada's nascent wartime industrial capacity was unable to supply all of Great Britain's defence requirements. Britain looked towards the United States in which a great reliance on its industrial

⁶⁷² Berton, Pierre .2002. *Marching As To War – Canada's Turbulent Years 1899-1953*. Anchor Canada, 515

⁶⁷³ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 16-17

⁶⁷⁴ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 485 (514/710)

⁶⁷⁵ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 12

⁶⁷⁶ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 495 (524/710)

⁶⁷⁷ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 496 (525/710)

capacity was soon placed.⁶⁷⁸ Given Canada's geographical position, an opportunity arose as a go-between for the procurement of arms and supplies in which Canadian financing, negotiation, and diplomacy would play a huge role.⁶⁷⁹

The situation did not materially improve until the desperation following Dunkirk. The withdrawal from the continent, left the British without means to support itself or to replenish its lost materiel left in the field, following that debacle. The defeat at Dunkirk brought with it transformation. After Dunkirk Mr. Howe and the Department of Munitions and Supply were placed in the forefront of the Canadian war effort sustaining Great Britain. Canadian industry was rapidly ramped up. Significantly only a relatively small proportion of that production was directed to the needs of Canada's Armed Forces.⁶⁸⁰

The ramp up reaped one significant achievement in the automotive sector. The war relied on logistics and transportation. Canada produced 815,729 transport vehicles of all types alone for war purposes. It represented the country's greatest single industrial contribution.⁶⁸¹

But Canada's industrial efforts were largely downplayed in the overall representation of the war. But one British writer acknowledged:⁶⁸²

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"a major factor not merely in British but in global war supply",

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Then went on to state with some hyperbole,

[BLOCK START]

"Here, indeed, more than anywhere else, may be found the specific Canadian contribution to the victory of the United Nations",

[BLOCK END]

He went on to underscore the Canadian contribution to the war found in the 200,000 vehicles employed in North West Europe. He compared that output to operations of the Canadian armed forces. In his opinion, Canada's industrial contribution was the more important contribution to victory.⁶⁸³ It was in this effort, that defeat and disaster were prevented from befalling Great

⁶⁷⁸ Baime, A.J. 2014. *The Arsenal of Democracy. FDR, Detroit, and an Epic Quest to Arm an America at War.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Boston/New York.142

⁶⁷⁹ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 100-110

⁶⁸⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 486 (515/710)

⁶⁸¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 487 (516/710)

⁶⁸² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 487 (516/710)

⁶⁸³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 487 (516/710)

Britain. Often overlooked too, was that this pending doom was forestalled through Canada's industrial effort until the United States was able to bring its industrial might to bear.

Canadian industrial capacity and effort was often scoffed when measured against the industrial capacity of the United States. The reality of the effort though is found in these figures given to the House of Commons of rough percentages and destinations of war materials produced in Canada and that were distributed:⁶⁸⁴

To Canada	34%
To United Kingdom and other Empire countries	53%
To United States	12%
To other Allied nations.....	1%
Total 100%	

The supply of the United Kingdom predominated the Canadian efforts by far. The United Kingdom estimated that it received 60 per cent of its tanks, 67 per cent of its artillery, 70 per cent of its rifles, and 53 per cent of combat aircraft from Canadian sources during the war. The Canadian Forces received approximately only one third of our own industrial output.⁶⁸⁵ Clearly, the Canadian effort was directed to Great Britain in its direst hours.

This reflects Canada's true contribution to the war. That contribution not only included the service and sacrifices of its men and women of its armed services, but also that of the men and women of its industrial and agricultural industries as well. It was a total war effort, an effort that continues to be largely under appreciated as major contribution to winning the war.

A Change of Dance Partners

Change also happened in the background. Canada produced a great deal of materiel based on British types. However, Canada's production methodology came to be based on American production methods, standards, and techniques. As such Canada became dependent upon American imports for machinery, spare parts, sub-assemblies, and components. In the end the production of British-type equipment often required adaptations of manufacturing procedure to suit Canadian-American methods.⁶⁸⁶ A subtle change that would eventually evolve in a new economic relationship as well.

Along with the industrial production methodology, came economic change.⁶⁸⁷ That change within Canada paralleled the adoption of American production methods. It complicated in part the payment system. It required the adoption of a new method of a currency based system regarding its balance of payments.. Canada, stood alone amongst the Commonwealth, using US dollar currency instead of sterling. In the end that created problems with the British trade and

⁶⁸⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 488 (517/710)

⁶⁸⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 488 (517/710)

⁶⁸⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 489 (518/710)

⁶⁸⁷ Bryce 2005. Canada and the Cost of Second World War, 72-73, 100-101

balance of payments.⁶⁸⁸ These had to be resolved throughout the war where Canada played a significant role.⁶⁸⁹

Canadian war industry was not only nascent and fledgling, but also was the management and control structure behind it. There was a great deal of work and political movement behind the scenes to get it going on an even keel. It all came to fruition when Minister of Finance (J. L. Ralston). asked the Prime Minister to relieve him of the responsibility for the War Supply Board. Both Ralston and King felt the man for the job was C.D. Howe Minister of Transport. The Board was appointed under him accordingly. It was all formalized by an order in council 23 November. C. D. Howe, who many believed, came to be the absolute monarch of Canadian war production. The Department of Munitions and Supply that had come into existence April 9, 1940, by proclamation under the act of 1939, was now absorbed and replaced by the War Supply Board with Howe as Minister at its head.⁶⁹⁰

Concurrently, there were other issues to resolve on an international scale, the purchase of arms on behalf of Great Britain.⁶⁹¹ There was some issues with the United States defence establishment resisting the sale of arms to Great Britain. Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of the Treasury was dissatisfied with the state of affairs that saw a tendency of the United States armed forces "to keep many things to themselves".⁶⁹² That too, was understandable given the Armed Services of the United States were underfunded and in the process of rebuilding its strength during the inter-war years much like their Canadian counterparts.

Henry Morgenthau wanted to resolve the bottlenecks. Morgenthau thought it best to use the Howe-Purvis channel within the Department of Munitions and Supply rather than pursuing purchases separately through representatives of the services of the United States. But there were dissenters with the program within the United States as well.⁶⁹³ Progress was far from smooth, but it was all largely resolved at meeting of heads between King and Roosevelt at Ogdensburg New York that got all on the same page regarding wartime purchasing for Great Britain.

Military procurement for Canada, in the United States, was subsequently placed firmly in civilian hands. The fact that the US military was far more powerful in the United States than in Canada, the soundness of this decision was arguable. There would always be resistance no matter the decision.⁶⁹⁴ The story behind the Ogdensburg agreement deserves a fuller telling. It was a seminal achievement by King in his administration of the war. But in the end, it all boiled down into who was in control in the matter of balance of payments.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁸⁸ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 489 (518/710)

⁶⁸⁹ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 72-73, 100-101

⁶⁹⁰ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 496 (525/710)

⁶⁹¹ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 110

⁶⁹² Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 496 (525/710)

⁶⁹³ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 496 (525/710)

⁶⁹⁴ Stacey 1970. *ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945*, 496 (525/710)

⁶⁹⁵ Bryce 2005. *Canada and the Cost of Second World War*, 105-116

Great Britain proposed a more formal approach. Britain suggested through the Canadian High Commissioner in London, that all Commonwealth supply requirements from the United States, should be dealt with through the British Purchasing Commission in London. That would require a pooling of purchases that saw the settlement of priorities and allocations in London. Of course, they agreed that this would involve some form of joint Commonwealth consultation. The Canadian government did not agree, and its War Committee replied along the lines that the Canadian government felt that the present procedure adequate. The War Committee was firm in its belief that the status quo should be continued as is, rather than changing the procedure that would see the system centralized and operated from London.⁶⁹⁶

There was a battle going on. This battle was not with the enemy, but was one fought amongst us. Important decisions were eventually made in late August and early September 1940 that essentially reflected two fundamental principles. One was based on the:⁶⁹⁷

[BLOCK START]

- prejudices, some might call them — of the King administration: a preference for civilian over military channels, and
- a preference for national over Commonwealth machinery.

[BLOCK END]

Despite King's preferences, they did not prejudice full and friendly cooperation. In the end the Department of Munitions and Supply worked most closely and amicably with its counterpart in London, the British Purchasing Commission.⁶⁹⁸ There may have been good reasons for the British government to attempt the centralized control of all Commonwealth supply requirements from the United States. Equally there were sound reason for Canadian resistance.

The great fear was the settlement of accounts and priorities was in the allocation of expenses would be unevenly or unfairly distributed. The British desired that the allocations be conducted in London, through some form of joint Commonwealth consultation.⁶⁹⁹

Consultation in British terms was often in the tone of "do what you are told, and we know best" rather than in the tone of cooperation. History demonstrated this in the final settlement of the BCATP accounts. It was all a matter of control.

⁶⁹⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 496 -497(525-526/710)

⁶⁹⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 496 -497(525-526/710)

⁶⁹⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 496 -497(525-526/710)

⁶⁹⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 496 -497(525-526/710)

Commonwealth countries were often dealt with as inferiors to Britain. Sometimes it was in the perception of who got what and who was given obsolescent material to get on with the job.⁷⁰⁰

The Canadian Army's needs were placed at the bottom of the priorities list even though the Army was serving in Europe.⁷⁰¹ Only about one-third of Canadian war production went to the Canadian forces.⁷⁰² Finally, there was no clear mechanism of equals talking to equals.

Regardless the system worked well enough under "mutual understandings" through the need for cooperation when it arose. It could have been more efficient.

The Changing Face of Canadian Industrial Capacity

This was only a small part of the problem. The production of war materiel within Canada, was not without controversy. There was a concern regarding private or public sector production. The fear of government lay in potential for war profiteering by the private sector. In the end the private sector produced the majority of war goods but under strict and stringent control of war time profits.⁷⁰³

The problem went way beyond profiteering. Canada was short on industrial capacity that raised its ugly head during the summer of 1940. Britain had a desperate need for rifles immediately following Dunkirk., Canada exported all the Ross rifles it could send in answering Britain's call for arms. Even then Britain wanted more while Canada was left with just enough Lee-Enfields for her rapidly expanding forces and local defence.⁷⁰⁴

A rapid shift occurred. The nature of Canada's industrial face was about to change. Land, factories, and infrastructure were rapidly procured or built to expand Canada's growing war industry. A fundamental policy decision 14 June by Acting Minister of National Defence (Major Power), was laid before the War Committee.

Power put forward a memorandum written by the "Master General of the Ordnance," 18 May. That memorandum recommended Canada undertake production of all articles of armament and equipment for her troops. This call resulted in the resourcefulness of Canadian industry to come to his aid. This was finally the call upon which the needs of the long-starved Armed Forces were addressed.⁷⁰⁵

The device to be employed was the Crown company. It was a brand new type of Government organization providing for production-purchasing-control mechanisms.⁷⁰⁶ Canada was the only country of amongst the United Nations that procured all its war supplies through a single

⁷⁰⁰ Greenhouse et al 1994, 13

⁷⁰¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 291-292 (318-319/710)

⁷⁰² Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 488 (517/710)

⁷⁰³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 497(526/710)

⁷⁰⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 498 (527/710)

⁷⁰⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 501 (530/710)

⁷⁰⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 501-502 (530-531/710)

agency. This mechanism eliminated competition between the Armed Services for the equipment they required.⁷⁰⁷ It was likely instrumental to sorting out the priorities and eliminating competition amongst all its components within the capacity of its war industry.

Crown Corporations did not exist prior to the Department of Munitions and Supply Act of 1939. The earliest Crown company came into being May 1940. Eventually this grew to 28 Crown companies that worked under this department.⁷⁰⁸

The coordinated and concentration had a tremendous impact on Canadian war production. The effort could not come fast enough. Canadian troops overseas were now outfitted with modern equipment but only so far as it was made available by the British War Office. Troops remaining in Canada for home defence generally made do with the weapons of the last war or none at all.⁷⁰⁹

The Department of Munitions and Supply was established 9 April 1940. That date was marked by the Germans invasions of Denmark and Norway. The Department was born into tumultuous times midsummer of 1940, following disasters that befell France and Belgium in May. This had a full effect, which saw total money value of contracts awarded increased materially.⁷¹⁰

The list the monthly totals down to midsummer of 1941 provides an insight. It demonstrates the sense of urgency of mobilizing Canadian war industry in meeting the needs of an emerging and urgent situation:⁷¹¹

Contracts Awarded by Department of Munitions and Supply on
Canadian Account

9-30 April 1940	\$ 11,640,360
May.....	31,009,313
June.....	45,403,572
July.....	82,019,269
August	74,404,709
September	68,326,872
October	148,002,916
November	66,565,640
December.....	143,788,776
January, 1941.....	50,897,295
February.....	60,085,469
March.....	64,198,745
April.....	144,035,380
May.....	106,440,774
June.....	39,930,076
July.....	59,102,219

⁷⁰⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 503 (532/710)

⁷⁰⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 502 (531/710)

⁷⁰⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 503 (532/710)

⁷¹⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 505 (534/710)

⁷¹¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 505 (534/710)

But there was also a broader impact beyond the Department of Munitions and Supply in its impacts to the Canadian economy. These impacts were broadly felt across all spectrums of Canadian industry and society. The preceding figures do not include contracts placed by the Civil Aviation Division of the Department of Transport for construction, etc., required under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. It all amounted to a tremendous economic boom in which Canada achieved full employment.⁷¹²

A summary Research and Development

All aspects of industrial capacity were engaged and directed to Canada's efforts during the Second World War. This included its universities, research, and industrial base as well. It encompassed a wide variety of research disciplines and organizations such as the Winter Experimental Establishment at Edmonton, Alberta; a Photographic Research Establishment and a Radio-Wave Propagation Unit at Ottawa; and the Institute of Aviation Medicine in Toronto.⁷¹³ It was a boon to technology and in its civilian applications after the war.

It often began with a small start. The Royal Canadian Navy for instance began its research effort with the employment of two scientists from Dalhousie University. These two academics assisted in developing countermeasures against magnetic mines, from which a small laboratory was established at Dalhousie. This small nucleus eventually grew into a Council officially recognized as the "Scientific Research and Development Establishment" of the R.C.N. By March 1943, the Navy assumed responsibility for its own research division. Finally, the RCN took over the facilities at Halifax, and by January 1944 this scientific section was converted into a separate unit, known as "H.M. Canadian Naval Research Establishment".⁷¹⁴

A Small Arms Proof and Experimental Establishment was organized at Valcartier, Quebec where inter-service research and development in the field of propellants and explosives was conducted. But in the end, Research on explosives and ballistics was carried on under the direction of an N.R.C. Associate Committee at various universities.⁷¹⁵

So too biological and chemical warfare where research in Canada was conducted mainly at the Canadian Army's Kingston Laboratory at Queen's University and at the War Disease Control Station on Grosse Ile, near Quebec City. This effort was ultimately a joint Canadian-United States project. project.⁷¹⁶

All these efforts culminated in a tremendous industrial expansion. Still, it all took time to get it up and running since most of the plants had to be created "from scratch" after which, it took even longer to produce the goods. Industrial production peaked in 1943. Regarding aircraft production in number and in dollar value, Canadian aircraft production reached its peak in 1944. In that year

⁷¹² Berton.2001. *The Great Depression*, 9

⁷¹³ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 509 (535/710)

⁷¹⁴ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 509 (535/710)

⁷¹⁵ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 509 (535/710)

⁷¹⁶ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 509 (535/710)

4178 aircraft were produced worth \$248 million as compared with 4133 worth \$212 million in 1943.⁷¹⁷

As the war progressed, Canada's maritime interests expanded as well. The shipbuilding industry, which was practically non-existent at the outbreak of war, responded well. Orders placed early in 1940, with the help of steel plates from the United States, saw ten keels laid in February. That industry rapidly expanded, such that by the end of 1940, 44 corvettes had been launched and 14 completed along with a dozen of these useful little vessels commissioned and in operation by the end of the year.⁷¹⁸

This effort also extended to Canada's mercantile shipping as well. Merchant shipbuilding reached its peak in 1943 with 150 units built valued at \$250 million. The down side to this was much naval shipbuilding was deferred until 1944. In that year 2288 units were finally constructed. The vast majority this production and deferral on the production of warships lay with the build up of landing craft that were essential to the cross channel invasion of Europe.. Regardless 73 escort vessels and 50 minesweepers were also constructed with a value of \$143 million.⁷¹⁹ All this was necessary to replace the merchant shipping losses to the U-boat war, to move valuable shipping of war goods, and building a cross channel capability for moving troops to Great Britain for the coming invasion of Europe scheduled in 1944.⁷²⁰

All this activity generated a tremendous industrial capacity and economic boom whose Canadian war production total effort was valued at \$9,544 million (Canadian dollars). Separately, defence construction, and plant expansion was financed to the tune of \$1,566 million more. All these figures refer only to contracts placed by the Department of Munitions and Supply. By 31 December 1945, the Department of Munitions and Supply was concluded, and its functions became the business of a new department, that of Reconstruction and Supply.⁷²¹ The end was finally in sight.

Epilogue - The lasting legacy of the Second World War

Canada's past is the cornerstone of its Defence Policy beginning very shortly after the Great War. It has been a policy geared toward limiting liabilities and commitments, on the one hand, and doing it on the cheap on the other, often as friends with benefits. It is an evident policy established in practice in most Canadian procurement decisions. It is a policy founded in the continuation of looking to the low cost option, deferment, or outright cancellation. And perhaps more so, it applies to the extent of Canadian participation in conflict, to limit liability and commitment, that is either linked to the maximization of economic or to political benefit.

The years following the Second World War were tumultuous. Peace was never assured. Despite being an ally and on the winning side, lingering doubts concerning the Soviet Union's sincerity

⁷¹⁷ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 506 (536/710)

⁷¹⁸ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 506 (536/710)

⁷¹⁹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 506 (536/710)

⁷²⁰ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 506 (536/710)

⁷²¹ Stacey 1970. ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENTS , THE WAR POLICIES OF CANADA, 1939 – 1945, 506 (536/710)

for peace and its post-war agenda after victory in 1945 remained. Their agenda became very evident in a power grab for dominance in a sphere of geopolitical influence that led to the establishment of the Iron Curtain. Winston Churchill first put this concept forward as he saw Soviet controlled countries falling within its sphere of influence. What evolved in its aftermath were a series of proxy wars. It saw the balance of global power fought for in the lines of influence. A soft war was waged between the dominant doctrines of democracy and communism in a fight for followers.⁷²² A peace of sorts was assured through concepts of mutually assured destruction in which there would be no winners in a nuclear conflict.⁷²³

The Iron Curtain was essentially the continuing battle of wills amongst former Allies, with on one hand, those aligned with the United States, United Kingdom, and other liberal democracies. On the other hand, was the alignment of states with the Soviet Union that became the Warsaw Pact. The red threat and its expansion was held in abeyance initially by the threat of nuclear power which was held in the hands of the United States and United Kingdom. But not for long as the Soviet Union too became a nuclear power that led to the doctrines of nuclear deterrence and eventually, mutually assured destruction.

The Korean War brought matters to a head. The lines were further crystallized in this proxy war, and global peace destabilized in a fight between democracy and communism for nuclear deterrence was considered. Peace was destabilized in the power grabs of the raging fight over wills, in what became the Cold War. All this finally came to a showdown with the Cuban missile crisis.

The Cuban Missile Crisis forced a rethink of Canadian nuclear policy. The balance in world power was tilting and was leading inexorably towards the potential of a hot war. It all held significant consequences for small countries like Canada.⁷²⁴ Canada in this changing space was but a small and secondary player. Regardless, Canada still had strategic, if not tactical interests, in what transpired. Canada depended immensely on the protection of the US umbrella of nuclear weapons.⁷²⁵

And yet the Canadian public was ambivalent towards the use and employment of nuclear weapons, particularly on Canadian soil. Canadians moved between the poles of pro and con.⁷²⁶

⁷²² Churchill, Winston S. 1953. *Triumph and Tragedy*. Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, The Riverside Press Cambridge, Book II, and Morton 1985, 231,246

⁷²³ Boston Study Group. 1979. *Winding Down – The price of Defense*. W.H. Freeman and Company, San Francisco, 70-71

Chivian, Eric, M.D., Susanna Chivian, M.D., Robert Jay Lifton, M.D., and John E. Mack, M.D. 1982. *Lat Aid – The Medical Dimensions of Nuclear War*. W.H. Freeman and Company, San Francisco,12,113, and Goldwin, Robert A. 1969. *America Armed – Essays on United States Policy*. Rand McNally & Company Chicago (3rd Edition)

⁷²⁴ Keess, John "Strategic Parasitism, Professional Strategists and Policy Choices: The Influence of George Lindsey and Robert Sutherland on Canadian Denuclearisation, 1962-1972." *Canadian Military History* 29, 1 (2020), 1-2

⁷²⁵ Ibbitson, John 2023. *The Duel – Diefenbaker, Pearson, and the Making of Modern Canada*. Published by Signal. Published by Signal, Penguin Random House Canada Limited, Penguin Random House Company , 197-198

⁷²⁶ Morton 1985, 248 and

Then Prime Minister Diefenbaker was not in favour of their use. He was wont to decline their employment on Canadian soil, despite the fact, his American allies expected their immediate use and Canadian support. Regardless of the Prime Minister's wishes, Minister Harkness, without authority and on his own volition, called the Canadian Forces to immediate alert and ordered to their war stations.⁷²⁷

The whole affair left Diefenbaker's government in a quandary that eventually led to his government's defeat in 1963. The potential of a nuclear option forced a rethink of Canadian defence policy. These discussions subsequently led to negotiations of mutual defence arrangements with a non-nuclear role for Canada that would be exercised under the Liberal's coming rule.⁷²⁸

John Diefenbaker as prime minister in 1957, struggled with the use of the nuclear option when in power. On the one hand, he had the military to contend with. All three services desired a variety of nuclear weapons to fulfill Canadian defence commitments. On the other hand, there was public opinion to consider that was split on the matter. Diefenbaker attempted to wrangle both pro- and anti-nuclear factions in his party through indecision and study.⁷²⁹ Canada did procure several systems but significantly, although nuclear capable, their procurement was done without crucial agreement on accepting warheads. It was the perennial problem of limiting liability or no commitments.⁷³⁰

Lester B. Pearson, the leader of the opposition, forced an election in 1963 in which his party came to power. Once in office, the Liberals quickly ended the drawn-out nuclear negotiations. The resolution of the quandary saw joint administration and oversight of nuclear weapons on Canadian soil. Pearson was both reluctant and apathetic in accepting the warheads but did so only to fulfil a number of defence commitments. Pearson held the view that many of these commitments, were not in Canada's interests.⁷³¹ Significantly following the 1963 election, the liberals promised "a searching review of Canadian defence policy". It was the political code-word for wait and see.⁷³²

Some players that had developed the nuclear option, had contributed greatly to the discussions of Canadian Defence Policy. They remembered that the use of that weapon ostensibly ended the Second World War. The aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki though, left many with great doubts of the morality of the bombs' employment in that war. It left them with a moral crisis to consider in their hearts and who now searched soulfully for a better solution. Canada was one such player. Ultimately Canada searched for ways in which its values and interests were either respected and/or acknowledged.

Ibbitson 2023, 278

⁷²⁷ Morton 1985, 247

⁷²⁸ Morton 1985, 248

⁷²⁹ Ibbitson 2023, 296

⁷³⁰ Keess 2020, 12

⁷³¹ Keess 2020, 12-13

⁷³² Morton 1985, 249

As in the Second World War, Canada had difficulty in having its voice heard. Several of the players around the table held similar experiences of the Second World War. They too brought similar concerns to the nuclear table in the 1950s and 1960s. It is of interest therefore how the experience of the Second World War guided these lesser powers, and Canadian defence policies in particular, during the post war years and well into the 21st century.

The central nature of Canada is founded on its size, a vast territory with a relatively small population, and the health of the Canadian economy. Defence policy is often based from the consideration of external factors, which are often based too on trade relations and economics. These tend to guide foreign policy in what Canada can afford and contribute. Defence policy is necessarily subordinated to it in costs. The objects of Canadian interest therefore are dependent on trade abroad, the life blood of the Canadian economy, and its necessity in achieving a level of prosperity for the benefit of all.⁷³³

The hard reality of Canadian Defence Policy lies in the fact that Canada has never been able to stand on its own. It has always been dependent on one form of association or another in the matter of its foreign policy and relations. That is the reality of the dependence on foreign trade in economic matters.⁷³⁴ Canada has and continues to find it impossible to practice its foreign policy in isolation without consequences.⁷³⁵ The essential fact is in the fact that Canada lacks the manpower and industry to be a major military power.⁷³⁶

The relationship with the United States has always been a delicate one. A marked change in that relationship began in 1927. Canada turn to legal-diplomatic relations with Washington. In this independent effort, Canada began to assume a position in the burdens and delicacies associated with direct diplomatic representation with the United States. It marked the first steps to becoming a total sovereign nation responsible for its own diplomatic relations. A further step to greater diplomatic relations was taken during the Second World War. At stake was Canada's need for survival and joint defence. That came with a recognition and a need for the establishment of the Permanent Joint Defense Board with the United States. This was a pivotal moment that saw Canada move from the British to the American sphere of influence in defence

⁷³³ Morton, W.L. 1967. "The Fundamentals of Canadian Defense and Foreign Policy." *Air University Review*, January-February 1967, 4-14 (93pg)

Source: <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1967/jan-feb/morton.html>

Accessed: 24 July 2005 (note an archived copy can be found here as the original no longer maintained at Air University: [Air University Quarterly Review January-February 1967: Vol 18 Iss 2 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#))

⁷³⁴ Ibbitson 2023, 147, 160, 197-198

⁷³⁵ Lévesque, Catherine. 2024. "Former Liberal foreign minister says Canada no longer 'useful' in world affairs: 'We...lost our bearings'." *National Post*, 16 January 2024

Source: [Former Liberal foreign minister says Canada no longer 'useful' in world affairs: 'We...lost our bearings' \(msn.com\)](#)

⁷³⁶ Morton 1967, 4-14

of North America. This would tend to guide and influence Canadian Defence policy from that point forward.⁷³⁷

It was out of military necessity in the second half of the twentieth century that Canada became committed to military obligations with the United States. In the end, Canada became the much weaker partner because of its smaller size and economy. It became a fine line of maintaining Canadian sovereignty and independence while managing its foreign policy concomitant with Canadian interests and public opinion.⁷³⁸ Moreover, the overriding factor, was the ability to pay for it all!

Since the end of the Second World War then, Canada has sought means of maintaining its independence while contributing to the larger matters of the world. This has been accomplished through alliances with the United States in NORAD and NATO as well as through various trade agreements committing and tying its economy to the US juggernaut. Beyond that Canada has attempted to bolster its influence and relevance through the United Nations, principally in peacekeeping. It all has to do with addressing the ways of maintaining relevance in which Canadian defence policy address the needs of:⁷³⁹

- Meeting its North American commitments while maintaining its independence
- Preserving good relations with the United States while trading as freely as possible
- Preserving its economic independence while sharing in American capital, industrial skills, and expertise
- And being a good citizen of the world and a good neighbour to the United States

It was always and continues to be a very fine line to follow, a hard row to hoe, and it is one that regrettably, the country seems to have abandoned in the early 21st century. Economically, Canada is a much weaker economy today forgoing the tremendous benefits and potential of its oil and gas sector in particular. It has forgone tremendous investment in the potential of the energy industry.⁷⁴⁰ It has placed all its hope in one basket of the unproven “Green economy.” In military parlance, Canada’s economic planning lacks one foot on the ground, a step necessary for transition and success.

Our economic weakness and intransigence in managing our economy undermines our position as a key partner in the West. Our current government policies at the time of this writing are designed to appeal to “Canada as the Post-national State” and global green lobbies rather tending to jobs and industry.⁷⁴¹ This obsession has led to the detriment of our well being in the matters of

⁷³⁷ Morton 1967, 4-14

⁷³⁸ Morton 1967, 4-14

⁷³⁹ Morton 1967, 4-14

⁷⁴⁰ *Kotkin, Joel. 2024. “Trudeau has weakened Canada — and by extension, the entire free world.” National Post, 17 January 2024*

Source: [Joel Kotkin: Trudeau has weakened Canada — and by extension, the entire free world \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/politics/trudeau-has-weakened-canada-and-by-extension-the-entire-free-world)

⁷⁴¹ Malcolm, Candice . 2016. “Trudeau says Canada has no ‘core identity’”. *Toronto Sun* , Sep 14, 2016

Source: [Trudeau says Canada has no ‘core identity’ | Toronto Sun](https://www.torontosun.com/news/politics/trudeau-says-canada-has-no-core-identity) Accessed: 26 May 2023

importance in global security and interests in which Canada is now largely excluded and ignored.⁷⁴²

Canada has ignored the trends of belligerence and insecurity surrounding us. Canada has continually either disregarded or ignored the buildup of defence capacity of hostile foreign players such as China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran. These state players are building up their militaries to the detriment of world peace and security. Moreover, they all have demonstrated a willingness to use their capabilities. And most importantly many have used influence on the hindrance and interest of Canada as well as the west and its liberal democracy.⁷⁴³

In the face of these ongoing developments, trends, and reality; several countries, such as Japan, Poland, Finland, and Sweden, have shifted their interests to more aggressive military and diplomatic stances. Canada for the most part, seems to be heading in the opposite direction and is backing off. Canada now consistently ranks near the bottom in the measure of defence as share of GDP among NATO countries in recent years. To add to its military's pain, Canada has forced further budget cuts upon it.⁷⁴⁴

It is clear to many that in any coming crisis, that current government's policies serve to jeopardize our future. Canada needs to bulk up both its military and diplomatic capabilities, not slim them down.⁷⁴⁵ The challenge will be to rejig these, to renew Canadian influence, and to find its place in the world once more.

The one constant in Canadian Defence policy from past to present has, and will continue to be, to "limit liability and commitments." It is the one constant in which Canadian policy has been framed. It is the fine balance of attuning resources to relevance that has been honed on the edge of minimalist defence spending. It is in the fine edge of this minimalist spending that is a tipping point to Canada's relevance for many of its allies. It is employed in their judgements of Canada's relevance in world affairs and as a military ally that becomes the benchmark for their favour. It does matter to them in considering what Canada brings to the table, however, small, to make it remain a relevant, significant, or important ally.

The problem with a modern nation state is that it is often difficult to avoid commitment and obligation. In Pearson's time the conundrum lay in the decoupling of nuclear weapons on Canadian soil while maintaining relevance in NATO. In the end Pearson's turmoil led to a broader commitment in Europe that saw an increase of conventional forces on the ground to stem the tide of Soviet over reach. It became the foundation of Canadian defence spending and planning for the Cold War. It was the one constant that Canada attempted to achieve and sustain through various white papers of the time in the consistent framework to plan to:⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴² Kotkin 2024

⁷⁴³ Kotkin 2024

⁷⁴⁴ Kotkin 2024

⁷⁴⁵ Kotkin 2024

⁷⁴⁶ Thomas, Maj H. Allan. 2018. "Change And Effect: The Evolution Of Canadian Defence Policy From 1964 To 2017 And Its Impact On Army Capabilities." Canadian Forces College – Collège Des Forces Canadiennes, JCSP 44 – PCEMI 44, 2017 – 2018. Her Majesty The Queen In Right Of Canada, As Represented By The Minister Of National Defence, 2018. 79-80 (85-86/92)

1. the defence of Canada
2. continental defence, and
3. defence-related contributions to international peace and security operations

That framework obliged Canada to make commitments and that actually achieved relevance as we had something to offer. And herein lies the lesson to our government and defence planners in the 21st century for maintaining Canada's relevance to the world! The past is indeed prologue to the future. You have to bring something to the table that the world requires. To do other wise is to ignore history at your own peril.

But operating within this set framework has been fraught with discontinuity and discord. History has demonstrated that domestic considerations and defence policy choices have been placed at odds by successive Canadian governments following the Second World War. Defence policy has often been crafted on an ad hoc basis and influenced by partisanship politics as it influenced Canadian defence policy. Consequently, the results often generated disparities within the desired time horizons. The associated consequences of attempting the realignment of military capabilities often resulted in persistent mismatches between government policy and ambitions of successive governments. All these tended to influence the Canadian Forces capabilities for either good or ill.⁷⁴⁷ The lesson here is that all must be on the same page and that Canadian defence policy requires a bi-partisan view if it is to succeed. In other words, define the common goals and quit fighting amongst yourselves!

The continuity of Canadian Defence policy is thus greatly influenced by the survivability of a current government in-being and over a long term. No government can commit its successor to its long-term view unless there has been virtual consensus by all political parties concerned. This must be premised on a high regard for the necessity of defence. No such consensus exists in Canada, other than tacitly.

Defence may be deemed a necessity in so far as it is a required element of statehood. But in what capacity, how much, and how it is employed for that matter are often left unattended, overlooked, disregarded, or downplayed. It all leads to deferral and kicking the can down the road, the consequences of which can easily be drawn from the lessons leading to and from the Second World War. Future governments will, no doubt, reassess and have their own spending priorities. New governments may also have new, possibly differing agendas. There is no long-term certainty for the future of Canadian Defence policy.⁷⁴⁸ And herein lies the problem, uncertainty, in what are we to plan for, the woke policies of social change, or in the defence of Canada?

⁷⁴⁷ Thomas 2018, 79-80 (85-86/92)

⁷⁴⁸ Madigan, Gerry. 2010. "Canada First – Defence Strategy: A Retrospective Look. Too much? Too little? Or just right?" Canadian Military Journal, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 2010, 33
<https://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol10/no3/doc/06-madigan-eng.pdf> (forces.gc.ca)

The current world view is very critical of Canada for neglecting defence. Their arguments are found easily in the case of Canada whose thirst for free riding on the backs of others has been grist for the mill. Large arguments have been made regarding our free riding in a demand for greater defence spending to achieve a minimal target of at least 2% of GDP and the ability within its economy to pay for it.⁷⁴⁹ And perhaps that this is where stability in Canadian defence policy lays, maintaining at or near 2% of GDP in which a consensus amongst all political parties is required. It would eliminate the dithering along the way and allow the Canadian Armed Forces to get on with its mission, the defence of Canada.

But there always has been a difficulty of operating under a Defence Budget Strategy of two percent of GDP. For Canada that strategy has always been linked to conditions of economic constraint. This strategy over time has unravelled as it was never affordable in its entirety over time. Given the change of national economic circumstances to which it is largely dependent upon in peace time, sustaining a two percent growth has always been exceedingly difficult. The lesson here lies in the necessity of strong economy and the building blocks that are available to do so. Ignoring the demands for Canadian energy, the world's thirst for Canadian LNG, oil, and energy, while promoting an unsustainable Green energy plan, without having one foot on the ground, is akin to shooting oneself in the foot, then taking aim for the other!

Defence simply has never had a high public priority and yet it should. It has been the sacrificial lamb upon the alters of economy and efficiency for the government's needs time and again. However, given the realities of life in the post-9/11 world, Afghanistan, and the current instability in the world, defence should not be an easy target choice, and yet it is. The problem lies in sustaining Canadian support for defence.⁷⁵⁰

The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War that provided the "constant" background to plan towards, ended all that. The singular threat was no more. The world seemed to be on a course to a broader peace and it was a matter of time for the declaration of a "Peace Dividend." Canada grabbed onto that and greatly reduced its defence spending, commitments, and size of its forces. This all led to a degradation of equipment that has neither being replaced in due course nor maintained effectively due to lack of funding, investment, or interest. Nor has Canada allowed its military to adjust to the required transformations.

Regardless, other ways and means were sought in maintaining Canadian relevance on the world stage. Hard power turned to soft power to do so. While Canadian Forces were reduced in size and number, there were increased obligations ostensibly for peace that led to the cycling of the same personnel on a reduced base over and over again to meet these growing demands. The impact too was greatly felt in equipment that was at the end of life cycles. Equipment was only kept alive on life support for extended periods. There was no buffer neither for pairs nor spares. The greatest suffering though was in personnel. It was directly felt either in the growing trends

⁷⁴⁹ Hartley, Keith, and Todd Sandler. 1995. *The Economics of Defence*. Cambridge University Press, The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, 19, and Hitch, Charles J. and Roland N MacKean. 1978. *The Economics of Defense in the Nuclear Age – A Rand Corporation Research Study*. Atheneum New York (Originally published by Harvard University Press, 1960), 281-307

⁷⁵⁰ Madigan 2010 "Canada First", 34

of increased exits or reduced enrolments. It extended well beyond impacting many mentally that ended in increased suicide rates from an overstressed workforce.

This began with the Decade of Darkness that preceded the next increase in operational tempo. The Peace Dividend masked a period of instability that saw an increase in terrorism and war that eventually stimulated world events in the wars in Iran/Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and beyond. It was 9/11 that crystallized the fact that war was a constant, but it was not war of geopolitical factors and state actors. But it became wars of ideologies, the unseemingly war of warped minds in which anything goes.

And herein lies the rub in the foundation of a policy of limiting liabilities or commitments. This policy disregards the obvious, kicks the can down the road, and does not support preparation in advance for times of conflict or instability. After all we tend to look the other way that war is the continuation of policy by another means when the time comes.⁷⁵¹ But it is in Canada's policy of deferral, that time and again, the means to fight war or its deterrence arrives far too late.

It is the legacy of Canadian policy that echoes far back as the Second World War that continues on to this day. It has been clearly evident in every purchase or commitment that Canada has made in procurement. A recent purchase of faulty, time expired, dilapidated F18s from Australia is a prime example. This was the government's panacea solution to solving the RCAF requirement for new aircraft. Canada has become a laughing stock by replacing one obsolete aircraft with another, and now is no longer taken seriously. No surprise when its defence investments are irrelevant.

No nation especially a small one can afford to sustain and deplete its treasury on its military and security requirements. It has always been a case of a fine balance of having just enough, just in time to meet an obligation or to meet an inherent or present danger. Some have said it has been a case of walking softly and carrying a big stick. It's the size of the stick that matters. The 21st century is one in which Canada sadly has lost its soul. Its policies are no longer as clearly defined as they were in the 20th century. To the world at large, because of its depleted armed forces and lack of clear foreign policies based in existential threats rather than reality, we are no longer relevant.⁷⁵²

All this stems in part from the lack of a balanced military and an affordable defence policy for a small nation. Where do we fit in a foreign policy that is no longer designed to fill some requirements in the greater picture of Allied military needs? Those needs have been overruled by existential demons of "climate change" amongst many seen as a threat to our existence in the once liberal, now illiberal, mind. Canada has forgone a once solid balanced path of managing policy needs and interests to its detriment.

⁷⁵¹ Clausewitz (Howard-Paret).1993. On War, 173-174,731

⁷⁵² Tumilty, Ryan. 2024. "Canada seen as an 'unserious player on the international stage,' says Chamber of Commerce CEO." National Post, 2 January 15, 2024

Source: [Canada seen as an 'unserious player on the international stage,' says Chamber of Commerce CEO \(msn.com\)](https://www.msn.com)

Accessed: 2 Jan 2024

The path to the future rests not in one where Canada contributes 2% of GDP to meet its security and defence needs. But surely that path is one of investments based on sound policies. It is a path whose results are evident, measurable, and expedited in timely rather than a generational fashion. It should be one based on personnel, procurement, and maintenance continually along the way that sustains some semblance of military capability desired and valued by our Allies. Now Canada is viewed as dead weight. Many of our Allies are willing to let Canada sink in the mire of its own making.⁷⁵³ And sadly, unless things change, and politics removed from the process, Canada is likely to descend further into the abyss of irrelevance. That is where the true risk comes to Canadian sovereignty and our continued existence as a nation.

It's not too late to rejig and redirect. The past is indeed prologue to the future for we have that example in the Pearson period. Here Canada had to make a choice of employing nuclear weapons as part of its military capability and alliance obligations. Canadians were not in favour of this at all. Caught on the horns of a dilemma, Canada chose to invest in non-nuclear capability and equipment and increased its forces overseas in Europe to fill the gaps on the ground in order to remain both relevant and to sustain its seat at the table as middle power. It was a fine balance of policy and investment that helped Canada remain relevant. It has been a corner stone of Defence policy that has been either forgotten or ignored.

The liberal election to power in 2015 has seen the military decline further into an abyss. Many important procurement decisions have either been delayed or deferred. Needed equipment has been replaced with broken and obsolete assets such as the F18 super hornet from Australia. Maintenance and training have declined all leading to an inability to support operations. Canada is no longer considered “useful” to its allies and many pundits have clearly stated that Canada has lost its bearings.⁷⁵⁴

John Manley, former deputy prime minister of Canada under the Chrétien government said:⁷⁵⁵

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“I feel that we have somehow lost our bearings. We weren't often the chair of some of these international organizations or the secretary general, but we were often the rapporteur or the second. We played key roles. If we held the pen, we could influence outcomes better than some of the sometimes chairs of the United Nations or other committees could do.”

⁷⁵³ Lilley, Brian. 2023. “LILLEY: Canada excluded from 'Quint' statement on Israel for a reason.” Toronto Sun, 10 October 2023

Source: [Canada's G7 and NATO allies excluded us from statement on Israel | Toronto Sun](#)

Accessed: 4 Dec 2023

⁷⁵⁴ Lévesque, Catherine. 2024. “Former Liberal foreign minister says Canada no longer 'useful' in world affairs: 'We...lost our bearings'.” National Post, 16 January 2024

Source: [Former Liberal foreign minister says Canada no longer 'useful' in world affairs: 'We...lost our bearings' \(msn.com\)](#)

⁷⁵⁵ Lévesque 2024

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The importance of a proper alignment of foreign policy and defence spending lies in finding ways of being useful. Canada's usefulness comes in ways and means of opening doors to talk with others that once were closed.. This sublime role has allowed Canada to be a valued middle power on the world stage. The fine balance allowed Canada to act as a bridge between belligerent countries that opened the doors to diplomacy.⁷⁵⁶

The value of Canadian diplomacy and intelligence extends as far back to the Great War and its aftermath.⁷⁵⁷ Little is known of the work of a Canadian, Winthrop Bell who behind the scenes, provided intelligence that guided British and Canadian policies in that war's aftermath. Bell was also the first person known to have warned against the Nazis rise and its intents. He did so on two occasions, the first in 1919 and then twenty years later in 1939.⁷⁵⁸

Bell's significance to the Canadian observer is this, you don't necessarily have to be all singing and dancing player to be powerful in order to be relevant. You do have to bring something of value to the table. Today Canada's influence has waned when in it is needed.

The times have been deeply divisive and complex in Canada today. The current Canadian government has strained relationships rather than build on them.⁷⁵⁹ Saner heads must prevail and perhaps its time for Canadian to consider that Canada needs to rebuild and invest both in diplomacy and in its military to take its proper seat at the table once again. This requires change but is the average Canadian willing to do so? Time will tell.

⁷⁵⁶ Lévesque 2024

⁷⁵⁷ Bell Jason. 2023. *Cracking The Nazi Code – The Untold Story Of Canada's Greatest Spy*. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower 22 Adelaide Street West, 41st Floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5H 4E3

⁷⁵⁸ Bell 2023. vii-viii

⁷⁵⁹ Lévesque 2024