



BUILDING A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Canada-US Relations
in the Eisenhower Era, 1953–61

Asa McKercher & Michael D. Stevenson

BUILDING A SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP

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*Canada-US Relations in the Eisenhower
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ASA McKERCHER AND
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To our families, with love

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FOREWORD

The C.D. Howe Series originated because there was a growing gap in the writing of Canadian political history, and over time the series has given a venue to historians writing in that part of the field. It is appropriate that this volume covers C.D. Howe's period in our history and that Howe himself figures prominently in its pages. At the time, Canadians were aware that they were living in a time of prosperity, and by the early 1960s – where this book also ends – younger Canadians took good economic times to be a new normal. Older Canadians, those who had grown up in the 1900s, 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, were less certain: ghosts of depression and war had been mitigated but possibly not banished forever. There were still remnants of the frugality caused by hard times and war in personal habits and nervousness among those who had lived differently or in less secure times necessitating that the good times had to be carefully husbanded. Even for the young, there was a current of fear that ran through the decade, with the atomic bomb and the possibility that the two main atomic powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, would fall into conflict by design or accident.

In the world of the 1950s, Canadians and Americans lived what one historian has dubbed “parallel lives.” With one notable difference – which we will come to in a moment – they shared the same culture, meaning that they ate the same food, wore the same clothes, lived in the same kinds of houses, listened to or watched the same radio or television stations, belonged to the same trade unions, and sang the same songs. If Minister

of External Affairs Lester Pearson visited his American counterpart, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, then there was a fair chance that the previous Sunday evening they had both watched *The Ed Sullivan Show* on television and could talk about how Sullivan had featured the Canadian comedy team of Wayne and Shuster before they got down to the questions of American oil quotas shutting out Canadian petroleum, or American agricultural subsidies undermining Canadian wheat sales, or the necessity to guard against the Soviet nuclear menace by installing radar fences across the Canadian north.

The notable difference, of course, was that Canada was a country of two languages, French and English, whereas the United States in those days had only one, English. The government of Louis St. Laurent was unusual in that it did not pay a vast amount of attention to “the French fact.” Of course, one French fact was that the prime minister was a francophone from Quebec – though he spoke English perfectly, thanks to an Irish Canadian mother. The succeeding government of John Diefenbaker did not have even the fig leaf of a French head of government, and Diefenbaker spoke only English. Not surprisingly, the French fact began to stir under his government. Diefenbaker was far from alone among his compatriots. One American diplomat stationed in Ottawa commented many years later that what some English Canadians said about their French fellow citizens reminded him of the American south. The Canadian attitude of “holier than thou” he found alternately amusing and irritating and always unconsciously ironic.

The meetings between Pearson and Dulles were not always cordial or pleasant. Dulles could be abrasive, and he had the confidence bred into a wealthy and patrician background. He was, after all, not the only secretary of state in his family. His grandfather in the 1880s and his uncle in the 1910s had preceded him in the office. His brother was the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and his sister was an officer in his own State Department – though, in an age that discriminated against women as a matter of course, she never became an ambassador. But after hours, Pearson sometimes found a different Dulles, remarking once that dinner at his house had been remarkably civilized and that the secretary had a good wine cellar.

Pearson and his department were not the only Canadians involved in relations with the Americans. C.D. Howe, the minister of trade and

commerce (and American born and educated), handled trade matters. Howe had become a firm Canadian nationalist, but in dealing with the Americans he was well aware that his American pedigree, especially in his choice of universities, was as good as theirs. He once reduced the American secretary of agriculture, a godly man, to apoplexy when he called American undercutting of Canadian trade “iniquitous.” The American was unused to hearing his policies described as evil, but it was one of the things that he had to get used to with Howe. Canadians and Americans might be similar, might even be friends, were definitely allies, but the Canadians had the reputation in Washington of being very tough negotiators, who often prevailed in matters of detail over their American counterparts, who had to worry about both Communist China and capitalist Canada and often were unprepared for the Canadian style of diplomacy.

Readers will find that this volume fills in much of the detail in Canadian-American relations, and in that sense it is a very Canadian book, looking back to the content and fitting into the style of the period. We thus commend it to what we hope will be its many readers.

JOHN R. ENGLISH AND ROBERT BOTHWELL

The C.D. Howe Series on Canadian Political History is supported by a grant from the C.D. Howe Memorial Foundation. The grant was given to promote greater research and publications on Canada’s political history. The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History also supports this series, which has already published important biographies and analytical studies that have attracted academic and popular interest.

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This project began as separate conversations that each of us had with Greg Donaghy about the need for more attention to the history of Canada-US relations in the 1950s. Greg hit on the idea of a joint effort among the three of us: a monograph examining the Eisenhower administration's dealings with Canada and a symposium leading to an edited collection in which contributors would take a broader view of Canadian interactions with the United States in this period. We secured a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and began both our research and the planning for a symposium to be held at the University of Toronto in May 2020. But the COVID-19 pandemic intervened. Then, suddenly, Greg died. This tragic loss did not deter us from seeing our joint projects through. The symposium was held a year late and over Zoom. And the resulting collection – *North of America: Canadians and the American Century, 1945–60* – was published by UBC Press in 2023. It was dedicated to Greg. A scholar, friend, and mensch, he also provided much of the inspiration behind this second book that now rests in your hands.

Building a Special Relationship is the result of the efforts of more than just us two. As any historian can attest, our research was not possible without the help of the expert staff at a wide range of archives: Library and Archives Canada; the National Archives and Records Administration; the Directorate of History and Heritage at the Department of National Defence; the Hoover Institution; the Library of Congress; the Seeley G. Mudd

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Manuscript Library at Princeton University; the Massachusetts Historical Society; Queen's University Archives; the John George Diefenbaker Archives; the National Archives of the United Kingdom; the City of Vancouver Archives; the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library; and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. The last two institutions also provided invaluable support via research grants. We also benefited from the financial assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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Our appreciation goes to our respective families. Michael thanks Roberta for her continued support. Asa thanks his rogues' gallery of loved ones: Kendall, Calvin, and Harriet. We dedicate this book to you.

BUILDING A SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

On a snowy, windswept day in January 1946, Canadians welcomed General Dwight Eisenhower on a tour of victory. Fresh from orchestrating the successful Allied defeat of the European Axis powers, the general stepped off his train in Ottawa to cheering crowds who gathered in spite of the weather. The short route from Union Station to the Parliament Buildings was lined by uniformed servicepeople, many of them having just fought under Ike's command. Spending several days in Canada's capital, Eisenhower dined privately with Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, laid a wreath at the National War Memorial, conferred with senior Canadian officers regarding future military cooperation, and attended a ball at Rideau Hall, the governor general's residence. Leaving Ottawa – one reporter noted that the general could add the city to “his list of victories” – Eisenhower travelled to Toronto, where he received a similarly “tumultuous welcome” complete with a tickertape parade.¹ Perhaps the highlight of his Canadian visit came when King announced that Castle Mountain, near Banff, would be renamed Mount Eisenhower, a testament to the general's “steadfastness and the security of his leadership.” In response, Ike quipped that the peak was no doubt as bald as his head. More seriously, in a speech delivered in Ottawa, he paid “humble tribute” to the service and sacrifice of the hundreds of thousands of “my Canadians” who had fought alongside American servicepeople in the recent conflict. Going on to praise the close wartime collaboration between Canada and the United States, the general emphasized that “the necessity for cooperation

has not passed.”² These comments were widely reported in the Canadian press, and Ike’s call for continued peacetime collaboration was met with agreement. The *Montreal Gazette’s* editors contended, for instance, that in terms of Canadian-American relations, the general’s tour was an important step in helping to “bind still closer, on a more assuredly permanent basis, the integration of common purposes, of action and of resources achieved during the war.”³

Such warm sentiments were widely held and not just among the political class. Beyond the crowds that greeted Eisenhower, local businesses in Ottawa took out advertisements welcoming him as a “soldier of democracy,” a “beloved commander-in-chief,” and a “distinguished good neighbour.” Birks Jewellers praised the visit as “another gesture that is further evidence of the good-will existing between neighboring countries.”⁴ Newspaper editorial boards likewise celebrated his leadership of the wartime alliance, which had showcased “his ready co-operativeness” and “his international spirit,” and there was hope that, as the world moved on from the war, Eisenhower would go on “to exercise a political influence no less valuable than his services in battle.”⁵ It helped that in his public comments the general was careful to downplay his own achievements and praise the Canadian military’s accomplishments. After several meetings with the general, including tea at Laurier House, King was impressed with Eisenhower, dubbing him a “representative of what is most manly in the character of the American citizen.” Privately, the prime minister mused that Eisenhower would make an excellent pick for UN secretary general.⁶ These warm feelings for the decorated guest, who embodied notions of steady leadership and international cooperation, reflected positive judgments about the United States. At a press conference alongside the general, King announced that he intended the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) – formed in 1940 to coordinate joint continental defence efforts – to be permanent, indeed.⁷ For some observers then and since, creation of the PJBD marked a historical shift in Canadian alignment from Britain toward the United States.⁸ Its continuance into the postwar era seemingly entrenched this development.

When Eisenhower next returned to Ottawa, it was in January 1951, and he was serving as the supreme Allied commander in Europe, the military head of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Taking part in

brief ceremonial functions in Canada, he focused on meetings with Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, senior Canadian officers, and other government officials at what was the conclusion of a consultation tour that had taken him to the capital of each NATO member, what one Canadian newspaper described as “the most significant military reconnaissance in history.”⁹ In the five years since his previous trip to Canada’s capital, international and ideological enmities in Europe had hardened, and the Cold War had spread to Asia. Canada and the United States had worked together to confront these challenges jointly or collectively with other states, including through military intervention in Korea and the founding of the NATO alliance. However, the Korean stalemate, the supposed loss of China to communism, and the end of the American nuclear monopoly raised doubts about US leadership. Cognizant of this concern, Eisenhower gave the Cabinet Defence Committee what one Canadian diplomat called a “pep talk.” With Ottawa considering the deployment of military forces to Western Europe, the general praised “the value of practical gestures” to demonstrate the North American commitment to NATO and emphasized “the essential importance of restoring the morale of Western European members of the Alliance.”¹⁰ The Canadian government soon deployed ground and air units to Europe, where they would remain, in varying form, until the 1990s.

Eisenhower came back to Canada in November 1953, this time as president of the United States. A further official visit would follow in 1958, though there were other meetings with Canadian leaders elsewhere, from the White House to the Augusta National Golf Course. Throughout his presidency, which ended in January 1961, the former general led his country – and the Western alliance – through a tense period marked by Cold War crises and by anticolonial upheaval in what was then called the Third World. There was a buildup of nuclear forces, part of a wider military expansion that occurred amid years of unbridled free enterprise and relative prosperity after decades of depression and total war. It was Eisenhower himself who, as he left office, decried the influence of the so-called military-industrial complex. The “Age of Eisenhower,” as one historian recently labelled it, was among the most “consequential” periods in recent American history even as it has largely been overlooked by historians interested in other eras.¹¹ This period was an important one, too, both for Canada and for Canadian-American relations.

In *Building a Special Relationship*, we examine the Canada-US relationship during the Eisenhower era, exploring how the United States worked with the successive Canadian governments of Louis St. Laurent and John Diefenbaker to cement cooperative bilateral ties that endure to this day. As our title indicates, the years 1953 to 1961 saw the building of a “special relationship” between the two governments. The special nature of this relationship centred around a common outlook on both the management of cross-border ties and responses to issues beyond North America. While Canadian and American officials engaged each other in tough negotiations in defence of their respective interests, they also purposefully worked toward finding consensus, avoiding punitive measures, and advancing common goals. During the Eisenhower era, the paramount goals for policy makers in Ottawa and Washington were – to use the parlance of the time – the containment of Soviet totalitarianism, the advancement of freedom, and the protection of free enterprise.

With this North American consensus came a suite of formal and informal institutions and arrangements in the realms of trade, intelligence, and defence which, collectively, were characterized as forming the basis of the special relationship between the two countries. The term “special relationship” is both overused and commonly invoked to describe a number of relationships between the United States and other countries (notably Israel and the United Kingdom) with whom the Americans have similar arrangements – or who have pretensions about the unique nature of their ties to the Western superpower.¹² Nonetheless, throughout the Eisenhower era the term was employed by both Canadian and American figures, who very much saw that they were building such a relationship between Canada and the United States. So, far from being artificial or an anachronism, “special relationship” was *au courant* in the 1950s and encapsulates the ties linking both countries.¹³

Throughout the Eisenhower years, politicians and officials on both sides of the border diligently tackled long-standing irritants stemming from rapid economic change and global political instability. Existing channels of negotiation between Washington and Ottawa were augmented by new consultative mechanisms that frequently proved to be effective in ensuring the smooth functioning of cross-border relations. To be certain, significant policy differences emerged in the conduct of external relations between

the two nations. The Eisenhower administration vigorously asserted its authority as the economic and military leader of the Western alliance to champion courses of action that frequently aggravated the St. Laurent and Diefenbaker governments. These successive federal governments similarly sought to protect and advance their own economic interests against the backdrop of increasing nationalist sentiment in Canada while often attempting to support its southern ally. Above all, Canadian officials worried about the potential for nuclear conflict and sought means both to defend North America and to temper perceived American belligerence. Ultimately, Canada and the United States worked successfully toward finding consensus on a wide range of major policy initiatives that set the stage for further progress in Canadian-American relations after Eisenhower left office in January 1961.

Eisenhower's two terms in the White House were marked by the convergence of interests with the St. Laurent and Diefenbaker governments in key fields. These years witnessed the continued expansion of trade between the two countries in a host of products, from agricultural commodities to natural resources to manufactured goods. Between 1953 and 1960, Canada's annual exports to the United States increased from \$2.4 billion to \$2.9 billion, and the value of American exports to Canada increased from \$3.1 billion to \$3.7 billion.¹⁴ In 1960, the United States accounted for nearly 56 percent of all Canadian exports and more than 67 percent of all Canadian imports, and Canada was the largest single trading partner of the United States, accounting for more than 18 percent of exports and nearly 20 percent of imports.¹⁵ The magnitude of these bilateral trade figures was matched by cross-border investment flows. Between 1953 and 1960, nonresident direct and portfolio investment in Canada increased from nearly \$11.5 billion to more than \$22.2 billion, with the United States accounting for a minimum of more than 75 percent of this value throughout the Eisenhower years.¹⁶ American investment played a particularly important role in development of the Canadian petroleum, mining, and financial sectors. Investment flows, though, were not unidirectional. Canadians invested heavily in the American economy in this period and in 1960 provided more than \$1.9 billion of capital to their southern neighbours – nearly 28 percent of all foreign direct investment in the United States in that year.¹⁷

In addition to managing trade and investment across the border, Ottawa and Washington handled a host of critical policy files addressing other continental concerns. Boundary waters negotiations engaged senior officials continuously and resulted in well-publicized agreements involving hydroelectric development and navigation improvements on the St. Lawrence and Columbia Rivers. But much-lesser-known diplomatic initiatives in this area also involved prime ministerial intervention and witnessed Canada's ambassador in Washington making the "unusual and, strictly speaking, improper" effort to lobby US senators directly on Capitol Hill to vote against American legislative proposals to divert water from Lake Michigan into the Mississippi River basin.¹⁸ Continental defence cooperation also increased markedly between 1953 and 1961. Radar stations funded and operated by US personnel pushed ever farther into the Canadian north to detect anticipated incursions of Soviet bombers over the pole, and various agreements governing overflights of US aircraft in Canada's skies and weapons storage provisions at leased bases in Newfoundland and Labrador were implemented or contemplated. The operational integration of United States Air Force (USAF) and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) units under the umbrella of the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) in 1957 guaranteed that Washington's calls for enhanced continental security would reverberate in the corridors of political and military power in Ottawa. Indeed, in the years immediately following NORAD's implementation, American officials noted "considerable sentiment" within elements of Diefenbaker's government that Canada was "becoming inextricably involved with United States defence arrangements on a piecemeal basis without a very clear understanding of where it is all leading to."¹⁹ This concern would be most evident in Ottawa's vacillation on acceding to American requests to equip Canadian defence forces with nuclear weapons, an issue that exploded publicly in 1963, bringing down Diefenbaker's government.

Beyond North American borders, during the Eisenhower years, American and Canadian interests both intersected and clashed and frequently reflected the broader ideological position adopted by the West. In Asia, Canada warily supported American efforts to confront the People's Republic of China during successive crises in the Taiwan Strait, and Ottawa proved to be a reliable if cautious ally as the Western member on supervision and

control commissions in Indochina in the aftermath of the Geneva Accords in 1954. But serious differences developed over Washington's insistence on maintaining a rigid trade embargo against Beijing and eventually required the Eisenhower administration to ignore breaches of American law involving extraterritorial jurisdiction over subsidiary firms operating in Canada. Officials in Ottawa also looked askance at the US refusal to recognize the communist regime in Beijing. Later the Diefenbaker government would also adopt a different course from that of the Eisenhower administration over relations with revolutionary Cuba.

At the same time, within NATO, Canada remained a faithful supporter of collective security efforts in Europe and lobbied for increased economic cooperation among its allies. Ottawa also supported NATO efforts dealing with the seemingly intractable problem of Berlin and encouraged the summit (ultimately stillborn) of the four nuclear powers scheduled in May 1960. At the United Nations, Canadian and American officials were engaged in several key policy files ranging from disarmament to codification of the law of the sea. And the UN machinery proved to be indispensable in resolving sequential crises in the Middle East. In particular, the St. Laurent government strongly supported Washington's aggressive response to Anglo-French collaboration with Israel during the Suez Crisis in 1956, and Lester B. Pearson brokered an end to the emergency despite opposition criticism of Canada's role as the Eisenhower administration's "chore boy" in betraying British and French interests.²⁰ Although Pearson had worked with American diplomats, his action – which earned him a Nobel Peace Prize – would become mythologized as a shining moment of independent Canadian action on the world stage.

Despite the clear importance and vitality of Canada-US relations during the Eisenhower period, historians have hesitated to provide an overarching interpretation of bilateral dealings during this period. Rather, scholars have focused on the dramatic history of the immediate postwar and early Cold War eras, frequently reducing the Eisenhower years to an annex or dealing with it in piecemeal fashion.²¹ Alternatively, anticipating John F. Kennedy's poor relations with Diefenbaker and Prime Minister Pearson's complex interactions with his American counterparts from 1963 to 1968, academics have frequently treated the 1950s as a prelude to the real history to come in the 1960s while thoroughly analyzing Washington's relationship with

Ottawa during the Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations.²² General treatments of bilateral relations in the aftermath of the Second World War also tend to concentrate on the outsized personality of Diefenbaker while he helmed the Canadian government beginning in 1957 and to downplay the Eisenhower administration's interactions with the St. Laurent government.²³ In these works, the Eisenhower era is often characterized by its humdrum conformity to the rules of a rapidly developing consumer society in which Canadians and Americans lived, in Robert Bothwell's phrase, "parallel lives."²⁴ Broader histories of Canadian foreign policy identify flashpoints in the Canada-US relationship in the 1950s without analyzing the specific overall impact of the Eisenhower years on the managing of bilateral relations or tracing the more cooperative aspects of this relationship.²⁵ And, perhaps predictably, Canada does not feature prominently in the analysis of US foreign policy on a global scale, with William Hitchcock's influential *The Age of Eisenhower*, for example, containing a single passing reference to Canada while discussing the role of the Canadian UN delegation in addressing the Suez Crisis.²⁶ Nor is there much focus on American perspectives of the Canada-US relationship, an oversight not unique to the 1950s.

Specialized studies analyzing distinct elements of the Canada-US relationship tend to focus on the Canadian perspective, instead of providing an even treatment of the views of Ottawa and Washington, while glossing over fundamental features of bilateral diplomacy during the Eisenhower era – in effect, the building of the North American consensus. Frequently, the formation of the Diefenbaker government is treated as the starting or ending point of inquiry. In economic and trade matters, Canadian scholars emphasize the endurance of the special relationship between Canada and the United States for the three decades following the end of the Second World War. For instance, Bruce Muirhead notes that, following the Progressive Conservative election victory in 1957, "official Ottawa was self-assured, deliberate, and very conscious of its responsibilities" when dealing with its southern neighbour before the economic malaise of the mid-1970s set in.²⁷ Continental natural resource development strategies and environmental diplomacy have also assumed prominence in the academic literature without focusing on specific prominent themes during the period 1953–61 or by providing microlevel analysis largely divorced from high diplomacy

between Ottawa and Washington.²⁸ And, though defence relations have remained a long-standing priority for scholars of Canadian-American relations in the 1950s and 1960s, the approach has often been disjointed. Major studies of continental air defence in North America privilege the creation of NORAD in 1957 as the point of departure or focus on the early years of more informal cooperation in joint air defence.²⁹ Similarly, the question of nuclear weapons within the continental defence umbrella focuses primarily on the Diefenbaker period and the eventual breakdown in political relations between Canada and the United States over Canada's refusal to acquire nuclear warheads for Canadian forces.³⁰

Building a Special Relationship challenges these traditional interpretations of Canadian-American relations and remedies the lack of analysis of the Eisenhower administration's policies affecting Canada by delving deeply into efforts by actors in both Washington and Ottawa to manage an increasing array of bilateral linkages while also addressing pressing international issues and crises. On both sides of the border, national economic, political, and cultural imperatives flourished, often dividing the two nations. Growing Canadian nationalism challenged the relaxed defence arrangements of the immediate postwar period, and Canadians demanded a greater voice in their economic and cultural futures, bewildering Americans with contradictory pressures for an integrated energy market and more distinct cultural policies.³¹ Americans had their own economic priorities to pursue during the later 1950s. Moreover, US policy makers chafed at what they saw as the excessively cautious and limited strategic vision of their North American ally as decolonization and Soviet notions of competitive coexistence turned the Cold War global.³² Struggling to understand these national differences and competing strategic outlooks and building an institutional framework to contain them became the hallmarks of Canada-US relations between 1953 and 1961. Indeed, tolerant accommodation defined bilateral relations until the end of the Cold War. Neither prelude nor annex, the Eisenhower years were a turning point for the consolidation of the special relationship between Washington and Ottawa, the building of the North American consensus that prevailed for decades to come.

The actions and personalities of politicians and senior officials fuelled this enhanced bilateral relationship, none more so than the president. As the supreme Allied commander in Europe during the Second World War,

Eisenhower proved to be a deft diplomat, managing prickly characters such as rival generals Bernard Montgomery and George S. Patton and French leader Charles de Gaulle. The experience left him with one unassailable rule: “Don’t pick fights with members of your own team.”³³ Eisenhower continued to use these skills as president. His attitude reflected a fundamental belief in the importance of having and maintaining alliances as a key element of American strength. In the midst of a heated debate with his advisers over whether to launch a military intervention in Indochina despite opposition from Canada and other friendly countries, Eisenhower replied to the argument that the United States had to act because it had leadership thrust on it by emphasizing that to him “the concept of leadership implied associates. Without allies and associates the leader is just an adventurer like Genghis Khan.”³⁴ In a period of preponderant American power amid a global Cold War, he took seriously the notion that he was leader – as Canadian newspapers put it after his inauguration in 1953 – of the “whole free world.” While bearing a “heavy burden,” Eisenhower also carried “the good will of all free men.”³⁵

In terms of Canada-US relations in the Eisenhower era, contact between the president and his two Canadian counterparts became a prominent feature, and the cordial association that the president developed with St. Laurent was heightened during his dealings with Diefenbaker after the election in June 1957 removed the Liberal Party from office. As his second term in office progressed, Eisenhower developed an increasingly pronounced personal interest in Canadian affairs that witnessed him frequently commenting on the state of bilateral relations – both their positive and their negative features. Overall, he was convinced of the central importance of good relations with Canada. In 1957, he remarked to Canada’s ambassador in Washington that there were some bilateral difficulties that he found “worrying” because “if our two countries could not work together in confidence and understanding there would be precious little hope of international cooperation anywhere in the world.” It was his long-time “private philosophy,” he added, which “his experience as wartime commander in chief had confirmed ... that the USA must always work first with Canada and secondly with the UK, and only after that with other countries. These primary relationships were basic to the successful working of larger international institutions, including the UN and NATO.”³⁶ Two years later, at a press conference alongside Prime Minister of

Britain Harold Macmillan, Eisenhower, unprompted by reporters, was eloquent about his affection for Canada: “Here is a border more than 3,000 miles long that’s defended by nothing but friendship. There is not a gun or fort along it. This is the kind of thing that I think we must all strive to achieve, whether we are geographical neighbors or not.”³⁷ Saccharine sentiments perhaps, but they set a tone for cooperative relations and reflected a positive outlook by the president. As he later put it in his memoirs, “I knew that, because of the comparative size of our two nations, our Canadian friends sometimes suspected us of arrogance,” a deft observation.³⁸

Cabinet ministers and secretaries similarly played a vital role in the conduct of external affairs between Canada and the United States. During the St. Laurent government, Lester Pearson and John Foster Dulles carefully managed the intricacies of bilateral affairs. An irascible character, Dulles himself had long experience with Canada, having grown up in Watertown, New York, a border town, and owning a cottage on Duck Island, on the Canadian side of Lake Ontario near Kingston. For his part, Pearson was an internationally renowned diplomat, able to parlay his reputation and skills to boost Canadian influence in Washington and elsewhere. But an element of uncertainty unquestionably crept into foreign relations channels following Dulles’s death in 1959 and the selection of two inexperienced Canadian secretaries of state for external affairs by Diefenbaker. The prime minister’s second appointee – Howard Green – proved to be a particularly determined guardian of Canada’s national interests who lacked Pearson’s clout and frequently and openly challenged the Eisenhower administration’s designs. Ambassadors in Ottawa and Washington were prominent proponents of the merits of policies formulated by their respective governments. Indeed, R. Douglas Stuart and Livingston Merchant on the American side and Arnold Heeny and Norman Robertson on the Canadian side were among the most gifted diplomats that either country has ever produced, and they played a critical role in bilateral negotiations resolving thorny issues or in forcefully protesting the actions of an opposing government. And a host of deputy ministers, personal advisers, desk officers, and policy specialists sprinkled throughout the American and Canadian civil service bureaucracies provided indispensable advice regarding the virtues or demerits of cross-border initiatives or responses to international occurrences.

These individuals working at all levels of the diplomatic hierarchy operated within a structural framework conducive to tackling important bilateral matters. Heads of government summits effectively addressed pressing concerns and served an important ceremonial function either through carefully stage-managed official visits or via informal consultations frequently related to attendance at international meetings. Both countries worked assiduously through NATO and UN channels to attempt to maintain a common Cold War posture against the Soviet threat even as serious differences frequently emerged between Ottawa and Washington on a range of critical questions, including disarmament, the role of smaller countries within the Western alliance, and the willingness of the Eisenhower administration to circumvent trading norms established through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Long-standing consultative agencies proved to be indispensable in crafting solutions to cross-border concerns. In military matters, the PJBD established during the Second World War remained the key agency reviewing continental defence initiatives, and in economic affairs the venerable International Joint Commission (IJC) played a crucial role in solving complex water resource questions. The established systems that predated Eisenhower's election victory in 1952 were augmented by important high-level boards created between 1953 and 1961. Intergovernmental meetings of consultation allowed senior civil servants and military officials to exchange information on critical defence matters. And two ministerial committees were established at Ottawa's request to ensure enhanced political consideration of contentious cross-border military and economic questions.

Our book provides a comprehensive analysis of the interaction of people and diplomatic structures to gain a full picture of Canada-US relations during the Eisenhower administration.³⁹ The first three chapters of *Building a Special Relationship* examine Washington's interactions with the St. Laurent government; the latter three look at dealings with Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives. As we show, both nations lobbied to protect and expand their economic interests in this period. Frequently, as the much less populous nation in the partnership, Canada found itself at a disadvantage when confronted with aggressive trade policies emanating from Washington. Nonetheless, Ottawa enjoyed considerable success in securing concessions in commercial matters as the 1950s progressed, and

governments in both countries expressed satisfaction with their economic interactions, particularly during the Diefenbaker period. Cold War defence matters and involvement in foreign crises proved to be more contentious, understandably so given the stakes. Aggressive efforts by Washington to project American military power around the world were often opposed by the St. Laurent and Diefenbaker governments, which were concerned with the long-term implications of a more robust military posture and sought to accommodate an increasing suspicion of US motives within elements of the Canadian population. Despite these strains, the close and deepening alliance between Canada and the United States remained vibrant, as did the economic ties between both countries, a testament to the bilateral consensus and special relationship cemented in this era.

RETHINKING CANADA-US ECONOMIC COOPERATION, 1953–57

Frank Tinker was clearly upset when he left Toronto in late 1954. “I’m leaving Canada,” the departing US vice-consul wrote, “and I’m glad.” His two-year assignment done, the diplomat packed his bags, weary of Toronto’s “spiteful and hostile atmosphere.” In the pages of *Maclean’s* magazine, he complained of the “childish spite” that passed for Canadian patriotism and of his daily encounters with either “a truculent, smugly, anti-American editorial or a twisted headline.”¹ Canadian popular attitudes toward the United States had shifted during Tinker’s brief posting, growing steadily more critical in the two years since the election of Republican President Dwight Eisenhower on 4 November 1952. Canadians admired the genial Eisenhower but recoiled from the scandalous red-baiting tactics employed by the anticommunist crusaders associated with Republican Senator Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin and Vice-President Richard Nixon. They were nervous, too, about Washington’s new resolve to be more aggressive in confronting its Cold War adversaries, and they fretted about the growing US military presence in the vast Canadian north, where American defence planners peered over the polar horizon at the Soviet foe.

Most importantly, Canadians worried about bilateral economic relations. Although sometimes uneasy about the postwar surge in US investment in Canada, in 1952–53 they worried mostly about the rising tide of Republican protectionism that threatened the export markets on which Canada’s postwar resource boom depended. Consequently, as Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent’s Liberal government prepared to face a Republican White

House for the first time in a generation, economic diplomacy emerged as its top priority. Diplomats and politicians in Ottawa urged stronger US support for a liberal, rules-based, multilateral trading system. Scrambling to contain the impact of US protectionism on Canadian trade, they waited patiently as Eisenhower determined his foreign economic policies. Although sympathetic to Canadian aspirations, his White House ultimately proved to be unable and unwilling to provide the kind of liberal global leadership that Canada wanted and needed. Coming to terms with this unhappy fact divided cabinet, isolated Canada at GATT, and ultimately encouraged Ottawa to start reimagining a different North American partnership. Despite their differences and even as they maintained tough positions during negotiations, Canadian and American officials tried their best to ameliorate economic problems, avoiding punitive actions against one another's economy and ensuring the cross-border flow of goods, people, and investment.

Eisenhower's election win in 1952 left Liberal Ottawa uneasy. Canadians liked Eisenhower, whose stints as a Second World War and NATO commander were widely praised. "There is admiration for one of the great figures of this era," the *Globe and Mail* enthused a year after his election. "There is affection for a man of good heart and good-will, a selfless and incorruptible man."² His "informality, sincerity, and humour" also impressed Canada's diplomats, who described the president as "uniformly friendly," leaving no "doubt that his sentiments of friendship for Canada and Canadians were as sincere as their expression was unaffected."³

Yet the influence of the Republican Party's right wing deeply disturbed many Canadian observers. Eisenhower's partisan vote-getting and his late campaign promise to visit Korea in search of peace appalled Canada's most influential journalist, Bruce Hutchison, who called them "the sleaziest and most dangerous roorback ever."⁴ Divisive Republican policies, warned one Toronto professor, "were no less menacing than the Red Army divisions that stood on the Elbe."⁵ The changes in the White House were especially worrying, since twenty years of Democratic government had left Canada without close contacts with the new administration. "A Republican victory," the veteran Canadian ambassador in Washington, Hume Wrong, told friends, "might well be disastrous."⁶ Eisenhower, at least, was from the wing of the Republican Party that supported NATO, the United Nations, and

the general thrust of American postwar foreign policy, so he had been the preferred option to Robert Taft, a staunch isolationist. Following Ike's victory, Wrong assumed that there were likely to be some "alterations of pace and emphasis" in foreign policy but that little would change overall. An unnamed Canadian official told veteran reporter Blair Fraser that any "gloom" felt about the first Republican administration in two decades was outweighed by a faith that Eisenhower was "firmly committed to the ideal of international co-operation."⁷

Over the first months of 1953, Canadian policy makers hurried to Washington to establish their Republican connections. External affairs minister Lester B. Pearson, who had known John Foster Dulles, the new US secretary of state, since the mid-1940s, snuck into town in mid-February for an informal meeting at Wrong's residence, far away from the prying press. Minister of Defence Brooke Claxton followed in March, securing an early audience with the top brass at the Pentagon. Plans were made to ease Wrong out as well. Closely identified with Democratic Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Wrong had spent eighteen of the previous twenty-five years in the US capital and, by his own admission, had become "stale."⁸ He was replaced by Arnold Heeney, a veteran Ottawa mandarin with experience as clerk of the Privy Council, undersecretary of state for external affairs, and ambassador to NATO. Renowned for his administrative rather than policy-making skills, Heeney had campaigned hard for the job. His strong pro-American outlook – he thought that close relations with the United States were Canada's "most precious international asset" – was partially offset by a nuanced characterization of US officials as "generous, charming, and often frightening."⁹ He arrived in Washington armed with a mandate from Pearson to "get in with the new crowd."¹⁰

Most importantly, Prime Minister St. Laurent, who prized personal diplomacy, energetically lobbied the White House and local US diplomats for an early meeting with Eisenhower.¹¹ A political veteran who had held the justice and external affairs portfolios before becoming prime minister in 1948, St. Laurent enjoyed foreign policy and had clear views on its conduct. Like his mentor, William Lyon Mackenzie King, he was a liberal in the British reformist tradition, and he valued political liberty, the rule of law, and free trade.¹² Unlike King, he was quick to acknowledge the implications of postwar global instability and the Cold War, becoming an enthusiastic

champion of both the United Nations and NATO as well as a supporter of increased defence spending and military cooperation with the United States.

St. Laurent believed that people and leaders the world over were basically alike, and he deployed his folksy charm to cultivate warm relations with his diplomatic interlocutors. "Our Prime Minister exudes friendliness and simplicity and those attributes bring an immediate response on the part of those he meets," observed one Canadian diplomat of the prime minister's style. "He makes it clear that he has no exaggerated idea of his own importance nor the importance of Canada and reduces contact to a common level where formality goes out the window and an atmosphere of friendliness and ease prevails."¹³ Serving as Canada's secretary of state for external affairs from 1946 to 1948, St. Laurent had voiced the need for Canada to adopt a more outwardly focused foreign policy, one that, though still respecting the country's relative size vis-à-vis the great powers, nonetheless would see a "willingness to accept international responsibilities."¹⁴ Although later there was much mythmaking about a so-called golden age of Canadian foreign policy under St. Laurent (both as foreign minister and then as prime minister), Canada did rise in relative importance and influence in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Certainly, foreign governments liked what they saw in St. Laurent. Australian High Commissioner Sir Douglas Copeland judged the prime minister "by far the most astute and dignified politician in the North American Continent, and certainly among the first three or four in the world."¹⁵ Like many observers, Copeland's British colleagues admired St. Laurent's "courage" and "bold forthright manner," recalling especially his support for wartime conscription in 1942 and 1944 – unpopular in his home province of Quebec – a memory that lingered into the 1950s.¹⁶ American observers were equally impressed, highlighting St. Laurent's "clear mind and great integrity, almost courtly manner, [and he] is an accomplished raconteur, witty." Official Washington was perhaps most appreciative of his "practical insight into world problems."¹⁷

Eisenhower granted St. Laurent a date in early May. There was much for the two leaders to discuss. Across three broad fronts, bilateral Cold War defence questions were growing more complex and costly by the day. In response to US pressure in the summer of 1950, Canada had sent a brigade

to Korea, where it unhappily remained, bogged down alongside US and UN troops, in a deadly stalemate with communist North Korea and China. Canadian forces, a brigade and several squadrons of fighters, had returned to Europe too, part of Canada's contribution to the US-led defence of Western Europe against Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union. And in late 1951, a third front opened in North America as the United States pushed into northern Canada, staking out territory for continental air defence. Even as Eisenhower settled into office, Canadian officials and politicians were working their way through a substantial list of US desiderata that included requests to add nine radar stations to the Pinetree Line; to build the first experimental radar stations – of possibly forty – for the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line across the high Arctic; to construct and staff airstrips on Ellesmere and Baffin islands; and to erect radar stations at Alert, Eureka, and Resolute, each staffed by approximately 200 US troops.¹⁸

The sprawling defence commitment, especially its North American component, worried Ottawa. When Washington pressed for urgent permission in late January 1953 to begin work on a handful of experimental radar stations testing the DEW Line's effectiveness, Canada hesitated. The American invasion of the Arctic promised to overwhelm the tiny Canadian presence. "An increase in US activity in the Arctic," Pearson and St. Laurent warned cabinet, "would present risks of misunderstandings, incidents and infringements on the exercise of Canadian sovereignty."¹⁹ Claxton and General Andrew McNaughton, Canadian chairman of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, doubted that the US system would work and were fearful of being "stampeded" into sharing responsibility for a project likely to cost well over \$200 million. Moreover, the prime minister himself was skeptical of Canada's capacity to assume this burden while maintaining forces in Korea and Europe. What, wondered St. Laurent on the eve of his visit to Washington, were US defence priorities for Canada?

US foreign policy was also top of mind in Ottawa. During the election campaign, Dulles, the Republican Party's leading foreign policy spokesman, had tilted right, abandoning his earlier bipartisanship and denouncing Democratic Cold War policies as "negative, futile, and immoral."²⁰ Promising to roll back communism in Eastern Europe, he declared that the United States would "strike back where it hurts, by means of our own choosing."²¹ What this meant exactly was unclear, but the early evidence was not

encouraging. Pearson was dismayed by Dulles's first clumsy efforts in early 1953 to make continued US economic aid to Europe contingent on speedy European rearmament. He dismissed US policy privately as "mere gauche-rie or blackmail."²² Pearson said nothing in public either when Eisenhower withdrew US naval forces from the Taiwan Strait in February 1953, freeing Nationalist Chinese forces to harass Communist China. But he sure worried in private. "Ike may not be able to control the situation," he told friends. "Having said A, he might have to say B and so on through the alphabet towards a large Asiatic war."²³

Reassurance was thin on the ground. Change was coming, Dulles had told Pearson at their February meeting in Washington, insisting that the United States "was determined not to leave the initiative in the Cold War to the Soviet Union." Dulles promised "to create situations which would worry the Kremlin," explained why the United States would be less inclined to consult its allies, and identified distant Indochina as the world's "most critical point." With wry understatement, Pearson replied that it "might be difficult to create uneasiness in the Soviet Union without at the same time creating uneasiness among the allies of the US."²⁴

Economic relations were also worrying. Close to the top of Ottawa's agenda was the fate of the long-stalled St. Lawrence Seaway and power project. Unleashing the transportation and power potential of the mighty river flowing through the Canadian heartland had been a national priority in Ottawa since the 1920s. A sensible treaty allowing for joint development had been signed in 1941 but failed again and again to pass the US Congress, where legislators representing East Coast shipping centres opposed the development of a rival. By early 1952, though ready to welcome US participation, Canada was resolved to build the seaway alone. But power, which Ontario desperately needed to fuel its booming postwar economy, was different. Geography and economics dictated joint cooperation with the Power Authority of the State of New York, which required a licence from the Federal Power Corporation, a creature of the White House. Construction was impossible until that corporation, dragging its feet, acted.²⁵

More importantly, Ottawa was increasingly nervous about commercial policy and trade. Since the 1940s, Canada had run large annual trade deficits with the United States. In the short term, these deficits were offset without much harm to the Canadian economy by American direct investment. But

long-term Canadian hopes for a more closely balanced bilateral trade relationship were pinned on the reduction of European and British trade restrictions, the creation of an expansive liberal multilateral trade order under American leadership, and more exports to the United States. By 1953, these hopes had begun to fade in the face of growing protectionism in the Republican-dominated Congress and an uncertain response from the White House. As a result, when the US Department of Agriculture extended restrictions on dairy imports in December 1952, officials in the Departments of External Affairs and Trade and Commerce resolved to welcome Eisenhower's government into office with a sharp reminder of Canadian concern. A note from Ambassador Wrong targeted both the original quota on dairy products and the growing number of protectionist elements in US trade policy. They included limited legislative scope for the administration to negotiate tariffs, delay in the simplification of US customs regulations, broad protectionist loopholes in recent US trade agreements legislation, and growing activism by the US Tariff Commission. To underline Canadian anxieties, when the note was delivered in February 1953, it was accompanied by a press release and a House of Commons statement by the prime minister.²⁶

The Canadian reaction was even sharper in April when Congress targeted imports of lead and zinc with crippling tariffs. Canadian production, expanded at the outset of the Korean War with US encouragement and \$25 million worth of federal government loans, employed 10,600 men, half of whom depended on exports to the United States.²⁷ On instructions from Minister of Trade and Commerce C.D. Howe, Sidney Pierce and Douglas LePan, the two senior economic officials at the Washington embassy, called on Harold F. Linder, the assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, to register Ottawa's unhappiness.²⁸ At the same time, James Byrne, the American-born Liberal Member of Parliament (MP) for the BC riding of Kootenay East, where eight mines had already cut 1,000 jobs, urged the House of Commons to consider retaliatory tariffs on US imports of asbestos and nickel, an idea backed by desk-thumping MPs, including St. Laurent and Howe.²⁹ From their embassy just across Wellington Street from Parliament Hill, fretful US diplomats viewed the debate as evidence of "smoldering resentment over US import restrictions and Canadian apprehension that our new Administration ... may lead the world toward increased

protectionism and contracting world order.”³⁰ On the eve of St. Laurent’s first meeting with Eisenhower, US Chargé d’Affaires Don Bliss warned that “a real threat to our over-all relations with Canada exists.”³¹

There was also some uncertainty in the view north from Washington. Things were fine at the top. Eisenhower certainly retained fond memories of Canada from the Second World War, when he commanded Canadian troops in both Sicily and northwestern Europe. A natural storyteller, the president enjoyed recalling his wartime experiences with the prickly Canadian commander, General McNaughton, who worked hard to keep his distance from his British colleagues, the spiritual heirs of Canada’s former imperial overlords. “Remember, General,” Eisenhower would laugh as he delivered his punchline, “we are fighting the Germans, not the British!”³²

Eisenhower was rightly proud of his record as Allied commander and of his ability to manage the larger-than-life personalities and clashing interests of his powerful bosses, including Charles de Gaulle, Winston Churchill, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The president understood power and its dynamics too. He was rarely inclined to use American muscle to force an issue with much smaller Canada, a tactic that might antagonize Canadians and expose the United States to charges of bullying. “When you’re dealing with those Canadians,” he told one US negotiator, “be so fair that you could move on their side of the table and feel comfortable.”³³ This message got through. The Republican administration, recorded one Canadian, was ready “to meet our point of view whenever possible consistent with their own proper interests.”³⁴

Canada was familiar and friendly territory for other key members of the administration. The president’s chief of staff, Governor Sherman Adams, was a crusty and blunt-spoken New England politician whose early career in the cross-border pulp-and-paper trade encouraged a “keen” interest in Canada.³⁵ Similarly, Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson had spent more than two decades as vice-president and president of General Motors, whose operations also spanned the Canada-US border. And Eisenhower recruited Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey from the presidency of Cleveland miner M.A. Hanna, where Humphrey had raised the \$250 million investment required to open up the vast Labrador iron ore fields in the 1940s.³⁶ The businessmen were friends of C.D. Howe, the powerful minister of trade and commerce.

Dulles, too, was familiar with Canada. He grew up in the borderlands of upstate New York, his hometown of Watertown a short drive or boat ride from the border. He had extensive financial and legal business in Canada in the 1920s and 1930s, when his most important client was the International Nickel Company. He sat on the executive committee of both its American parent and its Canadian subsidiary and played a key role in backing an international nickel cartel.³⁷ He relaxed at his cottage on Duck Island, on the Canadian side of Lake Ontario. "I am almost a Canadian citizen," he joked with Pearson. "At least I exercise the privilege of paying some modest taxes."³⁸

The professional diplomats in the US embassy in Ottawa and the State Department generally shared this positive outlook. "The Canadians are almost always with us on the major issues in NATO and in the UN," concluded an assessment of Canadian foreign policy prepared in late November 1952.³⁹ "Our political relations with Canada are easy," Bliss wrote to Governor Adams from Ottawa in early 1953, "but they are by no means automatic."⁴⁰ A looming national election in Canada, the distracting temptations of economic prosperity, and the Cold War stalemate in Korea and Europe had resulted in a slackening of Canadian effort: "It is clear that Canadians are becoming increasingly complacent, introspective and engrossed with internal politics."⁴¹

American assessments of Canada's global role, nonetheless, could be surprisingly bitter. A foreign aid review in April 1953, for instance, complained of Canada's increasingly "nationalistic approach." Ottawa, it charged, viewed its "programs with satisfaction, and a degree of smugness . . . It has been oblivious to foreign criticism to the extent of the personal beguilement that it does not exist, and it has been ruthlessly efficient in its counter-attacks on Canadian criticism."⁴² Canadian complacency no longer matched the US sense of urgency regarding the worldwide struggle against communism, exacerbating differences over the "execution, method and timing" of Western foreign and defence initiatives. Moreover, cautioned State Department officials, Canadian policy makers considered the United States "awkward and hasty" and "inclined to be 'trigger happy'."⁴³

To combat these worries, Dulles urged Eisenhower to use his encounter with St. Laurent to reinforce "our special relationship with Canada." The president should let the Canadians know that the United States counted

on their continued support in NATO and Korea while simultaneously reassuring them about US “priorities.” “The Canadians are fearful,” Dulles warned, that “we will become overextended in Asia at the cost of Europe and NATO and will want to discuss priorities in Defense.”⁴⁴ For a president used to placating allies, the task before him was manageable.

The morning skies were ominous and grey when St. Laurent and Pearson boarded the RCAF transport at Ottawa’s Rockcliffe airbase for the short hop to Washington on 6 May. They landed precisely on time at the Military Transport Base and were whisked straight to the president’s White House office for lunch. The Americans were generous hosts, and during the two days of talks they worked hard to strike a reassuring tone. Yet the bilateral dynamic remained tentative and exploratory, and little momentum seemed to build. The first day was devoted to international security and defence. As St. Laurent acknowledged at the start, there was no question of slackened support for NATO and Western European security, Canada’s top priorities. But the dialogue faltered as the focus shifted to Asia and Korea, where recent communist proposals promised progress in the long-deadlocked truce talks. The rashness of the tone-deaf Dulles, who insisted that “the US would not stand for lengthy haggling,” contrasted sharply with St. Laurent’s placid rejoinder that “in Canada there was not much impatience for ‘getting it over with.’” Eisenhower intervened with a promise to “resist pressures by supporters of drastic solutions,” an effort to smooth things over.⁴⁵

The talks picked up briefly when they turned to the Soviet Union, where Stalin’s death in March raised hopes of a thaw in Cold War hostility. Here, too, the president offered comforting stability, pledging to pursue any Soviet peace initiative to the “last corner.” But he was less surefooted on continental defence. Eisenhower certainly made all the right noises, expressing his “full respect for Canadian sovereignty” and pledging to develop the DEW Line “on the basis of partnership.” But he had no answers to St. Laurent’s lingering doubts about the technology’s feasibility or to Pearson’s questions about the political wisdom of sending Canadian forces to Europe while Americans piled into the Canadian Arctic.

Day two began with a surprise. The administration, the president announced with a smile (almost certainly convinced that he was doing St. Laurent a favour), was ready at last to endorse US participation in jointly

developing the St. Lawrence Seaway. While Sherman Adams hurried to brief the press on the good news, the mood in the White House remained sombre. Canada was anxious, the prime minister began, about US economic policy. Restrictions on dairy products and cattle, as well as lead and zinc, Pearson explained, had raised fears that the United States was entering a period of protectionism likely to have “a serious effect on the general strength of the free world.” The president was sympathetic but neither hopeful nor helpful. The Canadians were “talking economic sense,” he admitted, “but the impulses of nationalism and the arguments based on the view that the needs of defence required domestic sources of supply were difficulties in the way.”

Perhaps, Secretary of Defence Charles Wilson proposed, Canadian fears might be met by bilateral free trade. General Motors, he added in all seriousness, would doubtless maintain its Canadian plants, though their focus might shift from cars to parts. Spooked by this unexpected digression, Pearson replied on the fly with a proposal for a joint economic board. Like the International Joint Commission, which handled waterways, or the PJBD, it would study cross-border economic problems and report back to the two governments. Unlike a bilateral trade deal, he explained, it would avoid “doing anything which would keep others out.” Eisenhower was intrigued by both ideas and asked Dulles and Pearson to work on them. “In his Cabinet,” he promised the departing prime minister, “there were no economic isolationists.” All he needed was a little time for his new legislative commission on foreign economic policy, still wending its way through Congress, to build up public and congressional support for a truly liberal trade agenda.

From the American perspective, the visit was an unalloyed success. Progress restarting the stalled St. Lawrence Seaway had pushed economic bickering off the front pages. “Our off-the-cuff reaction is that things went very well indeed,” wrote Hayden Raynor, director of the State Department’s Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs. “I believe St. Laurent is leaving very well pleased with the results of his visit.”⁴⁶

The Canadian assessment was more nuanced. The prime minister and his advisers were reportedly gratified by the president’s warm welcome and by the “earnestness, sincerity, and understanding of complex problems shown by [him].”⁴⁷ But in Ottawa, there were whispered complaints that

the president had not made enough fuss over his guest.⁴⁸ Moreover, on many issues, Eisenhower had simply missed the mark. Ottawa wanted action in the Federal Power Corporation, for example, not the complications of US participation in the St. Lawrence Seaway. Similarly, Eisenhower's vague but comforting thoughts about the prospects for a Korean armistice left the skeptical Canadians privately wondering "whether the President's views were being correctly translated in the directives which were being sent to the negotiators."⁴⁹ The Canadians were also irked by American insistence on including a paragraph in the final communiqué on the crisis in Laos, which Pearson dismissed as a "quasi-colonial situation" and one in which Canada had no interest.⁵⁰ As one Canadian official complained to a US counterpart, the Canadians resented "being made use of in a campaign to educate the American people as to the importance of Laos."⁵¹ Most importantly, St. Laurent's government remained "nervous and uneasy" about US economic policy and Eisenhower's plea for time. "The Canadians were inclined to feel," reported US diplomats in Ottawa, "that it would take another six months to know for certain whether they were out of the woods in regard to their trade relations with America."⁵² Thus, the overall Canadian assessment was restrained: although the visit allowed the prime minister to get to know the president, External Affairs officials did not think that the visit "should give rise to uncontrolled exuberance."⁵³

The summit had one happy result: it allowed St. Laurent to cite a proposed joint economic committee as evidence of US goodwill on trade, blunting opposition pressure for retaliation and temporarily defusing trade tensions with Washington. Yet, in the wake of the summit, neither country seemed to be all that anxious to pursue the idea. One complicating factor was its close association with the president's unexpected interest in bilateral free trade. Understandably, with a federal election in the offing, Canadian ministers and officials flat out refused to consider the historically explosive subject – free trade had cost a previous Liberal government an election win – and with State Department help they quickly swept Eisenhower's option off the table.

Moreover, there was opposition to a joint committee in both foreign ministries. Dulles was fearful of claims on his time and told his subordinates to "do nothing unless pressed."⁵⁴ Canadian diplomats were also wary of wasting their time. US participants, they speculated, would either be

too senior to be familiar with bilateral issues or too junior to matter. Consequently, it was not until 6 June that Canadian officials half-heartedly outlined their thinking to Livingston Merchant, the assistant secretary for European affairs in the State Department. They envisioned a committee with a limited mandate, composed of four ministers from each country, meeting twice yearly to exchange views on trade and report back to their governments.⁵⁵ Out of this modest proposal would emerge a hallmark of close bilateral relations.

Renewed trade tensions gave the committee life. On 9 June, despite earlier Canadian protests, the White House renewed and intensified restrictions on imported dairy products. Although the overall economic damage was slight, the measure caused “real hardship” for cheddar cheese producers in eastern Ontario and western Quebec, Liberal Party strongholds whose voters would count in the federal election called just four days later.⁵⁶ “The consequence of unilateral resort to such practices,” Ottawa replied in a tart diplomatic note, immediately released to the press, “is bound to raise grave problems, not only for international trade but for the whole structure of international cooperation.”⁵⁷

That same day the US Tariff Commission began hearings on imports of groundfish fillets and oats. To the astonishment of Canadian observers, Eisenhower’s Department of Agriculture testified in favour of tariff protection for oats, a market almost entirely supplied by Canada. The Canadian reaction was “quick and strong,” with angry officials soon speculating on the prospects of retaliation. John Deutsch, the senior trade official in the Department of Finance, warned US diplomats in early July that limiting a major Canadian export such as oats would invite retaliation, however much it might hurt Canada. “It was impossible to foresee the consequences if retaliations develop,” he continued grimly, but “they could lead to a very widespread deterioration in US and Canadian cooperation. He could visualize a deterioration in defence relationships, in cooperation in international organizations, in exchange of information between the two governments.”⁵⁸ In short, a dispute over oats could affect the wider relationship.

Although it discounted Deutsch’s views as extreme – St. Laurent would hardly endanger NATO to protect oats exports – the US embassy advised Washington that the anger was real and, with the election on, the

consequences unpredictable. This point was underscored mid-month, when, after consulting ministers campaigning across the country, St. Laurent himself wrote directly to Eisenhower. There was steel beneath the gentle language of diplomacy. He had a public opinion, too, the Canadian leader insisted, warning that restrictions on oats and groundfish “would jeopardise the livelihood of thousands of Canadians [and] could not fail to create resentment and ill-will and consequential demands for action on our part.”⁵⁹ The next day Canadian embassy staff handed the State Department a note repeating the threat more bluntly: “A decision . . . to limit the imports of either of these commodities would have serious implications not only for trade but for other aspects of relationships between our two countries.”⁶⁰

But Eisenhower had no room to yield. When Wrong stopped at the White House for a farewell visit on 24 July, the president insisted that his free-trade convictions “were as strong as ever.”⁶¹ But surely, he pleaded, Wrong’s prime minister could appreciate how hard it was to deal with Congress. Tariff Commission hearings, the president wrote to St. Laurent a few days later, did not necessarily mean tariffs. In any event, he stalled for time since his plans for a commission on foreign economic policy were progressing apace.⁶² That was hardly enough to placate Ottawa, as US diplomats well knew. The newly appointed American ambassador to Ottawa, who took up his post in July amid the brouhaha over oats, was none other than R. Douglas Stuart, who had just stepped down as head of Quaker Oats, a company whose operations extended into Canada. Indeed, earlier in his career, Stuart had worked at the company’s plants in Saskatoon and Peterborough, Ontario. His appointment was applauded in Canada as, “in a sense, a home-coming,” and the White House won plaudits for appointing an envoy who knew something about Canadians.⁶³ Certainly, Stuart was an embodiment of the cross-border trade and investment that marked the increasing business relationship between the two countries.

US Undersecretary of State Walter Bedell Smith knew enough to see the problems posed by disruptions to oats imports. American diplomats told Dulles and the White House that peace with Ottawa required either the speedy extension of the Trade Agreements Act, mired in Congress, or the creation of the cabinet-level joint economic committee. “Such a Committee,” the State Department argued, “will serve to mitigate to some degree

the serious and growing concern among Canadians as US trade policies threaten their vital trade with the United States.”⁶⁴ Dulles agreed to proceed.

Merchant went to work in August, quickly rounding up the necessary interagency approvals. He was doubtless helped by the Liberal romp to victory on 10 August, when St. Laurent’s party captured 169 of 265 seats, a decisive win interpreted in US circles as likely to reinforce his government’s tough line on bilateral trade.⁶⁵ In early September, fresh from their summer holidays, both sides finally got down to negotiations. They reframed the committee’s terms of reference to reflect Washington’s desire for a broad economic (not just trade) focus and reduced the frequency of meetings to one per year. The revisions were done and approved by October, ready for launching during Eisenhower’s return visit to Ottawa on 14 November.

The public unveiling of the joint committee rested at the heart of the presidential visit, with both countries equally anxious to move beyond the summer’s tensions. In Washington, US diplomats approached the visit determined “to assure Canadians, without saying so categorically, that we regard them as equal partners in working toward a common objective, that we have no intention of disregarding their views or overlooking their interests.”⁶⁶ With that goal in mind, Dulles and Eisenhower refused to impose a quota on imported Canadian oats before the trip. “The political reaction in Canada,” warned Merchant, “could very well be so adverse as to have effects in fields other than trade.”⁶⁷ Highly attuned to Canadian public opinion, Merchant emerged as a State Department expert on Canada-US relations.

Ottawa’s approach was just as careful. Given Republican defeats in recent special elections held in several Congressional districts, Pearson urged St. Laurent to show “an appreciative understanding” of Eisenhower’s domestic difficulties.⁶⁸ Pressure for a favourable decision on oats should be balanced by praise for recent White House efforts to resolve St. Lawrence power issues and to resist congressional demands for still more restrictive tariffs. The stage was set for a productive summit.

In a display of the camaraderie between the two governments, Pearson boarded Eisenhower’s train as it crossed into Canada at Rouses Point, New York, where the president waved to a small knot of supporters clad in his blue pajamas and maroon dressing gown, delighting reporters with the

neighbourly gesture.⁶⁹ The mood was festive by the time the train pulled into Ottawa at 11:30 a.m. on 13 November to be greeted warmly by a crowd of 50,000, swollen by civil servants granted an extended lunch hour. “I like Ike,” shouted a teenage girl, winning cheers and a broad presidential grin. For Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, it was a full day of public wreath laying, tree planting, and socializing at Government House and the US embassy that left Ottawa “atwitter.”⁷⁰ “Even the fussy trimmings of protocol,” gushed *Globe and Mail* reporter Bruce West, “couldn’t remove from the event a certain atmosphere that was as casual and friendly as a visit from the man next door.”⁷¹

The real work began the following morning. As the Peace Tower bells played “The Stars and Stripes Forever” and “America the Beautiful,” the presidential cavalcade swept onto Parliament Hill. The House of Commons, packed with MPs and senators and, for the first time, TV cameras, welcomed Eisenhower with a standing ovation. The prime minister’s introduction was a warm and generous tribute to US global leadership. “The powerful influence which your nation exerts in the world community is,” St. Laurent summarized, “in action as well as in aim, an influence for good, and we welcome it.”⁷²

Eisenhower replied in kind, winning thunderous applause with a greeting in French and then listing a litany of Canadian contributions to North American life that joined Canada and the United States in “a mighty unity built on values essentially spiritual.” His threefold message, less than twenty minutes long, was tough but reassuringly honest. First, Eisenhower assured nervous Canadians that he was indeed a committed free trader. However, he added, there would be no progress on trade liberalization until his economic commission, now hard at work under businessman Clarence Randall, had reported early in 1954. “Make haste slowly,” Eisenhower said, “is a homely maxim with international validity.” Second, the president offered Canadians speedy progress on the stalled St. Lawrence Seaway project, which he was “sure and certain” that the United States would join. Finally, Eisenhower outlined the enormous and urgent joint effort required to defend the continent against the growing Soviet bomber threat, clearly signalling to nervous Canadians that continental defence “rests squarely on the sovereign nature of our two peoples.”⁷³

The president was equally impressive in a restricted session with St. Laurent’s cabinet, which gathered in the MPs’ lounge immediately after

the speech. The confident and self-assured American commander-in-chief skipped lightly across the globe's hotspots: Russia's bluster reflected its fear and weakness; progress in Europe was slow but encouraging; President of Korea Syngman Rhee was "extremely difficult" and would be "carefully handled." "On the whole," Eisenhower assured Canadian ministers, "the free world was stronger than it was two years ago."⁷⁴ Prompted by St. Laurent, who subtly recalled their similar domestic problems and mutual vulnerabilities on trade issues, he next extolled the virtues of joint boards and advance consultations. However, Eisenhower warned against exaggerating North American difficulties, especially when weighed against the shared commitment of Canada and the United States to democratic government and free institutions, which "set an example to other nations."⁷⁵ Circling back to the Cold War confrontation with Soviet communism, the president explained that this North American model was vital given the otherwise restrained Western approach to world affairs, a message welcomed by the ministers. "We should not attempt," the president added, "forcibly, to impose our brand of democracy on others."⁷⁶

From a public relations perspective, the presidential visit was a success. Newspapers praised Eisenhower as "a very old friend and a very good one" and the embodiment of the "unshakable nature of the friendship between Canada and the United States."⁷⁷ The visit, Pearson told the prime minister, "went off extremely well," without "any sour notes."⁷⁸ American views were equally positive. "It was a well-worthwhile trip," Adams wrote from the White House. "There wasn't a dull moment."⁷⁹ Heeny was more discerning. "I was struck once again by the reluctance of Canadian ministers to take issue with a celebrated guest or raise embarrassing questions," he wrote in his diary. "I had no doubt that Eisenhower and his advisers left with the impression that Canada had no problems of any consequences with the United States."⁸⁰ Sharp-eyed observers were quick to see Eisenhower's references to trade throwing cold water on Canadian hopes for lower tariffs, spelling trouble ahead. "Eisenhower Statement Proves Disappointing" wailed a prominent *Montreal Gazette* headline. And these pessimists were soon proven right. Within a week, on 19 November, Douglas LePan, the Washington embassy's expert on economic matters, had picked up worrying rumours in the American capital that Eisenhower would call Canada's bluff and restrict imports of Canadian oats to solve his domestic surplus problem.⁸¹

A US quota, Minister of Trade Howe fumed, would be met by a formal GATT complaint and searching scrutiny of US exports of fruits and vegetables as likely targets for retaliation. Hume Wrong, now deputy minister of External Affairs, demurred. The symbolic and real costs of retaliation were simply too high, he warned Pearson. Retaliation would damage the cooperative basis of Canada-US relations that had emerged since the war, heralding a “much more acrimonious phase in our commercial relations.” Moreover, he added, it was “virtually impossible to choose any retaliatory measures which would not injure some Canadian interests.”⁸² Consequently, when Sherman Adams and Gabriel Waugh, the assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, arrived in Ottawa on 4 December to consult with Howe and Pearson on the US measure, the Canadians were ready to compromise.

Howe handled the talks. Canada would win a GATT complaint, he began, a view substantiated by the awkward and muted reaction of US trade adviser John Leddy. As that would do neither country much good, the minister advanced an alternative. Recalling the “happy experience” of the Second World War, when Ottawa routinely controlled troublesome exports to the United States by executive decree, he wondered whether similar procedures could not be tried again. A Canadian export quota of 23 million bushels effective in early December would achieve much the same result as the US restrictions. Happily, it would sidestep a public trade spat and reduce the risk that an American quota would become a permanent irritant. Moreover, taking effect six weeks later than the US measure, it was much more liberal in its impact, allowing Canada to export almost all its 1953 oats crop. This was a sensible outcome, and both the Canadian cabinet and the president quickly approved the arrangement.⁸³

The consultations had another important consequence, focusing Canadian attention (and hopes) on the inaugural meeting of the Joint Canada-US Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs, soon slated for 16 March 1954. Tackling rumours that US restrictions on rye were coming next, Howe pleaded with Adams to postpone any US action until after the ministerial meeting, giving him an opportunity to address the matter. The gathering loomed even larger in the new year when news leaked out that Washington was about to overhaul its farm surplus disposal program. A bulked-up program, with its own powerful “czar” and interagency office, was

reportedly planning to dump surplus US produce, including wheat, onto world markets without regard for the “orderly marketing of friendly countries.”⁸⁴ Canadian policy makers in Washington and Ottawa differed sharply over the threat. Heeney and his principal economic adviser, Douglas LePan, an old Washington hand, rightly feared a fundamental assault on postwar marketing arrangements.⁸⁵ Mitchell Sharp, whom Howe sent to consult with Adams, Waugh, and senior agriculture officials, was quicker to accept the vague assurances offered by the Americans.⁸⁶ Both Heeney and Sharp agreed, however, that it was important to stave off any changes until ministers from both countries could hash them out.

By the time the joint committee met in Washington on 16 March, other worrying issues were crowding its agenda, including a US quota on rye and the fate of the Randall Commission’s report on US foreign economic policy. Although the commission generally leaned liberal, its recommendations on GATT were vague and weak, alarming trade officials in the State Department and their interlocutors in the Canadian embassy. “The wind seems to be blowing so strongly here against GATT,” warned one report back to Ottawa.⁸⁷

US officials and cabinet members clearly grasped Canadian fears. In their view, Canada, once tied to the British Commonwealth, was now a “maturing power” closely identified with the United States. For reasons of self-interest and as a responsible member of the international community, it was legitimately concerned with the future of US economic policy. With progress toward global trade liberalization stalled, according to a US briefing note, “they know that if we refuse the role of economic leadership, Canada is not strong enough to step in and assume this responsibility.”⁸⁸ Moreover, it warned, Canadians naturally resented moves that failed to take their domestic economic and political interests into consideration and often thought that American policy “hit most sharply our best and most important allies.” Tackling Canadian fears would require “frank and honest” conversations, designed to bring out differences in approach that “may permit some mutual modification of national lines of action to facilitate achievement of our common objective.”⁸⁹

The joint committee provided just the assurance that Canada so badly wanted. A White House lunch with Eisenhower and dinner with Dulles established an upbeat tone, as US planners intended.⁹⁰ A short opening

session allowed Howe to air Canadian grievances over American tariff restrictions, surplus disposal policies, and grudging approach to GATT.⁹¹ That cleared the air, letting ministers get down to work. The president's economic adviser, Gabriel Hauge, who spoke with the weight of the White House behind him, was optimistic. For the first time since the release of the Randall Commission report, Canadian ministers heard an authoritative view of the White House reaction to it. The news was good. The report, Hauge cautioned, reflected "a cross-section of US opinion" and admittedly was no "repeal of the corn laws." Nor did its recommendations on European and sterling convertibility envision "a dash to the tape."⁹² But, Hauge promised, Eisenhower would back many of its most liberal recommendations, turning them into a handful of laws to extend the Trade Agreements Act and kick-start another round of GATT negotiations; to simplify customs valuations, classifications, and procedures; and to liberalize the Buy American Act. This was good news indeed. If implemented, Howe observed generously, then the White House program represented a "considerable step forward." Minister of Finance Douglas Abbott, though disappointed with the slow US approach to convertibility, grudgingly agreed that Randall's report was a "move forward."⁹³

The long afternoon discussion of agricultural trade produced more agreement. Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson, an outspoken free-market advocate, began with all the right views. The new US agricultural program recognized the importance of exports to both countries, he argued, insisting that the United States was alert to the need "to have regard for the interests of other countries." The program was not about cut-throat marketing. Rather, he insisted, the program was intended to maintain a firm floor price for produce, to expand consumption, to balance production better, and to improve farm management. In his rosy view, US farm production would drop while the global pie grew ever larger.⁹⁴ When Benson stumbled – he was drawn into a sharp exchange with Howe over restrictions on rye and US wheat-marketing policy – Adams stepped in. Rotting stockpiles and high storage costs, he repeated, meant that the United States was "moving more aggressively in promoting sales." But, he insisted, the United States would "move carefully and in consultation with other governments." Indeed, the new "czar," Clarence Francis of General Foods, would take from sixty to ninety days to assess the situation and act

only after consultations. More importantly, Adams repeated that the program embraced much more than exports. It called for expanding wheat sales at home and abroad, for adding wheat to cattle and poultry feed, as well as for trade missions to Latin America, Europe, and Asia. The United States, Adams crossed his heart (and fingers), would avoid price cutting and dumping.⁹⁵

From the Canadian perspective, the US presentation represented the basis of an informal deal, effectively struck in the meeting's final communiqué, drafted by the ministers themselves. When disposing of surplus agricultural produce, both the United States and Canada promised "to consult with interested countries and not to interfere with normal commercial marketings ... [A]ny extraordinary measures that might be adopted to reduce surpluses should result in greater consumption and should augment, not displace, normal quantities of agricultural products entering into world trade."⁹⁶

The meeting broke up in euphoric self-congratulations. "In all his nineteen years in government," Howe exclaimed to Merchant, "he had never spent as interesting and rewarding a day."⁹⁷ R. Douglas Stuart, the American ambassador in Ottawa, joined the Canadians for the flight home to Ottawa. "They were quite exhilarated," he wrote to US Undersecretary of State Walter Bedell Smith. "They came away with the feeling it was our intention to treat them as full partners and give them every consideration in working out our mutual problems in a perfectly fair, frank straight-forward way."⁹⁸ Although the Canadians had not welcomed its initial creation, they now saw value in the Joint Cabinet Committee.

The euphoria was short lived as domestic pressures forced the White House to compromise its lofty aims. At the end of March, Eisenhower wrote to St. Laurent that the United States would limit imports of rye, notwithstanding Howe's earlier protests.⁹⁹ In early May, Ottawa was astonished to learn of a murky US proposal to barter wheat for Brazilian strategic materials, "a radical and dangerous departure from previous policy" that thumbed its nose at the joint committee's communiqué.¹⁰⁰ Worse news followed at the end of the month when Republican protectionists forced Eisenhower to abandon his plan to seek a three-year renewal of the Trade Agreements Act and to settle instead for a one-year extension. At the same time, news leaked of a series of recent US Tariff Commission reports

recommending import restrictions on groundfish fillets, lead and zinc, and Alsike clover seeds.

Ottawa pushed back. On instructions from Howe, Sharp, already in Washington on other business, met with Hauge of the White House and focused on the threat to groundfish. These restrictions would be a “mortal blow” to Ottawa’s efforts to modernize the fisheries industry in Newfoundland, a deeply impoverished province whose place within Canada still remained unsettled five years after it joined Confederation. Furthermore, they would alienate a province where US air and naval bases constituted a substantial strategic interest. The American action was “unthinkable.”¹⁰¹

Hauge was sympathetic, but there was little give. Perhaps, the embassy speculated, the White House would have to appease congressional protectionists to secure a one-year extension of the current Trade Agreements Act. Heeney guessed that the president would reject restrictions on fish in favour of tariffs on lead and zinc as the price for his trade legislation. This development, Howe told cabinet, was “not satisfactory,” and he lined up his colleagues’ support for formal protests.¹⁰² At 2:00 p.m. on 28 May, LePan and an embassy delegation met with Thorsten Kalijarvi, the deputy assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, to present a note protesting restrictions on groundfish fillets. They were back again at 4:30 p.m. with an equally strong note on lead and zinc. “By this time,” LePan reported with obvious satisfaction, “Kalijarvi was limp.”¹⁰³

Not everyone thought that the protests were enough. “Republican protectionists in Congress,” warned Heeney, “have now tasted blood.”¹⁰⁴ In addition to retreating on the Trade Agreements Act and considering more restrictive Tariff Commission recommendations, Eisenhower was backing away from changes to the Buy American Act and legislation simplifying customs schedules and procedures. Two conclusions seemed to be clear: “The President’s foreign economic program is coming apart at the seams,” and “one cannot help wondering whether anyone is holding the reins.”¹⁰⁵

The protectionists were winning, insisted Heeney. This was happening just as bountiful American defence contracts were drying up; when American raw material stockpiling policy was emphasizing domestic suppliers; and when American agricultural sales threatened Canada’s traditional markets across the globe. The danger to Canada’s economy was profound

and merited renewed efforts to make Ottawa's fears known at the top levels. Another diplomatic note would be useless; a letter from St. Laurent to Eisenhower should be held in reserve. Instead, Heeny recommended delivering an oral *aide-mémoire* to Dulles, whom he thought was finally awake to the dangers that bilateral economic differences posed to his broader campaign to unite the Western alliance against the Soviet threat. Canada's key message was clear: any US tariffs on lead and zinc or ground-fish fillets would make it difficult for Ottawa to resist domestic pressures to respond by increasing tariffs on US imports.¹⁰⁶

In Ottawa, the retaliatory machinery geared up. Against their better judgment, unhappy officials in the Departments of Finance and External Affairs reluctantly put the last touches on legislation fine-tuning the Customs Act to allow targeted retaliation.¹⁰⁷ On 3 June, Pearson presented Heeny's recommendation to cabinet, which directed officials to prepare a draft *aide-mémoire* for consideration. Yet there remained a great deal of uncertainty about how to proceed. On the one hand, Abbott and St. Laurent favoured only vague threats of retaliation, leaving Ottawa room to retreat if necessary. Abbott was especially fearful of acting on the eve of the US midterm elections, slated for November. On the other hand, Howe dismissed Heeny's worries entirely. He was confident that Eisenhower would reject restrictions on fish and that the fate of lead and zinc was "not as gloomy as it hitherto appeared."¹⁰⁸ Reflecting an interdepartmental consensus at the official level, Ed Ritchie, the expert head of the Economic Division at External Affairs, warned ministers against vagueness. If cabinet could not reach agreement on specific retaliations, then there was little point in making further representations.¹⁰⁹ On 9 June, after six days of deliberation, Howe and St. Laurent resolved to do nothing.¹¹⁰

In the short run, Howe was right. Eisenhower rejected tariffs on ground-fish fillets in July, and, after much squirming in August, he kicked lead and zinc down the road by agreeing to help American producers with additional purchases for government stockpiles. To prove his bona fides with Republican protectionists, the president instead targeted Alsike clover seeds but not before meeting Canadian demands for a small tariff-free quota sufficient to maintain established trade channels.¹¹¹

Yet US protectionist pressures were unrelenting, and during the fall of 1954 irresolute White House wavering on trade policy chipped away at

Ottawa's patience. In September, the United States extended its 1953 quota on oats, again prompting Canadian embassy officials to tramp down to the State Department in protest, pleading for a time limit and a share of the quota to reflect Canada's dominant market position. "While Canada was abiding by its obligations under the General Agreement," fumed a visiting assistant deputy minister from Ottawa, "the US was running up a growing list of infractions."¹¹² Tariffs on barley feed and barley malt were next, generating another round of impatient high-level representations by Howe, Sharp, and W.C. McNamara, the chief assistant commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board. "More restrictions on imports from Canada will not be well received," Sharp complained. "As a representative of the Canadian Government we are often asked ... why Canada observes the principles of GATT when the US does not?"¹¹³

Cabinet's reluctance to confront the United States finally evaporated late in the fall as Western trade negotiators packed their bags for Geneva and a conference renewing GATT. Despite Anglo-Canadian objections at preliminary talks in July and September, the White House had resolved to ask GATT members for a "blanket" waiver "legalizing" protectionist trade restrictions, past and future, adopted under Section 22 of the US Agricultural Adjustment Act. Fearful that the United States request would encourage a wave of similar demands from European states, setting back the postwar struggle for trade liberalization, Pearson and Howe headed to Washington in early January 1955 to confront Dulles and his colleagues. Rather than Howe, Pearson – who had backed Heeney's challenge to US protectionism six months earlier – emerged as the leading Canadian spokesperson.

Canada's chief diplomat was blunt. Canadians, Pearson warned, were becoming "restive" about GATT and pressing Ottawa for higher tariffs. A waiver would further weaken GATT's value, mean an "open split" with the United States over trade policy, and possibly reduce the trade organization to "more shadow than substance."¹¹⁴ Dulles was unyielding in his reply, underlining the administration's domestic political difficulties. "More than most other people," he explained, "Americans inevitably were prone to the illusion that they could get along without trading outside their borders." A waiver, he argued, was required to convince protectionist members of Congress to adhere to GATT and promised a pathway to trade stability.

The resulting discussion, recorded the Canadian embassy's notetaker, was "a series of variations played over a fundamental deadlock."¹¹⁵

In Geneva, L. Dana Wilgress, the ambassador to NATO and Canada's principal trade negotiator, struggled to define delegation tactics. Perhaps, he mused, Canada might align itself with protectionists in Europe, marshalling a large majority behind a moderate waiver to pre-empt and block the American effort. Or, he ventured, Canada might accept US invitations to help refine its waiver, making it conditional on good behaviour, including advance consultations, time limits, and respect for established patterns of trade.¹¹⁶ Other key Canadian diplomats were encouraged to weigh in. "I must say that I am worried about the isolated position our delegation must be in," Norman Robertson, the high commissioner in London, wired Pearson. Since Washington insisted that it must have its waiver to get GATT through Congress, it made no sense for Canada to stand aloof from the negotiating process.¹¹⁷ Heeny also begged Ottawa to compromise. Opposition risked alienating US officials, and a defeat would halt any modest movement in the United States toward freer trade. "We hope you will consider the paradoxical possibility that in the present circumstances some sacrifice, both of principle and perhaps of immediate interest, may be the course best designed to promote the establishment of those economic conditions throughout the world that would be to our lasting benefit."¹¹⁸ But Ottawa yielded nothing. "It would seem clear that what we (and the US Administration) are confronted with," Pearson wrote, "is a situation in which the positions of the US and Canada are fundamentally irreconcilable on an issue to which both countries attach great importance."¹¹⁹ On 5 March, after two months of discussion and debate, the waiver was adopted 23–5, including Canada.

Two years of frequent bilateral skirmishing over trade policy were weakening Canada's faith in the prospects of a US-led liberal multilateral trading order. This grim development was certainly clear to the professionals in both Ottawa and Washington. Heeny was sufficiently concerned to warn Pearson in October 1954 that, though relations were still good, "I have detected in certain expressions of view on our side evidence of something approaching prejudice, and even mistrust, of US intentions."¹²⁰ R. Douglas Stuart, too, increasingly fretted about growing bilateral tensions amid Washington's tendency to overlook Canada when making policies, a failure

that he blamed on the State Department, whose bureaucracy lumped Canada with Western Europe and the Commonwealth rather than placing it in the Western Hemisphere or even on its own. The ambassador returned home in January 1955 specifically to urge Herbert Hoover Jr., the under-secretary of state, to give “Canada the attention which its importance to us economically and as an ally warranted.”¹²¹

Among the most important voices of concern was that of Toronto businessman Walter Gordon. Born in 1906, Gordon was a scion of Toronto’s Anglo-Canadian establishment, whose deep-rooted suspicions of the United States and American power he inherited. These suspicions were reinforced through his education at crusty Upper Canada College and the Royal Military College of Canada. A new breed of accountant, the management consultant, Gordon divided his career between the country’s emerging financial hub on Toronto’s Bay Street, where he joined the family firm, and later the public service in Ottawa. During the Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War, he worked for several federal agencies on a range of economic policies, projects that left him leery of free trade, disposed to protective tariffs, and impressed by the capacity of a modern government to manage the economy.¹²²

Like many Canadians by the mid-1950s, Gordon was growing uneasy with US foreign and economic policies. Unlike most of his compatriots, however, he was able to make his views count. A prominent Liberal, Gordon had become friendly with Pearson in the mid-1930s and was offered a junior cabinet portfolio by St. Laurent in 1949 and again in 1953. In the spring of 1955, amid signs of an economic slowdown in Canada, he launched a bid to rethink Canadian economic policy. His approach was broad and subtle, but unmistakably revisionist, aimed at giving Canada “a new lift and a new impetus.”¹²³

Inspired by American businessman William S. Paley, who conducted a detailed survey of US raw materials in 1952 for President Harry Truman, Gordon proposed a royal commission to study Canada’s economic prospects from the ground up. That made sense, he argued in a paper for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, given the fast-changing face of postwar Canada, the surging global demand for Canadian resources, and the increasingly uncertain nature of foreign trade, especially with the United States. The results, he hoped, would inform Canadian economic and

industrial development policies, shape immigration and social programs, and generate incentives to keep Canada's natural resources in Canadian hands.

Gordon took his idea to his friend Walter Harris, who had succeeded Douglas Abbott as finance minister in July 1954. A shrewd and hard-working lawyer from small-town Ontario, Harris was popular with Liberal MPs and touted as a favoured successor to St. Laurent, who valued his political judgment. His shy and unassuming style – “Don't try to make a statesman out of me,” he joked. “I am just an Ontario farm boy” – belied a “flair for practical politics.”¹²⁴ With roots in the Liberal Party's reformist wing, Harris was open to new ideas and ready to tackle the champions of the status quo, including Howe. Although Howe opposed the proposed royal commission – “an investigation of the Canadian economy was, in Mr. Howe's view,” observed journalist Tom Kent, “an investigation of C.D. Howe”¹²⁵ – the commission was approved by cabinet in early April.

Harris unveiled his royal commission at the end of his budget speech on 5 April. The context was significant. Casting his eye south to the United States, the finance minister warned Canadians of a “disappointing lack of progress toward actual reductions in trade barriers” and “disconcerting signs of a revival of protectionist feeling.”¹²⁶ There was stepped-up and unfair competition from US interests in Canada's traditional agricultural markets, he also warned. The clear implication was that the royal commission would help Ottawa to craft new economic policies to address these challenges. Heaney, for one, was quick to grasp the minister's message. “It will result in a marked movement away from Canada's traditional free trade position,” he cautioned the State Department in April. He added that the looming threat of US import restrictions on Canadian oil, the most recent protectionist measure from Congress, was “indicative of the impossibility of Canada continuing its present policy.”¹²⁷ Heaney's message was hardly surprising: “This was what we should have expected,” Kalijarvi minuted grimly on learning of Canadian disaffection.¹²⁸ Yet the royal commission sent ripples of concern through the State Department and White House, where key economic policy makers Merchant, Waugh, and Hauge quickly refocused their attention on their errant Canadian friends.¹²⁹

In the aftermath of the establishment of the royal commission, the St. Laurent government expressed increasing trepidation about Washington's

aggressive agricultural disposal strategies in foreign markets. The Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 – known as Public Law 480 (PL-480) – authorized \$700 million to finance the sale of surplus farm products to US allies. The Mutual Security Act passed the same year committed an additional \$350 million in disposal funds. C.D. Howe criticized the US pursuit of noncommercial agricultural transactions under this legislation in a House of Commons statement in May 1955, and External Affairs subsequently sent a formal protest note to Washington. Ottawa emphasized that ministers at the 1954 Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs had explicitly promised that disposal initiatives that affected normal trade flows would be pursued only with adequate consultation. While praising the Eisenhower administration for initially respecting this pledge, the St. Laurent government expressed its “growing sense of alarm” over recent PL-480 transactions that had “seriously reduced” sales of Canadian grain. At the least, Ottawa requested that import quotas in the International Wheat Agreement be accepted as the floor for normal commercial transactions.¹³⁰

Heeney delivered this note to Sam Waugh at the State Department on 2 June, stressing Canada’s “real and continuing concern” with American surplus disposal practices. Waugh vigorously defended Washington’s agricultural trade stance. Moving large quantities of surplus products through regular open market channels, he warned, would seriously destabilize global commodity prices. The powerful farm lobby in Congress, furthermore, placed “constant pressure” on the Eisenhower administration to use PL-480 for its legislatively sanctioned purpose. Finally, Waugh reminded Heeney of the “politically all-important objective” of stabilizing the economies of allied countries threatened by communism through the use, among many initiatives, of local currencies to finance agricultural purchases. A member of the Italian government, Waugh claimed, had recently expressed his appreciation of Washington’s agricultural assistance that did not require expenditures of chronically scarce dollars. “On no other occasion,” the ambassador gloomily reported to Ottawa, “when Canada’s concern about the United States programs of disposal of wheat was brought to his attention, has Waugh spoken so emphatically in defence of the surplus disposal program.”¹³¹

Mitchell Sharp confirmed Heeney’s impression of Washington’s inflexibility during consultations that he held with senior American officials at

the end of July. Frank Daniels, the head of the Department of Agriculture's Commodity Stabilization Service, candidly admitted to Sharp that he personally shared the Canadian dissatisfaction with "give-away" programs, but he offered no indication that the Eisenhower administration would budge. Dr. Arthur Burns, the influential chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, proved to be similarly unhelpful, informing Sharp that he saw no solution to the surplus disposal impasse; the situation, Burns believed, "was likely to get worse before it got better." In his account to Howe of these consultations, Sharp advised that "there is no point in making further diplomatic representations" protesting US surplus disposal activities. Instead, the time had come when "frank and full discussions" at the ministerial level should be pursued, and he recommended that surplus disposal be the first and foremost item on the agenda for the upcoming Joint Canada-US Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs.¹³²

The joint committee subsequently met on 26 September in Ottawa and again proved its worth in providing the Canadians with a chance to press matters with their senior American counterparts. Agricultural disposal policies were at the forefront of discussions. The Canadian side – in an unusual procedural move – distributed a briefing note to American secretaries during the meeting emphasizing PL-480's harmful effects on Canada's agricultural exports. For the crop year ending 30 June 1955, American exports of wheat and flour had increased by 56 million bushels, whereas Canadian exports of these commodities dropped by 4 million bushels. Traditional markets for Canadian wheat and flour had been hit especially hard. Canada's share of the combined US-Canada exports of these commodities to Yugoslavia, for example, had been nearly 31 percent between 1949–50 and 1953–54. But in the year following the introduction of PL-480, the Canadian share of sales to Yugoslavia had declined precipitously to 8.3 percent. This increasing inability to maintain a reasonable share of agricultural trade, the note maintained, "threatens the very foundations of our economic structure and affects immediately and intimately the lives and incomes of all the farmers of the Prairie Provinces."¹³³

Howe forcefully developed the Canadian case against these distorting influences in agricultural trade to his American counterparts. He focused on the US sale of wheat for local currencies that could not be classified as straight commercial transactions that anchored Canadian export practices.

A recent agreement had provided Brazil with 500,000 tons of American wheat paid for in cruzeiros, 70 percent of which was then allocated to a forty-year development loan to Brazil. Howe also strongly objected to a recently adopted US practice of selling commodities on a bid or auction basis. In July, 1 million bushels of rye had sold for less than 70 cents a bushel through a sealed bid, significantly below the market cash price of \$1.05 per bushel.¹³⁴ Pearson reinforced Howe's analysis of surplus disposal policies by noting their "disproportionate effect" on Canada: "There was no single subject in relations between the two countries today," he emphasized, "which was more controversial in Canada than the trade in wheat."¹³⁵

Faced with these vigorous representations, US secretaries failed to promise immediate changes to their surplus disposal policies. Ezra Taft Benson informed his hosts that "Canada is not suffering too badly from agricultural problems" and that some American experts believed that the United States did not, in fact, have a fair share of global food commodity markets.¹³⁶ Furthermore, PL-480 allowed for a much more orderly and flexible disposal of agricultural surpluses than otherwise would be the case if the Depression-era Commodity Credit Corporation used its considerable authority to sell farm products under any financial terms. Ultimately, the secretary of agriculture emphasized, only efforts to limit unregulated harvests and increase global consumption of foodstuffs would address the problem adequately. Both sides recognized the importance of the surplus disposal file in bilateral relations, and the communiqué issued at the meeting's conclusion stressed that "there should be closer consultation in an effort to avoid interference with normal commercial marketings."¹³⁷

Senior American and Canadian officials subsequently held a flurry of meetings in late 1955 to address the disposal of US agricultural surpluses. At a conference in Washington in October, Sharp reiterated the St. Laurent government's belief that PL-480 represented "the principal disruptive factor" in the international wheat market. But these representations were brushed aside, with Ben Thibodeaux, the State Department's director of the Office of International Trade and Resources, cheerfully informing his guests that only "technical points" separated the two countries. When pressed further by Canadian officials to explain the recent US sale of four million bushels of wheat through a cut-rate bid process, F.C. Daniels, the general sales manager of the Department of Agriculture's Commodity

Stabilization Service, bluntly asserted that, in this particular case, the port of New Orleans was blocked with surplus commodities, and the United States “had to sell the wheat or dump it in the ocean.”¹³⁸

These bilateral consultations continued into the early months of 1956 with no resolution of the vexing problem of surplus disposal policies. Both countries continued to increase their supplies of wheat, with Canadian production swelling from 519 million bushels in 1955 to 573 million bushels in 1956 and US production growing from 935 million bushels to slightly more than one billion bushels during the same period. But Ottawa proved to be unable to spur foreign sales of Canadian wheat while the United States continued to expand its wheat trade. Canadian wheat exports, in fact, would decline from 309 million bushels in 1955 to only 263 million bushels the following year, whereas American wheat exports through all trade mechanisms would increase to a then-postwar high of 549 million bushels in 1956, nearly 60 percent higher than the previous year.¹³⁹ Furthermore, only one-third of these US exports comprised purely commercial transactions, with the remainder coming under special transactions of barter, foreign currency sales, or relief.¹⁴⁰

While Ottawa grappled unsuccessfully with Washington’s permissive agricultural disposal policies, the St. Laurent government was more aggressive in protecting its domestic publishing industry. The Canadian magazine sector had experienced increasing competition from American publishers after the Second World War, with the US share of consumer magazine circulation increasing from two-thirds of the market in 1948 to four-fifths of the market in 1955. Of particular concern was the growth of special editions of American magazines such as *Time* and *Reader’s Digest* featuring editorial content created in the United States with minimal Canadian content. These American consumer magazines also took an increasing portion of available advertising revenue from Canadian corporations, with *Time* and *Reader’s Digest* alone increasing their share of gross advertising revenue in consumer magazines in Canada from 18 percent to nearly 37 percent between 1948 and 1955.

The St. Laurent government first wrestled with this problem early in 1956. Department of Finance officials offered several possible solutions to stem the flood of American publications entering Canada and the outflow of advertising revenue. A tariff could be levied against foreign periodicals

based on the weight of printed matter entering the country, but the tariff on magazine imports specifically had been eliminated in 1935 under a trade agreement with the United States and had been bound under GATT provisions that would be difficult to violate. A more promising approach involved the levying of a tax on gross advertising revenues of special editions that would be applied in a nondiscriminatory fashion to all foreign publications. Although an advertising tax could not be warranted on strictly commercial or economic grounds, it could be justified by emphasizing that Canadian magazines “form a really important strand in the fabric of Canadian life, and that no government could allow a strand of this importance to be broken or worn away.”¹⁴¹ Walter Harris subsequently proposed a 20 percent excise tax on the advertising revenues of special Canadian editions of foreign magazines to cabinet to be included in the upcoming federal budget for 1956-57. Although ministers believed that foreign magazine owners and domestic advertisers would “complain vociferously” about this blatant protectionism, they approved the measure on 19 March on cultural grounds and hopefully to prevent the further erosion of the market position of domestic periodicals.¹⁴²

The Eisenhower administration forcefully protested the planned advertising tax. The president raised the matter with Prime Minister St. Laurent on 27 March during the brief North American summit meeting at White Sulphur Springs while conceding that the Canadian magazine industry did face intense competition from American periodicals.¹⁴³ A less tactful response came two days later when the State Department abruptly called in Heeney to meet with Herbert Prochnow, the deputy undersecretary for economic affairs. “The spirit of Henry Luce unmistakably permeated the six or seven page memorandum which Prochnow was to recite,” Heeney reported exasperatingly to External Affairs, with Prochnow focusing exclusively on the commercial elements of the tax despite the ambassador’s repeated interjections that Canada’s motive “was not the protection of an industry but rather the maintenance of an institution – our national periodical literature.”¹⁴⁴ Eventually, Washington issued a formal protest note on 7 July requesting that the 20 percent tax not be implemented because of its injurious effects on American business interests and its potential to create “misunderstanding between our two countries which might well be detrimental to the broader interests of both.”¹⁴⁵

Ottawa refused to be swayed by these American protests. Harris informed cabinet on 2 August that a final decision needed to be reached on applying the advertising tax and repeated the arguments in its favour. Some ministers argued that the tax might have “no great practical effect” on the existing situation and that “drastic action” would be required against all US magazines entering Canada to protect domestic magazines. Others noted that GATT commitments precluded general tariff remedies, that the tax would be a deterrent to the entry of new US special editions into Canada, and that it would be most undesirable to withdraw a budget measure in response to American criticism.¹⁴⁶ Cabinet ultimately decided to impose the excise tax at its 7 August meeting, with ministers remarking that even the announcement of the proposed tax had already dissuaded some American magazines from establishing special editions in Canada. US objections to the measure could also be mitigated, members of cabinet believed, if its antidumping character would be explained clearly and emphasized.¹⁴⁷

Arnold Heenev immediately met with John Foster Dulles late in the afternoon of 7 August to deliver the formal response to the 7 July US protest note. The Canadian note emphasized that questions of bilateral commercial policy were not involved in the application of the excise tax since no tariff barrier to the free entry of US magazines had been established and the tax applied equally to all countries that might produce special editions for distribution in Canada. Dulles, speaking “rather light-heartedly” in view of the pressures that he faced, informed the ambassador that he regretted the Canadian decision and hoped that the St. Laurent government would regard the tax “as an experiment and that this experiment would meet the same fate as had the USA experiment with prohibition!”¹⁴⁸ The State Department officially replied to the Canadian note on 20 August, regretting the excise tax’s implementation and expressing hope that the measure would be temporary.

Washington returned to its position strongly opposing the advertising excise tax in March 1957. A diplomatic note claimed that the effects of the Canadian measure had been “severe,” causing some US magazines to halt their special editions and others to lose advertising revenue. Furthermore, the excise tax, the Eisenhower administration believed, could be used as a precedent for comparable economic actions by other countries and restrict the “free flow of information” essential to maintaining the Western alliance.

Canadian officials rejected these assertions. Indeed, the Department of Finance believed that the tax “appears to have been almost completely successful in achieving its objectives.” These achievements included the cancellation of several major US publications’ plans to establish special editions and the partial redress of the competitive imbalance between *Time* and *Reader’s Digest* and their Canadian rivals – all without violating Canada’s international obligations.¹⁴⁹

The Eisenhower administration’s protests of Ottawa’s implementation of the advertising sales tax occurred as its aggressive US surplus disposal policies continued unabated. Ongoing enticements to foreign countries disrupting normal commercial sales included an effort by Washington to provide wheat to France through a barter transaction that would see the French government construct housing for American military personnel.¹⁵⁰ There was also a new initiative to provide wheat to Communist Poland to build agricultural stockpiles. At a 7 January 1957 cabinet meeting, Canadian ministers determined that bilateral talks among senior officials occurring since the September meeting of the Joint Canada-US Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs were ineffective. Cabinet instead endorsed a proposal from Prime Minister St. Laurent to lobby President Eisenhower to investigate continued unfair disposal practices producing “a most difficult situation” for Canadian wheat farmers to build on the goodwill generated by a brief, unofficial meeting between St. Laurent and Eisenhower in December 1956.¹⁵¹ Learning that the prime minister was returning from a Florida vacation, the president, fresh from re-election, had invited him to pay a brief stopover. With Eisenhower in command of a golf cart, the two leaders played a round at the storied Augusta National Golf Course before St. Laurent headed home. Their meeting, St. Laurent remarked, was a “purely social chat,” viewed by a *New York Times* reporter as a sign of “the informality and amity” of bilateral relations.¹⁵²

“It is natural and perhaps inevitable that certain things are done in some branches of our respective administrations that you and I do not know about personally,” the prime minister subsequently noted in a letter to the president on 11 January 1957 before he emphasized the impact of American surplus disposal policies on Canadian wheat farmers. St. Laurent asked Eisenhower to determine whether Canadian concerns were justified and, if they were, to inform his senior cabinet officials on the Joint Committee

on Trade and Economic Affairs to assist in “avoiding consequences which, I am sure, are not intended and could be quite harmful to our common prosperity.”¹⁵³ In the president’s absence from Washington, US officials promised that a review of American wheat sales in foreign markets would be “immediately undertaken” and that a reply would be forthcoming from Eisenhower after he had received the results of the investigation.¹⁵⁴

Unsurprisingly, the analysis conducted by the Department of Agriculture essentially confirmed that, “despite all our reassurances, the Canadians have real grounds for certain fears about our wheat disposal efforts.” The French housing barter deal would displace some dollar sales from Canadian producers, the “inexperience” in the early administration of PL-480 “very likely” affected Canada negatively, and Ottawa’s concerns about proposed sales to Communist Bloc countries were justified.¹⁵⁵ The White House provided a detailed briefing to Heeney on the matter.¹⁵⁶ After that, and armed with this information, Eisenhower replied to St. Laurent in a carefully worded letter promising that he would express his “deep concern” to US officials involved with their Canadian counterparts about Washington’s sale of wheat in foreign markets. The president did promise “to reduce to a minimum the points at which our respective interests diverge,” but he noted that “it may be unreasonable to hope that disagreement will be eliminated from all areas in which Canada is affected by our emergency surplus disposal program.”¹⁵⁷

Eisenhower’s cautionary disclaimer proved to be prescient after Washington proposed in April 1957 to offer 500,000 tons of wheat under PL-480 to Poland, with generous credit terms that involved a five-year period of grace for payment and scheduled repurchases of Polish zlotys with dollars for up to thirty-five years.¹⁵⁸ This proposal threatened to undercut Canadian wheat negotiations with Poland and received immediate criticism from Ottawa. Mitchell Sharp warned the US embassy that the consummation of the US-Poland deal on these terms would “blow [the] lid off” economic relations between Canada and the United States and result in “open warfare” in the competition for international wheat markets.¹⁵⁹ Livingston Merchant, now installed as the US ambassador in Ottawa, subsequently took up the matter directly with Lester Pearson to mollify the Canadian foreign minister. Merchant emphasized that no final decision had been made about the Polish wheat deal and requested a more “open-minded consideration”

of the situation by the St. Laurent government. The “extremely easy” financial terms were “shockingly unorthodox,” but Ottawa, Merchant counselled, should recognize the “unique and fleeting opportunity” to make inroads in the Cold War in Eastern Europe if Poland’s needs could be accommodated. Pearson emphasized that US actions were “pressing on [an] extremely sensitive Canadian nerve,” and Merchant subsequently pressed the State Department to encourage Poland to buy additional quantities of Canadian wheat and engage in further high-level bilateral talks about the matter.¹⁶⁰

But Ottawa’s hope that further representations to senior American officials would prevent the noncommercial transaction with Poland proved to be illusory. In his farewell call on Ezra Taft Benson before ending his first stint as Canada’s ambassador in Washington, Heeney emphasized the “very serious” repercussions for Canadian-American economic relations if wheat disposal problems were not addressed. Although Benson was “sympathetic as usual,” he could not promise that any concessions would be granted.¹⁶¹ A delegation led by C. Douglas Dillon – who had stepped down as ambassador to France and would soon be appointed as assistant secretary for economic affairs – then met with C.D. Howe in Ottawa with no progress made. Far from retreating from the US position regarding the supply of 500,000 tons of wheat for Polish stockpiling purposes, Dillon encouraged Canada to provide an additional 300,000 tons of wheat to Poland.¹⁶² But discussions with Polish officials subsequently revealed that they had no interest in increasing cash purchases of Canadian wheat at market rates. In the end, the US-Poland transaction was finalized in May 1957, with External Affairs officials forced to send apologetic reassurances to Warsaw that their vigorous opposition to the American provision of wheat under long-term credit arrangements did not diminish Ottawa’s sympathy for the economic difficulties that Poland faced in requesting American agricultural aid.

The very depth and breadth of the close economic relationship between Canada and the United States meant that there was ample room for conflict. Moreover, American economic primacy left Canadians feeling victimized by the situation. Invited to address the Canadian Club in Vancouver in April 1956, in what was his final public speech before retiring from diplomatic life, R. Douglas Stuart had sought to alleviate

Canadian concerns while defending American foreign investment and the resulting control of industry in Canada, particularly in the natural resources sector. “There has been no relentless flood of US capital sweeping into Canada,” Stuart asserted, “undermining the economy and besieging the citadel of Canadian independence.” On the contrary, the ambassador stated, the “great preoccupation over the possibly injurious effects” of capital inflows was occurring while the amount and proportion of the American component of all foreign direct investment in Canada had declined since 1953. Stuart conceded that American finance would logically exert “a certain amount of influence” on the Canadian economy, but he emphasized that “my own sincere conviction is that US investment in Canada has been decidedly beneficial rather than detrimental.” Without naming him directly, Stuart also referred to – and quoted from – a recent speech delivered by George Drew in which the Progressive Conservative leader of the opposition criticized US investment and warned that Canada should not be treated like another state of the American union. Stuart informed his audience that these provocative statements about the alleged domination of foreign capital in Canadian industry were “being discussed emotionally perhaps more than logically.” Proponents of this view, Stuart continued, were not “seeking a solution but rather the creation of an issue” to generate “a maximum of suspicion and rasp the pride and self-respect of any Canadian.”¹⁶³

Meant to quieten critics in Canada, instead Stuart’s lecture “touched off political thunder and lightning” across the country.¹⁶⁴ Drew led the Tory charge by attacking the “unprecedented” nature of the ambassador’s remarks that constituted a “major diplomatic incident,” and he noted in a national radio speech that “nothing could be further from reality” than Stuart’s claim that he opposed US investment in Canada.¹⁶⁵ John Diefenbaker, the Conservative external affairs critic and future prime minister, criticized Stuart’s “gratuitous intrusion” into Canadian domestic affairs.¹⁶⁶ In the House of Commons, prominent Conservative E. Davie Fulton deplored the “extraordinary and unprecedented” events in Vancouver. Furthermore, Fulton claimed, Stuart’s speech demonstrated “how far things have gone along the line of acceptance of American domination” and represented “the action of a government here in Ottawa which has so debauched Canadian politics that it uses the United States ambassador as

a tool to advance its own political interests.”¹⁶⁷ Responding to this onslaught, Lester Pearson refuted any charge of collusion between Ottawa and Washington and denied any advance knowledge of the speech, but he noted that Stuart’s remarks nonetheless were “unfortunately of a character to provoke controversy” because of his senior diplomatic status.¹⁶⁸ Within the Department of External Affairs, Jules Léger, the undersecretary of state, also noted the unhappy timing of Stuart’s reference to legislation currently being debated by Parliament and his “ill-advised” mention of Drew’s speech, although he believed Stuart to be well within his rights to debate the contentious subject of US investment in Canada.¹⁶⁹

Despite these criticisms, other Canadians viewed Stuart’s speech as a “masterly argument” delivered by “one of the ablest representatives the United States has ever had in Canada or anywhere else – and, at times, an equally able spokesman for Canada in the United States.”¹⁷⁰ Stuart had indeed refrained from naked partisanship in Washington’s favour during his tenure as ambassador and frequently counselled American audiences to pay stronger heed to their northern neighbours. Speaking to a Northwestern University convocation audience in January 1955, for example, he warned that Canadians “find it increasingly hard to laugh off American ignorance and misconceptions about them” and that American indifference threatened to jeopardize the “unparalleled cordiality” that marked Canada-US relations.¹⁷¹ Stuart also expressed surprise that his Canadian Club address had provoked a hostile reaction in some quarters. “I am grieved that my friends in Ottawa should have interpreted my speech as anything other than an attempt to promote friendly relations between our two great countries,” he maintained. “Canada need not worry about an economic invasion by the United States,” the ambassador emphasized, since all developing economies had relied heavily on foreign capital, and “there is nothing sinister about this. It is simply an economic fact that capital always seeks a fertile field.”¹⁷² After his departure from Canada, Stuart continued to encourage the State Department to prioritize relations with Canada and move away from preoccupation with the “glamour” of older European nations. “We as a nation have been inclined,” he informed John Foster Dulles, “to take Canada for granted. This I think is a mistake.” Stuart recommended that “Canada should be given complete and proper attention” because of the increasingly complex nature of bilateral relations and the

fact that “Canada is more important to us commercially, and perhaps defensively, than any other country in the world.”¹⁷³

Stuart’s epistle to strengthen relations with Canada was in keeping with the thinking of many in the Eisenhower administration and the US government. The president himself prided the “quite special importance” that he attached to “good and easy relations” with his country’s northern neighbour.¹⁷⁴ But doing so abutted against the administration’s domestic priorities. Furthermore, the Canadians had their own political situation that hampered economic ties. The St. Laurent government’s concerns about the presence of US capital in Canadian industry had been largely dismissed by senior American officials, but the preliminary report of Walter Gordon’s Royal Commission on Canada’s Economic Prospects issued in December 1956 confirmed the concentration of American investment in Canada’s resource and manufacturing sectors. “It is quite clear from the evidence presented before this Commission,” the report emphasized, “that many Canadians are worried about such a large measure of decision-making being in the hands of non-residents or in the hands of Canadian companies controlled by non-residents.”¹⁷⁵ Beyond cross-border capital investment flows, trade irritants and commercial squabbles affected the US-Canada economic relationship before the summer of 1957. US tariff measures on lead, zinc, oats, and groundfish concerned Canadian officials, and no relief could be found in GATT venues to address these vexing American actions. For their part, Republican trade representatives lobbied vigorously when protectionist efforts to safeguard the Canadian magazine industry were inaugurated by the St. Laurent government. The primary economic dispute between Ottawa and Washington remained the latter’s insistence that surplus disposal policies backed by Congress would be pursued energetically to flood foreign markets with American agricultural products sold on noncommercial terms that elbowed out Canadian wheat.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that diplomatic channels between the two nations remained open, and, despite serious squabbles in several areas, bilateral economic relations were generally harmonious. Trade and investment flows blossomed from 1953 to 1957, continental economic integration and interdependence continued apace, and the parameters of major infrastructure projects such as the St. Lawrence Seaway were decided. Washington’s and Ottawa’s positions in contentious

cross-border matters were frequently generated by other factors beyond their pure economic foundations. The Eisenhower administration viewed several bilateral policy files through an international lens filtered through Cold War imperatives, and the presence of a powerful legislative branch in the US policy-making process attuned to purely domestic electoral concerns clearly affected Washington's economic diplomacy. The St. Laurent government, meanwhile, looked to moderate the increasingly preponderant influence of the United States by appealing to cultural and nationalist elements in Canadian society in the formation of Ottawa's negotiating stance with its American counterpart. And the consultative machinery between the two countries functioned properly beyond the heads of government diplomacy practised by Eisenhower and St. Laurent. Long-standing bilateral agencies such as the International Joint Commission and the Permanent Joint Board on Defence were augmented by the creation of the Joint Canada-US Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs that demonstrated the utility of bilateral cabinet-level discussions and that would gain increasing importance – along with a similar ministerial committee in joint defence matters created in 1958 – in Canadian-American relations during the second term of Eisenhower's presidency. These various bilateral bodies attested to the growth of links between the two North American partners, as well as to efforts in Canada to ensure a measure of parity with its larger neighbour, partly with an aim to temper American power and to remind Washington of Canada's own interests. This tendency among Canadians was evident not only on bilateral economic files but also on foreign policy issues that reached far beyond North America. And in the early Eisenhower era, Asia loomed particularly large as a Cold War flashpoint.

ASIAN DOMINOES AND CANADA'S DIPLOMACY OF CONSTRAINT, 1953–56

As French colonial forces in Indochina faced being overrun at their besieged fortress at Điện Biên Phủ in early 1954, American policy makers debated coming to their European ally's rescue. Officials in Washington feared a victory by the anticolonial, communist-dominated Vietminh, a concern matched by worry about being sucked into another conflict in Asia so soon after the Korean War. When the National Security Council (NSC) met to review options, Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey expressed upset that US intervention would mark a turn toward an expansive effort "to prevent the emergence of Communist governments everywhere in the world." Recognizing the risks of the United States overextending itself, nonetheless President Dwight Eisenhower mused about the danger of Indochina falling to communism. In a famous formulation, he likened the French colony to "the first in a row of dominoes. If it fell its neighbors would shortly thereafter fall with it, and where did the process end?" Mixing his metaphors, Eisenhower gave the answer: "It would end with the United States directly behind the 8-ball."¹

Eisenhower's enunciation of the Domino Theory reflected Americans' deep anxiety about the spread of the Cold War beyond Europe, about the overlap between communism and anticolonialism, and about the collapse of formal European imperialism and the perceived power vacuum left as empires retreated. Although opting not to intervene in Indochina to prop up French rule, the president remained convinced of the geopolitical importance of what was then coming to be called the Third World.

Addressing a conference of state governors months after Dien Bien Phu's fall, Eisenhower returned, publicly, to the potential domino situation:

Now let us assume that we lose Indochina. If Indochina goes, several things happen right away. The Malayan peninsula, the last little bit of the end hanging on down there, would be scarcely defensible – and tin and tungsten that we so greatly value from that area would cease coming. But all India would be outflanked. Burma would certainly, in its weakened condition, be no defense. Now, India is surrounded on that side by the Communist empire. Iran on its left is in a weakened condition ... All of that weakening position around there is very ominous for the United States, because finally if we lost all that, how would the free world hold the rich empire of Indonesia?²

Days later he confided to his NSC colleagues that “we must face up to it: We can't go on losing areas of the free world forever.”³ To address this fear, the United States ramped up covert and overt efforts to keep communists – real and imagined – out of power and prop up friendly governments, whether they were democratic or not.

For US policy makers, Asia was a special concern. In 1949, mainland China had been “lost” to communism; the following year Washington committed military forces to a grinding war in the Korean Peninsula. Communists seemed to be on the march in Malaya, Indochina, and elsewhere. During the Eisenhower administration, a series of crises moved Asia to the forefront. Whether in Korea, Indochina, or Taiwan (Formosa), the United States faced considerable difficulties ensuring that dominoes remained upright. Among those difficulties was securing support from allies such as Britain and Canada. Although allied governments had rallied behind Washington following the outbreak of the Korean War, that conflict had exposed significant fissures. By the time Eisenhower entered office in 1953, Asia had become the most serious point of disagreement between Ottawa and Washington, with Canadians wary of increasing American security commitments in the region and belligerent rhetoric. In an article published in the New York magazine *World* late that year, Lester Pearson highlighted discord over the region as “the greatest threat ... to the unity and purpose of the Western grand alliance against Communist imperialism” and a distraction from the

locus of the Cold War struggle in Europe. His message to US policy makers was simple: “Don’t Let Asia Split the West.”⁴

In contrast to the United States, with its historical imperial outposts in Hawaii, the Philippines, and even China, Canada was never a South Pacific power. The cultural, economic, and political interests of most elite Canadians lay overwhelmingly in the North Atlantic and Western Europe, where they had waged two wars in a generation to defend them. When Soviet aggression seemed to be likely to lead to a third, Canada rallied again, emerging as a founding architect of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1948–49. Containing Asian communism was not a Canadian concern. However, as the Cold War deepened, and as the European powers retreated from their colonial outposts, Canada was drawn increasingly into Asian affairs. Indeed, the 1950s witnessed a shift in Canadian foreign policy toward greater involvement in Asia, often in response to, if not in aid of, American moves. With Canadian officials viewing the American commitment to Western Europe as a prime goal, Pearson’s cautionary dictum to Washington not to let Asia split the West cut both ways. As a result, Canada often found itself supporting US policy. Such support was viewed by Canadian officials not only as the price of alliance but also as a means of exerting some influence in Washington. Ottawa feared that a conflict in Asia could spark a world war, so throughout the Cold War, and certainly during the Age of Eisenhower, Canadian officials pursued what one scholar labelled a “diplomacy of constraint,” an effort to temper American belligerence.⁵

When Asian matters threatened, as they did with the outbreak of the Korean War, Canadian diplomats rushed to remind Americans to keep their eyes on Europe and to avoid drastic action. Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and most of his cabinet thought that North Korea’s invasion of South Korea in June 1950 was simply a Soviet feint to divert attention toward Asia. But assured by Harry Truman that the United States would maintain its primary focus on Europe, Canada reluctantly signed on to the American crusade to contain communist aggression in the Korean Peninsula. Despite their misgivings, Canadians mostly kept quiet and followed the United States into battle, ponied-up for Korean reconstruction, and helped to isolate the People’s Republic of China, abandoning plans to recognize the communist regime in Beijing as Britain had done. The strategic bargain

lasted until autumn 1952, when mounting American frustrations with the Korean stalemate were made manifest in Eisenhower's election.

Fresh from his victory, in December President-Elect Eisenhower fulfilled a campaign promise to "go to Korea" to assess the situation for himself.⁶ Subsequently, he called for an "honorable peace."⁷ Ending the fighting proved to be just as difficult for the new Republican administration as it had for its Democratic predecessor. Not only would an armistice constitute a perceived loss for the West, but also Washington and Seoul refused to return Korean and Chinese prisoners of war who objected to returning to their communist governments. Canadian support for Indian efforts at the United Nations to broker an agreement on the prisoner issue had enraged Dean Acheson, Truman's secretary of state, who had confided to British officials a desire to bring Canada "to heel."⁸ There was far less animus from the Eisenhower White House, in part because of American recognition that the stalemate was a drain on resources. In February, Lester Pearson and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had discussed Asian affairs, mainly in positive terms, with the American admitting that the military situation had stabilized such that "there was little doubt that the line in Korea could be held." Dulles's attention was now on Indochina, "the most critical point in the world today."⁹ Pearson and his officials did not relish the United States being drawn into another conflict, particularly while the fighting in Korea continued.

Asian security featured heavily in St. Laurent's two-day visit to Washington in May. The trip followed the death of Joseph Stalin, a development that opened the possibility of improved East-West relations. In a major address in April, Eisenhower played up the "Chance for Peace," famously urging a reduction in arms spending, which he likened to "a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed." Repeating his earlier call for an "honorable" solution to the Korean stalemate, he warned of the growing communist threat in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ For Canadian officials, the prime minister's planned trip to the US capital was well timed to suss out the extent to which this speech marked a turn in US policy. St. Laurent's brief made clear the need to emphasize to the president that Canada continued to view Korea as a distraction and that, "although we fully agree with the US estimate of the importance of Indo-China and Malaya to the free world, our limited capacities make impossible any commitment to support actively the free world in either of these areas."¹¹

In public relations terms, the prime ministerial visit was a stunning success. Behind the scenes, Asia emerged as a major sticking point. Senior State Department officials impressed on Pearson the importance that the administration now placed on Indochina as the next front in the struggle against communism. Pearson rejoined that the situation seemed to be more “a struggle against French colonial control” than “an international security issue,” and it would take UN involvement before the Canadian public would permit Canada’s involvement in Indochina. He then turned to Korea, engaging in a lengthy discussion in which he underscored that “every effort should be made to try to attain an agreement on an armistice” and that Canada expected to be consulted on US moves.¹² In his own comments on Korea with St. Laurent, Eisenhower affirmed that an armistice was the preferred outcome to either a stalemate or a ramping up of fighting, adding that he was combatting public “impatience” and calls “for quick solutions of difficult problems,” such as “drastic” military action. St. Laurent was reassured by this statement, less so by the president’s emphasis on the “danger” of Indochina.¹³

While the Americans were shifting their focus away from Korea, in the weeks following St. Laurent’s visit to Washington, armistice talks proceeded, with the prisoner issue the prime stumbling block. Proposals by the communist side to meet the substance of the UN-approved Indian plan raised hopes of a breakthrough, but US diplomats proposed their own solution.¹⁴ Pearson was irate. He fired off instructions to Ambassador Hume Wrong in Washington to make it clear to the Americans that “we do not propose to follow them” and that Canada’s government was “disturbed” by their stance and upset that no consultation with co-belligerents had been undertaken.¹⁵ The message was received: Acting Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith informed Eisenhower that “Korean negotiations are at a crisis point. Our position vis-à-vis the Allies is deteriorating daily.”¹⁶ Smith subsequently briefed Wrong and the British, Australian, and New Zealand ambassadors, assuring them of Eisenhower’s commitment to negotiations. But ending on a sour note, he stated that if talks failed then “military operations will have to be intensified.”¹⁷ This harsh position underscored for Canadians the lingering danger of the Korean situation – and the wider Cold War – with Canada bound to the United States through an alliance yet having little control over US policy. In public, Pearson reaffirmed alliance

solidarity, telling an audience in Vancouver that “the Communists should not think, or try to make others think, that we are divided [over Korea] ... We are not.”¹⁸ In private, he had Wrong reiterate to his American interlocutors that Canada “could not accept any responsibility ... regarding additional military action” in Korea and that Ottawa expected consultations to proceed in the event that the war would need to be expanded.¹⁹

Thankfully, a breakthrough was found, and after an agreement on prisoners was reached an armistice was struck on 27 July. Although fighting ended, Canadian military units remained in South Korea in a UN force meant to deter renewed hostilities and to signal ongoing support for the United States. By 1954, Canadian officials were antsy about the deployment, as were the British and New Zealanders. As Pearson told his cabinet colleagues, the mission was a problem because it was coming to be associated with the planned Southeast Asia Defence Organization (later the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), an Asian “NATO” that Canada wanted no part of, and because South Korean strongman Syngman Rhee seemed to expect that UN forces would come to his aid even if he undertook aggressive action against North Korea.²⁰ After talks with Washington, Ottawa drew down its forces before removing them in May 1955.²¹ So ended Canada’s unhappy military experience in Korea, a conflict that many Canadians promptly forgot.

That the communist side had agreed to a ceasefire in Korea was seen by many as a demonstration of the new, post-Stalin Soviet leadership’s desire to improve relations with the West. As for Canada-US relations, the Korean War had made clear the two allies’ separate geopolitical priorities despite a shared worldview. Summarizing Canadian attitudes, Ambassador R. Douglas Stuart reported that Canada’s government accepted US “leadership in the Western world” and supported “without reservation our basic opposition to Communism and all that it stands for.” Where bilateral differences emerged, he observed, lay with “divergent views as to how Communism should be dealt with in the Far East.”²² Months later, during a visit to Ottawa, Eisenhower sought to win the Canadians over to the need to confront Asian communism. Speaking to the Canadian cabinet – a rare honour for a foreign official – the president emphasized that the Cold War was shifting to the periphery, a Soviet effort to weaken the West at the margins. “The real problem,” he intoned, “was to counter the gradual

subversion of democratic ideas and the fomenting of trouble in underdeveloped parts of the world.”²³ This thinking drove the Eisenhower administration’s resort to covert action in places such as Iran and Guatemala, where unfriendly regimes were toppled, and dispersal of economic and military assistance to friendly governments.

Eisenhower’s concern with the Cold War on the periphery – what was then coming to be known as the Third World, the vast territory that was a part of neither the Communist Bloc nor the West – was grounded in the Domino Theory and the sense that, when it came to US national security, there were no peripheral regions. The loss of Indochina, the National Security Council concluded in March 1953, “could not be localized, but would spread throughout Asia and Europe.”²⁴ Canadian officials rejected this view at least as far as it concerned Canada. “Militarily,” the head of Canada’s military emphasized, “we have no more interest in South East Asia than we would have in a case of communist aggression in Iran or Pakistan.”²⁵ Canadian officials characterized their own approach to Southeast Asia as “cautious,” reflected both in a limited diplomatic representation in the region and by the avoidance of commitments. Hence Ottawa’s decision to spurn membership in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (set up in 1954) despite the participation of Canada’s closest allies, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.²⁶ Pearson waffled between viewing that organization as “meaningless” and, as he confided to Krishna Menon, his Indian counterpart, a welcome development. In either case, Canada had no interest in security commitments outside the NATO area.²⁷ The one significant Canadian initiative in Southeast Asia was participation in the Colombo Plan.

When it came to Indochina specifically, Ottawa objected to viewing the anticolonial struggle as anything more than that. Pearson had said as much to Eisenhower and Dulles in May 1953.²⁸ And Canada’s position was to avoid formal military involvement in the colonial wars of its NATO allies. Ottawa looked skeptically at French efforts to “share the burden of the conflict” and connect the war to the “West’s struggle against Communism.”²⁹ Nor was this view kept secret. During an official visit to India in 1954, St. Laurent told reporters that NATO membership did not give Canada any obligation to intervene in Indochina.³⁰

Even so, Canadian officials recognized the need to support France, Britain, and other allies. In forums such as the United Nations, diplomats often

provided political cover, and with Indochina specifically Ottawa had transferred, since 1950, Canadian matériel to France for French forces in Europe with the recognition that some of it would be covertly diverted to colonial troops in Southeast Asia.³¹ Yet there was recognition that the war was intractable. In May 1953, as US officials were becoming increasingly invested in Indochina, Pearson confessed that he was “coming around more and more to the view that the only way out in Indochina is by a negotiated settlement with the Indochinese and Chinese Communists,” perhaps through the United Nations or some international regime.³² Given their “wary and aloof” posture toward the Indochina conflict, Canadian officials envisaged little role for Canada in this negotiating process unless, perhaps, the French faced “the prospect of a complete debacle.”³³

Just such a turn of events occurred between March and May 1954, with the Vietminh assault against Điện Biên Phủ. The battle occurred as France secured British, American, and Soviet agreement to hold talks dealing with Indochina concurrent with peace negotiations over Korea. Belligerents in the Korean War were invited to participate in that portion of the conference, meaning that Canada would attend, as would Communist China. Set to convene in late April, the Geneva conference offered the prospect of settling tensions in Asia, even as the French situation at Điện Biên Phủ deteriorated.

Against preparations for Geneva, the Eisenhower administration considered using military force to shore up the French position. In January, Eisenhower had told advisers that there “was just no sense in even talking about United States forces replacing the French in Indochina,” but two months later, amid the fighting at Điện Biên Phủ, he was more open to US intervention provided that “there were the political preconditions necessary for a successful outcome.”³⁴ The solution seemed to involve building an international coalition, what Dulles called “united action.” Washington eyed support from New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and Britain, the linchpin. Building a coalition was important because, as Eisenhower recognized, domestic sensitivities after the Korean stalemate meant that there was “no possibility whatever of US unilateral intervention.”³⁵ As American diplomats scurried to secure help from allied governments, the president publicly appealed for assistance in Indochina, invoking the Domino Theory and casting doubt on a negotiated settlement.

Privately, he remarked that he was “gambling thousands to save billions,” adding that it was impossible to let “the Communists chip away any more.”³⁶

As part of the effort to secure united action, Dulles approached Arnold Heeney, lobbying the Canadian ambassador in Washington on the necessity of military intervention. Recognizing Canada’s limited interests in Southeast Asia, the secretary of state first invoked the Domino Theory to present the situation there as a threat to Japan – a country of economic importance to Canada – and then contended that, with the talks in Geneva to begin soon, it was necessary to present a “united front.” Heeney’s response was blunt: Canada’s only commitments to the region lay through its membership in the United Nations, Ottawa’s preferred channel for action.³⁷ Pearson made the same point in the House of Commons later that day, quelling public speculation about the government’s stance toward united action. The American plan, he commented later, suffered from “a combination of rashness and desperation” and would “do little to help the French or Indo-China and might even extend and intensify the present conflict.”³⁸ St. Laurent shared this view, and, in a statement released several weeks later, following open appeals for assistance from Paris, the prime minister reiterated that Canada lacked any military commitment to Indochina.³⁹

Canadian participation was admittedly a long shot, whereas the Americans had high hopes for gaining help from Britain given that country’s strategic interests in a region where it still held colonial possessions. In a flurry of briefings on both sides of the Atlantic in mid-April – what historian Fredrik Logevall called “a remarkable fortnight in American diplomacy” – Eisenhower, Dulles, and other senior administration officials urged their British counterparts to join them in an armed intervention to save the French position at Điện Biên Phủ.⁴⁰ The results were disappointing. British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was at pains to stress the unlikelihood that Indochina could be held militarily. “The loss of the fortress must be faced,” added Prime Minister Winston Churchill.⁴¹ During NATO meetings in advance of the Geneva conference, Eden shared this assessment with Pearson, who agreed that intervention had little chance of success. What Pearson feared, he told his British counterpart, was that the Americans would “go it alone,” a move that would create “explosive” differences between Washington and its allies.⁴²

The lack of allied support for united action had already created tensions within the Western alliance. President Eisenhower complained of British officials' "morbid obsession that any positive move on the part of the free world may bring upon us World War III."⁴³ Yet, as he himself recognized, the Indochinese situation was dangerous. Unilateral intervention, the president speculated, "would mean a general war with China and perhaps with the USSR, which the United States would have to prosecute separated from its allies."⁴⁴ Finding little support and with the stakes of involvement so high, the Americans held back, watching as the garrison at Điện Biên Phủ surrendered on 7 May.

In the meantime, the Geneva conference opened on 26 April. Canada participated officially in the portion dealing with Korea, which ended on 15 June having failed to find agreement on a path to unification or a formal peace treaty. Arriving for the conference, Pearson was ready, as he told US officials, "to assist in any possible way and to avoid any position which would suggest that we were indifferent to United States difficulties."⁴⁵ In an address to the gathered delegates that won plaudits from the Americans, Canada's foreign minister castigated the North Koreans and Communist Chinese for their "aggressive military action" and decried communist designs on Asia as a threat to "peace [and] prosperity."⁴⁶ The Canadians matched this rhetoric by opposing North Korean proposals for unification. At the same time, there was little enthusiasm for the hard line taken by the Americans and South Koreans. "Is it more important to preserve our unity at all costs," Canadian diplomats wondered, "or to stand by our principles which satisfy our conscience?"⁴⁷ Three weeks later the answer was clear: "In order to avoid any appearance of disunity ... we are prepared to accept the [Western] declaration [of negotiating principles] and sign it ... We have no intention of making any public declaration of dissent."⁴⁸ Pearson and his team made little effort to broker a breakthrough agreement on Korea, accepting US leadership and, in effect, the peninsula's North-South division. In a private note written at the outset of the conference, Canada's foreign minister had reflected that foremost among "communist aims" at Geneva was to divide the Americans from their allies.⁴⁹ Pearson had no desire to create such divisions.

Although opting to back the Americans, he found their conduct at Geneva upsetting. Beyond the hard-line position on Korea, he judged it a

mistake that Dulles had avoided “having even nodded” to Zhou En-Lai, the Communist Chinese premier in attendance. “This, of course, may be understandable in terms of American domestic politics,” Pearson reflected, “but it doesn’t seem to make sense here” amid discussions meant to bring about settlements in Korea and Indochina. Like Washington, Ottawa refused to recognize the regime in Beijing; however, the Canadians were convinced that this stance needed to change. Indeed, hearing that Zhou wanted to meet him, Pearson made sure to have himself “introduced to him one afternoon at the buffet.” Zhou invited Pearson to his delegation’s hotel, where the two chatted and the Chinese premier presented the Canadian with a ceremonial book of ink writing printed on rice paper. In addition to these brief exchanges, Chester Ronning, Pearson’s assistant, who had served in China in the 1940s, set about building contacts with the Chinese delegation.⁵⁰ These fleeting interactions – denounced by American delegate Walter Bedell Smith as “fraternization” – soon proved to be consequential in connection to Indochina.⁵¹

Pearson’s sense that Dulles was mistaken in ignoring Zhou paled next to his incredulity at American hostility to India. Canada’s foreign minister and many of his officials believed in India’s importance to any Asian settlement, judging that the country was better positioned to assess Asia’s post-colonial complexities than either the United States or the former colonial powers of Europe. In contrast, they found their US counterparts “almost pathological” on the subject of Indian involvement in Asian security issues.⁵² At one point, Pearson fantasized to his colleague Escott Reid, the Canadian high commissioner in New Delhi, about a scenario in which he could take Reid’s reports on India and “get Mr. Dulles alone, relaxed before a cheerful fire, and soothed by a glass of bourbon, [and] ... read every word of them to him!”⁵³ No such opportunity presented itself. As a result of ongoing American hostility to India, Canadian diplomats engaged in a balancing act. Pearson encouraged Anthony Eden to take Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru into his confidence regarding discussions in Geneva. At the same time, Pearson told his officials that “he did not wish [Canada] to become the principal channel for informing the Asians of what took place.”⁵⁴ When he left the conference, he quietly proposed a meeting of Commonwealth foreign ministers, hoping to associate India more closely with Asian security arrangements. However, he insisted that New Delhi issue the

invitations lest Washington learn of his involvement. When the press heard of the Canadian initiative, Pearson quickly retreated, dropping the idea.⁵⁵ For their part, the Indians saw value in their contacts with Canada. Judging that he could not affect the United States directly, in a talk with Chinese leader Mao Zedong, Nehru outlined his hope of influencing it “indirectly through countries like Britain, France or Canada.”⁵⁶

Alliance solidarity and the potential for Canadians to play a moderating role also clashed on the question of Canadian involvement in Indochina. Canada was not formally a part of the Indochinese talks at Geneva, although Pearson kept abreast of the discussions via the British and Americans, adopting a posture that he described as “avoid[ing] indifference, on the one hand, and commitments on the other.” Given the preconference threat of American intervention and the mid-conference surrender of the *Điền Biên Phủ* garrison, he recognized the importance of a settlement because, “if the Indochinese question goes very wrong, serious and widespread conflict might result, from whose consequences we would not be able to escape.”⁵⁷ The result of the Geneva conference was a series of accords covering Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, with the last to be divided temporarily in two. France agreed to withdraw its forces from the northern half of Vietnam, leaving it to the nationalist and communist Vietminh; the French and their allies would remain in the south. The accords prohibited the introduction of military personnel or matériel into the region and called for elections on Vietnam’s future to be held in 1956. Most of the conference members signed the final documents, though not the United States, which agreed only that it would not obstruct the accords.

To oversee the peace deal, the conference set upon creating three truce commissions – one each for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia – a method used in Korea in the run up to the war, obviously with poor results. To avoid a rerun of the Korean commission (on which Canada had sat), in which there had been an equal Western-communist division, meaning that no majority could be found and no decision reached, the Geneva delegates opted for a troika structure: Poland, for the communist side; neutral India; and Canada, for the West. Canada’s nomination by the Chinese delegation came as a “complete surprise” to Canadian diplomats, a testament to the country’s status internationally.⁵⁸ Since participation in the International Commission for Supervision and Control would mark a major commitment

to a region in which Ottawa had long expressed no interest, it remained to be seen whether Canada would participate.

Beyond concerns about financial and personnel costs, Canadian officials were mindful of the potential for “trouble and embarrassment,” especially in the event that Canadian commissioners might need to rule against the South Vietnamese side and thereby upset Washington. “The consequences for us of being involved in a difficult and politically dangerous enterprise such as this without even moral support from the United States would be serious indeed,” mused officials.⁵⁹ Despite this potential friction, the Americans were supportive of Canadian membership, viewing Canada as a stalking horse for Western interests. As Dulles told Eisenhower, the Canadians would be in a position to “block things.”⁶⁰ Delivering the official US response to Ambassador Heenev, Robert Murphy stated that Washington was “delighted” that Canada was invited to participate, adding, in reply to a question from Heenev, that, though Ottawa “could certainly ‘get away’ with refusing” to sit on the commission, “whether it would be in the free world’s interest for it to do so was another question.”⁶¹ With the Eisenhower administration’s blessing, Pearson informed cabinet that his department was “satisfied that the procedures envisaged by these agreements were workable and might result in a permanent settlement of the Indo-China problem.” Overcoming their hesitation, ministers approved participation in the commission with the hope that the Geneva Accords would “prevent further bloodshed.”⁶²

As the International Commission for Supervision and Control formed in August 1954, the Canadians selected Sherwood Lett, a lawyer and veteran of both world wars, to chair Canada’s delegation. In instructions to Lett, Pearson outlined the issues at stake in Indochina and Canada’s interest in the commission. Hardly satisfactory, the ceasefire agreements were based “on political and military realities” and were the consensus of the parties at Geneva. As such, it was important that the accords be made to work, because if properly implemented they could “prevent Laos and Cambodia from falling under Communist domination” and give breathing space to allow a noncommunist South Vietnam to take form. Safeguarding the region against communism was a prime objective, Pearson wrote, and though this goal reflected Canada’s “Western outlook” it was vital to “maintain an attitude of judicial impartiality” to ensure that the commission

could function in its various tasks: overseeing the release of prisoners of war and the relocation of military forces, observing demarcation lines, and preventing the introduction of new military forces and matériel. The commission had no enforcement powers, but that meant that there were no resulting commitments, a key consideration for Ottawa. Overall, Canada's overriding interest in Southeast Asia was the "maintenance of peace," no easy task.⁶³

Canadian policy makers also envisioned another, secretive role for Canada to play in Indochina. In late July 1954, as the planning for Canadian participation was proceeding, Ambassador Heeney had indicated to US officials – presumably at Pearson's behest – that Canada would be willing to provide the Americans with intelligence gathered via its work on the commission. As Heeney emphasized, Ottawa judged that it could perform this task "quite properly without impinging upon our international responsibilities" as commission members. Shortly thereafter, Walter Bedell Smith, a senior State Department official, Eisenhower confidant, and former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, confirmed that Washington would appreciate any information that Canadian commissioners could provide.⁶⁴ A formal proposal was put to Pearson and approved: Canadian commissioners would be surveyed upon completion of their assignments, with the collected information sent to the Americans. This suggestion testified to Canada's willingness to help its American ally, a typical role that Canada played in the Cold War. Later allegations of spying would tarnish Canada's image among observers who saw it as evidence of Canadian complicity in the American war in Vietnam. Lett himself wished to avoid this perception, refusing to pass along intelligence. When he left in 1956, David Johnson, his successor as chairperson, agreed to participate, as did dozens of other Canadians who served on the commission.⁶⁵ Importantly, intelligence followed both ways, with the Americans furnishing information to the Canadians and other friendly governments.⁶⁶

Simply put, Canadians were willing to perform this task because the United States was an ally engaged in the important work of containing communism in Southeast Asia, a goal shared by officials in Ottawa. For example, having visited Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia on a goodwill tour in 1956, Paul Martin, the minister of health and welfare in St. Laurent's government, praised American efforts to turn these countries into

“bastions against further Communist penetration.”⁶⁷ By 1965, 23 percent of Canadian foreign service officers had served on the commission, the overwhelming majority of them returning with negative views of North Vietnam, skepticism of Indian neutralism, and sympathy for US policy in the region.⁶⁸ However, there was a stark contrast between support for Washington’s nation-building efforts and the increasingly militarized response to communism that began in the 1960s – and that had threatened to erupt in 1954.

Although Canadian officials shared with their American allies the overall goal of preventing Southeast Asia from falling to communism, serving on the commission put Canada in an unenviable position given actions by both the South Vietnamese and the Americans that ran counter to the Geneva Accords. By late 1954, frustration with South Vietnamese strongman Ngô Đình Diệm’s obstruction of the commission’s work reached the point where Pearson complained to Dulles that, if the situation did not improve, then Canada would not “leave our mission there indefinitely.”⁶⁹ Pearson and Dulles themselves clashed over the Eisenhower administration’s opposition to the elections called for by the accords and that the International Commission for Supervision and Control was supposed to oversee. At the Canadian foreign minister’s request, in March 1955 the US secretary of state visited Ottawa to brief government ministers on the situation in Asia, notably Vietnam and the Taiwan Strait. In a private chat, the two top diplomats engaged in a heated argument over the elections, Pearson emphasizing the likelihood of a Vietminh defeat given communism’s unpopularity with the Vietnamese people, Dulles doubtful that communists would permit free elections. This significant disagreement aside, when Pearson repeated his threat to withdraw Canada from the “very complicated and difficult responsibilities” that it had undertaken via the commission, Dulles urged the Canadians to stay put. Vietnam’s fate, he added, was likely to be partition along the lines of Korea and Germany, hardly a reassuring prediction given that these countries were Cold War flashpoints.⁷⁰

Diem’s declaration on 23 October 1955 founding the Republic of Vietnam indeed put an end to the elections and the plan of unifying Vietnam. With this turn of events shredding the Geneva Accords, Canadian policy makers debated the merits of remaining on the commission, ultimately

deciding to do so. As was apparent to US officials, the Canadians were doubtful of American policy in the region, viewing it as risking the armistice that had been in place since Geneva.⁷¹ Over the next decade, Canadian commissioners watched first hand as US involvement in Vietnam deepened to the point of war.

Involvement in the control commission meant increased interactions between Canadian and Indian officials, a welcome development for policy makers in Ottawa who believed that India, a Commonwealth partner, had an important role to play in stabilizing Asia. This belief differentiated Canada's approach to India from that of the United States, where New Delhi's policy of neutralism was regarded with great suspicion. In turn, the Indians were wary of American involvement in Asian affairs, which seemed all too reminiscent of European imperialism.⁷² In early 1954, Louis St. Laurent was scheduled to travel to India as part of a "world tour" through Western Europe and South and East Asia, affording him an opportunity to address the gulf between India and the United States. With the prime minister's trip occurring as the French position in Indochina collapsed and as questions loomed over the American response, he arrived in New Delhi in February determined to "allay some of the more extreme fears of Western policy, and in particular of US policy, which preys on the minds of Indian leaders."⁷³

St. Laurent had ample opportunity to address the US approach to Asia, meeting with his Indian counterpart, Jawaharlal Nehru, five times over four days. The Canadian was sympathetic not only to Nehru and to India's policy of nonalignment but also to Washington, defending American efforts to contain communism and distinguishing US actions from those of European imperial powers. In a speech to the Indian parliament, he praised the "readiness of the United States to assume the responsibilities of a major power." Asians, he continued, had nothing to fear from Americans because, as their neighbours, Canadians knew them to have "no other ambition than to live and let others live in mutually helpful international intercourse."⁷⁴ The gathered parliamentarians met this statement with disapproving silence. St. Laurent, Indian diplomats complained, was acting "as an emissary for the United States in making these remarks."⁷⁵ Nehru came away from his meetings with the Canadian with a nuanced judgment. "Of course," he wrote, "in the final analysis [Canadians] side with the US.

Canada has given support to the US because of the dollar returns.” Yet he recognized that Ottawa had been “consistently friendly” toward India, listened receptively to Nehru’s explanations of Indian policy, and exercised “a restrained influence on the US.”⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, American officials were delighted with St. Laurent’s comments. “No nation could ask for a more sympathetic advocate,” Ambassador R. Douglas Stuart told Ottawa reporters. Full of similar praise in a letter to St. Laurent, Eisenhower expressed the certainty that “the trip will prove to have been of particular value in demonstrating the goodwill of the West towards the new nations of the East and in advancing mutual understanding.”⁷⁷

St. Laurent’s praise for the United States was not his only notable statement to come out during his visit to India. Encouraged by Nehru, at a press conference with Indian and Canadian reporters, St. Laurent not only endorsed his Indian counterpart’s call for an immediate ceasefire in Indochina “without any reservation or hesitation” but also signalled a shift in policy on China. Making clear his disapproval of the communist government, he stated that nevertheless it was time for a “realistic” approach to recognize that “it is not the Nationalist government in Formosa that represents the great mass of humanity that constitutes the people of China.”⁷⁸ This comment left American diplomats scrambling to discern whether Canada would recognize the Communist regime in Beijing and support the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in taking over China’s seat at the United Nations. Although assuring Stuart that the status quo remained in effect, Pearson remarked nonetheless that “it was a mistake, particularly in diplomacy, for any country to state that never would it do this, that, [or the] other thing.”⁷⁹

Recognition of Beijing constituted a direct challenge to US policy on China. As Eisenhower had explained to Canadian cabinet ministers during his trip to Ottawa in 1953, American opinion was overwhelmingly against recognizing the PRC, for “recognition in the minds of American citizens had implied approval and that was an attitude which the American government must always keep in mind.”⁸⁰ The other extenuating circumstance was the status of the Republic of China, based on the island of Taiwan. Officially recognized as the legitimate Chinese government by the United States, Canada, and most Western governments – though not Britain, which recognized the PRC – the Republic of China held China’s seat at the United

Nations. Naturally rejecting this situation, the PRC claimed suzerainty over Taiwan. With the Nationalist regime in Taipei and the Communist regime in Beijing each committed to one another's destruction, the situation in the Taiwan Strait was tense, with the added complication of what action Washington would take in the event of a war between the two Chinas. For US policy makers, Taiwan was an important domino, not only because of its geographic position between Japan and the Philippines, but also because of the influence within the United States of the powerful China lobby, which pushed for a hard line in Asia.⁸¹ Indeed, Pearson and St. Laurent recognized the China lobby's hold on American policy makers and the lack of a similar body in Canada as a chief cause of the two allies' differing outlooks.⁸²

Canada's approach to China was characterized by caution: a desire not to offend the United States by breaking ranks over recognition and a hope that a conflict between Nationalist China and Communist China could be avoided lest the Americans – and, by extension, the Canadians – be drawn into a war. The Canadians had looked in horror as American forces blundered by drawing the Chinese communists into the Korean War in 1950. The risk of a similar occurrence overshadowed Canadian-American interactions over Taiwan: not only was Chiang Kai-shek, the long-time Nationalist potentate, an unpredictable character, but also US officials were prone to belligerent rhetoric, raising the prospect that they might actually practise what they preached. In 1954, Pearson was taken aback when Dulles told him that he “regarded communism as something not to be tolerated; that he could not face the idea of co-existence; and that it was his policy to bring about the overthrow of the Peking regime.”⁸³ For Canadian policy makers, who doubted the wisdom of pretending that the communist government did not exist or that a war with China would be anything short of a disaster, such statements were alarming.

Canadian doubts about US policy in Asia deepened in the autumn of 1954 when Communist China began shelling Nationalist positions on the Dachens, Quemoy, and Matsu, islands offshore from the mainland, perhaps paving the way for an invasion of the islands or even Taiwan itself. If the situation escalated beyond shelling, then would the United States intervene? Discussing options with the National Security Council, Eisenhower was blunt: “They are talking about war.” And if war with Communist China came, he added, then he was “firmly opposed to any holding back like we did in Korea.”⁸⁴

Whereas in the past Canada might have ignored such a situation, the risks of escalation, the alliance with the United States, and its new role on the international commission in Indochina gave it a larger stake in the region. “The Canadian public,” Arthur Menzies of the Department of External Affairs Far Eastern Division warned, “would be greatly alarmed if Canada’s efforts to establish peace in the Far Eastern area were jeopardized by provocative action in the China Sea.”⁸⁵ With allies panicked, US diplomats were at pains to offer reassurances, as Walter Bedell Smith did to Arnold Heeney, that the United States was unlikely to intervene in a Chinese invasion of the offshore islands; an attack on Taiwan, though, would be another matter. Soothing the fears of Ottawa policy makers over potential US military involvement, Heeney stressed that it was “essential to remember that the final decision lies with Eisenhower, who is a man of great caution.”⁸⁶

Heeney’s praise for the US president was not misplaced. Eisenhower recognized the danger of the situation, and he pushed back against the China lobby’s demands to strike Communist China. “The hard way,” he told a group of Senate Republicans, “is to have the courage to be patient.”⁸⁷ In December 1954, the Americans convinced Chiang to pull his forces from the Dachens – the most northern and least defensible islands – in exchange for a security guarantee. Washington pledged to defend Taiwan but was ambiguous about Matsu and Quemoy. The following month the Communists renewed their bombardment of the remaining Nationalist forces on the offshore islands, prompting speculation about where Washington would draw limits. Dulles pressed his NSC colleagues to recognize that abandoning the islands altogether would see a congressional “revolt,” with Eisenhower adding that public opinion would not stand for backing down in the face of aggression. Drawing a historical analogy popular in postwar policy-making circles, he “said that there was hardly a word which the people of this country feared more than the term ‘Munich.’”⁸⁸ Avoiding appeasement carried the risk of war, but in a show of domestic solidarity behind his course of action the president secured a congressional resolution backing the defence of Taiwan and related territories.

Amid these tensions, Pearson publicly clarified Canada’s stance. First, he told the House of Commons that Taiwan’s fate should be settled by international negotiations and that the Nationalists should withdraw from

the offshore islands.⁸⁹ Several days later, as he prepared to leave for a Commonwealth summit, he used a national radio broadcast to clarify the differences between the American and Canadian approaches to the situation. "The policies now being worked out in Washington to deal with these matters are American, and Canada is not committed to them," he assured his audience, adding that Canada's only obligations arising from the situation lay in its responsibilities as a UN member. War over the islands, Pearson affirmed pointedly, would be "tragic" and "unutterable folly."⁹⁰ His instinct was to buttress these public statements with private representations in Washington, instructing Heeney to explain to the State Department that Ottawa drew a distinction between Taiwan – whose security was important – and the offshore islands, which were not worth a war.⁹¹

Complicating matters for Ottawa was that Anthony Eden had placed the crisis on the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of Commonwealth prime ministers, raising speculation about a joint diplomatic *démarche* by Britain, India, Canada, and other countries. Anxious not to see the United States isolated, Pearson telephoned Dulles and offered to explain US policy in London to dispel any "extreme and erroneous impressions." Seizing the offer, Dulles emphasized three points: first, the United States did not want war; second, it would hold Taiwan; and third, US strategy was largely designed to restrain Nationalist enthusiasms. He also engaged in an explication of the Domino Theory, emphasizing that if Taiwan fell then Japan would follow, compromising the security of the United States, Canada, and the Commonwealth states of Australia and New Zealand.⁹² Evidently, Pearson was not swayed by this latter line of thinking. At the Commonwealth meetings in early February, he reported the gist of Dulles's three points to his counterparts, adding only that it would be important to find a unified front with Washington lest the "free world" appear divided.⁹³

Pearson's desire to clarify US policy to his Commonwealth colleagues was balanced by a willingness to work with them to undertake a joint initiative. After separate preparatory talks with British and Indian officials, Pearson met Eden and Nehru on the summit's sidelines, where they agreed on some international settlement via the United Nations. Pearson laid out the idea – as an interim measure meant to quell the immediate situation – of getting Washington to offer a reassurance that the Nationalists would withdraw from the remaining islands and a Chinese reassurance that it

would not interfere with this withdrawal. Impressed, Eden and Nehru agreed to proceed. The British reached out to Dulles, and the Indians approached Beijing.⁹⁴ Pearson, meanwhile, briefed Walton Butterworth, the US ambassador in London, to ensure “that there should be no impression created in Washington that anything like collective pressure on the Americans is involved.” He also underscored that Canada was only informally involved with the Anglo-Indian proposal.⁹⁵ This foray in Pearsonian diplomacy was a cautious one.

Washington’s response to the joint initiative, in Pearson’s words, was “very disturbing.” At a full meeting of Commonwealth representatives, Eden read the British ambassador in Washington’s report of a discussion with Dulles. The secretary of state had brushed aside the proposal, instead indicating his country’s intention of coming to the Nationalists’ aid should the Communists assault the offshore islands. The gathered premiers agreed to support “a very stiff” rejoinder from Eden asserting that the British would not back the Americans in this course.⁹⁶ The Commonwealth summit ended on this sour note. Given ongoing public and parliamentary speculation about the Canadian reaction to American military intervention in the islands, in the House of Commons St. Laurent repeated Pearson’s earlier statement that, outside the United Nations, Canada had “no commitments regarding collective security in the Far East.” Offering reassurance to his listeners, and to Washington, he praised Eisenhower for recognizing that the present crisis required “great care, great patience, and understanding.”⁹⁷

Kind words about Eisenhower did not disguise the fact that Canada, like other allies, did not back US policy. Perhaps the Canadian diplomat most sympathetic to the Americans, Ambassador Heeney later reflected that at this point in early 1955 he had a sense of “increasing confidence” in Eisenhower’s ability to handle peacefully the offshore islands crisis offset by doubts about the ongoing influence of the “extreme Chiang Kai-shek group.”⁹⁸ Washington policy makers recognized that a lack of support was a major handicap. In the words of one top State Department official, the dearth of allied backing would “seriously impair our capabilities if hostilities spread” beyond the Taiwan Strait.⁹⁹

To shore up foreign opinion, Dulles stepped into the breach, inviting Pearson to meet in New York. The meeting was important for both men.

Dulles was anxious to secure support from Pearson, then at the height of his international influence, and the Canadian hoped to clarify and moderate US policy. Neither achieved his full objective, but both left encouraged and satisfied. For his part, Pearson warned Dulles of “real anxiety” in the Commonwealth over American backing of a Nationalist defence of Quemoy and Matsu. If that was US policy, he explained, then “it would be difficult if not impossible to support her.” Dulles was unbending. Nationalist morale could not stand another retreat, he insisted, and the United States would back Chiang’s forces to the hilt. Even so, he promised that Washington would ensure that the islands were not used for offensive actions and would stop Chiang from shipping military supplies to the islands for this purpose. In “due course,” Dulles explained, he hoped to convince the Nationalists to withdraw from Quemoy and Matsu. But doing so would take time. Pearson saw an opening now and asked Dulles if he could interpret the American position thus: “Therefore, in the knowledge of this defensive policy, which was also one of ultimate withdrawal, those who had contact with the Chinese Communists should persuade them to take no military action against the islands. We would then have a *de facto* cease-fire and at least a chance of working out later some satisfactory solution.”¹⁰⁰ Dulles agreed with the Canadian’s interpretation and expressed the hope that Beijing could be persuaded accordingly.

As Pearson saw it, his American counterpart had given the go ahead for a diplomatic overture. With St. Laurent’s blessing, he promptly relayed his conversation with Dulles to Escott Reid, who in turn passed the message on to Nehru. “It is my conviction after my visit to New York,” Canada’s foreign minister stated, “that our best and possibly our only hope of avoiding hostilities is to persuade the Chinese Communists to restrain any attacks on the coastal islands and the Chinese Nationalists from using these islands for attacking the Communists.”¹⁰¹ Despite the possibility of a breakthrough, Nehru failed to pass along this information to Beijing. As for Dulles, he told colleagues that he had won Pearson’s sympathy – but that was not so. The Canadian foreign minister described the American’s unyielding attitude as “half-Presbyterian, half Jesuit.”¹⁰² It was not a compliment. Dulles had impressed Pearson with his candour and by stating that his long-term goal was to see the Nationalists decamp from the islands. “I think we must accept the fact that if there is an attack on [Taiwan],” the Canadian told

Eden, “the Americans will probably intervene. I would also like to accept the fact that Dulles’ long-range policies ... are sincere and sound.”¹⁰³

As tensions over the offshore islands remained, the implications for Canada came blindingly into focus. At interdepartmental talks on national security with Minister of National Defence Ralph Campney and General Charles Foulkes, the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, Pearson complained that the standoff over the islands was the result of political factors – US domestic politics and a desire to preserve American prestige – instead of strategic ones. What was so frustrating, then, was that, as Canada’s foreign minister well knew from his briefing notes for the meeting, American support for Taiwan was likely to cause a “chain reaction of events” leading to a war that would involve Canada. Foulkes affirmed as much, noting the likelihood that, in any confrontation with Communist China, the United States would deploy North American-based bomber aircraft, requiring permission to overfly Canadian territory. Beyond the decision to approve these flights, Ottawa would need to weigh approving precautionary defensive measures against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) since the Soviets were likely to come to China’s defence. The United States might even launch pre-emptive strikes on the Soviet Union. In short, the situation in the Taiwan Strait had the potential to become a nuclear war.¹⁰⁴

Faced with this stark reality, Pearson bandied about for a solution. One possibility was to create an international regime to monitor the Taiwan Strait. With Dulles away on a diplomatic mission to Asia, the Americans showed little interest in the idea, and Pearson ordered it abandoned lest word leak out of what might be “designated as a Canadian peace proposal.”¹⁰⁵ Then came two troubling statements by Dulles and Eisenhower. In a radio broadcast from his Asian tour, the secretary of state warned of his country’s willingness to deploy “new and powerful weapons of precision” – a reference to nuclear weapons. “We must, if occasion offers,” he stated in an announcement of the massive retaliation policy to which he had given voice the previous year, “make it clear that we are prepared to stand firm and, if necessary, meet force with a greater force that we possess.”¹⁰⁶ Asked about this comment at a press conference several days later, the president confirmed that, “where these things can be used on strictly military targets and for strictly military purposes, I see no reason why they shouldn’t be used just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else.”¹⁰⁷

Dulles's statement in particular worried Pearson, whose recourse was to speak out publicly, using an event in Toronto to discuss the state of Canada-US relations. Addressing the same venue four years earlier, amid dark days in the Korean War, he had famously remarked that "the days of relatively easy and automatic relations with the United States were over" – a comment that had caused a firestorm of editorial and political criticism on both sides of the border.¹⁰⁸ Repeating the remark, he aired several grievances, from punitive tariffs to the uncertainty of being involved in the offshore island crisis because of geographic proximity to the United States. As he told his audience in Toronto, "the neutrality of either of us if the other were engaged in a major war in which its very existence were at stake ... would be unthinkable."¹⁰⁹ And war over the offshore islands, Pearson was clear to say, would not see Canada take up arms.

His comments set the stage for Dulles to pay a hasty visit to Ottawa, where the differences over the crisis were fully aired. In a private tête-à-tête, Pearson went over the Canadian position: the offshore islands were not central to Taiwan's security and could be abandoned; the overriding concern was "interdependence," meaning that Canada could find itself in hostilities through actions taken in Washington, hence Ottawa's interest in having "a voice ... in the decisions which might bring these policies into play."¹¹⁰ Dulles's reply came in a briefing to the full Canadian cabinet. Invoking the Domino Theory, Dulles linked the stalemate in Korea to the French defeat in Indochina to the present communist effort aimed at "driving US influence away from the entire offshore island chain from the Aleutians to New Zealand," with Formosa the key. In response to St. Laurent's warning of the risk of "possible chain reactions" that might result in a worldwide conflict, Dulles cited appeasement, underscoring the importance of not repeating the supposed mistakes of the 1930s by refusing to push back against aggressive powers.¹¹¹ In a final meeting before the American's departure, Pearson raised his notion of an international regime, perhaps through the United Nations, to neutralize the Taiwan Strait, but Dulles brushed aside the suggestion.¹¹² The American preference was for brinkmanship. "We were all delighted that you were able to come," Canada's foreign minister wrote to his US counterpart shortly thereafter, joking that they should meet again "at that other off-shore island called Duck!," a reference to Dulles's cottage on the Canadian side of Lake Ontario.¹¹³

Dulles's meetings in Ottawa had allowed an airing of both governments' respective positions but solved little in terms of bringing them together. Eisenhower congratulated Dulles "on your masterful handling of a delicate and difficult situation."¹¹⁴ As the president recognized, standing firm in defence of the offshore islands "would forfeit the good opinion of much of the Western world, with consequent damage to our interests in Europe and elsewhere." But he judged that, ultimately, undermining the Nationalists was just as much of a problem since, in his view, Taiwan's security "is essential to the best interests of the United States and the Free World."¹¹⁵ Meanwhile, in the House of Commons, Pearson reiterated his opposition to US policy, insisting that Canada would not join "limited or peripheral wars" in Asia. It would be a different situation with "a major war which threatened the very existence of the people of the United States."¹¹⁶ Left unsaid was that a peripheral war could escalate.

Preventing escalation was a prime concern in Ottawa, magnified by Dulles's and Eisenhower's comments about the utility of tactical nuclear weapons. In this context, a *New York Times* story about a Pentagon briefing for reporters indicating that a communist attack on the offshore islands was imminent led to panicked efforts by the Canadian embassy in Washington to learn the facts of the situation. It found that the comments were those of a senior US naval officer offering his own opinion. The White House quickly issued a statement to calm matters, but the damage was done.¹¹⁷ Pearson directed officials in Ottawa and Washington to clarify civilian control over US nuclear weapons and to assert with their American interlocutors the Canadian government's concern about the naval officer's wayward comments.¹¹⁸ Sharing the same worries, British diplomats reached out to inquire whether they might undertake a joint *démarche* to the Americans.¹¹⁹ From Washington, Heeney urged rejection of the idea. Since "the pressing problem is to find some plan under which the United States could and would abandon its present policy in respect of the coastal islands," he contended that it was vital to stay focused. Solving this problem, he speculated, would mean that worries about the use of nuclear weapons "would virtually disappear."¹²⁰ His comments were perhaps wishful thinking given that US authorities clearly saw utility in nuclear weaponry. At a meeting of the most senior civilian and military officials in the Canadian government, General Foulkes stated plainly that the Americans "had no

intention of fighting any war without using all the kinds of weapons that were available," though the use of nuclear weapons in the present crisis would mean "the whole of Asia would be completely alienated" from the West. As for the British proposal, these officials recommended against Canadian participation on the ground that the Americans might resent their closest allies seeking to assert a measure of control over US nuclear policy.¹²¹

Evidently, Pearson accepted this recommendation. It helped that events regarding Taiwan had moved toward a potential resolution. In late April, attending the Bandung Conference in Indonesia, where representatives from the Global South discussed ways of working together internationally as a unified bloc independent of either side in the Cold War, Zhou En-Lai announced his country's readiness to negotiate with the United States over differences, "especially in the Taiwan area." President Eisenhower responded by remarking that "we would be glad to meet with them and to talk with them."¹²² Over the following weeks, Communist shelling of the offshore islands tapered off. Pearson and his cabinet colleagues welcomed these developments. But when Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies suggested that the Nationalists withdraw from the offshore islands in exchange for a security guarantee from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, ministers asserted that the Canadian government would continue to reject any commitment to Asian security beyond the UN Charter.¹²³

The offshore islands crisis was a successful American foray into nuclear brinksmanship: the islands remained in Nationalist hands, the Communists backed off, and war was averted. However, it reinforced doubts in Ottawa about the wisdom of American efforts to isolate China, both through nonrecognition and barring of UN membership. Even before the showdown in the Taiwan Strait, Canadian officials had considered a change of course, signalling to the Americans this possibility. In September 1954, Heeney had told US officials that public opinion in Canada was far more receptive than public opinion in the United States to recognizing the Beijing regime. For the Canadian government, he continued, the deciding factor would be signs of mainland China's "intention to conduct its international relationships by peaceful means."¹²⁴ Subsequent Chinese conduct during the offshore islands crisis was a bad sign. Moreover, though Heeney did

not mention it, another vital factor that Canadian policy makers had to account for was Washington's stance.

In August 1955, with the passing of the crisis, Pearson's advisers recommended preparing for the contingency of recognizing Beijing, particularly if other countries toeing the American line changed course. Indeed, there was even a sense that the Eisenhower administration, by accident and despite "Mr. Dulles' pious talk," might extend *de facto* recognition via efforts to settle the islands crisis.¹²⁵ Canadian authorities opted to wait several months before making a change. Also in August, Pearson used a speaking event in Vancouver to explain that the showdown in the Taiwan Strait had reinforced his view that Asian Cold War issues could be managed more easily with Communist China at the table. Assuring his audience that recognition of a government did not equate to approval and that Canada would move forward only with its allies, Pearson stated that the "time is coming, and soon, when we should have another and searching look at the problem."¹²⁶ Canadian newspapers from across the political spectrum applauded these comments as a recognition of the reality of the Communist government's obvious control of the mainland and of China's great power status, and there was support for a change to the policy of nonrecognition.¹²⁷

Canadian diplomats were pleased with this positive reaction domestically as well as with the "temperate" response in Washington. Their advice was to let the matter rest on events abroad and to encourage public discussion at home.¹²⁸ The muted American reaction was temporary. At a high-level meeting of Canadian and American officials in early December, Jules Léger, Canada's undersecretary of state, praised Beijing's "relative quiescence" as a sign of progress, making it more likely that Ottawa would move toward recognition. The Americans responded vigorously, stressing that they viewed Chinese actions "in an entirely different light, nor had there been a change in the communists' objective of taking over Asia." Affirming that there was no pending change in US policy, Walter Robertson, the assistant secretary for Far Eastern affairs and a hardliner on China, expressed that it was "extremely disturbing to hear of the possibility of Canadian recognition."¹²⁹ The negative American reaction did not dissuade Pearson from forging ahead, but it did inject some caution. Heeney was dispatched to broach with Dulles the notion of Canadian and American officials

conducting a joint review of their respective policies on China, not just the differences between them but also the factors behind their separate positions. Dulles agreed to the idea, and the Canadian side began drafting documents.¹³⁰

In the new year, little progress was made on the proposed study, with attention fixed on a long-germinating American initiative to have St. Laurent and President of Mexico Adolfo Ruiz Cortines meet with Eisenhower to discuss “problems of continental interests.” There was even the hope of establishing some sort of trilateral machinery to deal with North American issues.¹³¹ The Canadians were alarmed at these suggestions. Although they welcomed a visit between St. Laurent and Eisenhower, there could be no “equat[ing] the relations between the United States and Canada and the United States and Mexico.”¹³² Canadian efforts ensured that the summit in March 1956 at the Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia (dismissed by Arnold Heeney as “one of the largest enclosed acreages of bad taste in the world”), consisted of two overlapping bilateral meetings, with a trilateral *tour d’horizon*.¹³³ Eisenhower and St. Laurent took advantage of the intimate setting, golfing together, but their substantive talks were hampered by the prime minister’s “weary and withdrawn” disposition – a sign of the depression from which St. Laurent suffered – leaving it to Pearson to carry on the conversation with the president and secretary of state.¹³⁴

China dominated much of the bilateral Canada-US discussion at White Sulphur Springs. Pearson outlined the Canadian view that contact with the Communist Chinese was better than ignoring them. As for the United Nations, he stated that it was “hard” to maintain the “fiction” that the Nationalist regime represented all of China. These statements prompted a stout riposte from Eisenhower and Dulles on the continuing necessity of isolating the regime in Beijing because of its aggressive behaviour.¹³⁵ Later, during the trilateral session with Cortines, the American president gave a long soliloquy on the continued “implacable” nature of Soviet policy: the ongoing threat of “countries being ‘chipped off’ one by one by the Communists.” After Dulles then spoke at length about the aggressive nature of Chinese foreign policy, Eisenhower underscored that Taiwan’s defence was “absolutely vital” and that the offshore islands had become a “symbol” of defiance against communist expansion. As Heeney intuited from these comments, the American position on China had “hardened.”¹³⁶ Differences

over China aside, the White Sulphur Springs summit was relaxed, a model, Eisenhower later explained, of the “quite special importance he attached to good and easy relations between the USA and its two neighbours on the North American continent.”¹³⁷

Eisenhower’s and Dulles’s full-throated defence of US policy struck a chord in Ottawa. The idea of a joint China study was shelved along with the potential of Canadian recognition. Meeting with Nehru several months after the White Sulphur Springs conference, St. Laurent revealed that he “had been much surprised at the strong views which President Eisenhower had expressed to him” on China. “A too hasty effort to force a change on” the White House, he cautioned, “would meet with a strong reaction not only from the administration but also from public opinion and Congress.”¹³⁸ It helped the American cause that, as Ambassador Stuart wrote from Ottawa, he had spent months “hammering on the case against recognition,” to the point where, he speculated, he was “getting a little under Mike Pearson’s skin.”¹³⁹ This lobbying was important, but the final hammer blow fell at the December 1956 meeting of consultation between senior national security figures in both governments. Here Walter Robertson made it abundantly clear that US policy would remain unaltered. If, he threatened bluntly, “present developments in Canadian policy continue, there could be very disturbing consequences.”¹⁴⁰ The Canadians wisely beat a retreat. The following year St. Laurent remarked to his British counterpart that, when it came to a revision of policy on China, “it was more convenient for the Canadian government if the question did not arise just at this time.”¹⁴¹ For over another decade and despite policy makers’ belief in the inanity of the policy, Canada would continue not to recognize Communist China, a position owing entirely to deference to the United States.¹⁴² Pearson’s dictum not to let Asia split the West continued to hold true.

When the Eisenhower presidency began, Canada’s presence in Asia seemed to be cursory at best: some development programs via the Colombo Plan, a diplomatic presence in a smattering of countries, and military forces in Korea that Ottawa was keen to withdraw. Three years later Canadian troops had been pulled out of the Korean Peninsula, but otherwise Canada’s presence in the region had only deepened, from membership in the international commissions in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to St. Laurent’s tour of Asia in 1954 – the first by a sitting prime minister. The expanding

American role in Asia amid the Cold War and decolonization meant that Canada, too, was drawn into Asian affairs. Frequently, Canadian policy was shaped by a desire to assist the United States or to temper aspects of American policy that concerned officials in Ottawa. China was where this duality was most clear, but it suffused Canada's overall stance toward Asia. The reason was simple: the United States was not just an ally but also a country whose economic and military importance to Canada was paramount.

That is not to suggest that Canadians did not have their own points of view that diverged from those of Americans or that Ottawa acted in lockstep with Washington. For instance, whereas American officials viewed the Bandung Conference of nonaligned countries in 1955 through jaundiced eyes and Eisenhower issued an "anodyne" statement to the delegates, Canadian policy makers saw the meeting for what it was – "a natural development arising out of the concern of the countries of the area to meet and discuss common problems" and signified "the increasing importance of the Asian countries." And St. Laurent earned plaudits from the gathered delegates for his own statement congratulating them on their summit.¹⁴³ The differing responses to Bandung, and to the wider geopolitical situation in Asia, perhaps explain why the Eisenhower administration did not seek Canadian participation in the covert Anglo-American-Australian operation to foment a coup in Indonesia in 1957.¹⁴⁴ Nor were Canadian diplomats reticent about making their own positions clear to their American counterparts. In his memoirs, Lester Pearson recalled a discussion with John Foster Dulles on their way to the White Sulphur Springs conference, which followed months of worry about Taiwan and the offshore islands. "You Canadians," Dulles sneered,

Are always complaining that we never consult you about our policies. "Ike" as you know is a great golfer and, who knows, he may want [us] to play a few holes ... If we do and the score is all square on the 18th green, I'll wager that you'll intervene just as I am about to make the deciding putt to demand that I consult you about it first.

Pearson rejoined: "If I did, Foster, it would be merely to tell you that you were using a No 9 iron."¹⁴⁵ The successive crises regarding Korea, Indochina, Taiwan, and Chinese recognition had exposed differences between the two allies and, for Canadian officials, had raised the problems of, first, how to

pursue an independent course and, second, how to influence their ally. Frequently, Canada found it difficult to do either.

Pearson's quip aside, then, when push came to shove, in Asia Ottawa sided with Washington. What drove Canadian policy makers was a mix of factors: a desire to keep relations with the United States in good repair; a recognition of American power and ultimate responsibility for containing China and the Soviet Union; and a shared anticommunist viewpoint. There was also a belief in Ottawa that Europe was far more important and that, in the interests of trans-Atlantic relations and European security, it was worth placating the Americans over Vietnam, Taiwan, or Chinese recognition. Whatever disagreements existed over the Cold War in Asia were kept in perspective. But what was clear was the danger posed by these events. At a meeting of Canadian national security officials in the wake of the offshore islands crisis, Undersecretary of State Jules Léger observed that "our air defence system was now so closely co-ordinated with that of the US that it was unavoidable becoming involved to some extent ... [if it was] ... engaged in a war with China."¹⁴⁶ The stark reality of military integration between the two neighbours amid a nuclear revolution is where we now turn our attention.

NUCLEAR NIGHTMARES AND DEFENCE INTEGRATION, 1953–57

“I cannot sleep at night,” Dwight Eisenhower confided in November 1956. Despite having just won re-election, the president told Clare Booth Luce, his ambassador to Italy, that he was uneasy. Several weeks earlier British and French forces had invaded Egypt to assert control over the Suez Canal, sparking an international crisis that had ended only with Washington using its financial and diplomatic power to force London and Paris to back down. Now, in the wake of the crisis, he was feeling the “pressure of PMs and FMs ‘all trying to tell me where I am wrong and why, if I don’t agree with them, I am no good.’” As if the task of keeping together the Western alliance was not enough, Eisenhower divulged that he was burdened by a far more consequential issue, a potential nuclear war. “I think of nothing else,” he told Luce. “There must be some other way. What liberties could we enjoy in smoking ruins?”¹ Nuclear war and alliance management – Eisenhower’s two concerns in November 1956 – are the focal points of this chapter.

The mushroom cloud loomed over the Eisenhower presidency. Americans were “frightened at the prospect of atomic war,” he told his national security team soon after taking office. The president shared this anxiety. To a group of churchgoers in October 1953, he reflected that a long-standing American sense of security provided by two ocean borders had “almost totally disappeared before the long-range bomber and the destructive power of a single bomb.”² Yet, for all his concern, the grim logic of the age called for amassing enough nuclear weapons to deliver a crushing blow

against the Soviet Union, with this threat of destruction – hopefully – serving to deter enemy aggression. The American nuclear arsenal grew from 369 warheads in 1950 to over 27,000 in 1962; the bulk of this expansion came under Eisenhower’s watch.³ There was a steady growth, too, of the warfare state, a seemingly permanent military and intelligence apparatus that grew despite the president’s worry about the impact of military spending on the health of the American economy and polity. During the Age of Eisenhower, the United States was transformed into an armed camp, and each international crisis was a potential nuclear conflict.

The Eisenhower era saw Canada drawn fully, if uneasily, under the American aegis. Canadian troops had fought in the Korean War and stood guard in Western Europe, but officials in Ottawa shared the US president’s concern about Cold War–driven budgetary pressures. Traditionally, Canada had spent little on its military outside wartime, and Louis St. Laurent, the prime minister from 1948 to 1957, joked that his background on defence issues was “something like our radar screens – its coverage ... not very extensive.”⁴ Nonetheless, because of the demands of its alliances, and because geography placed Canada between the two nuclear-armed superpowers, the Canadian government constructed its own warfare state.

Continental defence efforts were aimed primarily at protecting the deterrent power of the US nuclear arsenal by ensuring that the Americans could deliver a devastating retaliatory strike. To this end, the goal was to provide defence in depth: pushing North American defences ever northward to subject incoming Soviet bombers to repeated attacks. As it set about constructing radar warning systems, procuring interceptor aircraft, and accommodating an array of American requests for assistance, Canada’s government sought to balance sovereignty and security. Keen for Canadian help, the Eisenhower administration accommodated Ottawa’s sovereignty concerns. But there loomed the broader issue of nuclear war. Fearful of what the nuclear revolution portended for the resolution of international crises, Canadian officials sought a share in the decision making over use of the ultimate weapon.

Influencing American actions was an important goal for Canadian policy makers cognizant that their fate was bound up in decisions made by US authorities. As Arnold Heeney, Canada’s ambassador in Washington throughout most of the Eisenhower years, later recalled, the administration’s

commitment to a policy of nuclear deterrence premised on the idea of massive retaliation meant that “Ottawa was almost continuously anxious about the course of United States foreign policy.”⁵ Canadian anxiety was shared by Western European officials, who wanted both an American assurance of their security and a say in whether Paris or London would be immolated as a result of a dispute between Moscow and Washington. Was it possible for the Americans to share decision making? Given Eisenhower’s background as commander of the Allied forces in the Second World War and then briefly as NATO’s military head, Canada’s leading news magazine enthused that there would be “someone at the head of affairs in Washington, the capital of the free world, who commands the confidence of all factions in all free countries.”⁶

Keeping NATO together proved to be difficult. With Joseph Stalin’s death in March 1953 and the Korean armistice later that year, the improved international climate led to calls for a *détente* and raised doubts about the need for a military alliance. The nuclear revolution added another complicating factor. “With the growing Soviet nuclear air power,” Canada’s defence and external affairs ministers wondered “whether the US would in fact be prepared to take action if faced with the choice of suffering a nuclear holocaust or allowing one of the Western European countries to succumb to Soviet attack.”⁷ The main threat to alliance cohesion, however, came from outside Europe, in the so-called Third World, where Washington’s and Ottawa’s European allies sought to maintain their declining imperial influence. As shown in the previous chapter, disputes over policy in East Asia threatened trans-Atlantic harmony. However, what marked the apogee of intra-NATO differences over dealings with the Third World was the Suez Crisis of 1956, also an important moment of Canadian-American collaboration to keep the Western alliance together.

Canadian-American defence cooperation dated to August 1940, when, following the German blitzkrieg across Western Europe, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had proposed to William Lyon Mackenzie King, Canada’s prime minister, the creation of a Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) bringing together both countries’ military planners. King readily agreed, and the PJBD proved to be useful enough that it outlived the Second World War. Throughout the war, Ottawa had permitted the US military to construct an array of infrastructure across Canada’s north: the Alaska Highway,

an oil pipeline, and air strips to move matériel to the USSR. A sign of wartime cooperation, these projects stirred up discontent over a perceived loss of sovereignty. The King government eventually assumed the costs of much of the northern infrastructure and ensured that ownership was transferred to Canada.⁸

An American airbase at Goose Bay, Newfoundland (traded to the United States by Britain under the Destroyers for Bases agreement in 1940), posed a similar problem for Ottawa once the British colony became a Canadian province in 1949. In 1950, Washington wanted to expand the base into a staging point for nuclear-armed Strategic Air Command (SAC) bombers tasked with attacking the Soviet Union. Supporting the move, Brooke Claxton, the Canadian defence minister, told his cabinet colleagues that Goose Bay's expansion, including the construction of atomic storage facilities and the addition of 4,000 personnel, was "essential" for "the defence of this continent as well as in the overall strategy" of deterrence. The gathered ministers agreed to the request, accepting Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's view that they were "engaged in a collective effort" in which strategic bombing was a vital element. However, doubts were voiced about the propriety of the United States "expanding its activity in Canada just as Canadian troops were going abroad" to Europe to meet Ottawa's commitment to NATO.⁹ A recurrent theme throughout the Eisenhower years, this objection did not upset agreement on Goose Bay. The Americans acceded to Canada's major demand that the US Air Force seek permission for all SAC operations in or over Canada except "in the event of a major outright Soviet attack against continental North America."¹⁰ As with the wartime projects in Canada's north, the Canadian government asserted itself while still cooperating with its imposing ally.

Balancing sovereignty and security became increasingly important as the nuclear arms race ramped up. After the Soviet Union tested an atomic weapon in August 1949, President Harry Truman authorized development of the hydrogen bomb. On 1 November 1952, the Americans tested the first thermonuclear weapon at Enewetak Atoll in the Pacific. Having watched the US military's film of the test shortly before taking the oath of office, for Eisenhower it was no coincidence that in his inaugural address he warned that "science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from this planet."¹¹ As if to underscore the growing danger,

a report produced in the Truman administration's final days concluded that "probably 65–85% of the atomic bombs launched by the USSR could be delivered on target in the United States."¹² Although disagreeing with this dire conclusion, Eisenhower recognized his country's vulnerability to a nuclear attack, telling his National Security Council (NSC) two weeks after taking office that he wanted "a preparedness program that will give us a respectable position without bankrupting the nation."¹³

The latter consideration was important to the Republican president, who decried the huge growth in military spending that had begun as the United States plunged into war in Korea. Over the winter of 1953, NSC staff undertook several analyses of defence policy and its costs. Among their points of emphasis was the need to increase the "protection of the continental United States from enemy attack," which entailed working with Canada.¹⁴

Continental defence efforts were already gaining momentum. To house interceptor aircraft, in 1951–52 Canada's military reactivated decommissioned wartime airbases at Bagotville, Quebec, and Comox, British Columbia, and built new air stations at North Bay, Ontario, and Cold Lake, Alberta. A new interceptor, the CF-100, entered service in 1953. That year Ottawa updated an existing agreement authorizing US fighters to identify and shadow suspicious aircraft in Canadian airspace and to allow American interceptors to shoot down attacking planes over Canada.¹⁵ Moreover, in 1951, there was Canadian-American cooperation on the so-called Pinetree Line, a radar system stretching across the 50th parallel.

Largely paid for by the Americans, that system became operational in 1955. By then, it was already deemed insufficient. To provide ample warning of an attack, US military planners had set their sights on a radar system in the Arctic. In early 1953, they invited Canadian participation in Project Corrode, involving testing of radar equipment in arctic weather conditions. With the Americans paying for the testing and agreeing to share scientific data, Ottawa approved testing at two sites in Canada.¹⁶ Also, the agreement created two joint bodies: the Canada–United States Scientific Advisory Team, to coordinate the research project, and the Canada–United States Military Study Group, to analyze continental defence's operational requirements.

Despite approving Project Corrode, Canadian officials doubted the efficacy of the proposed radar systems. As Claxton explained to Charles

Wilson, Eisenhower's secretary of defense, "we were by no means persuaded that the proposed additional screen would add sufficiently to our defence to justify the expenditures of money and manpower."¹⁷ Like the Eisenhower administration, as the Korean conflict wound down, the St. Laurent government sought a peace dividend. Indeed, in 1953 there was the first reduction in Canada's defence spending since 1947. "The build-up of the Armed Forces and particularly the Air Force ... has been a major national task," Minister of Finance Douglas Abbott told senior officers, "but I feel now that the build-up is largely over" following the acquisition of new aircraft for North American defence and the dispatch of an army brigade and twelve fighter squadrons to Europe. Scheduled to meet Eisenhower in Washington in May, St. Laurent was prepared to inform the president that Canadian military spending had reached a ceiling.¹⁸

Although Eisenhower also looked to trim his country's budget, Canadian cuts, coming just as the Americans were ramping up continental defence efforts, were viewed as counterproductive. US embassy officials flagged the issue, noting that, with St. Laurent due to call an election later that year, the ruling Liberals saw cuts as politically popular, so they were unlikely to devote further money to continental defence. Canadians and their government, the embassy speculated, saw Americans as "Pearl Harbor minded" and did not "share the sense of urgency" in rapidly erecting defences against a Soviet attack. With Canada "at a crossroads" over whether to participate in defending North America, the United States had to show it the way.¹⁹ Eisenhower was briefed on the importance of seeking further Canadian involvement in air defence and of reassuring St. Laurent "of our respect for Canadian sovereignty and the fact that our mutual defense arrangements are always jointly agreed."²⁰ The president stuck to his brief, emphasizing to the prime minister that future continental defence projects should proceed "on the basis of partnership," and his government would show "full respect for Canadian sovereignty."²¹ A welcome assurance, it was tested by the worsening nuclear arms race.

On 12 August 1953, the Soviets tested a thermonuclear device. Two days earlier the Liberals had won a majority government. The grim reality that the Soviets could conduct a far more devastating attack on North America brought renewed emphasis to continental defence. From Washington, Ambassador Arnold Heeney highlighted the "nagging anxiety here" over

US vulnerability, warning that the Americans were bound to seek Canadian cooperation “on a scale considerably larger than any which have been made previously.”²² To tease out American planning and assert Canada’s interests, Heeney suggested reviving a series of high-level consultations between Canadian civilian and military officials and their American counterparts on nuclear strategy. Begun in 1951, these consultations stemmed from Canadian complaints about the possible use of atomic weapons during the Korean War; to reassure their allies, Truman administration officials permitted annual talks. Keen to continue strategic consultations with the new administration, Lester Pearson agreed that an overture be made. Heeney raised the subject with Charles Wilson, emphasizing that Canada wanted a “full opportunity” to participate in continental defence planning. Having just stepped out of an NSC meeting at which this subject was a focal point of discussion, Wilson readily agreed to the point, and the talks were soon scheduled for October.²³

In the interim, the Eisenhower administration hammered out its new continental defence policy. “The real problem,” the president told his advisers, “was to devise methods of meeting the Soviet threat and of adopting controls, if necessary, that would not result in our transformation into a garrison state.” Finding an answer to this “paradox,” as Eisenhower called it, sparked considerable debate. One point of agreement was that Canadian participation in continental defence was vital. Although Admiral Arthur Radford, the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, predicted that they “would encounter very little difficulty in getting all the cooperation and assistance we needed from the Dominion,” Eisenhower pointed out the necessity of ensuring that the Canadians were treated as partners. The resulting continental defence strategy emphasized Canada’s “essential” role in helping to protect the United States, and it urged senior-level talks with the Canadians to establish a common appreciation of the threat that they faced, of the ways to counter this threat, and of the areas where Canada could “take leadership in developing parts of the system and in contributing to its expense.” Recommending that the early warning system be prioritized, it identified two projects: a Southern Canada Detector Line along the 55th parallel (the future Mid-Canada Line) and, pending the results of Project Corrode, a Northern Canada Detector Line (the future Distant Early Warning Line) in the Arctic.²⁴ A month later, setting down its Basic National

Security Policy, in which it outlined the New Look strategy prioritizing expansion of the US nuclear arsenal, the administration called for “an integrated and effective continental defense system” to ensure that, in the event of a Soviet attack, the USAF could carry out retaliatory strikes.²⁵ Among national security policy makers, the simple dictates of geography gave Canada an outsized importance.

Given Canada’s newfound significance, American officials recognized the need to work cooperatively with the Canadian government. Livingston Merchant, an important State Department figure and close adviser to Dulles, saw the consultations initiated by Ambassador Heeney as the opportune moment to give the Canadians “a full and frank exposition of our thinking, of our intelligence estimates, and of the studies which have been made in the United States leading up to” the NSC directives on continental defence.²⁶ The first meeting of consultation of the Eisenhower era took place in October 1953. Admiral Radford outlined the Soviet nuclear threat to North America and American plans to counter it. Underscoring Canada’s centrality to these plans and highlighting the Southern Canada Line as a priority, he asked the Canadians to determine their level of participation. In reply, Heeney noted that Ottawa welcomed further talks on joint defence planning, adding that, given budgetary concerns, Canada’s government saw these efforts through its NATO commitment since helping Washington to defend the deterrent ensured “the war-making potential of the NATO alliance.”²⁷ This notion would allow Canada to meet NATO troop level targets by including its forces assigned to continental defence. Indeed, at the NATO ministerial meeting in December, Dulles and Pearson, both stressing “the increasing importance of North American Defence” in light of growing Soviet nuclear power, likened continental defence contributions to “contributions of units to the European sector.”²⁸ Over the next few years, with mounting American pressure to expand bilateral military efforts, Canadian officials seized on the idea of making continental defence a multilateral responsibility via NATO.

As more areas for defence cooperation were identified, sovereignty became an increasingly important issue. In a note to St. Laurent in October 1953, Claxton predicted that the Americans would “not remain content with a line along the 55th parallel,” adding that for Canada the priority with any warning systems was to discern “how we can continue to engage in a

joint operation with all its advantages and still take the initiative in going right ahead along the lines we want.”²⁹ That is, Claxton sought control over activities on Canadian soil and involvement in the lucrative research and development and construction portions of any projects.

Weeks later the issue of sovereignty came very publicly to the fore. In his speech to the Canadian Parliament during his presidential visit to Ottawa, Eisenhower called for a joint effort to protect “our North America.” “The continent,” he told his audience, “is a single physical and geographical entity,” and “defensively, as well as geographically, we are joined beyond any possibility of separation.”³⁰ The message to Canadians was clear: they had a responsibility to defend the United States. The following month St. Laurent gave a public response in a landmark speech announcing a major federal effort to develop the Canadian arctic, including the creation of a Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. “The Canadian northland lies between the two greatest powers in the world,” he explained, and Canada would take “joint measures for the security of the North American continent,” ones “carried out under the principle of full respect for the sovereignty of the country in which they are carried out.” Developing the North, and in particular creation of the new federal department, would demonstrate “our sovereignty in these northern lands right up to the pole.”³¹

Despite the later assertions of Canadian nationalists, cooperation in joint defence did not preclude the assertion of sovereignty; indeed, it required it. In November 1953, the Military Study Group recommended proceeding with the Southern Canada Line. In presenting the proposal to cabinet, Claxton urged undertaking the planning and construction of the line alone; cost sharing with Washington could be worked out later. This route would ensure control of developments on Canadian territory and allow use of Canadian-designed McGill Fence radar technology. Continental defence was a serious matter, Claxton reminded his colleagues, as the Soviet thermonuclear test had shown. However, he assured them that the press had “exaggerated” the vulnerabilities and the required defences against them and that, “on the whole, reasonable views prevailed in Washington.”³² Over winter 1953–54, Canadian military and scientific officials began planning what was now the Mid-Canada Line, drawing up staffing requirements, outlining construction and operational costs, and, after the spring thaw,

surveying sites at which to place the radar arrays. In the face of US pressure to do more for continental defence, Claxton proved to be a firm defender of Canadian interests. American officials saw nothing incongruous with his position. After the Canadian minister returned from visiting research installations in the Arctic in mid-1954, R. Douglas Stuart thanked him: “Too few people in North America realize the tremendous contribution you have made to the defense of this continent. Your outstanding ability, indefatigable energy and patience have gone a great way toward producing a situation which makes large areas of the North American continent safe from attack.”³³

Among US officials, continental defence coloured much thinking about Canada, for the issue underlined both the country’s importance to US security and the need to keep relations with the Canadians on a smooth footing. Even something as minor as the appointment of the American chair to the International Joint Commission – a bilateral secretariat managing cross-border waterways – assumed significance. Writing to one potential candidate, Dulles stated that the position “involves helping to maintain good relations with Canada which are exceptionally important now with the development of the necessity for continental defense.”³⁴ Despite Canada’s commitment to build the Mid-Canada Line, American authorities doubted that the Canadians shared their commitment to joint defence. Taking time out from a summer vacation in Canada, in July 1954 Charles Wilson briefed the Canadian cabinet on the necessity of joint action. The goal, he assured ministers, was to provide sufficient defences to deter an enemy attack.³⁵ After returning to Washington, Wilson gave the NSC a progress report, complaining that, although the Canadians had agreed to construct the Mid-Canada Line alone, they were doing so on their own timeline: surveying and other planning were proceeding apace, but construction of a test section of the line would not be undertaken until summer 1955, with the full project likely completed in 1957. Worried, Eisenhower remarked that “we are getting along pretty well with the Canadians,” but he wondered, practically, what “can be done by way of accelerating these programs over our present rate of acceleration.”³⁶

Defence efforts were indeed accelerating. In June, after Project Corrode had shown that the detection system in the Arctic was viable, the Military Study Group endorsed construction of the Distant Early Warning (DEW)

Line across the Arctic. In addition to flagging this project as one in which Canada might participate, Canadian military officials, pointing to trends in US defence policy, raised the prospect that Ottawa would be asked both to integrate its air defences under a continental command and to provision advanced weapons systems. "In general," the report concluded, "the demands on Canadian resources – financial, physical and manpower – are likely to be substantially heavier."³⁷ The DEW Line was the most pressing issue, and debate in the Cabinet Defence Committee centred on balancing sovereignty with the costs and responsibilities associated with building and maintaining another radar line. Two somewhat conflicting points were raised. On the one hand, accelerating construction of the Mid-Canada Line and assuming the full cost and staffing alone would relieve "increasing pressure" from the Americans for speedier action on defence measures and counter accusations made by errant congressmen "that we were not doing our share in protecting the continent." On the other hand, full responsibility for the costs of the Mid-Canada Line would leave scant resources to contribute to the line in the Arctic, which would become a unilateral American project, a politically "undesirable" situation. Ultimately, officials suggested continuing alone with the Mid-Canada Line and stipulating that a future DEW Line should be a joint undertaking. Cabinet approved this decision in a meeting presided over by Winston Churchill, who issued a stark reminder of the stakes confronting the West. As the visiting British prime minister intoned, "the best and perhaps the only defence against the terrible nuclear weapons that had now been developed was the deterrent effect of the power to retaliate in kind."³⁸

Although the Americans were careful about seeking Canada's agreement to participate in continental defence, from the Canadian perspective, the matter was a *fait accompli*. For instance, in August, when the Canadians learned that the White House approved moving the DEW Line into the planning stage, Pearson admitted that "there was no doubt in his mind that Canada would have to agree in principle to the proposal," and Ralph Campney, the new defence minister, told cabinet that they had "no alternative but to approve" the enterprise.³⁹ Details of the costs, cost sharing, and locations of specific radar sites were worked out over autumn 1954.

In November, after the formal plans had been finalized, Ottawa authorized construction. However, sovereignty emerged as an important point

of emphasis. At the Cabinet Defence Committee, there was agreement on the twin needs of avoiding “giving the Canadian public the impression that the US had vested rights in the northern half of the continent” and of ensuring that the US government respected “Canadian sovereign interests.” Even so, there was no dissension over the need for the warning system, and officials feared that, if Canada rejected the DEW Line, “the American public might react unfavourably” by turning inward and focusing on continental defence to the detriment of defending Western Europe.⁴⁰ In the final negotiations between the two governments, the Canadians insisted that Washington pay for the construction costs but use Canadian construction companies; any scientific research gathered from the radar sites should be shared with Canada; and, although US personnel would operate the radar sites, Canada would retain title to the land. Eager to move ahead with the project, the Eisenhower administration agreed to Ottawa’s demands.⁴¹

Construction of the Mid-Canada Line began in 1956, the eastern half was completed in April 1957, and the whole system was up and running in January 1958. By then, the DEW Line, stretching 8,000 kilometres from Alaska to Baffin Island, had been operational for eight months. With Americans building and manning these radar arrays, one writer in *Maclean’s* complained that “in law we still own this northern frontier ... In fact we do not.” This view was parroted by a variety of critics of Canadian defence policy who lambasted military cooperation with the United States and decried the apparent loss of territorial sovereignty.⁴² Yet, in cooperating with the Americans in building the warning system, Ottawa had asserted itself, using its leverage – the fact of geography – to ensure that Washington accepted a range of demands. On the key sovereignty question, R.J. Sutherland, a strategist within the Canadian military’s scientific research arm, was close to the mark when he observed that, with regard to the DEW Line, “Canada secured what the United States had up to that time assiduously endeavoured to avoid, namely an explicit recognition of Canadian claims to the exercise of sovereignty in the Far North.”⁴³

This reality did little to alter a growing uneasiness in some quarters in Canada over growing American influence – evident in economic and cultural terms – that, over the 1950s, fed a sense of nationalism. British diplomats expressed their own unease with these developments. Roger

Makins, Britain's ambassador in Washington, predicted that the "increasing demand of continental defence and its heavy cost ... must gradually limit the freedom of action of the Canadians on strategic questions, and tend towards a decrease of Canadian participation in the security of other parts of the world."⁴⁴ In strict budgetary terms, continental defence did place limitations on Canada's government, and the demands on the Canadian military did not end with the warning systems. Moreover, although Canadian policy makers had success in asserting sovereignty, they freely admitted that defence cooperation with the Americans seemed to be unavoidable. That sense, in turn, put limitations on Canada's freedom of action by drawing the two countries closer together and by keeping considerable Canadian attention and resources focused on continental defence.

Premised on the idea of deterrence, US nuclear policy required not only a credible defence against a Soviet attack but also the ability to deliver a swift and devastating strike against the Soviet Union. In both cases, Canadian geography proved to be important. In early 1955, the US military proposed constructing airstrips in Canada's north to station aircraft designed for aerial refuelling of SAC bombers. Raising the issue with Dulles, Pearson praised the "very satisfactory" cooperation on the warning system but noted that this new proposal posed "political and psychological problems" for the Liberal government, already accused of undermining Canada's sovereignty. As a means of lessening likely criticism of the Americans operating military facilities within Canada, he requested that Canadian personnel be used at the airstrips.⁴⁵ The issue lapsed until mid-1956, when Ottawa agreed to allow the Pentagon to survey potential sites in the North.⁴⁶ Completing its surveys in early 1957, the USAF requested permission to build four airstrips, at Frobisher Bay, Cold Lake, Namao, and Churchill. In a nod to Canada's sovereignty and in line with the Goose Bay agreement, the Americans offered to seek Canadian permission before undertaking refuelling exercises and to employ Canadian personnel at the refuelling facilities. In asking cabinet to support this request, Campney explained that the refuelling facilities would enhance SAC's capabilities, and "the support of SAC was one of the main Canadian responsibilities to NATO." Cabinet approved the proposal, a reminder that Canada's military cooperation with the United States was focused not only on continental defence but also on supporting offensive operations.⁴⁷

As Canadian officials recognized, the dictates of geography and the Western alliance together gave increasing military cooperation with the Americans an air of inevitability. Certainly, military planners accepted the rationale behind continental defence. In April 1954, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) judged that the destruction of even 90 percent of an attacking Soviet bomber force “may not be sufficient” to provide the necessary protection. Its solution was the adoption of nuclear-tipped surface-to-air missiles, then under development in the United States. “It seemed evident,” the head of the RCAF later speculated, “that the war-making capacity of this continent could not tolerate more than 50 successfully delivered thermo-nuclear bombs.” That autumn, after the Pentagon created the Continental Air Defense Command to coordinate US defensive efforts, officers in both countries began to consider forming a joint command linking their air defence forces.⁴⁸ With “our survival” at stake, General Charles Foulkes, chairman of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, assured Admiral Radford of the Canadian armed forces of the view that North American defence “must be a joint operation between our two countries in almost every respect.”⁴⁹

Ensuring this operation’s joint nature meant keeping up with American technological developments, which placed increasing demands on the Canadian government, encouraged the growth of Canada’s own warfare state, and pushed Canada into adopting nuclear weapons. In late 1955, Radford used the strategic consultation meeting with the Canadians to review a panoply of weapons systems under development. Raising Ottawa’s apprehension about costs, Foulkes responded that half of Canadian defence spending was already devoted to continental defence, putting a squeeze on the navy and army. Nonetheless, recognizing “the accident of geography,” he outlined ways to boost Canada’s contribution to countering the Soviet bomber threat: more interceptors, including development of the supersonic CF-105 Avro Arrow; more airbases; participation in the rollout of the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment, a computer system using radar data to assist in monitoring North American airspace; and the introduction to Canada of Boeing Michigan Aeronautical Research Center (Bomarc) long-range, nuclear-tipped, surface-to-air missiles to intercept attacking Soviet aircraft. This was an ambitious wish list, and fulfilling it, as Foulkes readily admitted, would mean drawing resources from “commitments in Europe.”⁵⁰

The prioritization of air defences presented a suite of problems for the Canadian military, including the fact that anti-aircraft weapons were a wasting asset. During a Combined Chiefs of Staff meeting in early 1955, Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds, the head of Canada's army, questioned the focus on antibomber defences, particularly the Avro Arrow program, which, because of the development of ballistic missiles, was "wrong in principle." To some observers, his retirement later that year seemed to be the result of his opposition to the focus on continental defence.⁵¹ Certainly, there was an element of interservice rivalry at play. In June 1955, the RCAF's deputy chief was demoted for musing publicly about abolishing the army and pouring the savings into the air force.⁵² But Foulkes, an accomplished army commander in the Second World War, accepted the need to ensure American retaliatory power. At the same time, he recognized the devastating implications of the nuclear revolution. "We are coming to the conclusion here," he wrote privately in September 1955, "that war as an instrument of policy is no longer effective as it involves the major powers, that what we in [the] military now can offer is mutual total destruction and therefore the role of the military is not one now of being prepared to win a war but one of assisting politicians to avoid war."⁵³

Strategic analysts in the Department of External Affairs (DEA) shared Foulkes's anxiety about a nuclear deterrence policy that seriously contemplated so-called mutual assured destruction. "The United States and the Soviet Union now confront one another with the prospect of mutual devastation by thermonuclear and nuclear weapons," George Ignatieff, head of the DEA's Defence Liaison Division, observed in a report in 1955 on deterrence. "It is this prospect, and not the mere existence of such destructive power, which is the deterrent to war." Rather than viewing deterrence as a source of stability, Ignatieff was worried because this policy created the fundamental danger that a miscalculation during a dispute between the two superpowers could lead to a nuclear conflict.⁵⁴ Given this harsh reality, DEA officials recognized that, since the Americans would use "every effort" to defend themselves, they were bound to demand increasingly more from Canada, further binding the two countries together.⁵⁵

A means of giving Ottawa more leverage in dealings with Washington was to make continental defence a multilateral undertaking by bringing it under NATO auspices. The Canadians had emphasized the NATO-continental

defence connection as a way of meeting the alliance's Lisbon agreement in 1952 to maintain a set conventional force level, but what Pearson and his advisers now envisioned was a more formal tie. In March 1955, Dulles visited the Canadian capital to emphasize the need, he told members of the Standing Committee on External Affairs (an all-party parliamentary body), for the two countries to work together on confronting the "tremendous problem" of defending the continent. In a private discussion with Pearson, he revealed that, for the administration, "the primary field for America's defence resources would be North America," presumably the prime Soviet target. Europe was a secondary consideration, with US military forces stationed there for the "psychological and political reasons" of reassuring the Europeans of Washington's commitment to their security. It was this focus on North America that so worried Pearson, who used the opportunity to raise the idea of a multilateral continental defence effort, even musing about having Dutch personnel deployed to northern radar sites.⁵⁶ A desire to counterbalance ties with the United States was part of Canadian officials' rationale for supporting NATO in the first place, and – confronted with increasing American demands to expand military links – it made sense to resort to a multilateral solution. "The treaty was, after all, more than European," Pearson explained in his memoirs, "and I believed that the North American sector should be considered an integral part of the North Atlantic defence structure."⁵⁷

Throughout spring and summer 1955, and as part of this effort to bring continental defence under NATO's banner, Pearson and his senior advisers sought to overhaul Canadian national security policy. In a report drafted by Ignatieff, the Department of External Affairs took stock of the revolution in warfare wrought by nuclear weapons and highlighted the problem confronting Canada: its "special geographical location" placing it between the two nuclear-armed rivals and directly implicating it in any dispute between Moscow and Washington. Yet Ottawa had no influence on how and when the United States might deploy nuclear weapons in a crisis. So, as the report put it, "our main aim is to seek an effective political control over the putting into effect of any plans or preparations for nuclear warfare" either through NATO channels or even a private Anglo-American-Canadian link.⁵⁸ Whatever the merits of the report, the idea of re-examining Canada's security policy was at first ignored and then actively opposed by

the Department of National Defence. General Foulkes, Ignatieff later reflected, “had no intention of letting External Affairs ‘eggheads’ jeopardize his relationship with Admiral Radford.” As for bringing continental defence under NATO’s banner, to the Americans the idea was a nonstarter. In 1954, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had ruled that the alliance’s involvement “might impose upon continental US defenses restrictions which would be militarily unacceptable.” Evidently, senior Canadian officers agreed. “Our own service people,” complained Pearson, “preferred bilateral dealings and arrangements with Washington” to a multilateral effort.⁵⁹ Instead, the growth of Canada-US military links continued.

Beyond the multilayered warning system, the US government pushed an expansion of continental defence efforts that directly implicated Canada. In June 1956, the Americans proposed stationing Bomarc anti-aircraft missiles at two sites in Canada as part of a wider network along the 48th parallel. North of this missile line, they sought deployment of nuclear-armed interceptors. The Canadian government signed off on surveying possible Bomarc sites.⁶⁰ Then, in September, State Department officials briefed Heeney on a presidential preauthorization for the USAF to use atomic anti-aircraft weapons over US territory. Authorization had also been given to allow Canadian military personnel to train with such weaponry. In line with the Atomic Energy Act – preventing the transfer of US nuclear technology to other countries – custody of the warheads would remain with US personnel stationed in Canada. As Heeney relayed, there was now an expectation that Canadian aircraft would be equipped with atomic weapons, but, as he reminded his American interlocutors, if they “placed so much emphasis on the importance of employing atomic weapons in Air Defence,” then it was in their interest to amend the Atomic Energy Act and transfer custody to the Canadians.⁶¹ Reviewing these issues, the Combined Chiefs of Staff resolved that, because of military and political questions of command and control and sovereignty, there could be no quick decision either on providing Canadian planes with atomic weaponry or on authorizing US nuclear-armed interceptors to operate in Canadian airspace.⁶² Preliminary talks on both matters were conducted in autumn 1956 between the Canadian embassy in Washington and the State Department. There were also discussions at the military level, and, though External Affairs was content to let the matter languish, in December National

Defence brought the US request to overfly Canada with air-to-air nuclear missiles to cabinet. Not only did ministers approve the request, but they also authorized the RCAF to turn an area near James Bay into a bombing range for SAC bombers.⁶³ In 1957, the American MB-1 missile, armed with a nuclear warhead, entered service.

As for arming Canadian jets with these weapons and deploying Bomarc missiles, those issues – explored in [Chapter 6](#) – assumed considerable importance in 1959 when the Canadian government axed the CF-105 Avro Arrow, which proved to be too costly to build, especially since, with allied governments keen to promote their own arms manufacturers, there were no foreign buyers and thus no possible economy of scale. Cancellation of the Arrow underscored the transitory nature of modern military technology. Raising continental defence in an NSC meeting in 1956, Charles Wilson remarked that “it is impossible to tell whether we were getting our money’s worth.” Agreeing, Radford added that “no one could tell how good the continental defense is until it is used against an attacking force.”⁶⁴ Eisenhower had warned about the economic and societal costs of developing a large military, yet the imperative to ensure a measure of perceived security demanded the constant development of new weapons systems to counter real and assumed threats.

Whether in terms of radar stations or SAC overflights, in its dealings with Washington, Ottawa had secured Canadian territorial sovereignty, and the Americans had been happy to meet Canadian demands. However, this military cooperation exposed the limitations of Canada’s freedom of action imposed by geography and the alliance system. In his memoirs, Heeney recalled thinking that the Canadian government had “no way to avoid” participating in various joint defence schemes. In 1956, he complained to Pearson that, although there was a host of channels for consultation with the Americans on military matters, and though the United States used these avenues of communication, often the resulting talks between military and scientific experts produced understandings “in danger of getting ahead of governmental decisions.” Increasingly, Canadian civilian officials risked becoming “suppliants before the US military authorities.” Convinced that continental defence cooperation was “inevitable and logical,” nonetheless Heeney cautioned that “the very military factors which compel this conclusion raise questions which are much more than

military.”⁶⁵ Ultimately, his concern reflected unease with the fact that Canada had bound itself to the United States and was caught up in military decisions made by American policy makers.

Canadian anxiety about a loss of control mounted as the Eisenhower administration pursued a more assertive approach to the Cold War struggle. In his state-of-the-union speech in February 1953, the president announced a “new, positive foreign policy” actively promoting Western interests, not reactive to communist provocations. “The free world cannot indefinitely remain in a posture of paralyzed tension,” he proclaimed, “leaving forever to the aggressor the choice and the place and means to cause greatest hurt to us at least cost to himself.”⁶⁶ Soon after assuming office, Dulles made the same point to Pearson in a private tête-à-tête. Unlike the Truman administration, which “lost” Eastern Europe and China and courted defeat in Korea, the Republicans were “determined not to leave the initiative in the cold war to the Soviet Union.” Instead, the new administration would “create situations which would worry the Kremlin by creating threats to Soviet influence at various points in the world.” When Pearson pointed out the difficulty of creating “uneasiness in the Soviet Union without at the same time creating uneasiness among the allies of the United States,” Dulles expressed the hope that Washington “could rely on faith among its allies in its peaceful purposes.” To reassure its friends, Canada’s foreign minister urged his American counterpart to improve consultation within the Western alliance, particularly by making the North Atlantic Council (NAC) a more effective instrument. Assuring Pearson of his intention to consult allies, Dulles asserted that “it was impossible” for Washington to “give each of the allies a veto” over US decision making.⁶⁷ Here was the nub of an issue that Pearson pursued throughout Eisenhower’s first term: was there a means of ensuring consultation with and perhaps a measure of control over the nuclear-armed superpower?

The Eisenhower administration’s more active outlook gelled into the policy of so-called massive retaliation, a central part of the White House’s “New Look” at defence. Stemming from the president’s desire to trim military spending, the New Look called for substituting conventional forces with nuclear weapons and drove the growth of the US nuclear arsenal. Dulles announced the policy of massive retaliation in January 1954. To seize the initiative from the Soviet Bloc and make “imaginative use” of its

various weapons, he declared that Washington would respond to any act of aggression with its “great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing.”⁶⁸

By underscoring that nuclear weapons could be readily used, the declaration raised the stakes of any potential crisis. It also raised doubts about whether the United States would risk a nuclear exchange over a minor incident in Europe or Asia. At a diplomatic reception in Ottawa several days after Dulles had outlined this policy, Pearson warned US embassy officials that the administration risked being “misunderstood” by its NATO allies, who might assume that the United States was trying to “escape responsibility” for sharing in their defence.⁶⁹ In a report for the prime minister on Dulles’s speech, Pearson speculated that the new administration was clearly staking out a new strategy with alliance-wide implications. By cutting back on its conventional force commitment in Europe, the White House was all but declaring that the alliance’s Lisbon agreement in 1952 to establish a large conventional force had set “unrealistically high” expectations. Although the St. Laurent government shared the Eisenhower administration’s desire to tame defence spending, Pearson identified the true significance of the declaration in its emphasis on massive retaliation. This policy carried with it a significant risk of bluff, for if in a showdown with an enemy it was “a question of the atom bomb and all-out war, or nothing, it may be, too often, nothing.” At the same time, by transforming any crisis into a nuclear crisis, the policy underscored the necessity for consultation among the United States and its allies.⁷⁰

Pearson publicly addressed the New Look in a speech at the National Press Club in Washington. He emphasized repeatedly that intra-alliance consultation was vital “if this policy of preventing aggression by the threat of immediate and overwhelming retaliation . . . is to work collectively.” He and other Canadians had no doubt about Americans’ good sense, but, he explained, there was “anxiety” in Canada about being “a junior member of a coalition in a world poised uneasily on the very edge of an atomic abyss.”⁷¹ Canadian newspapers praised Pearson’s statement. The *Ottawa Citizen* judged that, since massive retaliation “increases the risk of general war,” Canada’s foreign minister was right to demand consultation. “The United States is the leader of the free world,” wrote the *Calgary Herald’s* editors, “but the United States should not forget that she has vital allies.”

Although rarely agreeing with Pearson, the conservative Toronto *Globe and Mail* thanked him for performing “a valuable service for the Western alliance.”⁷² Dulles, too, had kind words for the speech, telling his Canadian counterpart that he agreed with its main points, particularly regarding the importance of diplomacy and of consultations “with allies, especially those whose territory and co-operation would be essential for maximum retaliatory effort.” Offering the reassurance that the administration had no intention of weakening NATO, Dulles explained that “his ‘new doctrine’ did *not* mean instant and overwhelming retaliation in every instance”; rather, it meant “keeping the enemy guessing” about the type and level of response. “He [Dulles] did not agree,” Pearson wrote in his report on this discussion, “that this would mean converting small wars into world wars.”⁷³

As shown in [Chapter 2](#), Asia was the primary area where Canadian policy makers feared this alchemy taking place, but Europe was also the scene of growing nuclear tension. In late 1954, the NATO powers agreed on a planning report, MC48, premised on the notion that the nuclear revolution had drastically altered “the conditions of modern war.” Among its recommendations, the report urged granting local NATO commanders permission, at the outset of a conflict, to use strategic and tactical nuclear weapons to repel a Soviet attack.⁷⁴

For Canadian diplomats, this authorization raised troubling questions about escalation, civilian control of military forces, and NATO allies’ right to consultation with the Americans, who controlled the nuclear deterrent. Officials in London shared these concerns, and Anthony Eden, Britain’s foreign secretary, indicated that he would press for the NAC to pass a resolution recognizing MC48 yet leaving governments free to “make final decisions” about the use of atomic weaponry. After talks between Canadian and British diplomats, Eden arranged to meet with Dulles and Pearson on the sidelines of the NATO ministerial summit in December 1954.⁷⁵ Dulles aimed to quash Eden’s resolution, explaining that in an emergency Washington would not want to wait on intra-alliance consultations. However, Pearson recorded, the American stated that the United States could accept consultations among “the three or four governments who would carry the main load in war – he obviously intended to include Canada among these.” If Pearson was mollified by this promise, he did not show it, warning Dulles that “governments had handed over to the military the power to commit

us to atomic war, and that no other kind of war was conceivable. Policy," he stressed, "is likely to become the victim of military plans, if great care is not taken."⁷⁶ Despite their worries, Eden and Pearson joined the other NATO foreign ministers in endorsing MC48.

Following the NATO ministerial meeting, Anglo-Canadian talks on nailing down the Americans on consultations began. The two governments agreed on two points: the need for the United States to consult with its allies prior to using nuclear weapons and the need to access the indicator intelligence – showing that an enemy attack was imminent – on which American officials would base a decision to launch nuclear strikes. In April 1955, with the agreement of the Department of External Affairs, the Foreign Office presented a proposal along these lines to the State Department. Weeks earlier Pearson had met Dulles, telling him that Canadians and the "people of other countries which are not great powers" felt great uneasiness about the realization "that the facts of interdependence are such that involvement is not necessarily related to commitment, and that decisions taken by others may lead to hostilities in which they would be expected to play a part." Consultation, Canada's foreign minister pointed out, was "an important political fact."⁷⁷

As for the British paper, it fared poorly. In April, after the proposal had been submitted, Dulles assured Heeney that talks to establish procedures could proceed, but the Pentagon and US intelligence services blocked follow-up action.⁷⁸ At the strategic consultation meeting in November 1955 with their senior US counterparts, Canadian officials pressed the matter. Jules Léger, the DEA undersecretary, stated that, for Canadian authorities properly to grant requests by SAC to overfly Canada with bombers, the United States needed to share indicator intelligence and commit to consultation "at the highest political levels." This bilateral understanding, Léger added, could be expanded to cover the NATO region and form the basis of a tripartite agreement with Britain for the automatic exchange of information and consultation among the three foreign ministers before wider discussions with allied governments.⁷⁹ Further talks revealed an American willingness to share indicator intelligence, and a bilateral agreement in December 1956 – later expanded into a tripartite deal with the British – established a communication link between Canada's Joint Intelligence Committee and America's Intelligence Advisory Committee. Ottawa

pushed for an agreement on consultations. “Canadian willingness to agree to joint operational control of the continental defence forces,” R.M. Macdonnell, the DEA deputy undersecretary, remarked to US Ambassador Livingston Merchant, “should be met by a corresponding US recognition of the need for adequate consultation ... on matters which lead to the alerting of the air defence system.” An emerging expert on Canada within the State Department, Merchant admitted “the extreme difficulty of the situation which Canada would face should North America be attacked because of actions on the part of the United States Government in areas in which we had no direct concern” and over issues, such as Communist China and Taiwan, in which Ottawa and Washington differed. In 1957, the Americans agreed to consult with Canada in crisis situations.⁸⁰

Effective consultation was one of many challenges confronting NATO statesmen. Another was the change wrought by nuclear weapons. Both massive retaliation and MC48 underscored the alliance’s increasing reliance on the American atomic arsenal, and, like the Eisenhower administration, other NATO powers saw the potential for cost savings by using nuclear over conventional forces. In July 1956, during meetings with NATO officials across Europe, Pearson was briefed by Selwyn Lloyd, Britain’s foreign secretary, on a plan to save London considerable money by reducing the British conventional deployment on the continent. Pearson thought the move sensible on strategic grounds – indeed it “would help us solve one of our most difficult Canadian problems” by justifying a shift of troops from NATO to continental defence – but worried that the British seemed to be blinded to “its international implications” in that it could herald a dangerous drawdown of NATO’s military strength. Briefings at NATO headquarters in Paris with Lord Ismay, the alliance’s secretary general, left Pearson convinced that the British plan was unsound. Returning to London, he related this point to Eden, now prime minister. The proposal, Eden responded, was being delayed in light of the US election, but her majesty’s government would not wait forever.⁸¹

As for any similar change in Canadian force deployments, both Pearson and Campney agreed that Canada’s brigade and fighter aircraft in Western Europe played important roles along with other NATO units in ensuring that, in the event of a Soviet incursion, the alliance was not forced to choose “between risking a nuclear holocaust or taking no action at all.”⁸² Even so,

with MC48 the basis of alliance planning and with the Soviets holding a conventional force advantage over NATO, the Western alliance was increasingly reliant on atomic weapons, and allied governments, including Canada, soon pushed to acquire so-called tactical nuclear weaponry.

The NATO powers' eventual adoption of nuclear weapons underscored growing tensions in the Cold War. However, the Eisenhower era had begun amid an improving international climate. Stalin's death in March 1953 raised questions about the military standoff in Europe. As Dulles had complained to Pearson and St. Laurent that May, calls in Western countries for a new, less militarized approach to containment were troubling. "From the free world point of view," he added, "it was easier for the allies to be united in actual fighting than in reaching agreement among themselves in political conferences."⁸³ Dulles was cheered by this meeting, which left him convinced that the Canadians were in "very nearly complete agreement with respect to the character of the Soviet threat and on the means of countering it." At NATO's ministerial summit in December 1953, Dulles and Pearson warned that the new Soviet leadership's effort to promote increased ties to Western European countries was designed to "induce disunity" among NATO allies and create a public sense that "there was no need for further defence preparations." To demonstrate the enduring value of the alliance and of transatlantic unity, the two North Americans called for increasing nonmilitary cooperation within NATO.⁸⁴

Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty – dubbed the "Canadian article" because Pearson had insisted on it during the talks that created the alliance – called for political and economic cooperation among alliance members, but it had been overlooked as the NATO powers focused on rearmament and expansion to include Turkey, Greece, and West Germany. Furthermore, Article 2 was a source of animus among some US officials, notably Dean Acheson, Truman's secretary of state, who had been convinced that the alliance should confine itself to military matters.⁸⁵ An apparent sea change in American attitudes toward Article 2 came in May 1956. NATO, Dulles declared before the NAC, "had reached a critical moment in its life," and the alliance "would have to show more flexibility and imagination in developing non-military activities if it was to hold its own with the Soviet bloc in competitive co-existence."⁸⁶ With US support, the NAC established a Committee of Three to examine cooperation under Article 2.

Chaired by Pearson, Norway's Halvard Lange, and Gaetano Martino of Italy – dubbed the “three wise men” – the committee surveyed alliance members about how they envisioned nonmilitary cooperation and whether it encompassed political, economic, and/or cultural matters. The surveys showed stark differences within the alliance, so the resulting report, approved by the NAC in December 1956, was, Pearson admitted to cabinet, “not of outstanding significance.” The committee, he added in his memoirs, “might more appropriately be called ‘The Three Stooges.’” In apportioning blame for the failure of the exercise, he pointed to the British, French, and especially Americans. Despite Dulles's vocal support for promoting nonmilitary cooperation, during the committee work Pearson found the secretary of state “cautious and not very encouraging,” feeding his growing doubts about his American counterpart.⁸⁷ Ironically, with its calls for intra-alliance cooperation, the wise men's report was approved a month after the Suez Crisis nearly upended the Western alliance.

That crisis marked the nadir of differences among NATO allies over areas beyond Western Europe's defensive perimeter. These out-of-area issues, as they were called, largely involved conflicts pitting the waning imperial powers against anticolonial movements. Although Eisenhower and Dulles were mindful that the United States had been born in an anticolonial revolt, and despite an American tradition of opposing European imperialism, containing communism and backing allies such as Britain and France took precedence.⁸⁸ For Canadian officials, meanwhile, policies on these conflicts were largely guided by “alliance-driven thinking,” with Ottawa reluctant to undermine fellow NATO members.⁸⁹ At the same time, as in French Indochina, say, Canada's government steered clear of becoming directly involved in the often violent retreat of empire.

By 1955, as the ranks of newly decolonized countries swelled, Canadian officials adopted a position cautiously more attuned to Third World demands, often setting Canada apart from its allies. When the leaders of twenty-nine newly independent countries gathered at the Bandung Conference in April 1955, St. Laurent sent a message of congratulations, a move in contrast to American and British hostility toward the summit.⁹⁰ Later that year, as Pearson embarked on a tour of Asia, Paul Martin, the minister of health and welfare, led Canada's UN delegation in spearheading an expansion of the organization's membership. The addition of sixteen new

members ended Western powers' clear majority in the General Assembly. Convinced that he had not been consulted about the move, Dulles raked Canadian diplomats "over the coals." In fact, the Canadians and Americans had been in close contact, and the problem lay with the secretary of state's subordinates, who had failed to keep Dulles informed of events. He later apologized to Pearson for the misunderstanding, adding that contrary to press speculation "he had been very happy about our co-operative and friendly relations ... and had no complaint of any kind to make."⁹¹ The incident was representative of differences between Canada and its key allies as the Cold War spread into the Third World.

The Middle East was an important flashpoint. To contain Soviet influence in the region, in 1955, with US support, Britain, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan concluded the Baghdad Pact, creating a mutual defence body similar to NATO. With little at stake in the Middle East, Canada steered clear of the agreement. In 1955, Canada had official representation only in Ankara, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Beirut, and Karachi, and the region itself, Pearson explained to the NAC, "lies outside our real defence interests and the commitments we would be willing to accept."⁹² Canadian interest in the Middle East was largely confined to two issues: reducing Cold War tensions that sprang up from superpower competition and protecting Israel, a country that Pearson and other Canadian diplomats had had a hand in creating at the United Nations in 1947–48 and that officials in Ottawa prized as "the only democracy, the only Western-oriented, and the only well-organized state in the Middle East, and one on which we can rely."⁹³

The Middle East's transformation into a site of Cold War competition accelerated with the Baghdad Pact and the conclusion in September 1955 of a massive arms deal between Czechoslovakia's communist government and Egyptian strongman Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser. Seizing power through a coup against Egypt's British-backed monarchy, Nasser was a leading proponent of Arab nationalism, which called for ridding the Middle East of European colonialism and unifying Arab states, goals that brought him into conflict with Britain and France and into seeming alignment with the Soviet Union. To keep him out of the Soviet camp, the Americans sought to curry favour with Nasser, who in turn played Washington and Moscow against one another. Israel complicated matters, for the Americans had an important domestic political interest in backing the Jewish state.

Yet, at the same time, Washington supported its Baghdad Pact allies as well as several Arab governments opposed to Nasser, none of which recognized Israel's existence. The British and French also backed Arab governments, and through a tripartite agreement in 1950 with the Americans they had agreed to guarantee the armistice lines between Israel and its neighbours. Canada sought to avoid this muddle. Still, with growing international tensions, Pearson proposed moving "quickly and effectively" to make a grand bargain with the Soviets that would see the four great powers jointly manage the region's affairs under UN auspices. Soviet participation was key, he added, since they were "playing with fire" by stoking Arab nationalism. To the Americans, reaching an accommodation with the Soviet Union was anathema.⁹⁴

The Czech arms deal marked Nasser's apparent shift toward one side in the Cold War, but the Americans still hoped to win Egypt over with funding for the Aswan Dam, a huge hydroelectric project. Meanwhile, from the Israeli perspective, the Czech arms deal, including the transfer of 50 Ilyushin-28 bombers and 200 MiG-15 fighters, threatened Israel's airpower advantage, creating a regional power imbalance. Tel Aviv began to search for advanced fighter aircraft. Because of their commitment to Arab governments and their desire not to stoke further anti-Western Arab nationalism, London, Paris, and Washington were reluctant to meet this request.

Free of the limitations imposed by regional alliances, Canada sold a range of small arms to Israel, but the Israelis prized American-designed F-86 Sabres, produced by Canadair in Montreal. At the White Sulphur Springs summit in March 1956, Pearson told Dulles of "the danger of the Israeli Government concluding that the balance of arms was shifting rapidly against them" since it might launch preventative attacks against Egypt. Raising aircraft sales, Dulles noted that Canada, free to act in the region, could meet Israel's demands. Ominously, he mused that "perhaps Nasser would soon 'have to be cut down to size.'"⁹⁵

A month later, following a second Egyptian-Czechoslovakian arms deal, Israel formally requested Canadair F-86s. Discussing these developments with Pearson, Dulles revealed a confidential plan to house F-86 squadrons on a US aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean for quick transfer to Israel in a crisis. Given this plan, he welcomed Canada selling several squadrons to the Israelis since they would provide pilots with training opportunities.

“I told Mr. Dulles,” Pearson reported of this conversation, “that requests of this kind from Israel represented a very serious problem for Canada which was not any more anxious than the United States to become identified with one side or the other.” A better policy was a great power-backed settlement that nullified the need for arms.⁹⁶ No settlement was forthcoming, and despite his reservations in August Pearson spearheaded cabinet approval of the sale to Israel of twenty-four F-86s.⁹⁷ By that point, regional tensions were reaching a critical juncture.

In what Dulles called “as big a chess move as US diplomacy has made in a long time,” Washington pulled funding for the Aswan Dam, a response to the second Egyptian-Czechoslovakian arms deal.⁹⁸ In turn, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, owned by Anglo-French investors and still a vital lifeline of the dwindling British Empire. In London, Norman Robertson, Canada’s high commissioner, told Lord Home, the Commonwealth secretary, that he “hoped the United Kingdom would not be too quick to gather too many spears to its own bosom.”⁹⁹ This sentiment was wishful thinking. Within the British government, attitudes toward Nasser hardened; speaking with Dulles, Lloyd likened the Egyptian to “a paranoiac like Hitler but without the power that Hitler had back of him. He said in essence that the British people feel they cannot let Nasser get away with his action.” Eisenhower was more empathetic to the Egyptian, explaining in the NSC his sense that Nasser “embodies the emotional demands of the people of the area for independence” and for “slapping the white Man down.” Whereas the Joint Chiefs of Staff favoured removing Nasser from power, the president urged calm. Given anticolonial nationalism, Eisenhower cautioned that Western intervention in Egypt could “array the world from Dakar to the Philippine Islands against us.”¹⁰⁰

The American solution was to convene a conference of countries with a direct stake in the canal. Pearson put little faith in this Suez Canal Users Association, telling the NAC that Ottawa wanted the matter brought before the United Nations. Canada was “geographically remote from the Suez,” but because it was a member of both the United Nations and NATO it “could not escape the consequences of the failure to find a satisfactory solution,” and Pearson urged fellow Western states to “rule out the use of force.”¹⁰¹ Diplomatic wrangling proceeded apace. In mid-October, Pearson told cabinet that, with the British and French engaged in talks

with the Egyptians, the Suez dispute “appeared to be quieting down.”¹⁰² American attention, meanwhile, was focused on Eisenhower’s re-election campaign.

Unknown to the American and Canadian governments, Britain, France, and Israel had hatched a plot to thwart Nasser, their mutual enemy: Israeli forces would attack Egypt, and under the guise of protecting the Suez Canal Anglo-French forces would seize the waterway. On 29 October, the Israeli attack began. When the news reached Eisenhower, the White House “rang with barracks-room language that had not been heard at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue since the days of General Grant.”¹⁰³ Compounding the president’s anger, the British and French quashed an American UN Security Council resolution calling for an Israeli withdrawal, shredding the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 by which London, Paris, and Washington had agreed to uphold the armistice lines between Israel and its neighbours. Instead, Prime Minister of Britain Anthony Eden and President of France Guy Mollet issued an ultimatum to Cairo and Tel Aviv, calling on them to ensure unimpeded access through the canal.

Bewildered by his allies’ conduct, Eisenhower urged Mollet and Eden to pursue “peaceful processes,” and in the NSC he made clear that he would not back them in using force. “How could we possibly support Britain and France,” he asked on 1 November, the day after British and French airstrikes against Egyptian positions began, “if in doing so we lose the whole Arab world?” American officials opted for a diplomatic path at the United Nations, seeking a mild resolution calling for a ceasefire and thereby outflanking harsher resolutions expected to come from the USSR and Third World delegations.¹⁰⁴ Compounding the anger in Washington was that Moscow had begun a crackdown in Hungary against an anti-Soviet uprising, and Anglo-French action threatened to distract world attention. As the president put it privately, the United States “must lead” at the UN General Assembly to stop Moscow “from seizing a mantle of world leadership through a false but convincing exhibition of concern for smaller nations.” In a televised address calling for peace, he publicly rebuked the United Kingdom and France for being “in error.”¹⁰⁵

Anglo-French belligerence toward Egypt left Canadian officials “stunned and uncomprehending.” Like Eisenhower, St. Laurent was irate. Writing to Eden, he withheld Canadian support for any potential military action,

urged calm, and reproached his British counterpart for possibly harming the Anglo-American alliance, “the very foundation of our hopes for progress toward a peaceful and secure world.”¹⁰⁶ Britain and France also risked damaging the cohesion of the NATO alliance and the Commonwealth, undermining the Western position in the Third World, and drawing the condemnation of the United Nations as aggressors. Their allies’ actions, Pearson complained to Dulles, were “stupid.” The American secretary of state, whom Pearson described as being “in a state of emotion and depression greater than anything I have seen before in him,” appealed for Canadian help in bringing home to the British government that any military action would be a grave error, particularly since it would distract world attention from Soviet actions in Hungary. As Dulles complained, just when the Soviet Union was “falling in disarray and losing all credit, now we come along with action as bad or worse.” Relaying Dulles’s request to Robertson in London, Pearson complained that the British and French had acted “without any consultation with any of their closest allies, including not only the United States but ourselves.”¹⁰⁷

Undeterred by warnings from Ottawa and Washington, the Anglo-French attack proceeded, and – as Soviet Bloc and Third World delegations prepared a series of damning resolutions – Canadian and American diplomats scrambled to deflect these attacks. Updating his cabinet colleagues on these events on 1 November, Pearson outlined the idea of creating an international police force “stationed on the Israel-Arab borders to keep peace” and thereby allowing for a cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Anglo-French forces, whose putative purpose was securing the canal, a task that the police force could undertake.¹⁰⁸ He then departed for the United Nations. Late that night, after an exhaustive debate, the General Assembly passed a US draft resolution calling for a ceasefire; notably, Canada abstained. In explaining his delegation’s vote, Pearson stated that his preferred course of action was the creation of a UN force to be sent to the region. Backing this idea, Dulles then welcomed Canada to formulate a proposal.

In New York and in Washington, Canadian and American diplomats scrambled to craft a resolution to create a UN force and to lay the groundwork for putting such a force in the field. The goals, Heeny told State Department officials, were to “prevent further deterioration in the situation”

in Egypt and to hold “off the pressure building up for a strong condemnation of the UK and France, an action which would raise many problems for the United States as well as Canada.”¹⁰⁹ Although his focus was on his re-election, Eisenhower approved these manoeuvres, and with his encouragement Henry Cabot Lodge, the US ambassador to the United Nations, handed Pearson a draft resolution inspired by the Canadian foreign minister’s prior suggestion of a police force. “I gave him the paper,” Lodge later recalled. “And he just looked at the paper and he said, ‘Yes’ just like that, adding ‘Yes, I’ll take it.’” Calling for the secretary-general to craft a UN emergency force to oversee a ceasefire, the resolution was adopted early on the morning of 4 November. The ceasefire began three days later, and the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) began to take shape.¹¹⁰

The UNEF was a means for the British and French to save face while backing down, an important consideration for Eden and Mollet, subjected to a political and public backlash against their bungling. Compounding British problems was a collapse in the pound sterling, worsened by Eisenhower’s decision to force London to withdraw troops from Egypt by withholding the export of petroleum and denying Britain access to International Monetary Fund credits.¹¹¹ American disapproval and the application of economic thumbscrews were decisive factors in the collapse of the Anglo-French scheme, but the president recognized the peacekeeping force’s importance in preserving a measure of British and French *amour propre*. He later credited Pearson’s “key proposal” with helping to resolve the crisis, telling St. Laurent at the time that “never have I seen action on the part of a government that excited me more than the rapid way that you and your Government moved into the breach. You did a magnificent job and we admire it.”¹¹² In fact, Canadian-American cooperation was key to bringing Pearson’s idea of an international police force into being. Canada’s foreign minister won the plaudits, and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957, cementing the Suez Crisis, for some Canadians at least, as the apogee of postwar Canadian influence on the world stage.¹¹³ Although Henry Cabot Lodge would later complain that the Canadian foreign minister got all the credit, it was Canadian lobbying that had ensured passage of the UNEF resolution, so Pearson’s prize was well earned.¹¹⁴

The crisis might have been a high point of common action by Canadian and American officials, but it belied an undercurrent of Canadian doubt

about Dulles, who had forced the confrontation with Nasser by pulling funds for the Aswan Dam. Confiding to one of his subordinates, Pearson expressed “great sympathy” for the British over both “their frustrations and provocations in the Middle East” and their “impatience” with the American secretary of state’s “ambiguous and inconsistent line” on Egypt. Even so, he was unsparing in his criticism of Britain’s government in terms of “how they expected to correct the situation by the kind of action they took without consultation with anybody and in the sure knowledge that a large majority of the United Nations would be mobilized by the Asians and the Arabs against them.”¹¹⁵ Both the Americans and the British bore blame for almost spoiling the Western alliance.

The NAC meeting in December 1956, Pearson reported to St. Laurent, had been “difficult” since Lloyd had sought to defend the Anglo-French adventure, and Dulles, “self-righteous” in attitude, had delivered “moral lectures” about the perils of the lack of consultation. In what the Canadian minister labelled a “very unhappy development,” Lloyd confided that he no longer trusted Dulles, leading Pearson to reflect privately that, although the “serious” breach between the allies could be repaired, the process would speed along “if the three or four personalities chiefly involved” were gone from the picture.¹¹⁶ Eden soon resigned as prime minister. His successor, Harold Macmillan, made repairing relations with Washington a top priority.

As for Anglo-Canadian relations, the Suez imbroglio was hardly a shining moment. In London, Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith reported that, among British diplomats, “the bitterness about the Canadian attitude on Suez was as great as that against the Americans.”¹¹⁷ Although Pearson and his colleagues had been acting to save London from its own incompetence, a lack of support for the British-French gambit looked, to some Canadians, like a dangerous lack of loyalty to Canada’s former imperial master. A current of anti-Americanism ran through this criticism. Thanks to the Liberals, Canada had become an American “chore boy,” complained Howard Green, a leading member of the Conservative opposition. E. Davie Fulton, another Tory, decried how the Liberals had “seemingly aligned Canada with the United States and Russia and against Britain and France,” and the *Calgary Herald* grouched that Canada had “limply hitched its wagon to the irresponsible shooting star of United States foreign policy.”¹¹⁸

This perception of the Liberals as American puppets only grew thanks to a mounting outcry among Canadian nationalists against American investment in Canada and a perceived loss of control over Canadian industry and resources. Other Canadians worried about the increasing defence ties between the two countries. In the federal election in June 1957, the pro-British Tories unseated St. Laurent's government, ending more than two decades of Liberal rule. The campaign had featured Conservative criticism of Liberal alignment with Washington.¹¹⁹ Somewhat taken aback by this development, American diplomats noted that, though there might be a flare-up of economic disagreements, they did not expect any significant problems to upset the Canadian-American alliance. An embassy assessment produced several months before the election noted that, though there was a "growing consciousness of national destiny" among Canadians, there was widespread support for military cooperation against the common threat of the Soviet Union. As embassy officials noted somewhat imperiously, Canadians recognized that "their continuing existence as a free and independent nation is tied to that of the United States, upon which they must in the final analysis rely for their defense."¹²⁰ The paradox at the centre of this orthodoxy – that to be free and independent Canada had to take part in joint defence efforts that limited Canadian freedom of action – had been a central cause of concern for the Liberals, who nonetheless had pursued a range of defence agreements with the United States.

From allowing the stationing or transit of US forces in Canada to the construction of joint infrastructure, these agreements had brought to maturity the nascent alliance between the two neighbours, which had begun only during the Second World War. The drawing together of the Canadian and American militaries was the result of a shared ideological commitment to defending liberal democracy and free enterprise as well as a consensus on the need to secure North America from attack. Importantly, military structures built during this period of keen Cold War tension endured, as did the Canadian need to balance sovereignty and security and to seek means of influencing American policy while embarking on independent initiatives that advanced Canada's distinct interests. And in 1957 it fell to the new government of John Diefenbaker to pursue these goals.

A NEW PARTNER IN OTTAWA AND CONVERGING ECONOMIC INTERESTS, 1957–61

The federal election in Canada in June 1957 ended twenty-two years of Liberal Party majority rule and returned a Progressive Conservative minority government led by John Diefenbaker. The mercurial Diefenbaker, who had secured the Tory leadership in December 1956, conducted a feverish election campaign during which he caustically labelled the St. Laurent government a “ruling caste” that – if re-elected – posed “a very real threat that Canada would become a one-party state.”¹ Conservative fortunes had been improving for a year before the election. The intensely partisan debate in the House of Commons in May and June 1956 about the construction of a natural gas pipeline from Alberta to Quebec – financed through a corporation temporarily controlled by US investors – wounded the St. Laurent government, particularly after it invoked controversial procedures limiting debate in Parliament. The Suez Crisis in 1956 provided the Progressive Conservative opposition with another wedge issue by raising the spectre of Ottawa’s purported rejection of Canada’s traditional ties with Britain in favour of meekly acceding to Washington’s condemnation of British, French, and Israeli actions regarding the crisis.

Another significant cause of Canadian criticism of the United States was American politicians’ anticommunist crusade. Canada was not immune from anticommunist fervour, including investigations of the loyalties of government employees and military personnel.² But the open persecution of Americans in public hearings and the churning flurry of allegations by

wild-eyed members of Congress caused deep consternation north of the border. A particularly disturbing aspect of this red baiting was the spillover into Canada, with a number of Canadians accused of being Soviet agents or communist sympathizers. Lester Pearson himself faced American allegations, based in part on unsubstantiated rumours but also, as his FBI file makes clear, his pursuit of independent initiatives in foreign policy (support for nuclear disarmament and recognition of Red China), and his willingness publicly to condemn McCarthyism.³ “We have recently witnessed the spectacle of innocent and respectable people being prosecuted and almost destroyed by innuendo and unjustified suspicion,” Pearson had affirmed in 1950 as congressional hearings on the red menace ramped up.⁴ The Canadians tended not to make official protests out of these anticommunist smears, though in 1953 Maryon Pearson had broken with the role typical of a so-called diplomat’s wife by upbraiding Eisenhower himself over Senator McCarthy’s conduct.⁵ The president’s supine stance toward McCarthy had caused disquiet in Canada. One commentator wrote that Eisenhower’s “appeasement” of the red baiters was “nauseating”; another likened the “puzzled soldier” to a “bewildered tourist” lost “in the foreign land of politics.”⁶ Canadian criticisms reached a critical mass with the suicide of E. Herbert Norman, Canada’s ambassador to Egypt, in April 1957 after a US Senate subcommittee’s release of classified intelligence evaluations of his loyalty received wide public attention. Through Ambassador Arnold Heeny in Washington, Pearson warned Dulles that as a result of Norman’s suicide “anti-Americanism in Canada is at an all time high.” When Dulles sought to downplay the issue, Heeny responded that “he could not over-emphasize the seriousness of the situation,” especially since Canada was about to enter into a federal election.⁷ Indeed, some in Parliament were demanding that Canada’s ambassador be withdrawn from Washington in protest, with opposition politicians claiming that Norman had been “murdered by slander.”⁸

Most importantly for the election in 1957, Diefenbaker promoted his evangelical brand of economic nationalism that frequently vilified the United States for harming Canadian prosperity. He sharply criticized the export of raw natural resources across the border and promised during the election campaign that a Conservative government would mandate the domestic processing of a larger share of these products. “Join together in co-operation

with the United States – yes,” he informed an Ontario audience in early May, “but build Canada.”⁹ Shortly thereafter, Diefenbaker kicked off his campaign in western Canada by attacking Washington for pursuing agricultural policies “with almost ruthless abandon” that the St. Laurent government had meekly protested “in dulcet tones that did not even demand a reply.”¹⁰

Nonetheless, the St. Laurent government did not believe that its frayed relationship with Washington in any of these key policy areas affected its political fortunes. Whereas Conservative commentators claimed that the Liberals were plodding off to the election campaign “with the martyred air of soldiers who have gone over the top too often,”¹¹ St. Laurent led a party supremely convinced of its right to continue the Liberal hold on political power. “We all know that these past four years have been generally the best ever experienced in Canada,” the prime minister informed a Winnipeg audience in his opening speech of the campaign. Furthermore, although no government could take full credit for the economic prosperity that the country had experienced, St. Laurent proclaimed that “the present government has certainly helped” and was “well qualified to give dynamic direction to Canadian progress in the years immediately ahead.”¹²

Diplomatic observers of the Canadian political scene agreed with St. Laurent’s pronouncements, and few anticipated the downfall of the Liberals in the weeks leading up to the election on 10 June. US Ambassador Livingston Merchant, for example, predicted just days before the election a comfortable Liberal victory in a campaign marked “by the absence of clear national issues and apathy among voters.”¹³ But the surprise Conservative victory – which saw the Tories secure a plurality of 112 seats in the 265-seat House of Commons – quickly required US diplomats to evaluate its impact on Canadian-American relations. Merchant’s detailed election post-mortems noted that “the next six months or year are going to be difficult” since the Conservatives “must make a showing and they are bound to be active in the general area of protecting sovereignty and increasing protectionism.”¹⁴

Aware of these potential complexities, John Foster Dulles scheduled an informal visit to Ottawa in July 1957 to meet Diefenbaker. Senior ministers in the new Conservative cabinet promised to be “extremely tough” with the United States.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the meetings allowed for the free exchange

of ideas and positions. Dulles subsequently indicated that his visit “perhaps headed off a certain amount of trouble on the horizon.”¹⁶ He also provided President Dwight Eisenhower with his evaluation of Diefenbaker:

He is, I think, the kind of person we can get along with, although I suspect that before he becomes aware of the perplexities of today’s problems and until he has developed an adequate staff, there will be difficult moments. He has a sense of his power as Prime Minister, but I think is still inadequate in his understanding of the problems and in any staff organization. There is no doubt but that they are much more Commonwealth minded than was the prior administration, but Diefenbaker shows a real awareness of the vital importance of working closely with the United States.¹⁷

Dulles’s forecast proved to be accurate in terms of the tenor of economic relations between Canada and the United States between the election in June 1957 and Eisenhower’s departure from office in January 1961. An array of policy files demonstrated the complexity of the bilateral connection and the willingness of Washington to cultivate sound economic ties with Ottawa. In particular, Canada successfully sought to guarantee preferential access to the US petroleum market and overcome restrictive American extraterritorial commercial practices to sell wheat to Communist China. Furthermore, in multilateral undertakings, two major United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1958 and 1960 witnessed efforts by Canadian and American negotiators to bridge serious differences over the definition of the territorial sea that had major economic implications for both countries. Additionally, complex discussions resulted in important agreements providing Canadian defence contractors with access to lucrative military procurement orders. Finally, the closing weeks of the Eisenhower administration witnessed the signing of a treaty establishing the framework for the future hydroelectric development of the Columbia River. And, underlying all of these issues, Eisenhower and Diefenbaker frequently conducted high-level diplomacy to address points of difference between Washington and Ottawa, most notably during the president’s visit to Ottawa in July 1958 that solidified the strong personal relationship between the two men.

Despite Diefenbaker's appeal to economic nationalism in the election campaign in 1957, the opening months of the Progressive Conservative government witnessed few protectionist initiatives. Ottawa officially protested the continued growth of Public Law 480 subsidies flooding potential foreign markets for Canadian wheat with American wheat bartered for strategic materials, but the only substantive effort to shield the Canadian market from American producers witnessed the imposition of an import embargo on turkeys in July 1957. The State Department immediately complained that these restrictions contravened GATT provisions and had been enacted without prior consultation. Canadian officials admitted that these were "valid objections," and continued diplomatic pressure from Washington resulted in an increased quantity of American turkeys allowed into Canada.¹⁸ But the Canadian government did not contemplate further restrictive measures in 1957. "The less Canada became involved in tariff matters with the US during the next few months the better," cabinet determined, since the Eisenhower administration had emphasized "that anything Canada might do by way of raising tariffs constituted an invitation to a large bloc in Congress to increase US restrictions on trade."¹⁹

While Ottawa proceeded cautiously with the bilateral trade file, some senior officials in Washington lobbied for a fundamental reshaping of Canadian-American economic ties. Clarence Randall, special assistant to President Eisenhower and chairman of the Council on Foreign Economic Policy, consistently advocated the formation of a Canada-US commission to study a free-trade zone in North America in light of the accelerating pace of economic integration in Europe. The State Department initially rebuffed the proposal before the Canadian federal election in 1957 because of its provocative nature, but Randall raised the issue again following the Conservative victory. He believed that any potential plan for integration would involve a pattern of very gradual readjustment and that "it would be hard to see how any government in Canada could refuse to make the study."²⁰ Dulles politely rebuked Randall for suggesting a course of action that Canadians believed would subject their country to preponderant US economic influence. "Our relations with Canada," Dulles warned, "are such that we would not want to confront Canada with proposals which we foresee in advance they would reject. We try to work together as good neighbors and not to embarrass each other."²¹

Undaunted, Randall continued to advocate continental economic integration. In the wake of the United Kingdom's proposal in October 1957 to create a free-trade zone with Canada, he lamented privately that "I was once more seized with a bad attack of frustration" that his proposal had been derailed by the State Department.²² Randall's free-trade proposition eventually reached the attention of President Eisenhower early in 1958 before it was shelved. After consulting with Merchant about the matter, Dulles counselled Eisenhower that any free-trade scheme would produce a "violent negative reaction" in Canada for "sentimental and economic reasons." Most of Canada's recent industrial growth, Dulles counselled, "could not survive free trade with the United States and there would, for a considerable time at least, be a trend toward making Canada more of a producer of raw materials for the more efficient industrial plants of the USA."²³

To discuss irritants in the bilateral economic relationship, a meeting of the Joint Canada–United States Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs occurred in Washington on 7–8 October 1957 – the first such meeting since September 1955. In preparation for these consultations, the Canadian delegation, led by Minister of Finance Donald Fleming, sought to emphasize the perennial problem of US agricultural disposal policies. Furthermore, Fleming and his colleagues intended to underscore the serious problem of Canada's massive trade deficit with the United States, which had ballooned to \$1.2 billion in 1956. The American delegation, led by John Foster Dulles, did not approach the meeting with a list of specific grievances to air. The scope paper providing guidance for the US secretaries stressed that the new Canadian ministers "seem to have exaggerated ideas regarding the subservience of the former government to US interests and policies," and the American delegation needed "to put the relationship in proper perspective and to reassure the Canadians that the US does not act in disregard of legitimate Canadian interests – certain specific measures to the contrary notwithstanding."²⁴

Although Fleming complained that the ministerial meetings were conducted in the State Department "in an atmosphere that was much too businesslike," both Canada and the United States emerged satisfied with the talks.²⁵ Randall provided his off-the-record evaluation of the first day of the meetings:

I thought the American side behaved badly and was inadequate ... Our people passed notes up and down to each other, got up and went down and whispered to a more remote person, and once Foster Dulles actually had mail brought in to be signed. On the contrary, during Foster's long discourse the entire Canadian delegation sat in an attitude of respectful attention ... Fleming made a perfectly brilliant presentation of the Canadian point of view on trade questions. He had organized it in masterly fashion; you could fairly hear the points click in place, and he stopped at the precise minute that he was supposed to. He was very tough but always pleasant. He made the point that Canada's trade is in imbalance with the United States and that they are not going along, letting this country take their raw materials and exclude their finished products.²⁶

But even Randall conceded after the second day of discussions that the meetings represented "a very orderly and useful exercise by men accustomed to deal frankly and realistically with questions that combine economics and practical politics," and Fleming concluded that "the exchange of views and information could not fail to be beneficial."²⁷ US Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks committed the only serious public relations gaffe after emerging from a meeting on the second day of talks. "We fixed 'em," he exulted, mistakenly believing that he was speaking to a corridor filled only with American journalists.²⁸ Weeks provided a full statement of apology to Fleming subsequently read in the House of Commons.

The primary bilateral economic issues in the first year of the Diefenbaker government originated in restrictive US trade practices. The first issue, which involved efforts to curb the import of Canadian petroleum into the American market, generated heated objections from Ottawa. Bilateral fossil fuel relations in the opening decades of the Cold War, as Daniel Macfarlane emphasizes, were "loosely coordinated ... through a series of ad hoc decisions and preferences rather than permanent agreements."²⁹ This was the result primarily of the nascent nature of the Canadian petroleum sector before the major oil discoveries in western Canada in the immediate post-war period, which resulted in national production increases from roughly 7.6 million barrels of oil in 1946 to nearly 82 million barrels in 1958.³⁰ Canadian petroleum policy was also affected by the need to rely on imports of

crude oil – primarily from Venezuela and the United States – into eastern Canada because of the lack of a national pipeline network. Although successive Canadian governments sought to expand exports of crude oil from western Canada to the United States, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations were preoccupied with the issue of reducing America’s rising imports of crude oil, which had nearly doubled from 174 million barrels in 1950 to 342 million barrels in 1956 – though this still represented only one-seventh of the volume of US production in the latter year.³¹

In the aftermath of the Suez Crisis and the continued instability in the Middle East, President Eisenhower commissioned a Special Cabinet Committee in July 1957 to determine whether crude oil imports threatened national security. The committee determined this to be the case and discussed a number of remedial measures, including stiff tariffs on imported oil and the imposition of country oil quotas. Eventually, Eisenhower endorsed a system of voluntary import limits for American refineries located in four geographic regions. In establishing voluntary quotas in Districts I to IV, most Canadian interests were specifically protected by exempting District V – encompassing the Pacific coast states and the outlet for Alberta crude oil sent across the border via pipeline – from the restrictions. By December 1957, however, the Special Cabinet Committee forecast that imports into District V would increase by nearly 30 percent in 1958. Since any scheme to exempt Canadian oil from voluntary ceilings applied to other countries “would be too patently discriminatory to make them practical,” the committee endorsed universal extension of the voluntary import program to District V.³²

These measures roused Diefenbaker into action. After learning of the extension of the voluntary restrictions while attending NATO meetings in Paris in December 1957, he ordered his Washington ambassador, Norman Robertson, to protest US actions.³³ Diefenbaker derided the notion that oil imports from America’s closest ally would threaten national security, and he wanted the State Department to be aware that Canada considered petroleum import restrictions to violate the spirit of bilateral agreements such as the Joint Statement of Principles for Economic Cooperation in 1950 and Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Robertson lobbied American officials on two occasions, to no avail, before Washington announced the voluntary import program expansion, prompting the Canadian submission of a

formal diplomatic protest note on 15 January 1958 threatening retaliatory measures against the \$100 million worth of US petroleum products entering Canada annually.

Despite this complaint, Eisenhower's Special Cabinet Committee subsequently recommended that the voluntary restrictions be tightened further in Districts I to IV because of a continued US supply glut, resulting in a 15 percent cut in potential imports from Saskatchewan producers. These import cuts for US refineries east of the Rocky Mountains in effect from 31 March 1958 combined with the threat of intensified restrictions in District V caused the Diefenbaker government to issue a second protest note on 23 June. But US officials remained unmoved, noting that security considerations did not provide a basis for favouring Canada over other allies, such as Venezuela, and that commercial considerations dictated the decline in oil imports, not the voluntary restriction program.³⁴

The second principal trade matter engaging officials in Washington and Ottawa before July 1958 concerned the Diefenbaker government's efforts to expand trade with Communist China in the face of strong US extra-territorial laws regulating Canadian subsidiaries of American corporations. The establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and Communist China's participation in the Korean War fuelled Washington's desire to isolate Beijing. Formation of the China Committee in September 1952 extended and expanded NATO's embargo of strategic goods against the Soviet Bloc to the PRC. Then, in August 1954, enactment of the Foreign Assets Control (FAC) regulations prohibited American companies and their foreign subsidiaries from exporting goods to China. The St. Laurent Liberal government reluctantly went along with these measures, but by early 1957 Ottawa criticized Washington for the "undue rigidity" of its policy on China while other nations, such as the United Kingdom, withdrew entirely from the China Committee structure.³⁵

Despite his anticommunist credentials, John Diefenbaker quickly pursued a strategy to increase trade with the PRC following the Progressive Conservative election victory. A Canadian trade mission to China in September 1957 revealed that PRC officials expressed an interest in obtaining limited quantities of Canadian wheat, an opportunity that Diefenbaker eagerly embraced to appeal to his electoral base in western Canada. But American FAC regulations quickly impeded the smooth negotiation

of Canadian wheat deals with China. Two attempts in late 1957 to engage Bunge Corporation, an American grain company operating in Canada, to sell Canadian wheat failed after company officials feared contravening US extraterritorial law. Although some small wheat shipments were concluded in March 1958 with firms unconnected with American parent companies, a subsidiary of the US-based Cargill Grain Company transferred a wheat contract to a solely Canadian firm after direct intervention from Washington. These impediments to wheat transactions with Beijing irritated Canadian officials but remained secret.

This changed in the first months of 1958, however, when news reached the public that the Ford Motor Company of Canada had declined to fill a potential order for 1,000 vehicles from a Chinese trading company because of FAC regulations. The Department of External Affairs had previously investigated this “extraordinary and puzzling” case and concluded that the US parent company had indeed interfered in the tentative transaction, although Chinese officials had never placed a firm order with Ford Canada.³⁶ The Eisenhower administration quickly realized that it faced a major problem that threatened to dovetail with the Diefenbaker government’s frequent appeal to Canadian nationalism. Originally supporting the strict application of FAC provisions, State Department officials now considered it “highly desirable to make some concession to Canada’s point of view ... to abate the conviction of so many Canadians that the US is oblivious of Canadian economic self-determination and tends, either by accident or design, to exercise undue control over Canada’s economy.”³⁷

At a meeting of the National Security Council on 3 July 1958, Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy shared the concerns of John Foster Dulles about the divergent approaches in Ottawa and Washington toward trade with the PRC. Nevertheless, he expressed his bewilderment that any effort would ever be attempted by the United States to control an American subsidiary corporation operating legally in another country. The final detailed position paper subsequently prepared for the Council on Foreign Economic Policy ahead of President Eisenhower’s visit to Ottawa in July 1958 recommended the reworking of FAC rules. This memorandum emphasized that, with the memory of the Korean War fading, American allies had “passed from an initial period of active cooperation to acquiescence or actual resistance” to US efforts to secure a comprehensive trade embargo against Communist

China.³⁸ As a result, US policy should be reformulated to take changing international opinion into account.

While Ottawa and Washington squabbled over commodity trade, they engaged in even more detailed and impactful bilateral negotiations on territorial waters and protection of vital fisheries. Historians of Canadian-American relations have not extensively analyzed attempts to establish an international law of the sea regime during two conferences sponsored by the United Nations during the Diefenbaker government's tenure, tending to focus instead on the third UN law of the sea conference convened between 1973 and 1982 that comprehensively codified global maritime law or on the issue of sovereignty over waters in the Arctic.³⁹ Both governments recognized the critical importance of the law of the sea, with the Eisenhower administration thinking primarily in terms of Cold War imperatives limiting the ability of coastal states to expand the breadth of territorial waters. For its part, the Progressive Conservative government zealously sought to protect Canadian fisheries from foreign encroachment, and no issue other than continental defence matters garnered the attention of ministers in Diefenbaker's cabinet more frequently than the law of the sea between 1957 and 1963.

Ahead of the UN law of the sea conferences, the International Law Commission had submitted a report in 1956 containing draft articles for a comprehensive law of the sea convention, and the UN General Assembly in 1956 reached agreement to hold the first United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in Geneva in 1958 to address the central question of the breadth of the territorial sea. The St. Laurent Liberal government originally supported the extension of the territorial sea to twelve miles from the coastline. But prompt American and British pressure resulted in Ottawa's decision to endorse a traditional three-mile territorial sea with an additional nine-mile contiguous zone in which a coastal state could exercise exclusive jurisdiction over fisheries. The incoming Diefenbaker government officially certified this position in August 1957. To maintain the ability of the US Navy to patrol coastlines around the world, the Eisenhower administration consistently supported a global three-mile territorial sea. Although Washington also considered a fisheries zone "an overly drastic and sweeping approach" to the question of economic development of maritime states, it did indicate some flexibility in this matter.⁴⁰ Meeting with Canadian officials

in December 1957 to coordinate approaches at the upcoming Geneva conference, US negotiators remained steadfast in their backing of a three-mile territorial sea while supporting the regional application of fishing zones in a potential Geneva agreement or bilateral fishing agreements outside an international law of the sea pact.

Canadian and American delegations faced a complex and fluid diplomatic environment when they convened the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I) on 24 February 1958. George Drew chaired the Canadian deputation.⁴¹ The former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party appointed by Diefenbaker in 1957 as Canada's high commissioner in London, Drew possessed few personal skills conducive to the thrust-and-parry negotiating environment of the conference, and his impulsive behaviour would prove to be an irritant in Geneva. Arthur Dean directed the US delegation. A distinguished corporate lawyer, Dean established his diplomatic reputation by representing the United Nations Command countries in negotiations with the Communist Chinese and North Korean governments after the Korean War. Drew and Dean confronted a wide range of preliminary positions addressing the primary conference topic of the territorial sea.⁴² Traditional naval powers, such as the United Kingdom, favoured a three-mile territorial sea but opposed the concept of a contiguous fisheries zone. Led by the USSR, many nations arrived in Geneva supporting the maximum territorial sea breadth of twelve miles, and several countries sought to extend fishing zones 200 miles from the coast.

Delegations determined the support for a variety of views on the territorial sea in the opening weeks of the conference. The United States quickly informed the Canadian delegation that its canvassing of delegates indicated that the Canadian "three plus nine" proposal might be the only possible compromise to prevent failure of the conference. An official *aide-mémoire* soon reached Ottawa from Washington emphasizing the primacy of a three-mile territorial sea in American strategy and promising strong support for the Canadian position if this proved to be the only method by which the narrow territorial sea could be maintained.⁴³ But the United Kingdom remained rigid in its initial position that movement away from a three-mile territorial sea would begin a stampede for the support of a twelve-mile sea, and other Western European delegations increasingly expressed their dissatisfaction with the Canadian proposal. Confronted

with this seemingly intractable opposition to the three plus nine formula, Dean subsequently informed Drew that the Canadians faced “tough sledding unless they were willing to make some modifications.”⁴⁴

The UK delegation subsequently broke the solidarity of the Canadian and American delegations by reversing its original position on the territorial sea and informing its key allies that the British cabinet now supported the establishment of a six-mile territorial sea. Drew expressed his keen disappointment with this decision since it violated the long-standing UK pledge that anything beyond a three-mile territorial sea would imperil Britain’s security and fishery interests.⁴⁵ American, Canadian, and British delegates met on 1 April, and Arthur Dean noted with “great bluntness and vigour” that the United States would not budge from the three-mile territorial sea limit under any circumstances.⁴⁶ But these warnings failed to move British delegates, who introduced their proposal on 2 April.

Introduction of the UK six-mile territorial sea proposal caused both Ottawa and Washington to reassess their strategies. Based on Drew’s analysis of the possible voting patterns in the First Committee, the Diefenbaker cabinet authorized Drew to canvass select European delegations offering a phasing-out period of five years for traditional fishing rights in exchange for their support for the Canadian three plus nine proposal.⁴⁷ Drew quickly met with representatives from Iceland, Denmark, and Norway to gauge support for the phase-out option. Each of these countries, however, refused to consider Drew’s scheme, and the leader of the Canadian delegation reluctantly informed Ottawa that Canada should make no additional moves to dilute the original Canadian proposal.

The United States reacted to the British proposal by ending its support for the Canadian position and introducing its own initiative, which expanded the territorial sea and proposed a phasing-out stage for countries with traditional fishing rights in a contiguous fisheries zone. Dean concluded that Britain introduced the six-mile territorial sea proposal solely to scuttle the Canadian three plus nine initiative – the “least damaging” proposal from the American point of view and the “only realistic hope” of preventing the breakdown of the Geneva conference.⁴⁸ After Dean unsuccessfully pressured Drew to consider a modified version of Canada’s proposal entrenching historical fishing rights within a contiguous fisheries zone, the US delegation, with the personal approval of President Eisenhower, circulated a new

proposal on 14 April to break the deadlock at the conference. Washington now called for a six-mile territorial sea, a “major and unprecedented” concession.⁴⁹ It also called for a six-mile contiguous fishing zone in which countries that had fished for a ten-year period would be allowed to continue for an additional five-year phasing-out period.

Canada reacted quickly to this American riposte. Informed of the new US position, Drew admitted that the old Canadian proposal stood no chance of being accepted.⁵⁰ But the Canadian delegation, in his thinking, could now adopt a bold new strategy because the Canadian position supporting a three-mile territorial sea had been formulated solely because of US and UK pressure. With Ottawa’s approval, Canada co-sponsored a new proposal with India and Mexico on 16 April that called for a six-mile territorial sea, a six-mile contiguous fisheries zone with no recognition of historical rights, and the right of a state to claim a territorial sea between six and twelve miles provided that the declaration had been made before February 1948. Washington expressed astonishment at the new Canadian position, which, in the American delegation’s view, “shocked the conscience of the conference.”⁵¹ This tripartite initiative soon fell apart, however, after India withdrew its sponsorship. Drew subsequently received approval on 17 April to introduce a new Canadian proposal supporting a universal six-mile territorial sea and a six-mile contiguous fisheries zone with no recognition of historical fishing rights or a phasing-out period.

The First Committee voted on territorial sea resolutions on 19 April, and only a portion of the revised Canadian proposal passed. After Ghana made a motion to split the Canadian resolution, the first paragraph calling for a six-mile territorial sea received only eleven supporting votes and forty-eight opposing votes, and the second paragraph endorsing a six-mile contiguous fisheries zone received thirty-seven votes in favour, thirty-five votes opposed (including the United States), and nine abstentions. The US proposal supporting the “six plus six” formula with recognition of historical fishing rights in the contiguous fisheries zone failed by a vote of thirty-six in favour, thirty-eight opposed (including Canada), and nine abstentions. Dean harshly criticized the “completely selfish attitude of Canada” for preventing a solid front of NATO countries uniting behind the American proposal; as a result of these factors, he noted, “the failure of the conference cannot be laid at our door.”⁵²

Undaunted by the defeat in the First Committee, the US delegation reintroduced their measure into the plenary session of the conference on 25 April to compete against the second paragraph of the Canadian proposal. After intense lobbying by Dean and his colleagues, the American resolution garnered forty-five votes in favour, thirty-three votes against (including Canada), and seven abstentions. The Canadian six-mile contiguous fisheries zone proposal lost ground in the plenary session, with thirty-five nations supporting it, thirty nations opposing it (including the United States), and twenty nations abstaining. The plenary voting post-mortems written by Drew and Dean revealed the level of acrimony between the Canadian and American delegations. Drew informed Ottawa that various delegations had been heavily pressured to support Washington's position, with threats of foreign aid being cut off if nations supported the Canadian proposal. The failure of the United States to acquire a necessary two-thirds majority, Drew believed, represented a significant victory in the face of US diplomatic coercion.⁵³ Dean was equally blunt in his report to the State Department:

One key factor in [the] failure of our proposal to gain two-thirds majority was of course [the] attitude of Canada. Canadian Del[egates] badly split and very unhappy ... We cannot avoid a certain satisfaction that, with all of Drew's maneuvering, the Canadian proposal on a contiguous fishing zone garnered fewer votes in plenary than it had in Committee One. This is generally interpreted as something of a setback for the Canadians and they fully realize it.⁵⁴

In the first year of the Progressive Conservative government, Prime Minister Diefenbaker and President Eisenhower met informally on two occasions in Washington in October 1957 and in Paris in December 1957 at the NATO Heads of Government meeting. These get-togethers and the leaders' similarities in age and ideological temperament allowed the two men to begin to develop a personal relationship that would continue until Eisenhower left office. "I found Eisenhower a warm and engaging person," Diefenbaker recalled in his memoirs, "and we became the best of friends."⁵⁵ The impetus for the first official meeting between the two leaders came from Washington. In the spring of 1958, US officials were disturbed by Ottawa's foot-dragging on formal approval of the NORAD agreement (see

Chapter 6) and the continued willingness of the Diefenbaker government to adopt nationalist positions in bilateral economic matters. But the State Department also hoped that the overwhelming Progressive Conservative victory in the general election on 31 March 1958 – the Tories won 208 of 265 seats in the House of Commons, the largest Canadian electoral majority in history to that date – meant that the Diefenbaker government would act more responsibly.⁵⁶ To encourage Ottawa in this direction, Dulles counselled Eisenhower to contact Diefenbaker to arrange a meeting, leading to the president's visit to Ottawa in July 1958.⁵⁷

The briefing papers prepared for Eisenhower ahead of his trip emphasized the major issues affecting US relations with Canada. Although “basically no less friendly to the United States than the Liberals,” the Diefenbaker government proved to be more vigorous in countering any perceived reduction in Canadian sovereignty and arousing public unease about the American economic and military influence on Canada. The primary objectives of the trip, therefore, were to demonstrate Washington's commitment to furthering cross-border cooperation, to investigate and solve problems in the economic sphere, and “to discourage the further growth of Canadian nationalism.”⁵⁸ The State Department also anticipated substantive agreement to be reached during the Ottawa visit in one key policy area. Washington conceded that some softening of its attitude would be necessary regarding the application of Foreign Assets Control regulations affecting Canada's trade with Communist China. Although no broad deviation from the austere American policy on Beijing would be countenanced, the United States would allow individual transactions with China by American subsidiaries to be approved if denying the transaction would adversely affect Canada's economy, if the goods were not of a strategic nature, and if the deal did not involve US dollars or US dollar facilities.⁵⁹

Canadian expectations of the summit mirrored those of the United States. Advisers warned Diefenbaker that Eisenhower and Dulles would raise questions, particularly in the economic sphere, “that may be a bit troublesome to you.”⁶⁰ But they also counselled the prime minister that he should not simply assent to American contentions that US policies were enacted with Canadian interests in mind, particularly in the case of petroleum import restrictions. Diefenbaker himself attached “particular importance” to addressing the problem of extraterritorial legislation affecting Canadian

trade with Communist China.⁶¹ Cabinet shared this concern and recommended on 2 July 1958 that Canada's position on American FAC regulations be made plain to Eisenhower and Dulles; if these consultations did not produce results, then a formal diplomatic protest would be launched in Washington. Diefenbaker also insisted that a primary purpose of the summit would be to cultivate a closer personal friendship with Eisenhower. To that end, talks would be informal and private, and opportunities for recreation and relaxation would be made available, including a fishing trip at Harrington Lake and a round of golf for Eisenhower.

He arrived in Ottawa in the morning of 8 July, and the first meeting with Diefenbaker occurred at the prime minister's residence at 24 Sussex Drive.⁶² After some discussion of the international situation, the conversation turned to the question of the supposed blocked order for Ford cars placed by China. After some "desultory discussion" of the issue, Eisenhower suggested that some *modus vivendi* could be worked out, but he emphasized that American policy on China could not be weakened.

Eisenhower intended his address to a joint session of Parliament in the morning of 9 July to be the centrepiece of his visit. He had informed his officials that it would be "useless to make one of the regular 'hands across the border' talks," and in his speech Eisenhower presented a candid exposition of American trade and economic policies and offered no apologies for their impacts on Canada.⁶³ "Despite inconvenience and even occasional damage" caused to Canadian wheat farmers by American agricultural surplus disposal policies, the president defended them since they fed needy populations and provided funds to recipient countries that raised standards of living to benefit the wider international trading community. Eisenhower similarly promoted US oil import restrictions as a perfectly valid tool to encourage exploration by the American oil industry and stimulate the development of a continental petroleum industry. "A healthy domestic oil producing industry is vital to our national security," Eisenhower claimed, and he firmly reminded his audience that "our security and yours are inseparable." The speech generated much comment from both Canadian and American observers. Howard Green, the government house leader and future secretary of state for external affairs, noted privately that "Eisenhower did not make too many friends in his speech to the House of Commons."⁶⁴ American officials, of course, viewed the speech in a different

light, and Livingston Merchant argued that Eisenhower's frankness, "once the Canadians got over their initial surprise over the fact that he had no intention of confining himself to platitudes, is now being applauded."⁶⁵

Eisenhower briefly addressed the Canadian cabinet following his speech to Parliament, and John Foster Dulles then met Sidney Smith and three other ministers in the afternoon of 9 July to discuss bilateral economic concerns. Oil import restrictions and trade with China remained uppermost in the minds of the Canadians. Minister of Finance Donald Fleming noted that limits on Canadian oil exports might result in the building of a pipeline from Alberta to the lucrative Montreal market currently serviced by American oil interests, and Minister of Agriculture Douglas Harkness claimed that the import restrictions would slow the development of the petroleum industry in western Canada and generate resentment of the United States. Dulles rehearsed the familiar American talking points emphasizing that Canada had been guaranteed a portion of petroleum refining in the United States and that Washington was "working to preserve Canadian interests."⁶⁶

A more substantive discussion occurred on US extraterritoriality laws and Canadian trade with China. Dulles proposed that a public statement be issued noting that, in specific cases in which disputes over the application of FAC regulations occurred, "there will be full consultation between the two Governments with a view to finding through licensing procedures satisfactory solutions to concrete problems."⁶⁷ Canadian ministers expressed their appreciation of Dulles's approach but asked that the word *licensing* in the proposed statement be replaced by *appropriate* to prevent the impression that Washington had veto power over transactions affecting the Canadian economy. Dulles agreed to this request and claimed that a number of applications from China had been made solely to sow discord between Ottawa and Washington; with a defined structure for approval of transactions with China, the number of requests would decline sharply.

Eisenhower, Diefenbaker, Dulles, and Smith met again in the prime minister's Parliament Hill office in the morning of 10 July. The topic of China dominated the conversation. Diefenbaker pressed the issue of the Ford Motor Company car order and asked how long the process would take for the US Treasury Department to issue an official licence for future transactions with China involving US subsidiaries operating in Canada. He also

emphasized that public use of the term “licence” should be avoided. Dulles assured Diefenbaker – to the latter’s “surprise and gratification” – that a Treasury Department licence for a major transaction involving Canada could be issued within forty-eight hours, and Canadian officials could announce that Washington would grant an exception to US extraterritorial laws and avoid using the legally correct term “licensing.”⁶⁸ The most contentious element of the discussion resulted from Sidney Smith’s offhand remark that Canada might consider officially recognizing the Beijing government as part of Ottawa’s strategy to expand trade with Communist China. After hearing Smith’s comment, “Eisenhower pounded his fist on the desk and shouted that the day Canada recognized the Peking regime he would kick the United Nations out of the United States.”⁶⁹ As the discussion about China continued, Eisenhower admitted that the American hard-line policy on Beijing was “an obsession” and that Washington “would have more difficulty in supporting Canada in this field than in any other field.”⁷⁰

Although Dulles met with Canadian ministers during the afternoon of 10 July to discuss the international situation, Canada-US defence cooperation, and the development of the Columbia River, the morning meeting concluded Eisenhower’s formal consultations with Diefenbaker and allowed the president to concentrate on the ceremonial aspects of his visit that had featured prominently in the trip.⁷¹ On 8 July, Eisenhower’s conversation with Diefenbaker at 24 Sussex Drive had been sandwiched between a formal greeting at Government House by the governor general and a black-tie dinner there in the evening. On 9 July, Eisenhower participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the National War Memorial before his address to Parliament and attended a reception hosted by the US ambassador in the evening. In the afternoon of 10 July, the president enjoyed a round of golf at the Ottawa Hunt Club with Livingston Merchant and Canadian Minister of Transport George Hees, a hole-by-hole account of which appeared the following day in the *Ottawa Journal* written by Eisenhower’s caddie. “I am sure its publication is in violation of every rule and ethic of journalism,” Merchant noted, “but it is a good warm story.”⁷² Eisenhower hosted a dinner that evening at the US embassy residence for the governor general and Diefenbaker before he left Ottawa in the morning of 11 July.

Canadian and American officials expressed satisfaction with the summit in Ottawa. Diefenbaker recalled that he was “generally pleased” with the

Eisenhower-Dulles visit, and Green noted that it “went off very well.”⁷³ From the American perspective, Ambassador Merchant appraised the merits of the president’s trip to Ottawa:

Your visit, I know, will have lasting benefits to our relations with Canada. These people are friendly and they are staunch allies. They are, as you realize, extraordinarily sensitive as a result of their history and their position of inferiority in power in relation to us. The last year has seen the development of a strident, almost truculent nationalism. Your visit itself and the frankness but friendliness of your address and all your talks with Cabinet leaders have created a new element of respect for the United States and for its policies. These men, I think, will as a result be more sober and more friendly in their dealings with us and in their public utterances.⁷⁴

A telephone call from Eisenhower to Diefenbaker on 14 July to discuss the deteriorating situation in Lebanon (see [Chapter 5](#)) formally confirmed their friendship in the aftermath of the Ottawa visit when the two men – to the astonishment of the president’s staff – agreed to call each other “Ike” and “John.”⁷⁵

The informal arrangements regarding Canadian subsidiaries of US corporations being granted exceptions to Foreign Assets Control regulations were made official in the months following Eisenhower’s visit to Ottawa. After the Council on Foreign Economic Policy determined that “nothing could be worse” than the case-by-case approval of requests only from Canada, a special committee was struck with representatives from the State, Treasury, and Commerce Departments.⁷⁶ This committee reported in December 1958 and unanimously recommended that

it may be desirable in the national interest to make exceptions for friendly foreign countries with respect to trade with Communist China by United States subsidiaries abroad. Such exceptions should normally be limited to situations (a) which are important to the economy of the friendly foreign country, and (b) in which an indigenous country (not United States controlled) is unable to fill the order.⁷⁷

The National Security Council officially approved these exemptions in January 1959.⁷⁸

This relaxation of US policy concerning extraterritoriality represented a major victory for the Diefenbaker government in its effort to cultivate Sino-Canadian trade. Ottawa temporarily proved to be unable to take significant advantage of Washington's concession for the remainder of Eisenhower's time in office. Beijing slashed orders of Canadian wheat in 1959 to retaliate against the Diefenbaker government's decision to impose dumping duties on cheap Chinese imports, and Canada's trade with China that year totalled only a meagre \$6.56 million. But in December 1960, the PRC returned to the negotiating table looking to purchase large volumes of Canadian wheat, and a \$60 million deal was signed at the end of January 1961 after the inauguration of John F. Kennedy. Despite aggressive opposition from the Kennedy administration to the transaction, Ottawa remained single-minded in its search for agricultural markets in China and secured a second major wheat agreement in 1961 valued at \$365 million.⁷⁹ Diefenbaker's decision to challenge FAC statutes after his election victory in 1957 ultimately paid handsome dividends for Canadian farmers and forced Washington to allow its northern ally to undermine its efforts to isolate Beijing.

At the same time that the Eisenhower administration relaxed the application of FAC rules affecting Canadian wheat, Washington also bent to the Diefenbaker government's consistent lobbying to guarantee access of Canadian petroleum to the American market. The Joint Canada-United States Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs met in Ottawa on 5 January 1959, and Canadian ministers identified US petroleum restrictions as "the most important item on the agenda."⁸⁰ American committee members cited a global supply glut as the explanation for the decline in Canadian oil exports to the United States from 180,000 barrels per day to only 75,000 barrels per day by the end of 1958 under the terms of the voluntary import program. Minister of Trade and Commerce Gordon Churchill argued that Canada had been "seriously injured" by the voluntary import restriction program and lobbied for a special exemption for Canadian oil entering the United States by pipeline. These representations temporarily fell on deaf ears, however, when a new system of mandatory oil restrictions was put in place in March 1959 that controlled oil imports on a refinery basis and

not by a company or country basis – despite an official protest note from Ottawa passed to the State Department on 19 February.⁸¹

Continued lobbying by Canadian officials, however, eventually paid off. Throughout April 1959, the State Department worked with other agencies to develop guidelines that would exempt Canadian petroleum from mandatory import restrictions. Washington remained firm in not allowing liquid natural gas from Canada to have unrestricted access to the American market but was willing to provide an exemption to pipeline oil if the Diefenbaker government delayed parliamentary debate for several months on legislation to create the National Energy Board. Furthermore, American officials were anxious that the exemption should not be portrayed in Canada “as a concession which had been unwillingly extracted” from the United States; instead, it was hoped that Washington would be given credit for working diligently to meet Canadian concerns.⁸² On 30 April 1959, President Eisenhower subsequently authorized the removal of the controls on Canadian crude oil imports crossing the border by pipeline, road, or rail. A delighted Prime Minister Diefenbaker informed the House of Commons of the petroleum exemption, noting that it “removes a source of distressing irritation and reflects a degree of co-operation and sensible development of resources which is so necessary for the economic prosperity and mutual defence of our two countries.”⁸³

Concerted efforts to secure commodity concessions from Washington in the aftermath of Eisenhower’s visit to Ottawa were matched by the Diefenbaker government’s determination to gain an increased share of continental defence contracts for Canadian suppliers. This pursuit gained mounting urgency as a result of the Conservative government’s controversial choice to halt development of the domestically designed CF-105 interceptor aircraft. The Eisenhower administration firmly rebuffed George Pearkes’s request in August 1958 for the United States to purchase squadrons of the CF-105 to offset its ballooning development costs.⁸⁴ This decision forced Diefenbaker to announce in September 1958 that Canada would integrate the American-made Bomarc ground-to-air missile system into the Canadian defence umbrella while postponing a final – though inevitably negative – verdict on the CF-105 program’s continuation to early 1959.

The planned acquisition of Bomarc missiles immediately spurred Ottawa to call for domestic participation in the production of components

for this weapons system and the associated sophisticated radar and fire-control systems. The annual bilateral meeting of consultation among deputy ministers and senior diplomats held at the State Department in November 1958 witnessed Canadian officials lobbying for a comprehensive system of production sharing. General Charles Foulkes, the chairman of the Canadian Chiefs of Staff, noted that “arms were now getting so complicated and expensive that the Canadians were being priced out of the field.” Undersecretary of State for External Affairs Norman Robertson further “emphasized the importance of the whole subject to the Canadian government” and highlighted the employment and investment benefits that would flow to Canada by the adoption of a more equitable distribution of defence contracts. The Canadian entreaties received a sympathetic hearing from senior American bureaucrats “fully conscious” of the Canadian dilemma, and working groups established the previous month were tasked with continuing to address the matter.⁸⁵

Production sharing received ministerial attention at the first meeting of the Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence held in Paris on 15 December 1958. Canadian Minister of Defence Production Raymond O’Hurley emphasized the “particular and immediate importance” of defence contracts for Canada’s struggling electronic industry, and Donald Fleming and Sidney Smith made another plea for Washington to purchase CF-105 aircraft. Although American cabinet secretaries refused to countenance any proposal to acquire Canadian-made interceptors, they indicated that significant progress was being made on the production-sharing front. The USAF had already decided to deal with Canadian contractors on the same basis as it dealt with American contractors, and plans were being considered to exempt Canada from provisions of the Buy American Act that sheltered US defence firms from foreign competition. The American delegation also receptively considered the proposal to assign to Canadian contractors one-third of the nearly \$400 million in costs associated with the adoption of the Bomarc system by Canada and related radar improvements.⁸⁶ Although Dulles dismissively informed Eisenhower that the meeting “served more as scenery than as a place for substantive debate,” measurable progress toward a production-sharing agreement continued to be made.⁸⁷

The Diefenbaker government’s formal decision to scrap the CF-105 program accelerated bilateral military production links. Although the

immediate job losses caused by this cancellation were regrettable, the prime minister informed the House of Commons on 20 February 1959 that “we must not abdicate our responsibility to assure that the huge sums which it is our duty to ask parliament to provide for defence are being expended in the most effective way to achieve that purpose.”⁸⁸ Production sharing, Diefenbaker emphasized, represented the most equitable, sustainable, and cost-efficient way for Canadian participation in continental defence efforts. Responding to his announcement, the new US ambassador in Ottawa, Richard Wigglesworth, applauded the “considerable political courage” that the prime minister showed in cancelling the CF-105, but he warned the State Department that criticism of the United States would grow should Canadian defence industries fail to receive “substantial contracts.”⁸⁹

The Eisenhower administration immediately heeded Wigglesworth’s counsel and discussed the issue of production sharing at a cabinet meeting on 6 March 1959. Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy spoke of the “great psychological impact” that the cancellation of the CF-105 had on the Canadian public, which now demanded an increased opportunity for the nation to participate in defence procurement programs. McElroy’s deputy, Donald Quarles, praised Diefenbaker’s “high statesmanship” and noted the significant degree of bilateral economic cooperation that existed in defence matters going back to the 1941 Hyde Park agreement. Quarles also discussed the existing efforts to include Canadian contractors in the Bomarc program, indicated that the US Navy and Army would soon join the Air Force in allowing Canadian firms to bid competitively for defence contracts, and believed that Buy American Act provisions would be rolled back shortly.⁹⁰ Eisenhower and his cabinet secretaries fully supported these production-sharing initiatives, and the value of US defence orders placed in Canada subsequently increased by nearly 50 percent over that of 1958 prior to the conclusion of a formal agreement later in 1959.⁹¹

As a result of these initiatives, politicians and officials in Ottawa and Washington expressed a high level of satisfaction with the state of the Canadian-American relationship in the summer of 1959. Arnold Heeny reported to External Affairs headquarters from Washington that no contentious bilateral economic issues existed and that “there had been a conscious US decision at a high level to meet us whenever possible.” Furthermore, the relationship between John Diefenbaker and Dwight

Eisenhower remained strong. After the two met to open the St. Lawrence Seaway in late June 1959, the prime minister reported to Heenev that Eisenhower “had been very friendly and had displayed real interest in the maintenance and improvement of good relations between Canada and the United States.”⁹² Senior State Department officials concurred with this positive appraisal. Westel Woodbury Willoughby, the director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, summarized the general tenor of bilateral affairs at this time:

As of the moment, the number of abrasive issues with the Canadians is remarkably few. In the past several months a number of thorny problems have been satisfactorily resolved. To be sure, some new ones have developed but on the whole the Canadians are pleased with our recent attitudes in bilateral relations. The Prime Minister’s special assistant recently told one of our officers in the Embassy that the Prime Minister has taken special interest in recent developments in US-Canadian economic relations and was most appreciative of US actions.⁹³

This bilateral cooperation in important economic matters would continue in the remaining eighteen months of the Eisenhower administration and proved to be most evident in efforts to broker an agreement delineating the breadth of the territorial sea at a second United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to reach a breakthrough agreement in late 1960 establishing a framework for the development of the Columbia River.

Events following the breakup of UNCLOS I demonstrated the critical importance of defining the territorial sea and contiguous fishing zones. The government of Iceland adopted the boldest strategy to protect its natural resources by unilaterally establishing an exclusive twelve-mile fisheries zone in September 1958. This declaration immediately threatened to undermine NATO unity since the United Kingdom refused to recognize Iceland’s proclamation and sent Royal Navy warships to escort British fishing trawlers exercising historical fishing rights in the disputed waters. Other nations, such as Communist China, unilaterally adopted a twelve-mile territorial sea in the aftermath of the conference in 1958. And some countries – particularly in Latin America – began to lobby for protected

economic areas beyond any twelve-mile territorial sea or contiguous fisheries zone. Recognizing the potential for chaos and potentially explosive situations given the lack of an international territorial sea regime, delegates at the 14th Session of the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in December 1958 calling for a second Conference on the Law of the Sea to be convened under UN auspices in February or March 1960.

Throughout 1959, the Diefenbaker government and the Eisenhower administration worked diligently to determine their preliminary positions. Ottawa canvassed more than thirty nations to gauge opinion on a potential conference agreement and determined that the unqualified Canadian six-plus-six proposal from the conference in 1958 would be the absolute minimum formula considered by the international community at the upcoming conference.⁹⁴ Washington, meanwhile, realized that any preferred position of a bare three-mile or six-mile territorial sea was not feasible and determined that a close alliance with Canada would be critical in conference negotiations. The State Department accordingly dispatched Robert Murphy, the undersecretary of state for external affairs, to Ottawa to meet with Canadian officials on 23 October 1959. Two major points of agreement flowed from this meeting. First, Canada and the United States would enter into negotiations to agree on a tapering-off period for the exercise of traditional fishing rights in the contiguous fishing zone provided that the upcoming conference adopted the unqualified six-plus-six proposal. Second, Washington would strongly lobby European countries at a meeting in mid-November 1959 to accept the Canadian unqualified proposal at UNCLOS II that would then be supplemented with bilateral agreements.⁹⁵

Canada-US negotiations for a phasing-out period proceeded slowly, and many European nations expressed disapproval of the Canada-US initiative. Arthur Dean subsequently consulted with Howard Green – who had assumed the External Affairs portfolio in June 1959 after the untimely death of Sidney Smith – at the end of November, informing him that an unvarnished six-plus-six proposal with bilateral side deals addressing historical fishing rights would not garner two-thirds support at the upcoming conference.⁹⁶ Dean hoped instead that Canada would agree to incorporate a phasing-out period of traditional fishing rights within a formal resolution submitted to the conference, a proposal that Green refused initially to

contemplate.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, both Canada and the United States firmly endorsed the necessity of adopting a six-mile territorial sea at the conference and halt growing support for a twelve-mile sea and agreed to cooperate closely.

Canadian and American delegations – again headed respectively by George Drew and Arthur Dean – acted under formal instructions adopted in early March 1960 that shared several critical characteristics. The Diefenbaker cabinet met on 8 March and determined that twenty-seven states claimed a territorial sea greater than six miles; this bloc constituted nearly one-third of the conference attendees and would be capable of vetoing international acceptance of a six-mile territorial sea. Canada, therefore, would likely need to sweeten its six-plus-six proposal to be submitted as the opening gambit at the conference. Canada's delegation would publicize its willingness to negotiate bilaterally or multilaterally with countries possessing traditional fishing rights in the six-mile contiguous fisheries zone. If the conference delegation determined that a phasing-out period of a maximum duration of ten years incorporated officially into the six-plus-six proposal stood a chance of securing two-thirds support, then cabinet should be consulted for further instructions.⁹⁸

The State Department tasked the American delegation to UNCLOS II with the major objective of securing an agreement on a six-mile territorial sea. If this could not be achieved, then all efforts should be directed toward preventing the adoption of a sea greater than six miles in breadth, even at the expense of the failure of the conference. In terms of a contiguous fisheries zone beyond the territorial sea, the US delegation would initially support a slightly modified proposal presented at the conference in 1958 and call for a six-mile fisheries zone beyond the territorial sea in which foreign nations could continue to harvest catches that did not exceed a preconference base level. If this proposal failed to garner sufficient backing, then a proposal that called for the phasing-out of traditional fishing rights in a fixed time period could be contemplated, even though “such an arrangement would be damaging to US fishing interests.” Furthermore, if a phasing-out clause did appear to be the only way that a consensus could be achieved, then Washington hoped that separate bilateral agreements could be negotiated with Canada and Mexico to allow Americans access to North American continental waters for an indefinite period of time or

for a lengthy period of time allowing for “an orderly and equitable adjustment of fishing practices.”⁹⁹

Canadian and American officials met in Washington on the eve of the conference to try again to iron out procedural tactics that could benefit both countries. Undersecretary of State Douglas Dillon emphasized to Saul Rae, the Canadian embassy’s *chargé d’affaires*, and J.S. Nutt, the Canadian first secretary in Washington, that it was “most unlikely” that the American proposal of a six-mile territorial sea and a six-mile contiguous fisheries zone with the recognition of traditional fishing rights could succeed.¹⁰⁰ Instead, it should be viewed as a starting point that would allow the United States to move toward a more palatable position. Dillon conceded that the impact of the Canadian unvarnished six-plus-six proposal on American fishermen operating in Canadian waters would be negligible, but its negative effect on US fishing interests working off Mexican shores would be significant. Furthermore, Dillon reminded Rae and Nutt that Canadian refusal to move toward a potential phasing-out period of traditional fishing rights or bilateral agreements regulating access to contiguous fisheries would threaten other areas of Canadian-American relations. Since Canada had adopted a nationalistic position on the question of oil exports to the United States, Dillon noted, Ottawa could not now dismiss similar sentiments expressed by US fishing interests about being denied access to Canadian waters. Rae and Nutt refused to be drawn into a debate about the broader ramifications of a breakdown of the upcoming Geneva conference, but they did note American reluctance to negotiate a bilateral agreement after the 23 October 1959 consultation in the wake of European opposition to the concept. Ultimately, the Canadian diplomats concluded, the Diefenbaker cabinet would have to approve any significant change in Canadian conference tactics.

UNCLOS II opened on 17 March 1960, and all delegations introduced their preliminary proposals to the Committee of the Whole in the opening weeks of the conference. Although Drew brashly expressed to the US and UK delegations his “great confidence” that the Canadian proposal might secure the necessary two-thirds support, extensive surveys of conference delegates revealed that neither the Canadian nor the American proposal would survive without modifications.¹⁰¹ Key Western European nations such as France privately expressed the view that a phasing-out period for

traditional fishing rights might prove to be palatable, and Norway spoke for many European allies when it expressed trepidation about the negotiation of bilateral fishing agreements supplemental to a general conference treaty. In the first week of April, surveys of the eighty-eight delegations revealed that the maximum number of votes that the American and Canadian proposals would receive in the committee stage was thirty-four and twenty-eight, respectively. This grim prognosis spurred Dean and Drew to co-sponsor a new proposal tabled on 6 April that supported the six-plus-six concept with a ten-year period of adjustment to phase out traditional fishing rights in the six-mile fishing zone contiguous to the territorial sea. But Drew's action stunned the Diefenbaker cabinet since the text of the official proposal had not reached Ottawa until 7 April and had not been officially vetted. Nevertheless, cabinet had little choice but belatedly to endorse Drew's action.

The Committee of the Whole voted on submitted resolutions on 13 April 1960. The other major proposal co-sponsored by eighteen African, Asian, and Latin American nations supporting a twelve-mile territorial sea was defeated by a vote of thirty-six in favour, thirty-nine against (including Canada and the United States), and thirteen abstentions. The Canada-US proposal secured majority support with forty-three nations supporting the measure, thirty-three nations opposing it, and twelve nations abstaining. Both American and Canadian delegates expressed satisfaction that not a single Western European nation except for Iceland voted against their joint resolution. But India and Ghana had been consistently hostile to the Canada-US proposal and frequently disrupted the generally moderate tone of the conference. This proved to be particularly galling to Drew, who viewed a lack of cooperation among Commonwealth countries with great concern. India, because of its troubled relationship with the separated portions of Pakistan, was hostile to the Western proposal because it wanted a provision requiring the permission of a coastal state for another nation's warships to pass innocently through the contiguous fisheries zone. Ghana was the other Commonwealth holdout because it demanded the inclusion in any proposal of an aid package from developed countries to countries seeking to expand their fisheries sections, a position that Drew believed stemmed from the "childish megalomania sense of political mission" that possessed the Ghanaians.¹⁰²

In the two weeks following the committee voting, Canadian and American delegates in Geneva lobbied aggressively to sway countries to support the Canada-US proposal. These efforts were aided by personal messages from President Eisenhower to five heads of state in the Afro-Asian bloc requesting their backing of the resolution. But the fate of the conference remained uncertain. The USSR ratcheted up its efforts to encourage proponents of a twelve-mile territorial sea to oppose the Canada-US proposal. Brazil, Cuba, and Uruguay complicated the joint resolution by submitting an amendment that would recognize preferential fishing rights of nations beyond a twelve-mile coastal zone if a special commission determined that a coastal state had an overwhelming economic need to have jurisdiction in the high-seas area adjacent to a contiguous fishing zone. And Iceland proved to be the most persistent obstacle to achieving agreement at UNCLOS II. Although a *modus vivendi* had been reached with the United Kingdom in January 1960 promising a peaceful resolution of the fishing dispute between the two nations, Iceland continued to demand unfettered control of fisheries in the twelve-mile zone from its coast. Drew succinctly diagnosed the nature of this opposition to the Canada-US proposal by noting that the Icelandic delegation “must be considered outside any general rule of law and be granted one-hundred percent recognition of the claims which they made without legal backing prior to the conference.”¹⁰³

The day of decision occurred on 26 April, and the Canada-US proposal failed to reach the required two-thirds threshold by a razor-thin margin of fifty-four votes in favour, twenty-eight votes against, and five abstentions. It was “almost incredible,” Arnold Heeney observed from Washington, to think that one negative vote switched from the “yes” column had prevented adoption of the joint proposal.¹⁰⁴ India remained recalcitrant to the end and cast a critical vote against the Canada-US resolution. The negative votes of Chile and Ecuador also surprised both Drew and Dean. In the horse trading leading up to the vote, Canada and the United States indicated that they would support the Brazil-Cuba-Uruguay amendment if Chile supported the Canada-US proposal and Ecuador abstained. The negative votes of these two nations were unexpected, and Drew condemned Chile and Ecuador along with India for wrecking the possibility of a conference agreement.¹⁰⁵ Dean noted that it was “impossible to describe third degree methods, threats of personal violence, threats of ostracism on returning to their own country,

and other methods” that kept some conference delegates from supporting the joint proposal.¹⁰⁶ Despite the best cooperative efforts of the Canadian and American delegations at UNCLOS II, therefore, no international agreement could be reached demarcating the limits of the territorial sea and contiguous fisheries zone. But the cooperation between Washington and Ottawa in Geneva in 1960 demonstrated the ability of the two nations to work together to achieve a common position – cooperation that stood in sharp contrast to the acrimonious relationship in evidence at UNCLOS I two years earlier.

The goodwill generated through collaboration on establishing a comprehensive law of the sea regime was matched in the bilateral negotiations to develop the power resources of the Columbia River, which flowed from British Columbia through Washington and Oregon on its way to the Pacific Ocean. Canada and the United States had asked the International Joint Commission (IJC) in 1944 to investigate the Columbia’s hydroelectric potential. Bilateral talks proceeded slowly during Eisenhower’s first term in office, but the Diefenbaker government prioritized the matter by creating the Cabinet Committee on Columbia River Problems shortly after the election in June 1957. Washington welcomed this initiative and subsequently informed Ottawa of its desire to expedite consultations; “at no time previously,” senior Canadian officials noted, “has there been such a frank approach made by the Americans to the question of actual negotiations with respect to the Columbia River.”¹⁰⁷ The Cabinet Committee subsequently established in December 1957 a Committee of Economic Studies, which met on fourteen occasions before submitting a report in November 1958. This report served as the basis for identical letters submitted on 29 January 1959 to the American and Canadian sections of the IJC calling for the commission to report at “an early date” on the principles to be applied to determine the economic benefits that would result from the cooperative use of the Columbia River system and how those benefits would be apportioned between Canada and the United States.¹⁰⁸

IJC members consulted throughout 1959 to determine the best course of action to secure an international agreement. These deliberations were impaired by the actions of the BC government led by Social Credit Premier W.A.C. “Wacky” Bennett, who promoted a wholly domestic alternative power development project on the Peace River in preference to the

Columbia River that would see the province sell its share of the latter power benefits to the United States. Senior members of the Diefenbaker government were highly critical of Bennett's baleful influence. Howard Green, for example, labelled Bennett "full of conceit and bombast" while he toured his home province of British Columbia with Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to Canada in the summer of 1959.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the Diefenbaker government worked to accommodate Bennett's concerns, establishing a liaison committee with the Social Credit government to keep it abreast of Canada-US negotiations. IJC deliberations produced a comprehensive draft report on 31 October 1959, and, after considering additional recommendations made by the BC government, a meeting of the IJC on 16 December produced an agreed statement of principles "sufficiently flexible to be used as the basis for negotiations of a Columbia Treaty."¹¹⁰ The report on these principles was formally transmitted to Ottawa and Washington by the end of that year.

Both federal governments accepted the IJC report, and negotiations commenced in mid-February 1960. Although Green continued to lament the "tragedy" of British Columbia's support for the Peace River project, a provincial representative supported by the Bennett government sat on the Canadian side of the table.¹¹¹ American negotiators believed that there was "no insuperable problem" from their perspective to the construction of three storage facilities on the Canadian side of the border – two on the Columbia River and one on the Kootenay River (the major tributary of the Columbia) – that would provide flood control benefits for the Columbia farther downstream.¹¹² British Columbia, though, opposed the damming of the Kootenay in the province, preferring instead to have the Libby Dam constructed in Montana. Seven negotiation sessions were held before meetings from 26 to 28 September 1960 produced the preliminary draft of an agreement. President Eisenhower personally signed off on the draft agreement and was reported by the State Department to be "extremely anxious" to have Ottawa sign off as quickly as possible.¹¹³ But the Diefenbaker cabinet maintained some reservations about the potential power benefits of the proposed agreement and continued to deal with the "consistently suspicious" attitude of British Columbia toward the commitment of Ottawa to fund capital projects related to the project in British Columbia.¹¹⁴

Further high-level consultations on 14–16 December 1960 and 5–6 January 1961 finally concluded an agreement. Under the negotiated terms, Canada would construct three dams at Arrow Lake, Duncan Lake, and Mica Creek in British Columbia to store nearly 16 million acre feet of water for flood control purposes and receive 50 percent of the downstream benefits from power generated in American facilities on the Columbia that would be transmitted back to the Canada-US border. The United States also possessed the option to build the Libby Dam, with Ottawa paying the costs of acquiring the resulting storage basin on Canadian soil. Concessions from the American side convinced the Diefenbaker government that “it would seem to be very much in Canada’s interest to facilitate the presentation of the treaty by the Eisenhower Administration in order to avoid reopening the many issues which have been resolved during the past several months of negotiation.”¹¹⁵

Diefenbaker flew to Washington on 16 January 1961 to meet with Eisenhower and sign the Columbia agreement – the president’s final meeting with a head of government or state before the inauguration of John F. Kennedy. The signing ceremony took place the next day; Diefenbaker was accompanied by Arnold Heeney and Davie Fulton, the minister of justice who had served as Canada’s lead negotiator, and Christian Herter and Elmer Bennett, the undersecretary of the Interior Department, joined Eisenhower. Diefenbaker praised the Canada-US relationship as “a model for all mankind” and wished his counterpart “good health and long years of service in the cause of peace”; Eisenhower reciprocated these kind words by noting that it was “indeed a great personal gratification for me to be able to sign this treaty in the last few days” of his time in office.¹¹⁶ These were not the last words on the Columbia River Treaty: domestic objections in Canada would lead to a revision of the agreement in 1964.¹¹⁷

The bilateral arrangement for the Columbia River was indicative of the Eisenhower administration’s economic approach to Canada. Following the Progressive Conservative election victory in June 1957, Washington had demonstrated an increasing willingness to accommodate a rising sense of nationalism in Canada and the Diefenbaker government’s consistent and frequently successful lobbying efforts in several key policy areas. Speaking to incoming Secretary of State Dean Rusk in the closing days of Eisen. “fundamentally sound and friendly” economic ties between Canada

and the United States marked by “active and continuing consultation” that was both “efficient and effective.”¹¹⁸ For all of Diefenbaker’s electoral bluster about American domination, the Tories were just as much in favour of the North American consensus on trade and investment as their Liberal predecessors. It helped, perhaps, that nationalist bluster had pushed Washington into more favourable positions on several issues.

To be certain, frictions in commercial and trade policies between the two countries remained. But in relation to more problematic interactions in military matters – most notably nuclear weapons and continental defence, to be discussed in [Chapter 6](#) – bilateral economic affairs during the Eisenhower administration reached their apex in this period. The years in which the Eisenhower administration and Diefenbaker government overlapped were also ones in which the Cold War standoff with the Soviet Union remained tense, even as there were some signs of a *détente*. Indeed, the late 1950s saw the so-called Third World emerge fully as a battleground in the struggle between the superpowers. Just as Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson had been forced to wrestle with the extent to which Canada should back its American ally in Asia, so too were Diefenbaker and Green confronted with questions about Canadian support for American foreign policy in the Middle East, Latin America, and Europe.

OTTAWA, WASHINGTON, AND THE COLD WAR IN THE THIRD WORLD, 1957–60

The opening of the United Nations General Assembly in September 1960 was a momentous event. Over a dozen newly independent countries, largely former African colonies, joined the United Nations, swelling the ranks of member states from the so-called Third World and bringing increasing attention to continued European colonialism and the inequalities between developed and underdeveloped states. Meanwhile, the Cold War raged. In May, a major summit between the USSR and Western powers had collapsed, raising international tensions precipitously. The anxious situation was compounded by confrontations in Cuba, Congo, and Laos, which joined Berlin as flashpoints in the East-West struggle. As Howard Green, Canada's foreign minister, reported to his cabinet colleagues, these incidents marked "a serious deterioration in international relations," worsened by "extreme language, irritability and rocket rattling."¹ With the opening of the General Assembly approaching, various presidents and prime ministers signalled their intention to attend, transforming the gathering in New York City into one of the largest ever meetings of world leaders. The UN session, Canadian diplomats warned, was likely to be a "propaganda jamboree."²

In light of the international situation, President Dwight Eisenhower decided to deliver an opening address to the General Assembly on 22 September. He opted to put forward, rather than a "polemic" against the Soviets, a "constructive and positive" agenda.³ Welcoming the new member states and calling for "a common effort to construct permanent peace, with justice, in a sorely

troubled world,” he proposed several nuclear arms control measures as well as a plan to neutralize Cold War tensions in Africa. With an optimistic flourish, Eisenhower ended his speech with a repeated appeal to build a “world community.” The following day Nikita Khrushchev delivered a sharp response. In a two-hour harangue, he castigated the United States and Western countries, decrying that “tens of millions of human beings are still languishing in colonial slavery” and praising “the sacred struggle of the colonial peoples for their liberation.” The Americans, meanwhile, were guilty of “aggressive intrusion” into Soviet territory – a reference to the U-2 spy plane incident that had led to the collapse of the May summit – and “attacks, intrigues, subversive activities, economic aggression and, finally, ill disguised threats of intervention” in Cuba, where left-wing revolutionaries had seized power. Finally, Khrushchev took aim at the United Nations itself, charging the international organization with failing to be impartial in its activities, such as peacekeeping.⁴ Far from tamping down international tension, the Soviet leader’s tirade showcased issues central to what one historian called “the crisis years.”⁵

Khrushchev’s speech left Western observers aghast. Eisenhower, for one, was “‘amazed’ by the violence” of the statement.⁶ Worse, other leaders joined in, denouncing Western governments. Charles Ritchie, Canada’s UN ambassador, complained in his diary that the “spectacle of all these dictators coming here to New York and strutting and orating and bullying reminds me of the Bad Old Days when Hitler and Mussolini were in bloom and busy breaking up the League of Nations.”⁷ The General Assembly had become an important front in the Cold War of words.

Monitoring events from Ottawa, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker had been debating whether to join other world leaders and deliver his own remarks. Once Harold Macmillan, his British counterpart, affirmed that he would attend, Diefenbaker headed to New York, where, coincidentally, he ended up giving the first Western response to Khrushchev. Canada’s Department of External Affairs prepared an initial draft, which the prime minister rejected. “External Affairs,” he complained, “all they tell me is to be kind to Khrushchev.”⁸ Instead, Diefenbaker relied on advice from political allies, producing what he later called “my most important single statement on Canadian external relations.”⁹

In his speech, the prime minister took direct aim at his Soviet counterpart, characterizing his comments as “a gigantic propaganda drama of

destructive misrepresentation” that constituted “a major offensive in the cold war.” Taking note of the new states represented at the General Assembly and Western European powers’ efforts to grant independence to their colonies, Diefenbaker condemned the Soviet Union for its own colonial control over Eastern Europe. Khrushchev, Diefenbaker stated, had “spoken of colonial bondage, of exploitation and of foreign yokes” when in fact the Soviet leader was “the master of the major colonial power in the world today.” His own hope, the prime minister declared, was that Khrushchev’s call for decolonization would “be universally acceptable” in applying to the Soviet Empire. In international affairs, he concluded, “there can be no double standard.” Turning to address the Soviet leader’s accusations of US imperialism, Diefenbaker noted that Canada did “not always agree with the United States, but our very existence – with one-tenth of the population of the United States and possessing the resources that we do – is an effective answer to the propaganda that the United States has aggressive designs.”¹⁰ In sum, the speech was an effective response to Khrushchev’s own statement, and though the Soviet leader was not in attendance the members of several Eastern European delegations walked out of the General Assembly in protest.

Diefenbaker’s stinging comments earned praise from both Eisenhower and Macmillan. One senior State Department official gushed that the speech was “like a breath of fresh air” in the General Assembly, whereas Khrushchev complained to Canada’s ambassador in Moscow that the prime minister’s words had “disappointed him.”¹¹ Diefenbaker’s diplomatic advisers, meanwhile, were less than impressed. The speech, a close aide later reflected, “disposed entirely of any surviving naïve hopes that Canada under Diefenbaker might still play a role of peacemaker in East-West or UN affairs.”¹²

The Canadian leader’s rejoinder to Khrushchev might have underscored Canada’s bona fides as a member of the Western alliance, but it masked differences between Ottawa and Washington over the handling of the Cold War. A week after Diefenbaker’s speech, Ambassador Ritchie confided to his diary that his counterparts in the US delegation to the United Nations “are not at all satisfied” with Canada. “The truth of the matter,” he continued, “is that the Americans dislike and mistrust the present Canadian government and all its works.”¹³ Although this was somewhat of an exaggeration,

Ritchie was right in discerning American doubts about the Diefenbaker government. In a report to President Eisenhower produced earlier that year, Secretary of State Christian Herter had emphasized that Ottawa “tended to attach less weight than we have to the need for ostensible military strength, has given greater credence to Communist threats, has more readily accepted as sincere Communist protestations of good faith, and has been more inclined to worry over suggestions involving risks.” Canada’s caution was compounded by officials’ aspiration to “leadership of the ‘Middle Powers’” and desire to “seek to demonstrate Canadian independence” by finding positions “divergent from United States policies.”¹⁴ Hardly positive, this assessment reflected genuine differences between the Diefenbaker government and Eisenhower administration.

Such differences over international issues were not unique to the Diefenbaker period. The St. Laurent government, too, had been concerned about the Eisenhower administration’s perceived belligerence, about the potential for nuclear conflict, and about the reach of the Cold War struggle into new areas, particularly the Third World born out of Europe’s collapsing empires. At the same time, Canada and the United States remained allies, with Canadian officials cognizant that the Americans bore the brunt of international responsibilities. As in the St. Laurent years, during the Diefenbaker period, Ottawa and Washington sought to manage their differences and find ways of cooperating in facing the East-West struggle. Amid the crises that occurred in the latter years of Eisenhower’s presidency, consensus was often hard to reach, straining the ties of alliance.

The Eisenhower era saw the Middle East emerge as a major site of Cold War competition, with Western governments fearful of losing control over the oil-rich and geographically significant region and the Soviets keen to make inroads. European and American influence was threatened locally by anticolonial nationalism personified by Egyptian strongman Gamal Abdel Nasser, who had overthrown Egypt’s pro-British monarchy in 1953. Once in power, Nasser became a vocal opponent of continued European imperialism in North Africa and the Middle East and a champion of a single Arab nation-state. From Morocco to the Persian Gulf, anticolonial revolutionaries – many inspired by Nasserism – challenged the regional status quo. In the view of many Western officials, the root cause of this ferment was not nationalism but communist agitation, a judgment

reinforced by Moscow's support for anticolonial movements and its backing of Nasser. The Suez Crisis in 1956 cemented the Middle East as a key Cold War flashpoint.

Canada had played an important if much mythologized role in helping to bring an end to the Suez debacle, but beyond this crisis Ottawa's interest in the region was limited. In early 1957, a diplomat at the Canadian legation in Beirut made the point that "Canada's own national security, as distinct from that of its traditional allies, is not at stake in the Middle East," although it was important to support those allies. Moreover, there was Canadian interest in "the need to preserve the prestige of the United Nations and the rule of law," which meant ensuring peace and stability.¹⁵ In contrast – and reflecting Canadian-American differences over the Cold War in Asia – US policy makers judged the Middle East as directly vital to American national security. Addressing Congress in early 1957, Eisenhower had outlined the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine, by which Washington would provide military and economic assistance "to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence" of Middle Eastern states facing aggression, whether from communists or Arab nationalists.¹⁶

This announcement was welcomed by Camille Chamoun, Lebanon's Christian president, who feared rising Nasserism. Lebanese politics were shaped by competing interests between the country's Christian and Muslim citizens, and Chamoun's efforts to achieve a balance ended in 1958. In January, neighbouring Syria joined with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic (UAR), the first step toward a region-wide, pan-Arab nation-state and one that brought Arab nationalism to Lebanon's border. Then, in May, after Chamoun indicated a desire to serve a second term as president in violation of the Lebanese constitution, Muslim dissidents rioted, prompting clashes with government forces. Pointing to UAR propaganda broadcasts, Chamoun blamed Nasser for the violence. On 22 May, Lebanon formally charged the UAR with interfering in Lebanese affairs and asked the UN Security Council to investigate. A lingering question was whether, in light of the situation, Beirut would seek military help from Washington and London in line with an Anglo-American security guarantee.¹⁷

US authorities fretted over events in Lebanon as the fall of Chamoun's government would mean the collapse of one of the region's few pro-Western regimes. In discussion with Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster

Dulles outlined various outcomes. "If we did nothing," he stated, "we would have to accept heavy losses not only in Lebanon but elsewhere" since opponents of the United States would come to doubt American resolve and mount challenges to the United States and its allies. However, Dulles also recognized the limitations of a "gun boat policy" that would provoke international condemnation. The situation would be different, though, if American forces were invited into Lebanon by its government.¹⁸ Preparations were made to assist Chamoun.

As the Americans contemplated intervention, Canadian officials took a more sanguine view of the unfolding situation. From Cairo, diplomats doubted the veracity of Chamoun's charges of the UAR's direct involvement in Lebanon. Meanwhile, just as St. Laurent and Pearson had recognized the appeal of anticolonialism in Asia, Diefenbaker judged that "the West had underestimated the strength of Arab nationalism."¹⁹ As for the possibility of Western intervention, Sidney Smith, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, saw a distinct possibility that the United States and United Kingdom would mount a military operation if asked to do so by Chamoun. Smith doubted the wisdom of this option, which, he told Diefenbaker, was sure to "upset the precarious situation not only in Lebanon but throughout the Middle East." As he admitted, with a limited direct stake in the region, Canada had few grounds for asserting itself in the situation. However, there was a Canadian interest via the United Nations in that Canada not only occupied a non-permanent seat on the Security Council but also maintained troops in the UN Emergency Force (UNEF), the peacekeeping mission formed during the Suez Crisis.²⁰

At the Security Council, attention turned to Lebanon's charges against the UAR. After several days of debate, on 11 June the Swedish delegation secured agreement to form the UN Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL), meant to investigate the charges. Canada backed UNOGIL and agreed to dispatch thirteen military personnel to help staff it. As Canadian diplomats underscored to their British and American counterparts, by helping to staff the mission, Canada "identified itself with the success of the UN operation."²¹ Asserting Canada's support for a multilateral solution was important to Canadian officials because, as the violence in Lebanon continued, the possibility of military intervention increased. Visiting Ottawa shortly after the formation of UNOGIL, Prime Minister of Britain

Harold Macmillan reminded Diefenbaker that Lebanon was subject to an Anglo-American security guarantee.²² In the view of Canada's small diplomatic staff in Beirut, US or UK intervention, even at Chamoun's invitation, would be a "tragic error," damaging not only "what is left of Western influence in this area" but also the reputation of the United Nations.²³

Ottawa's position was at odds with that of London and Washington, where intervention was under active consideration. "I have always sensed that the Canadian attitude in this matter was not very understanding," Dulles complained to British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, "and seemed to minimize the gravity of 'letting Nasser smoothly acquire another province.'"²⁴ When Dulles visited the Canadian capital with Eisenhower in early July, the president used the opportunity to explain to Diefenbaker the importance of ensuring continued Western influence in the Middle East. The Soviets, he warned, were bent on stirring up trouble "primarily to destroy the position of the West and in particular to deprive western Europe of Middle East oil." In a later discussion specifically about Lebanon and the US security guarantee to that country, notetakers recorded "no divergence" between president and prime minister.²⁵ Marked by some tense discussions on bilateral economic and defence issues, on the whole Eisenhower's three-day visit to Ottawa was productive and pleasant. "It is good to know that while we may not always agree," Eisenhower wrote to Diefenbaker, "any differences does [sic] not in the slightest alter our friendship."²⁶

Just days after the president returned to Washington, disaster struck: on 14 July, Iraqi military officers overthrew the country's pro-Western monarchy, accelerating fears of further revolutions and a Nasserist takeover of the Middle East. Responding to the Iraqi coup, Chamoun immediately appealed for Anglo-American help. At an emergency meeting that morning, US policy makers opted for intervention. They "must act, or get out of the Middle East entirely," Eisenhower asserted, with Dulles adding that, if the United States did not respond, it would suffer "the decline and indeed the elimination of our influence – from Indonesia to Morocco."²⁷ Here were shades of the same thinking behind the Domino Theory in Asia.

That evening, as American forces prepared to deploy to Lebanon, the president telephoned Diefenbaker. Informing the prime minister of his plans, Eisenhower appealed for support at the United Nations. Mindful of Canada's status as a smaller power, the prime minister appreciated the

advance warning.²⁸ An hour later Ambassador Livingston Merchant arrived at 24 Sussex Drive to brief Diefenbaker and Smith on the diplomatic manoeuvring at the United Nations, where the United States intended to introduce a resolution granting cover to the intervention and calling for the creation of a UNEF-style force to take the place of American troops. Although both Merchant and Smith agreed that the Soviets were certain to veto the resolution, and thus it was bound to fail, Diefenbaker “rather impatiently brushed aside these considerations” and asserted that he had given Eisenhower his word that Canada would back the US initiative in the Security Council.²⁹ “As you can well imagine,” the president wrote in a follow-up note to the prime minister, “I greatly appreciate your assurance of support.”³⁰ Any doubts in Ottawa, then, were smoothed over when Eisenhower took Diefenbaker into his confidence.

On 15 July, with the Marines wading ashore on the Lebanese coast and landing at Beirut’s airport, Henry Cabot Lodge, the American ambassador to the United Nations, began circulating a draft resolution to the Security Council. It sought approval for the US action, called for an end to foreign support for Lebanese rebels, and allowed for the deployment of a UN force to ensure Lebanon’s independence. John Holmes, Canada’s representative, publicly offered Canadian support, underlining that US intervention at the invitation of Lebanon’s government was in conformity with the UN Charter and that a UN mission could “build on the good foundation already laid” by the Americans.³¹ In the House of Commons, Smith made a similar statement. Pleased with this show of support, Eisenhower thanked Diefenbaker, writing that “I cannot tell you how deeply appreciative I am of your prompt and decisive action.”³²

Quickly, though, Canada’s support began to waver. Press opinion was less than impressed with these developments in Lebanon and New York. Some newspapers criticized the Diefenbaker government for “tamely” backing an “American ‘Suez,’” and others, warning that intervention was a dangerous course of action, called for a purely UN “solution.”³³ One commentator, summoning the image of Canada “as an impartial middle power with no international axe to grind,” urged a Canadian effort to calm regional tensions.³⁴ Those tensions were raised further on 17 July when, in response to a request for assistance from King Hussein of Jordan, British troops deployed to Amman airport and other areas in the Jordanian capital.

This second intervention spurred Canada's government to push for a purely multilateral solution to the situation. Beyond doubts in Ottawa about the wisdom of intervention, personal dynamics seem to have played a role in altering Canada's course. Whereas Eisenhower courted the Canadian prime minister, Macmillan made no such effort. On 17 July, Britain's high commissioner in Ottawa gave Diefenbaker an early morning briefing, but the prime minister was unimpressed, having already learned of the British landings through press reports. The lack of advance warning from London, Diefenbaker told his cabinet colleagues, was upsetting. So was the prospect of a wider regional conflict, a fear stoked by Soviet military exercises along its borders with Iran and Turkey. The situation, he stated, "was very explosive." Smith shared this worry, remarking to ministers that the Anglo-American interventions undermined the United Nations. "The world," he feared, "was returning to an era of power politics."³⁵ Speaking in the House of Commons that evening, Diefenbaker offered only lukewarm support for the British action and emphasized instead that Canada would give "every encouragement and assistance" to the United Nations in efforts to form an emergency force to take over from the British in Jordan and the Americans in Lebanon.³⁶

At the United Nations, the situation looked grim. It was evident that the US resolution introduced to the Security Council would be vetoed by the Soviets, and the Canadian delegation found that the British had little intention of introducing their own resolution seeking UN approval for their action in Jordan. As a result, it was difficult for Canada to "concert efforts" with the US and UK delegations. A bright spot was a Japanese effort to submit a resolution expanding UNOGIL, thereby allowing the United States to pull out of Lebanon.³⁷ On 18 July, John Foster Dulles and Selwyn Lloyd met in Washington for talks on how to proceed, and they invited Smith to join them for discussions on the Japanese draft resolution, which they all agreed to support.³⁸ Even so, Ottawa's lack of fulsome backing of the Anglo-American intervention upset British and American policy makers. "The Canadians were deplorable," Lloyd complained. "Their attitude created something near consternation with the Americans ... They seemed indifferent to the fate of Lebanon and Jordan and to have no realisation at all of the consequences in the Gulf, Sudan, Libya, etc."³⁹ A definite divide existed between Canada and its Anglo-American allies, with Diefenbaker and Smith increasingly stressing a multilateral solution.

For Canadian policy makers, it was vital to uphold the United Nations and avoid an escalation of the situation. To this end, after Khrushchev proposed an international summit to settle Middle Eastern issues, Diefenbaker endorsed the idea. In a message sent simultaneously to Eisenhower, Macmillan, and Khrushchev, he explained that Ottawa supported not just “proceeding in the UN towards a solution of the Lebanese and Jordanian crises” but also a means of seeking “some broader settlement” of regional issues.⁴⁰ Although it was odd for Canada to endorse a Soviet initiative, Diefenbaker told the House of Commons that tensions had “reached such a stage that every opportunity should be explored ... in the interests of heading off the possibility of war.”⁴¹ Meanwhile, at the Security Council, the Soviets invoked their veto to kill the Japanese resolution on the ground that it failed to condemn so-called Anglo-American aggression in the Middle East.⁴² With Moscow nixing a multilateral solution, attention shifted to a possible summit.

Diefenbaker seized on the idea of a summit, proposing two sessions, one to be held at the United Nations and the other in Canada. However, the Americans scotched this proposal, with Dulles preferring to see the matter confined to the United Nations, where a special session of the General Assembly was convened in August.⁴³ Smith arrived in New York ready to work with Halvard Lange, Norway’s foreign minister, with whom he had agreed to support “a constructive negotiation.”⁴⁴ After days of canvassing the various powers, and with heavy input from the Americans, the Canadian and Norwegian delegations produced a draft resolution calling for a UN guarantee and monitoring of the “integrity and political independence” of Jordan and Lebanon, thereby permitting an Anglo-American withdrawal.⁴⁵ Spurred on by this initiative, Arab delegates drafted their own resolution, which found unanimous support in the General Assembly.⁴⁶ Smith was pleased with this outcome, noting that the Arab resolution borrowed heavily from language in the Canadian-Norwegian draft. “I am delighted by the success of this first really important meeting of the Assembly that I have attended,” he told Diefenbaker. “I am not repeat not ashamed of Canada’s contribution.”⁴⁷ Even Dulles recognized the importance of the Canadian delegation’s quiet efforts. The American secretary of state thanked his Canadian counterpart, citing the draft resolution with Norway as the “key to the successful outcome.”⁴⁸

The Arab resolution not only provided for a guarantee of Jordanian and Lebanese integrity but also allowed for UNOGIL to monitor the situation. A month earlier Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN secretary general, had already opted to use the original Swedish resolution governing UNOGIL to boost the size of that mission. Canada had backed this move, contributing additional personnel.⁴⁹ UNOGIL's expanded presence paved the way for the withdrawal of US and UK forces in November; the following month UNOGIL itself withdrew. The situation was helped by Chamoun's resignation and replacement as president by the popular Fouad Chehab as well as peaceful overtures among Lebanon, Jordan, and the UAR.

The Lebanese crisis had exposed regional tensions in the Middle East, the willingness of the Great Powers to act irrespective of the United Nations, and the need – heightened in the wake of the Suez Crisis – for London and Washington to seek multilateral cover for their actions. These issues informed the Canadian response to the unfolding events, including Ottawa's efforts to chart its own course, albeit one supportive of its allies, resulting in divisions between Canada and Britain and the United States. In August, Livingston Merchant broached this divide with Jules Léger, the Canadian Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs (USSEA), remarking that the insistence of smaller Western powers on a settlement of the situation in the Middle East had left the NATO alliance in a "sad state." Léger disagreed sharply. "Consultation on the Middle East during the last two or three years," he retorted, "had followed decisions by the Great Powers but had not preceded them ... If ... the Alliance was 'in a sad state' on this particular issue ... the Great Powers had to bear the main responsibility."⁵⁰ For Canadian policy makers, the potential for crises to escalate or for decisions affecting Canada to be made without input from Ottawa were of prime importance. These considerations were true not just in the Third World but especially in terms of the overall Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union.

At the same time as the Eisenhower administration embarked on a vast buildup of the US nuclear arsenal and waged covert operations across the globe, it also undertook a tentative campaign of détente with Moscow. Part propaganda exercise to burnish the peaceful image of the United States, part attempt to put American-Soviet relations on a constructive footing following the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, outreach began in earnest in 1955.

That May the United States, USSR, France, and Britain – the Big Four – concluded the Austrian State Treaty, providing for the transformation of Austria into a neutral state and the withdrawal of military forces that had occupied that country since the end of the Second World War. Then in July the leaders of the Big Four met in Geneva, their first summit since 1945. Expectations for the conference were low, with the agenda focused on a wide range of topics, from arms control to German reunification, and concrete results were indeed limited. However, the meeting offered a chance to lower international tensions and build bridges between the Communist Bloc and the West. The summit, Eisenhower stated in his opening remarks, was paving the way for “a new spirit that will make possible future solutions of problems which are within our responsibilities.”⁵¹

Canada was not part of the Geneva summit, but Canadian policy makers welcomed the so-called spirit of Geneva. In 1954, Ottawa and Moscow had exchanged ambassadors for the first time since 1947, when a major spy scandal had led to the expulsion of Soviet diplomats from Canada. Then, several months after the Geneva summit, Lester Pearson became the first NATO foreign minister to visit the USSR. Relations expanded further with the conclusion of a bilateral trade agreement in February 1956. However, the Soviet invasion of Hungary that November stalled momentum, with Ottawa suspending a newly announced program of cultural exchanges between Canada and the Eastern Bloc. Hungary was a reminder of the limits of the mini *détente* of the 1950s.⁵²

When Diefenbaker’s Conservatives formed the government in 1957, the Canada-Soviet relationship was in a period of stasis, with Canadian officials mindful of these limitations. As a DEA brief for the new prime minister emphasized, Soviet foreign policy had several goals: the “dissolution” of NATO, the withdrawal of US forces from Europe, “the economic and political penetration of the under-developed countries of Asia and Africa,” and efforts “to overcome the set-back of Hungary by persuading Western peoples of the peaceful intentions of the Soviet Union.”⁵³ An outspoken critic of communism and Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe, Diefenbaker had little need for this reminder.

Caution about the limitations of *détente* aside, in the late 1950s there were various moves to put East-West relations on a more normal footing in part because of the growing dangers of nuclear warfare. In October 1957,

the Soviets sent the satellite Sputnik into space. The first time that a human-made object orbited the Earth, Sputnik sparked fears that the United States was falling behind the USSR in the development of missile technology. “Why Did the US Lose the Race?” asked *Life* magazine.⁵⁴ In addition to launching a major research and development program that included the founding of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Eisenhower sought to reassure US allies, calling a NATO leaders’ summit in December 1957. The president’s presence, Dulles remarked, would “in itself provide a rejuvenation of NATO.”⁵⁵ As the allies prepared to meet, Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin issued invitations to Western governments to build more contacts across the Iron Curtain. For the Soviets, détente was important in connection to plans for economic and social revitalization.⁵⁶

The NATO summit was Diefenbaker’s first, and the prime minister used the opportunity to underscore that his Conservative government was as committed to the alliance as its Liberal predecessors. In a statement to his counterparts, Diefenbaker cited Sputnik as giving “urgency” to the need to “reinvigorate” the alliance and meet its central goal of ensuring collective security against the Soviet threat. As for Bulganin’s overture, Diefenbaker emphasized both a need for caution and a need for “furthering understanding between Russia and the West in the spheres of human, scientific and cultural relations.”⁵⁷ Canada’s position was balanced and acknowledged the potential opening to the Eastern Bloc. On the sidelines of the conference, Diefenbaker met Eisenhower, to whom he outlined a desire to see Western countries “make some progress toward a better understanding with the Soviet Government.”⁵⁸ To this end, in January 1958, the prime minister responded to Bulganin. While stating his concern about Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, Diefenbaker expressed a willingness to develop “friendly relations,” and he pointed favourably to recent visits of the Soviet men’s hockey team to Canada and of Canadian performers to the USSR.⁵⁹ At this point, Moscow was concluding cultural exchange agreements with various Western governments, and in response to Diefenbaker’s message the Soviet ambassador in Ottawa approached Sidney Smith regarding a similar program. Smith welcomed the idea but explained “in all frankness that for purely domestic political reasons” Canada’s government would move slowly on this file in light of a recently called federal election.⁶⁰

The campaign ended on 31 March when Diefenbaker's Conservatives won a resounding victory. Movement on a cultural exchange agreement with Moscow still proceeded slowly, although in May the Soviets welcomed a delegation of twenty-nine Canadian businesspeople. "I am a businessman too," Khrushchev told the visitors, "and if our countries can make a mutual profit, no one will be happier than me."⁶¹ Several months later cabinet approved an exchange program forwarded to the Soviet government. It called for scientific exchanges dealing with mining, ice-breaking, and northern development; cultural exchanges involving Canada's National Gallery, National Research Council, and Trans-Canada Airlines; and sports exchanges involving hockey.⁶² However, the Canadian government refused to agree to an overarching cultural accord – the United States and United Kingdom had each concluded such an agreement with the USSR – citing issues of federal and provincial jurisdiction. Evidently, the lack of an overall accord gave Moscow pause, leading Canadian diplomats to complain of "an inexcusable delay" by the Soviets in responding to Canada's proposal.⁶³

Overshadowing any potential exchanges – and underscoring the overarching tensions of the era – was Khrushchev's ultimatum on Berlin in November 1958. The former Nazi German capital had been occupied by the Big Four at the end of the war and, like Germany itself, was divided between East and West. Yet Berlin lay within the Soviet-occupied German Democratic Republic (GDR) – East Germany – which Western governments did not recognize, instead acknowledging the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). On 27 November, in an effort to shore up the legitimacy of the GDR, Khrushchev challenged Western governments to sign a peace treaty with the GDR, a move that would amount to recognition. He also announced that, if the West failed to meet this demand, then on 27 May 1959 the USSR would turn over its occupation zone in Berlin to East Germany, forcing the British, French, and Americans to deal with the East Germans, again compelling the West to recognize the GDR. Moreover, Khrushchev demanded that the other occupying powers withdraw from Berlin, turning it into a demilitarized city. Meeting these demands would undermine Western support for the FRG and leave West Berliners vulnerable to East Germany.

The ultimatum was an alarming development, sparking a crisis that could escalate should Western governments opt to preserve the status quo. As

Eisenhower explained to his advisers, they should “make it clear to the Russians that we consider this no minor affair.” At the same time, a negotiated settlement was clearly important since the Western military position in Berlin was, in the president’s judgment, “illogical.”⁶⁴ Canadian diplomats shared these views, labelling Khrushchev’s demand “clearly unacceptable” and “hostile” while also hoping that Western governments would not fail to “take advantage of the opportunity of discussing the situation with the Soviet leaders.”⁶⁵ Of these governments, the Americans, British, and French had primary responsibility for dealing with the Berlin issue since they were occupying powers. Recognizing this fact, Sidney Smith nevertheless insisted, at a NATO foreign ministers’ conference in December 1958, that London, Washington, and Paris ensure that the smaller alliance members were apprised of developments and decisions and that no effort would be spared to seek a negotiated outcome.⁶⁶ Although Ottawa’s position on Berlin was cautious and conciliatory, the Canadian government was firmly behind upholding the Western commitment to the FRG and West Berlin. Paying a visit to Bonn, the West German capital, in late 1958, Diefenbaker affirmed Canada’s backing of its German ally. The prime minister, an aide observed, had little time for a policy that could be “construed as compromising with Communism!”⁶⁷

Although there was little appetite for compromise in any Western capital, the seriousness of the Berlin crisis sparked various diplomatic overtures. In January 1959, Khrushchev’s diplomatic troubleshooter, Anastas Mikoyan, first deputy of the Soviet Council of Ministers, travelled to Washington to meet with Eisenhower and Dulles. The visit of such a senior Soviet official to the United States was an unprecedented development, a sign of the precarious situation. Although Canadian diplomats had considered inviting Mikoyan to Ottawa, Diefenbaker nixed the suggestion.⁶⁸ In Washington, the visiting dignitary’s talks with the president and secretary of state were inconclusive. However, the fact that there had been discussions was a welcome development, even if, as Smith told Diefenbaker in an update on the Berlin situation, the possibility of the Americans, British, and French settling matters without input from the rest of NATO was to be avoided. His department, Smith reported, was casting about for a way to be “helpful and constructive,” with diplomats having drafted a list of certain sacrosanct positions regarding Berlin and the German situation with the goal of canvassing allied opinion to see

where NATO powers might be willing to budge. Approving this initiative, Diefenbaker instructed that the questions to allied governments be put in less pointed language so as not to suggest that Canadian policy was changing.⁶⁹

Producing little of value, the canvassing of allied views did reaffirm Diefenbaker's support for the status quo. To an aide, Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker explained that he did not want there to be any "indication of weakness" by the West since it would only encourage the Soviets.⁷⁰ In a follow-up discussion, the prime minister told Robinson that he was "generally skeptical of the prospect of progress through negotiation." Commenting privately on these remarks, Robinson was unsure of the extent to which the prime minister would prefer a more confrontational stance, noting that during the recent crisis in Lebanon his "early instinct in favour of a policy of Western intervention gave way under pressure of events" to supporting a UN "salvage operation."⁷¹ His skepticism of negotiations was not helped by an early February discussion with Amasap Aroutunian, the new Soviet ambassador in Ottawa, who had suggested that Canada might encourage its allies to support the withdrawal of military forces from Germany, an idea that the prime minister rejected.⁷²

Wary of the Soviets, Diefenbaker welcomed the announcement from Prime Minister of Britain Harold Macmillan that he would travel to Moscow to meet with Khrushchev and discuss the impending ultimatum. Writing to his British counterpart, Canada's leader applauded the move and counselled reinforcing the Western commitment to defend West Berlin and to dispelling any notion that "the West is anxious and spoiling for a test of strength." Although stating his distrust of Khrushchev, Diefenbaker concluded that "the dangers of the situation are so apparent and so appalling that nothing should be left undone."⁷³ Macmillan's ten-day sojourn to Moscow certainly did little to dispel Western doubts about Khrushchev. The rotund Soviet leader spent most of the visit insulting and berating his British visitor, even abandoning him for several days and leaving Macmillan adrift as if he was a simple tourist. But then, shortly before the British prime minister was due to depart, Khrushchev extended an olive branch, withdrawing his ultimatum and agreeing to a Big Four foreign ministers' conference to discuss outstanding East-West issues. There was the possibility, too, of a summit of the American, Soviet, British, and French leaders.⁷⁴

Macmillan's overture to Khrushchev had produced a respite, if a temporary one, with the settlement of Berlin and the wider German problem still looming. En route to Washington to debrief Eisenhower on his Moscow trip and seek the president's agreement to a summit, Macmillan, accompanied by Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, stopped in Ottawa to give Diefenbaker a rundown of events. The prime ministers agreed on the propriety of a summit. They also concurred on the necessity of avoiding any agreement on Berlin or Germany requiring the drawdown of military forces, which could undermine NATO. They shared, too, a view of the importance of counteracting any "foolish" moves by the Americans, with Diefenbaker outlining a particular worry about "a considerable intensification of 'nationalistic feeling'" in Washington and belligerent attitudes among US military commanders, a point that he asked Macmillan to raise with Eisenhower.⁷⁵

Hesitant about carrying a message for the Canadian prime minister, Macmillan followed through, while also emphasizing to the president, in several tearful monologues, his own fears about a potential nuclear war should a settlement of Berlin not be reached. Eisenhower was doubtful not only of the value of a leaders' summit itself but also that it could lead to a breakthrough, stating that the West could not "escape war by surrendering on the installment plan." Macmillan pressed for Eisenhower's agreement. "World War I – the war which nobody wanted," he stated, "came because of the failure of the leaders at that time to meet at the Summit." Relenting, the president and Macmillan drafted a letter to Khrushchev in which they agreed to a foreign ministers' conference that could lay the groundwork for a meeting of the Big Four leaders.⁷⁶ With Khrushchev's agreement, the stage was set for important acts of summitry.

As diplomats scrambled to lay the groundwork for the meetings, there was a major personnel shakeup in both Canada and the United States. In March, Sidney Smith died suddenly of a stroke, and John Foster Dulles was hospitalized by a cancer that had already left him debilitated; Dulles resigned in April and died in June. Diefenbaker and Eisenhower corresponded over their shared losses, with the prime minister writing that it seemed "like fate" that Smith and Dulles were absent "at a time when the international situation demands of the Free World the exercise of those

talents possessed in such abundance” by both men.⁷⁷ Diefenbaker appointed, as Smith’s replacement, Howard Green, a long-time Tory MP who, although lacking extensive international experience, had a keen interest in foreign policy issues, especially nuclear disarmament. The latter views made him question key elements of Canadian foreign and defence policy, raising concerns in Washington – as well as in Ottawa.⁷⁸ Eisenhower nominated, as Dulles’s replacement, Christian Herter, a former Massachusetts governor serving as undersecretary of state. From his time in elected office and then with the State Department, Herter had a keen awareness of Canada and of Canadian-American relations. Given his involvement and interest in the bilateral relationship, Canadian diplomats welcomed Herter’s appointment, but they recognized that his true talents would be tested in talks with the Soviets.⁷⁹

Herter’s debut was the May meeting of the Big Four foreign ministers in Geneva, where rolling talks took place in advance of a future leaders’ summit, the date and location of which were pending. As Eisenhower and Herter recognized, any settlement of Berlin and Germany would involve not only dealing with the Soviets but also managing US allies, who had their own, often clashing, views on these issues. For Canadian officials, a key stipulation was that Canada be kept in the loop regarding actions taken by its larger allies. Therefore, they applauded Herter’s decision to visit Ottawa in July for consultations with Diefenbaker and Green.⁸⁰ Herter outlined US intentions for the upcoming summit, emphasizing that Washington was taking “a liberal approach” in gauging what could be achieved. Diefenbaker welcomed this news, for as he related “eighty percent of the Canadian people favored” holding a leaders’ summit and that without one “there would be great disillusionment” among Canadians who would otherwise assume “that war was all that was left.” Happily, then, Herter emphasized that he shared “the Canadian views that there was no real alternative to negotiations.”⁸¹ Despite the grim topic of conversation, his visit – his first to Canada as secretary of state – was a positive one that, in the view of US officials, “couldn’t have been better.”⁸²

Among the issues that Herter and Diefenbaker discussed was the prime minister’s suggestion that a Big Four summit be held in Quebec City, the site of two wartime conferences between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Another summit there would burnish Canada’s relative

importance as well as Diefenbaker's reputation as a statesman. Herter responded positively, as had Eisenhower, to whom Diefenbaker had first raised the idea at a ceremony opening the St. Lawrence Seaway project in June. American officials judged that Quebec City would be an excellent choice for a summit, allowing Eisenhower to meet his domestic obligations and to host Khrushchev on the sidelines of the summit at a private bilateral meeting at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland.⁸³ Although Eisenhower remained cautious about a summit, he recognized that "the people will wonder why he won't try to resolve misunderstandings with Russia," so in correspondence with Macmillan and Khrushchev he broached a possible meeting in Quebec City. The British and Soviet leaders supported the notion, with November 1959 floated as a possible date.⁸⁴ However, President of France Charles de Gaulle refused to leave Europe for a summit, nixing a meeting in Quebec.⁸⁵ Fatefully, the eventual Big Four leaders' summit was delayed until May 1960, when it would be held in Paris.

While negotiations over the summit proceeded, there were moves toward an American-Soviet *détente*. As part of a cultural exchange agreement, in June the Soviet National Exhibition opened in New York City. An exercise in soft power, the exhibit displayed various Soviet cultural and scientific artifacts meant to showcase communism's achievements. The Americans reciprocated in July, with Vice-President Richard Nixon inaugurating the American National Exhibition in Moscow. His visit to the USSR was unprecedented, affording him a chance to discuss pressing issues with Soviet officials, including Khrushchev, as he did during the famous Kitchen Debate, "a defining moment in the ideological clash between East and West," in which he and the Soviet premier debated the merits of their respective systems.⁸⁶

Nixon's ten-day visit was overshadowed by two developments. The first was the announcement that Khrushchev had accepted an invitation from Eisenhower to visit the United States in September. The second was a US Senate resolution establishing Captive Nations Week as an annual event each July commemorating "the enslavement of a substantial part of the world's population by Communist imperialism."⁸⁷ Signed into law by Eisenhower just days before Nixon departed for Moscow, Captive Nations Week left the vice-president's Soviet hosts irate. In his discussions with his American guest, Khrushchev criticized the move, complaining that it undermined the "rapprochement between the US and USSR." Then,

accompanying Nixon on a two-and-a-half-hour boat tour of the Moskva River, the Soviet premier stopped the vessel eight times to gather up sun-bathers and picnickers and ask them “Are you captives? Are you slaves?” The vice-president defended the new law as a reflection of “public opinion in our country.” In his discussions with his Soviet host, Nixon went on to point out that he would “defend vigorously our ideas, but always in peaceful rather than belligerent or provocative terms,” and that the “competition of words and ideas rather than of peoples against one another” was a driver of human progress.⁸⁸ Captive Nations Week, the competing national exhibitions, and Nixon’s visit itself were all part of the ideological battle being waged by both sides in the Cold War. The Eisenhower administration was especially invested in this war of words with the communist side.⁸⁹

Diefenbaker, too, had a deep appreciation of the Cold War’s ideological nature. In late 1958, he made a storied “world tour” of countries in Europe and the British Commonwealth, including India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Malaya.⁹⁰ The latter countries were part of the emerging Third World, and it was there, as Diefenbaker put it to US officials, that the “free world is not getting its message across . . . that time and time again he had encountered those with no appreciation of what [the] United States or others in [the] free world have been contributing.”⁹¹ Soon after, speaking at the University of Toronto in January 1959, Diefenbaker took note of the “major conflict for the minds of men” being waged between East and West. Just as the Atlantic Charter had listed the goals of the Allies during the Second World War, he hoped that Western leaders could outline their principles and purposes in a “declaration of freedom’s creed,” which would clarify the “superiority of freedom when compared with communism.”⁹² Expounding on this idea of spelling out “the aims of capitalism,” in a series of speeches in Canada and the United States throughout 1959, Diefenbaker warned that, with Khrushchev travelling to the United States that autumn, the Soviet leader’s emphasis on “peaceful competition” only increased the need for “a truthful and aggressive salesmanship” of Western ideals to combat the “highly organized communist propaganda available in every book-store in every major language.”⁹³ Ultimately, Diefenbaker’s initiative to see Western powers issue a declaration of freedom’s creed came to nought. Even so, it highlighted the unity of purpose between his government and the Eisenhower administration amid the push toward *détente*.

Soviet anger over Captive Nations Week aside, Khrushchev agreed to undertake a thirteen-day tour of the United States in September, raising the prospect of a stop in Canada. “I have always been a strong adherent of this type of exchange,” Diefenbaker told reporters curious about whether an invitation to the Soviet premier was pending.⁹⁴ Hoping to improve Canada-USSR relations, Ambassador Aroutunian pushed Ottawa on this point, but he encountered what he characterized as an “unresponsive” attitude among Canadian officials, who seemed to be set on undermining the establishment of “friendlier contacts.” Moreover, talks on renewing the Soviet-Canadian trade agreement, expired since February 1959, had bogged down.⁹⁵ Although cabinet ministers were divided over hosting Khrushchev, eventually they decided to invite him to Ottawa following his American tour.⁹⁶ As Green told Diefenbaker, this visit would get the Soviet leader “acquainted with the Western way of life as pursued by a middle power” while showcasing both Canada’s independence from the United States and the unity of the Western position on key East-West issues. It was also a move favoured by 56 percent of respondents in a recent Gallup poll as well as many newspaper editorial boards.⁹⁷ The Canadian embassy in Moscow duly made inquiries about extending a formal invitation to Khrushchev. However, the timing was too late.⁹⁸ In the end, Diefenbaker might have been relieved by this result. As a former aide speculated, although the Soviet leader’s visit would cement Diefenbaker’s “standing on the world stage,” the prime minister was also mindful of the rabid anticommunism of Canadians of Eastern European descent – key political supporters.⁹⁹

Domestic pressures might have tempered Diefenbaker’s enthusiasm for hosting Khrushchev, but still the prime minister supported détente. On the subject of the Soviet premier’s visit to the United States, he publicly applauded Eisenhower’s efforts “towards the creation of an atmosphere which would facilitate the beginnings of what must be a long and difficult process of negotiation.”¹⁰⁰ Importantly, too, his sense of the importance of the visit in part led him to oppose Operation Skyhawk – discussed in [Chapter 6](#) – a joint Canada-US military exercise testing continental defences to be held while Khrushchev was in the United States.

Canadian officials were aware that Khrushchev’s American tour – described by one diplomat as “the most extensive one-man show ever presented on the North American continent” – did not mark a sea change

in the Cold War. Monitoring the Soviet premier's statements while on tour, the Canadian embassy in Washington concluded that they "hardly suggest a new direction in Khrushchev's thinking." George Ignatieff, one of the leading Russian experts in the Department of External Affairs, was concerned that, by portraying himself as peaceful, the Soviet leader would "exploit" Western public opinion in order "to create disunity in Allied ranks, especially in NATO." A "serious danger" with détente, warned John Holmes, another leading diplomat, was that the public was bound to overestimate the progress being achieved in ameliorating issues so that, when the Soviets continued "to pursue certain traditional policies in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere, people in the West may consider that they have been deliberately double-crossed."¹⁰¹ Diefenbaker shared these concerns about public expectations. A month after Khrushchev returned home, Diefenbaker asked Robert Murphy, a visiting senior State Department official, whether the tour "had not had a narcotic effect on American opinion, in the sense that it created a current of false security."¹⁰² Speaking in Halifax that November, Diefenbaker praised the "signs of a new spirit" in East-West relations. But he told his listeners that it was vital "not [to] suffer from the illusion that Soviet foreign policy has undergone a basic change," even as Canada and its allies needed to find grounds for negotiation.¹⁰³

If there was one Canadian policy maker more optimistic than cautious, it was Howard Green. A month after Khrushchev's American journey, Green travelled to Paris for bilateral meetings with French officials as well as a session of the North Atlantic Council. Canadian diplomats in Europe used their minister's visit as an opportunity to convene together to review the international situation and Canadian policy in the region. Undersecretary Norman Robertson touted the need for Canada to "regularize and to ease" relations with the Soviet Bloc through trade, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic visits. Nonetheless, he stated that Canada "should continue to realise who her real friends were in this process of co-existence." Likewise, the consensus among the gathered diplomats was that "détente presented a real danger to Western unity" in that some NATO allies might be more amenable to negotiating away fundamental positions. Green, however, seemed to be more inclined to view developments positively, praising the "considerable reduction of world tension" and stating that Canada should

use its high standing in the world to seek an end to “the threat of nuclear war.”¹⁰⁴ Meeting the next day with Charles de Gaulle and Maurice Couve de Murville, the French foreign minister, Green remarked that they were on the cusp “of a period of relaxation which was probably in the interest of both East and West.” Adding that, it “was premature to say how long it would last,” Green asserted that there was little doubt “that the West should at this stage take advantage of present Soviet dispositions.”¹⁰⁵ To his NATO colleagues, he added that, with Khrushchev’s visit to the United States, “we have entered a new phase of diplomatic activity.”¹⁰⁶

Ottawa had missed a chance to contribute to this flurry of activity by waiting too long to invite Khrushchev to Canada. A brief opportunity came in December when Anastas Mikoyan made a stopover in Halifax en route to the United States for meetings with Eisenhower. Diefenbaker sent well wishes to the Soviet deputy premier and dispatched Canada’s fisheries minister to greet him. After glad-handing with interested Halifaxians, Mikoyan attended a dinner with local grandees. In his post-prandial remarks, he stressed economic as opposed to military cooperation, and – despite some picketers protesting Soviet conduct in Hungary – Canadian officials judged the brief visit a “great success from everyone’s standpoint.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, encountering Canada’s ambassador in Havana at a diplomatic reception in Cuba early the next year, Mikoyan “beamed at the mention of Canada, and said that he had enjoyed visiting Canada and had been treated very well.”¹⁰⁸

Mikoyan’s Canadian layover was hardly a groundbreaking Cold War exchange. More important, perhaps, was the successful renegotiation of the Canadian-Soviet trade treaty, which had expired in early 1959. In April 1960, Gordon Churchill, Canada’s minister of trade and commerce, visited Moscow to sign the renewed agreement. He returned to Ottawa much impressed. In a note to Diefenbaker, Churchill confessed to having been “anti-Russian” but was now convinced that the Soviet leadership was comprised of “‘moderates’ in contrast with Stalin and his colleagues” and that their “desire for peace and friendly relations was genuine.” Adding that he now doubted US views of the USSR and had “so many reservations in my mind concerning American foreign policy and Big Four meetings,” Churchill urged Diefenbaker to undertake his own initiative to lessen international tension. At the least, he concluded, the prime

minister should pay his own visit to the Soviet Union – an idea that Diefenbaker was already considering.¹⁰⁹

As for Churchill's warm views of the USSR, they showed that among Canadian ministers enthusiasm for détente was contagious. In a major statement on Canadian foreign policy in February 1960, Green went so far as to suggest that "in the world today Canada has only friends and no enemies."¹¹⁰ British and American officials looked askance at such sentiments. Canadian foreign policy, British High Commissioner Saville Garner wrote, was influenced by the Conservative government's inexperience, by the prime minister's concern with public opinion, and by ministers' "idealism and a rather naïve approach to world realities," with Green and Diefenbaker "disposed to take a charitable view of others and to believe the best of them – whether it be Khrushchev or Nasser."¹¹¹ A US National Security Council assessment echoed this view, decrying a predisposition in Ottawa both "to accept as genuine" Soviet professions and "to accept uncritically the signs of a possible international détente."¹¹² Green, complained one official at the US embassy in Ottawa, "did not like soldiers, weapons, or policemen," an attitude that "made cooperation in the political-military field rather difficult."¹¹³ And, returning from a NATO summit in April 1960, US Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates complained that the Canadian ministers present had taken the "very disturbing" line that "peace and détente are just around the corner."¹¹⁴ As much as these comments highlighted Anglo-American dissatisfaction with Canada, they also underscored British and American officials' rigidity and readiness to dismiss any perceived softness toward the Soviets. For his part, Diefenbaker remained cautious about the results of the pending summit, telling de Gaulle that all he expected was "some progress" on a solution regarding Berlin.¹¹⁵

The Big Four summit was set to open in Paris on 16 May, with Eisenhower due to visit the USSR on 10 June. However, events intervened. On 1 May, the Soviets shot down an American U-2 spy plane overflying the USSR, with Khrushchev announcing the incident four days later. Seeking to cover up the spying, the US government issued a statement that a weather research aircraft had lost course. Then, in what Canada's ambassador in Moscow called "an unhappy occasion for Western diplomats," on 7 May Khrushchev delivered a stinging speech revealing that not only was the pilot alive but also that the Soviets had in their possession the spy plane and its camera

and film.¹¹⁶ Caught in a lie, on 11 May Eisenhower publicly admitted to the truth but defended the necessity of reconnaissance of Soviet territory. Deeply embarrassing for the Americans, this series of events overshadowed the Paris summit. Arriving in the French capital on 15 May, the US president met with his British and French counterparts, to whom Khrushchev had issued three demands: that the American leader apologize, ban future flights, and punish those responsible for the U-2 incident. As Eisenhower told Macmillan and de Gaulle, he would be “damned” if he would apologize.¹¹⁷ The next day, at the summit’s opening session, Khrushchev blasted the United States and made it clear that no negotiations could proceed. With the four leaders departing on 18 May, the summit ended, dashing widespread hopes for a *détente*.

Although not excusing the United States for the U-2 flights, most scholarly assessments have emphasized that Khrushchev himself bore considerable blame for the collapse of the summit, which he purposefully disrupted because he had no real solutions to the problems of Berlin and nuclear disarmament. Even Anastas Mikoyan admitted that the Soviet premier was “guilty of delaying the onset of *détente* for fifteen years.”¹¹⁸ Canadian officials had the same assessment, contending that, with Khrushchev expecting to gain little from the summit, he had seized on the U-2 incident “as a convenient excuse” for avoiding a meeting and “modifying” his policy.¹¹⁹

Given the Soviet leader’s actions, the collapse of the summit had the effect of hardening Canadian policy. At several cabinet meetings, ministers reviewed the international situation and concluded that, given the Soviets’ own extensive espionage activities, the “US air espionage programme was a necessary part of the defence of the Western world and that really the only crime was to have been caught.”¹²⁰ In public, Diefenbaker attacked Khrushchev, telling the House of Commons that the Soviet leader had abandoned the “opportunity for progress and improvement.” He continued this criticism in a national broadcast, charging Khrushchev with “destroy[ing] the hopes of mankind” and reminding listeners that it was important not to forget “the ruthlessness of the methods and the reality of the objectives of Communist strategy in world affairs.” Turning to the United States, the prime minister was careful to state that it was “not the time to enter into criticisms or recriminations of our friends,” and he appealed for Canadians to support their country’s chief ally.¹²¹

Diefenbaker's harsh rhetoric was a reminder of Canada's position in the Cold War. Meeting the Canadian prime minister at a diplomatic reception, Ambassador Aroutunian took him to task for "making speeches again," and the two men argued about who bore responsibility for the collapse of the summit.¹²² Conversely, US officials welcomed Canada's support. At Herter's suggestion, Eisenhower wrote to Diefenbaker to thank him for his comments, a "forceful gesture on the part of a close friend and ally."¹²³ Given American concern about Canadian policy makers' enthusiasm for *détente*, the collapse of the summit had a silver lining. As C. Douglas Dillon, the undersecretary of state, remarked in an NSC meeting, Green and Diefenbaker "had had their eyes opened" by Khrushchev's actions, which had "considerably modified the 'soft' attitude" in Ottawa.¹²⁴ Indeed, the collapse of the summit marked an end to Canadian support for *détente*, at least as far as the prime minister was concerned. When an aide inquired about his intentions in visiting the Soviet Union, Diefenbaker noted that, in light of "recent international developments," he would let the matter rest.¹²⁵ Green, perhaps unsurprisingly, was more conciliatory. In instructions to Canada's NATO delegation in advance of a meeting covering the implosion of the summit, he urged avoiding any strongly worded resolution framed "in the heat of the moment" that "we might later regret or wish to play down." Although the events in Paris had been "humiliating" for the West, the minister counselled a need to "preserve our sense of balance and perspective."¹²⁶ In the North Atlantic Council, Jules Léger, Canada's representative, duly followed this script, stating the need for the West to "close ranks and consider jointly the new situation."¹²⁷

In early June, several weeks after the breakdown of the summit, Eisenhower hosted Diefenbaker at the White House, a meeting originally scheduled to fall between the Paris conference and the president's now-cancelled visit to the USSR. Canada's prime minister and his host discussed a variety of issues largely related to joint defence initiatives and economic affairs, and despite some minor differences there was agreement between them that, as Diefenbaker put it, "relations in the past couple of years had been very good and indeed had been unequalled." The summit clouded much of their discussion, underscoring the sense that military cooperation was important. Yet, as the president observed, he was "not worried about any sector of the free world's defenses," judging that "Khrushchev was not at

this time going to deliberately provoke the West into a nuclear war.”¹²⁸ Several weeks later, on 27 June, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet delegation was withdrawing from the Ten Nation Disarmament Committee, a by-product of the Big Four foreign ministers’ conference in Geneva meeting to consider major nuclear arms control measures. The Bulgarian, Czechoslovakian, and Polish delegations then followed suit. Writing to the Soviet leader to complain, Diefenbaker charged him with acting in a disruptive and unconstructive manner that failed to match the Kremlin’s professed support for arms control.¹²⁹ Mid-1960 was a low point for Canadian-Soviet relations.

The U-2 incident and the Soviet Bloc’s withdrawal from the Ten Nation Disarmament Committee prompted a strong Canadian response that made clear Canada’s Cold War loyalties. US officials welcomed this changed emphasis. Even so, they retained their earlier doubts about Canadian policy makers. In July, two months after the implosion of the Paris summit, National Security Adviser Gordon Gray complained to Eisenhower about what he described as “the negative view of the Canadians with respect to the Soviet Bloc–Free World struggle.”¹³⁰ The immediate causes of Gray’s complaint were the positions adopted by the Canadian participants in the Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence, which had just met at the Montebello resort outside Ottawa. Among the points of major disagreement between the gathered Canadian and American officials was how to respond to the growing radicalism of the Cuban revolution and Havana’s increasing alignment with Moscow.¹³¹

Fidel Castro’s revolutionaries seized power in Cuba on 1 January 1959, toppling US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. Although it had sought to forestall Castro’s ascent, the Eisenhower administration was the first foreign power to recognize the revolutionary government, doing so on 7 January. Ottawa followed the next day. “As there are Canadian investments in Cuba,” Diefenbaker had been advised, “it is highly desirable that Canada should not lag in the recognition of the new government.”¹³² In government circles in North America, there were strong doubts about Castro and his movement. So, endeavouring to explain himself and the revolution to North Americans (and, for domestic consumption, to champion Cuban autonomy directly at the source of historical aggression), the Cuban leader and a bearded entourage embarked on a goodwill tour of the United States in

April 1959. From New York City, to Harvard Yard, to Houston, Castro was greeted by cheering crowds and curious onlookers. Fearing a spectacle upon the Cubans' arrival in the US capital, the State Department pushed for Eisenhower to "be away from Washington." Instead, Castro met with Vice-President Nixon, who concluded that Cuba's leader was "either incredibly naïve about Communism or under Communist discipline – my guess is the former."¹³³ Canadian officials were likewise wary, with Diefenbaker feeling "discomfiture" about Castro's effort also to visit Canada.¹³⁴ The Canadian government refused an official invitation, so the Cuban leader spent a day in Montreal as the guest of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, drawing large throngs. Montrealers, a reporter recorded, gave him "a revolutionary hero's welcome."¹³⁵

North American attitudes about Castro and Cuba's revolution quickly soured. The revolutionary government embarked on an ambitious program of reform that upended the island's social and economic order, transforming the country's close relationship with the United States. Communists also began to attain influential positions within the revolutionary government, which openly called for the overthrow of reactionary regimes throughout the Western hemisphere. In November 1959, Secretary of State Christian Herter urged a policy of confrontation. Agreeing, Eisenhower directed that "all actions of the United States Government should be designed to encourage within Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America opposition to the extremist, anti-American course of the Castro regime," with the possibility of creating either "a reformed Castro regime or a successor to it."¹³⁶ While the Eisenhower administration adopted this hostile course, Canada's stance favoured engagement. In the autumn, a new ambassador, Allan Anderson, had arrived in Havana. A brief prepared for him made clear that the Canadian government had "no outstanding political problems with Cuba" and instructed him to display "patience and understanding" and to "seek ways to reconcile Canadian political and economic interests with a revolution which cannot be stabilized until the deep grievances that produced it have been redressed." At the same time as senior US policy makers moved to crush the revolution, Canadian officials had come to terms with it.¹³⁷

The Canadian-American divide over Cuba only grew throughout 1960 alongside the mutual hostility between Havana and Washington. Citing Cuban support for Latin American revolutionary movements, in January

1960 Undersecretary for Political Affairs Livingston Merchant warned the NSC that the Cuban issue was “the most difficult and dangerous in all the history of our relations with Latin America, possibly in all our foreign relations.”¹³⁸ Merchant was overstating the situation, but American concerns only worsened when, in February, Anastas Mikoyan travelled to Havana and signed a trade agreement. The Castro government’s move to broaden Cuba’s economic links in defiance of American efforts to deny Havana access to foreign capital seemingly put Cuba into the Soviet orbit. Then, in March, *La Coubre*, a French freighter carrying munitions, mysteriously exploded in the Havana harbour. In a fiery speech, Castro blamed Washington, which had been pressuring its allies to keep arms away from the revolutionary government. Given the venom of the Cuban leader’s attack, Allen Dulles, the CIA director, told an NSC meeting that “there was no hope that the US would ever be able to establish satisfactory relations with a Cuban Government dominated by Castro.”¹³⁹ A week later Eisenhower approved a policy of “steady pressure” and support for regime change. To this end, Washington began covertly training and supporting a force of Cuban exiles to invade the island and topple Castro.¹⁴⁰

Over the next several months, Cuba-US relations worsened, culminating in the summer in tit-for-tat economic reprisals: Havana nationalized US oil refineries that had refused to process Soviet oil; Washington responded by cutting imports of Cuban sugar, the country’s major export. As the Americans looked to tighten further economic pressure on Cuba, they sought to enlist their allies, believing that only broad sanctions could be effective. As Treasury Secretary Robert Anderson observed at an NSC meeting, if the United States were to cut economic ties with Cuba while its allies increased trade and investment, “we would look like idiots.” And, as Anderson recognized, with Canada having a major financial presence on the island, its support was needed.¹⁴¹ The Americans mounted a full-court press to enlist Canadian assistance. First, Eisenhower wrote to Diefenbaker to tell him that, despite his hopes and attempts at restraint, American patience with Cuba had worn out. Growing communist influence in Cuba was “obviously inviting Soviet penetration of the Western Hemisphere,” he added in an effort to underline the wider stakes of this “serious situation.”¹⁴² Second, at the scheduled meeting of the Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence at Montebello, US officials gave

a more fulsome breakdown of the Cuban problem and its possible solution.

Although Canadian and American authorities reviewed a range of pressing issues at the Montebello conference, Cuba emerged as the topic of sharpest disagreement. Meeting with several Canadian ministers, including Howard Green and Norman Robertson, Canada's undersecretary of state, Treasury Secretary Anderson laid out Washington's position, premised on the judgment that "for practical purposes the Cuban Government had to be regarded as already under Communist domination." He continued that, with the revolutionaries aligning Cuba with the Soviet Bloc, US policy aimed to prevent the island from becoming a Soviet satellite. Since – in Washington's view – a prime means of forestalling this outcome was economic pressure, Anderson appealed for assistance, including blocking Cuban government accounts in Canadian banks and stopping trade in key areas. Canada's course, Anderson concluded, served as "a real test of the meaning and solidarity of the Alliance." Green gave the Canadian response. Explaining that he was "very doubtful of the wisdom of attempting to deal with the Cuban situation by external economic pressure," he questioned to what extent Ottawa should involve itself in what was a purely US-Cuba dispute.¹⁴³ At this point, Livingston Merchant intervened to assert that events in Cuba "were part of a package" of communist activities meant to raise "the temperature of the cold war" and necessitated a Western response. However, Robertson rejected viewing the situation in these stark terms. Discounting sanctions, he contended that the US cut to the sugar quota had handed Castro "a ready-made opportunity to blame the United States for Cuba's troubles and to identify Cuban nationalism with communism to our detriment."¹⁴⁴ Just as the St. Laurent government had been cautious about American anticommunist efforts in Asia, so too the Diefenbaker government had little desire to see the Cold War extended to Latin America.

The allies were parting ways on Cuba, the result of varying assessments of the situation and the proper course of action. With the Canadians convinced that US officials were overly "preoccupied with communism," the Montebello meeting, Anderson complained to the NSC, was "very disturbing". For his part, Eisenhower was left "somewhat surprised" that Ottawa had shown uninterest in "what we were trying to do with respect to Cuba."¹⁴⁵ Sure of their own course, American authorities brushed off Canadian

opinion, moving ahead with plans for regime change and, with the Cuban government nationalizing all foreign-owned businesses, imposing an embargo on the export of US goods to Cuba in October. Ottawa refused to abide by the embargo, in part because the Cuban program of nationalization exempted Canadian firms, notably the Royal Bank of Canada and the Bank of Nova Scotia. As Green emphasized to cabinet, as far as he and the prime minister were concerned, “Canadian-Cuban relations were normal.”¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, as Canadian diplomats continued to explain to their US counterparts, they doubted the wisdom of sanctions. The embargo, Ambassador Arnold Heeney put it to Undersecretary of State Douglas Dillon, was sure to “strengthen Castro’s position and to compel him even further into the arms of the Soviets.”¹⁴⁷ The Canadians, fumed Dillon in an NSC meeting, had “the presumption” to question US judgment. Herter chimed in to note that “the most unfavorable reaction” to the embargo “came from Canada.”¹⁴⁸

Part of the issue for the Americans involved integration of the North American economy, meaning that the Cubans might be able to skirt the embargo via Canada. At the same time, cognizant of Canadian nationalist sentiments, US policy makers wished to avoid, as one senior State Department official put it, actions “which could be interpreted as interference with Canadian sovereignty.”¹⁴⁹ As a result of this concern, the embargo was not enacted via the Trading with the Enemy Act, which would have applied to the subsidiaries of American firms operating in Canada. Care to sidestep a fight with Ottawa belied American anger at the lack of Canadian support, and Ambassador Heeney sent Ottawa several warnings about the perception – apparent in official circles, the press, and public attitudes – that Canada was purposefully undermining US policy or that Ottawa even backed Havana in its dispute with Washington. To counteract the “good deal of misunderstanding” of Canadian policy, he counselled a public statement, preferably by the prime minister, carefully outlining Ottawa’s stance.¹⁵⁰

Diefenbaker was of two minds on the embargo. In early November, he mused to an aide that Canada “should not long be able to hold off from a more active collaboration” with the United States on Cuba. Days later, stating that he was now firmly “against the idea” of cooperating with the embargo, the prime minister railed against what he saw as a US tendency to pay attention to Canada only when the Americans desired something; “to hell with them,” he said.¹⁵¹ The catalyst for this outburst was the election

of John F. Kennedy, the Democratic presidential candidate, who had staked out a tough stance toward Cuba during the campaign. Still, Diefenbaker did favour some collaboration, in part because of public sentiment in the United States and in part because US officials had indicated that any attempts by companies to import American goods into Canada for the purpose of then selling them to Cuba would lead to a rethinking of the non-use of the Trading with the Enemy Act. Outlining Canadian policy on Cuba in a House of Commons address in mid-December, Diefenbaker declared that there was “no valid objection to trade with Cuba,” nor was there reason to abandon “the kind of relations with Cuba which are usual with the recognized government of another country.” In a nod to US concerns, he then added that Canada would not “exploit the situation arising from the United States embargo” by actively increasing trade with Cuba. Furthermore, he had “no intention of encouraging what would in fact be bootlegging of goods of United States origin,” and Ottawa would take steps to prevent the re-export of US goods to Cuba via Canada.¹⁵²

Diefenbaker’s statement did the trick. Douglas Dillon, serving in the State Department but about to join the Kennedy administration as treasury secretary, told Canadian Minister of Finance Donald Fleming that he and other US officials were now “quite relaxed about Canada’s decision to continue normal trading relations with Cuba,” although any re-export of US goods “would have a very explosive effect.”¹⁵³ It also helped that the Canadian government had agreed to gather intelligence for the Americans, forging what one State Department official later referred to as “a long-standing exchange program conducted with the Canadian Embassy here in Washington in which reporting on Cuba has received special priority.”¹⁵⁴ This intelligence pipeline proved to be especially important when, in January 1961, as one of his last acts regarding Cuba, Eisenhower broke diplomatic relations with the island, shuttering the US embassy in Havana. Even so, Ottawa’s lack of overall support rankled him. “We talk about an embargo on Cuba on [the] one hand,” Eisenhower would complain as late as 1963, “yet Canada increases its trade on the other.”¹⁵⁵

Differences between Ottawa and Washington on Cuba would spill over into the Kennedy years, creating some of the tensions for which the period 1961-63 is often seen as one of the worst in the bilateral relationship. The seeds of this dispute were sown during the Eisenhower era, and from the perspective of

American officials – regardless of political administration – the Canadian unwillingness to follow the US lead caused considerable dismay. Nor was Cuba the only foreign policy item on which the two allies were not in lock step. Rather, Canada's response to Castro marked a seemingly wider divergence from the United States on Cold War issues. In May 1960, while chatting with Canadian General Charles Foulkes, the retiring chairman of the Chiefs of Staff and an old wartime companion, Eisenhower complained of neutralist sentiment in Canada. A number of politicians, columnists, and activists were calling for the pursuit of a new foreign policy in which the country would leave NATO and NORAD and sit out the Cold War. Against these views, the president explained, "Diefenbaker should jam the hard realities down the throats of his people." It was "most important," he added, that Canada and the United States "act as solid partners and both make some sacrifices."¹⁵⁶

An American sense that Canadians were less than solid partners and unwilling to make necessary sacrifices was a through line from the Eisenhower administration to its successor. Yet it is important not to overstate the differences, for policy makers in Ottawa and Washington were united on a broad ideological and geopolitical consensus on the necessity of containing Soviet aggression. Differences did exist over the means of containment and, as in the Middle East or Latin America, where the fault lines of resistance should be drawn. When it came to North America itself, a key element of the Canada-US consensus was the belief that joint continental defence efforts against the Soviet Union were vital.

Under St. Laurent's government in the early 1950s, Ottawa and Washington had forged a range of agreements to provide either for the joint defence of the continent or to allow American use of Canadian airspace while acknowledging Canada's sovereignty. As a part of this effort, the Canadian military, particularly the Royal Canadian Air Force, had sought weapons systems to fulfill its role in continental defence, the main point of which was to safeguard the US nuclear deterrent from a Soviet attack. When the Diefenbaker government came into office, this strategic imperative did not change. But the issues of finance, procurement, and sovereignty appeared to have become more complex, creating considerable strains in the Canada-US relationship.

THE CONTINENTAL DEFENCE DILEMMA, 1957–61

In the aftermath of the surprise Progressive Conservative victory in the federal election in June 1957, Livingston Merchant documented the changes that Washington could expect in its defence dealings with the incoming John Diefenbaker government. The US ambassador did not foresee “serious consequences to our security,” he informed John Foster Dulles, because the new party in power in Ottawa accepted “as inextricable Canada’s dependence on the United States for its own defense.” Nonetheless, there would be delays in decisions and the possible reconsideration of existing agreements. Furthermore, dealing with new personalities could lead to the discovery that defence problems that had been handled “efficiently and almost silently” through service channels “will in future swim up to the Governmental level for negotiation.”¹ In a separate report, Merchant expanded on this judgment and reiterated the “almost automatic reflex” that Canadian civil servants had developed to the plans and prejudices of the Louis St. Laurent cabinet affecting Canada-US relations. These favourable diplomatic conditions, he cabled, could no longer be considered automatic:

Effects this situation will probably be most immediately marked in field of joint defense projects in Canada. Conservatives basically accept necessity joint defense planning and presence US forces and installations in Canada but may be expected to show more sensitivity re Canadian sovereignty. At same time greater delays ... initiating

and implementing even minor proposed US projects because of need for working level officials to defer to busy and inexperienced Cabinet for guidance.²

Merchant's forecast of the Canada-US defence relationship during the remainder of President Dwight Eisenhower's second term in office proved to be accurate. The Diefenbaker government immediately approved in principle the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) agreement calling for the operational integration of Canadian and American air force units; parliamentary support for the pact and a formal diplomatic exchange of notes would occur late in the spring of 1958. But the Conservative government's subsequent hesitant response to escalating US requests for an enhanced North American defence posture soured relations. Canada's acquisition of advanced weapons systems with operational capacities enhanced by nuclear warheads launched desultory negotiations that witnessed the Diefenbaker government's increasing reluctance to acquire US nuclear tips. The Canadian cancellation of a major air defence exercise – Operation Skyhawk – in September 1959 permanently jaundiced the attitudes of many senior officials in the Eisenhower administration toward Canada's commitment to continental defence. And complex negotiations to provide Canada with American-made interceptor aircraft in the wake of the controversial cancellation of the CF-105 Avro Arrow could not be concluded before Eisenhower left office because of the Diefenbaker government's insistence on a reciprocal purchase of military transport aircraft that would stimulate the Canadian aviation sector.

Scholarly analysis of continental defence issues during the overlap of the Diefenbaker and Eisenhower governments features two primary themes. The first theme is the supposedly shambolic Canadian management of bilateral military relations by the Conservatives that resulted in the "defence debacle."³ These accounts, though, encompass events transpiring during the entire period of the Diefenbaker government and focus primarily on the Canadian prime minister's calamitous relationship with John F. Kennedy and the collapse of his government in early 1963 in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Detaching the history of continental defence from Diefenbaker's election victory in 1957 to the end of Eisenhower's presidency from the overall arc of the Conservative government's six years in power

highlights frequently nuanced and determined efforts in Washington to meet Canadian concerns about national sovereignty and the increasingly onerous financial burden of Cold War defence postures.

The second theme is the disproportionate attention paid to the role of Diefenbaker. From Peter Newman's muckraking journalism of the 1960s to thoughtful scholarly studies of nuclear weapons policy from 1957 to 1963, the Canadian prime minister is usually accorded the pre-eminent place in determining the scale and scope of Ottawa's military cooperation with the United States.⁴ Yet the comprehensive scrutiny of Canadian and American archival records illustrates the role that senior diplomats played in complex continental defence negotiations. Furthermore, Howard Green, who became secretary of state for external affairs in June 1959 following the untimely death of Sidney Smith, emerged as an essential driver of Canadian foreign policy. Green was viewed acerbically as the prime minister's "charming stooge" by many in Canadian press circles following his appointment.⁵ US embassy officials in Ottawa, however, reported astutely that "Green is no rubber stamp."⁶ He consistently championed a course of action opposing the closer integration of continental defence forces, particularly the contentious proposals to integrate American nuclear weapons into the Canadian defence posture.

In 1957, the fledgling Diefenbaker government inherited a far-reaching tentative agreement to integrate air defence forces in North America under a single command, the next logical step in the process of bilateral defence cooperation that occurred over the course of St. Laurent's tenure. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff in February 1956 had formally asked their Canadian counterparts to consider the operational amalgamation of Canadian and American air forces. The Canadian Combined Chiefs of Staff subsequently agreed, and a report authorizing the integration of operational air defence reached the respective Chiefs of Staff in December 1956. The Cabinet Defence Committee scheduled a meeting in April 1957 to consider the principle of joint operational control, but the St. Laurent government cancelled the meeting in the run up to the federal election. Meanwhile, the United States approved the integrated command on 15 April and expected Canada quickly to do the same. The defeat of the St. Laurent Liberals at the polls on 10 June led to a further delay.⁷ Convinced that Washington expected a final decision before 15 June, General Charles Foulkes, the

chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, unsuccessfully lobbied the outgoing minister of defence, Ralph Campney, to approve the air defence agreement before the swearing-in of the new Diefenbaker government.

Foulkes – operating “under almost daily pressure from the military in the United States” – then vigorously lobbied the new defence minister, General George Pearkes, to secure Prime Minister Diefenbaker’s approval of the defence agreement.⁸ Several important administrative features of the incoming Conservative government aided Foulkes’s efforts. The Cabinet Defence Committee had yet to be constituted, and the proposal to create NORAD would therefore not be vetted by a wide range of government departments. Diefenbaker also acted as his own secretary of state for external affairs in the first months of his government, and his notoriously prickly relationship with the Department of External Affairs meant that he would be unwilling to consult extensively with officials in that department. And the DEA ranks were in a state of flux at this time. Burdened by family problems, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs Jules Léger took a period of leave in late July 1957, and his departmental second-in-command was also absent from Ottawa. This left an assistant undersecretary, John W. Holmes, with little knowledge of the proposed defence agreement, in nominal charge of the department.⁹

In this bureaucratic vacuum, Pearkes accepted Foulkes’s earnest pleas that the defence agreement was essential. Armed with a draft memorandum to cabinet and an *aide-mémoire* providing some background on the unified air command proposal, Pearkes met privately with Diefenbaker on 24 July to press for immediate approval. Remarkably, given the prime minister’s later reputation for chronic vacillation and indecision even in matters of far less gravity, Diefenbaker acceded to Pearkes’s request and sanctioned the creation of NORAD without reference to cabinet. American officials, of course, were delighted with this turn of events since Livingston Merchant had warned Washington that the NORAD proposal “will be searchingly examined by Cabinet with certainty of delay in action and possibility of decision that [the] draft agreement must undergo substantial alteration.”¹⁰ When John Foster Dulles visited Ottawa days after Diefenbaker’s approval of the defence pact, he expressed his appreciation of the prompt handling of the matter. The prime minister indicated that he sanctioned NORAD’s creation because “he had long been disturbed over the fact that Canada

might have an inadequate or no voice at all in setting in motion actions which rendered war inevitable.”¹¹ The placement of a senior RCAF officer in NORAD’s command structure, in Diefenbaker’s view, ensured a Canadian voice in any emergency decision authorizing joint military action.

External Affairs officials, however, expressed shock at Diefenbaker’s decision. Holmes learned of Canada’s entry into NORAD only in a private conversation with Merchant on 31 July, and he immediately expressed concern about the lack of political oversight of NORAD’s military mechanisms.¹² This had been a consistent DEA worry since the St. Laurent government had first drafted the agreement’s provisions. Indeed, Lester Pearson had inserted language into the draft submission to cabinet – meant to have been reviewed first by the Cabinet Defence Committee – that political consultations would occur before air defence forces would be placed on alert. This emphasis had been removed from the cabinet memorandum that Pearkes had presented to Diefenbaker, and the Department of External Affairs now launched a vigorous campaign in August and September to formalize the Canadian accession to NORAD through an exchange of diplomatic notes approved by Parliament. Under increasing political pressure, Diefenbaker himself now supported a public intergovernmental agreement. Meeting Eisenhower in Washington on 17 October 1957 during an informal visit, Diefenbaker told his host that “he hoped that something could be worked out to indicate that the putting of this Joint Command into actual fighting operation would be preceded by an agreement between the President and the Prime Minister of Canada, thus asserting the continued authority of the civilian over the military in both countries.”¹³

US officials initially expressed reservations about the merits of a public exchange of notes. This attitude softened, however, after the Progressive Conservative government faced withering criticism from the opposition Liberals in the new autumn session of Parliament over NORAD’s ad hoc approval. Merchant reported to his superiors on the ineptitude of Diefenbaker’s cabinet to respond effectively to repeated Liberal attacks on the lack of a formal diplomatic agreement. Léger also approached Merchant on 15 November 1957 to lobby for US approval of diplomatic notes, affirming that this established practice had been followed for far less important matters of bilateral defence. Furthermore, Léger noted the absence of a political cushion similar to that provided by the Permanent Council within the

structure of NATO.¹⁴ Aware of the growing political problem facing the Diefenbaker government, the Eisenhower administration quickly supported the negotiation of notes authorizing the NORAD command as well as the formal terms of reference guiding continental air defence practices.

While these negotiations progressed, the Progressive Conservative government continued to deflect criticism of its handling of the NORAD file. Diefenbaker's prime strategy to make the agreement palatable to the Canadian public centred on linking NORAD with NATO. Although Washington provided faint signals that this connection could be justified within the broad parameters of the West's defence posture, Diefenbaker sought explicitly to place NORAD within the NATO administrative and consultative structure. Speaking to the NATO Heads of Government meeting in Paris on 17 December 1957, Diefenbaker praised NORAD as an "integral part of our NATO military structure" that "will report to the Standing Group and the NATO Council in a manner similar to that followed by the other NATO military commands."¹⁵ But this unilateral declaration carried no weight without Washington's explicit approval. When Diefenbaker recounted his participation in the NATO meetings in the House of Commons, he again linked NORAD with NATO but softened his Paris statement to indicate that the NATO Council would be apprised of NORAD activities for informational purposes only. Whereas Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker's special foreign policy assistant, believed that the prime minister's statement was "deliberately ambiguous" and used "fuzzy language as a bridge between opposing aims," American military leaders countenanced no such opacity.¹⁶ NORAD, the US Joint Chiefs informed Ottawa, "is not and should not be a NATO organization," and both Canadian and American senior air commanders bluntly asserted that "it would be fatal to let NORAD become in any way closely identified with NATO."¹⁷

The linking of bilateral continental defence to the wider Western military effort had been a source of controversy dating back to the early St. Laurent years. The NORAD terms of reference emphasized the purely North American character of the pact; any allusion to NATO was absent. There was little controversy in the drafting of this document. The preliminary text produced in January 1958 was edited through service channels and approved at the ministerial level in both countries early in May. Under these terms,

the commander in chief, North American Aerospace Defence Command (CINCNORAD), reported to the respective Chiefs of Staff in each country, and the commander and deputy commander could not be of the same nationality. CINCNORAD exercised control over all air defence forces assigned by both Canada and the United States as well as the radar stations of the Mid-Canada Line and the Distant Early Warning Line on Canadian soil. CINCNORAD's most critical functions were to "establish procedures and methods for conducting air battle ... and for directing the engagement and disengagement of weapons" and to "specify the conditions of combat readiness, to include states of alert, to be maintained by all forces assigned." Critically, the terms of reference did not include any instruction requiring CINCNORAD to consult directly or indirectly with the Canadian and American elected governments.¹⁸

The exchange of diplomatic notes formalizing the creation of NORAD logically emphasized the political aspects of integrating continental air defence forces. With input from American service branches, DEA and DND officials crafted the preliminary text of a note and submitted it to the State Department on 28 March 1958. The note contained much language found in the military terms of reference but emphasized the primacy of civilian authority by noting that the Chiefs of Staff in each country – to whom CINCNORAD reported – were "responsible to their respective governments." Furthermore, any wartime plans and procedures created by CINCNORAD would be "formulated and approved in peacetime by appropriate national authorities and shall be capable of rapid implementation in an emergency." Canadian bureaucrats also sought to achieve Diefenbaker's cherished goal of assuring public support for NORAD by linking it with NATO through language indicating that North America was "an integral part of the NATO area" and that the NATO Military Committee would be "kept informed" of NORAD activity through the existing advisory mechanism of NATO's Canada–United States Regional Planning Group.¹⁹

Predictably, preliminary US comments on the draft note questioned the possible complications surrounding the mention of NATO. The Pentagon "held the strong view that the wording of the NORAD note should not give any ground for interference by our NATO allies in the disposal of forces ... nor should it even by inference suggest the possibility that NATO had a right to comment on plans for the air defence of North America."²⁰

The State Department instead hoped to reference Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty indicating that member nations could develop their individual and collective capacity to resist an armed attack, with NORAD being a purely bilateral effort to achieve this goal outside formal NATO structures.

While these Canada-US consultations transpired, Ottawa attempted to add a layer of consultative machinery to assert political control over NORAD. In mid-February 1958, Sidney Smith, appointed the secretary of state for external affairs the previous September, proposed the creation of a bilateral committee consisting of the Canadian ministers of finance, external affairs, and national defence along with their American counterparts. Smith envisioned a committee similar to the existing Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs charged with addressing major policy problems arising from NORAD and other bilateral defence connections beyond the existing consultative machinery established in 1940 through the Permanent Joint Board on Defence.²¹ The State Department reacted coolly when presented with this proposal on 22 March 1958. Although Washington recognized the unique character of certain elements of the Canadian-American defence relationship, the United States also had extensive military connections with other NATO allies and did not have bilateral ministerial mechanisms with any other country. Furthermore, American policy makers remained focused on securing approval of the final text of the NORAD notes and did not wish to be distracted by the supplemental Canadian proposal.²² Subsequent negotiations seeking the formation of a joint ministerial defence committee, therefore, proceeded fitfully.

Discussions to conclude the NORAD agreement advanced quickly in May 1958. The United States submitted a revised version of the NORAD note suggesting changes to the Canadian draft concerning the extent of the North American command's link to NATO. In addition to some changes in emphasis on the matter of CINCNORAD's operational control of NORAD forces, Washington hoped to provide an altered and more precise description of NATO reporting procedures, with individual countries submitting reports to the Canada-United States Regional Planning Group before their consideration by NATO's Military Committee. Whereas Canadian military leaders accepted the changes and External Affairs officials emphasized that the United States "have come some way to meet our

difficulty,” cabinet determined on 8 May that Washington should be pressed to keep intact the Canadian references to NATO reporting procedures that had been outlined previously in the House of Commons.²³ The Eisenhower administration acquiesced to these demands to allow the Progressive Conservative government maximum flexibility in Parliament and to formalize NORAD operations that had been running since September 1957, and the NORAD exchange of notes occurred on 12 May.²⁴

When Diefenbaker brought the NORAD issue to the House of Commons in June, the Conservatives finally overcame nearly eight months of defensive statements. “By abandoning attempts to defend previous statements and actions and by attacking motives of the CCF and Liberals in questioning NORAD,” the US embassy in Ottawa reported, “the government regained the initiative to a certain extent.”²⁵ When debate concluded on 19 June, the House of Commons approved the agreement by a vote of 200-8. Diefenbaker and his cabinet had therefore successfully cleared their first major defence policy hurdle. Moreover, the Americans had played a helpful role in permitting some alterations, thereby securing their own overall interest, joint cooperation in continental defence.

President Eisenhower’s visit to Ottawa in July 1958 provided the opportunity to discuss and finalize the formation of the proposed joint defence committee sought by the Diefenbaker government to provide enhanced political oversight of continental defence operations. Draft notes had been prepared to authorize creation of the committee, but the State Department briefed Eisenhower ahead of his trip to emphasize that the committee should be organized “on as informal a basis as possible” to avoid duplication with other existing joint bodies of consultation. It was hoped that this concession would help Ottawa to sell the merits of NORAD to the Canadian public and to improve Canadian cooperation in other defence fields, such as the arming of Canadian forces with nuclear weapons.²⁶ For its part, Ottawa wanted to establish the joint committee to address the “quite serious problems” emerging in continental air defence.²⁷ Cabinet addressed this topic the day before Eisenhower’s arrival in Canada and hoped that the leaders would be able to announce formally creation of the committee at the end of the visit.

The establishment of NORAD and the proposed joint committee featured prominently in initial talks between Eisenhower and Diefenbaker in Ottawa.

After some discussion of the international situation, the conversation turned to the question of NORAD, with Diefenbaker noting the widespread fear in Canada that sovereignty had been sacrificed by turning over RCAF squadrons to an American commander. Furthermore, the agreement “would have gone down the drain” if the Progressive Conservatives had not secured a majority in the federal election in March 1958. To offset these negative factors, Diefenbaker lobbied that the proposed joint cabinet-level defence committee be authorized. Eisenhower responded that he supported civilian oversight of NORAD’s operations, but he remained skeptical about the utility of an unwieldy committee beyond the respective defence ministers of each country. Eventually, Diefenbaker and Eisenhower agreed to support a six-member defence committee consisting of foreign, defence, and finance ministers, and officials were charged with drawing up the terms of reference for the committee.²⁸ This was accomplished quickly – with composition of the committee rising to four members on each side – and the two leaders approved the text of the press release announcing the committee during their meeting on 10 July. Diplomatic notes officially establishing the Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence were exchanged on 29 August and 2 September 1958. This committee joined the one that Eisenhower and St. Laurent had formed to review trade and economic matters. Both boards testified to the close cooperation between Ottawa and Washington.

This enhanced system of consultation on defence issues quickly dealt with the question of nuclear weapons within the continental defence umbrella – the issue that would occupy the attention of the Diefenbaker government throughout its tenure. Washington had submitted a request in December 1957 to deploy nuclear weapons at leased American facilities at Goose Bay, Labrador, and at the Harmon airfield in Newfoundland for potential use by Strategic Air Command bombers. Ottawa had initially refused to consider this appeal in a timely fashion, but the question of nuclear tips on Canadian soil presented itself again in 1958. In place of the scrapped plan to equip the Royal Canadian Air Force with the CF-105 Avro Arrow interceptor, Ottawa had opted to construct two US-built Bomarc surface-to-air missile bases at North Bay, Ontario, and La Macaza, Quebec. On 15 October 1958, cabinet authorized negotiations with Washington to secure warheads for the Bomarc missiles to maximize their tactical effectiveness against an incoming Soviet bomber force.

The Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence met for the first time in Paris on 15 December 1958 during the NATO ministerial meeting. Although the Canadian delegation had been briefed before the meeting that “no final decisions were being reached at this time,” the Paris meeting focused on a possible statement to be presented in the House of Commons regarding Canada’s acquisition of defensive nuclear weapons.²⁹ The American secretaries discussed sections of the draft statement that seemed to reference weapons that did not technically fall under NORAD’s umbrella, such as the LACROSSE surface-to-surface missile scheduled to be used by Canadian army units under NATO command in Europe. They also probed the Canadians about the possibility of the statement’s reference to defensive weapons covering nuclear warheads on US leased bases. And US Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy questioned the release of a public statement before the operational details of the actual use of nuclear weapons had been determined. The Canadian ministers – in a declaration that eventually would prove to be completely inaccurate – reassured their counterparts that any American apprehensions about political control trumping military decisions in the field were unfounded. “It was not intended,” Minister of Finance Donald Fleming asserted, “that governmental control should be exercised in such a way in an emergency as to impose delay on essential operations.” Participants in the meeting concluded that “no difference of principle” existed between the two allies over the control of nuclear weapons and that some revisions to the proposed statement might be made to reflect the points discussed in Paris.³⁰ US officials eventually approved the text of a statement in mid-January 1959 after receiving assurances that the Diefenbaker government’s promise to table in Parliament the general terms of a future agreement on nuclear arms would mean that only unclassified portions of any pact would be publicly discussed.³¹

Diefenbaker delivered the statement on Canadian nuclear weapons acquisition on 20 February 1959 during a longer address to the House of Commons officially announcing the termination of the Avro Arrow program, which had become too expensive to continue. The prime minister informed Parliament that “it is our intention to provide Canadian forces with modern and efficient weapons to enable them to fulfil their respective roles.” He cautioned, though, that defensive nuclear weapons could be used

“only in accordance with procedures governing NORAD’s operations as approved in advance by both governments. Such weapons, therefore, would be used from Canadian territory or in Canadian airspace only under conditions previously agreed to by both governments.”³²

In the aftermath of this statement, preliminary negotiations through service channels had proven to be inconclusive, and Washington stepped up the pressure on Ottawa by submitting another request in April 1959 that, in addition to emphasizing the need to equip SAC forces with nuclear weapons, asked Ottawa to approve the deployment of the MB-1 air-to-air rocket at Goose Bay for USAF interceptor squadrons stationed there. Furthermore, American officials requested that nuclear-tipped antisubmarine weapons be provided to US forces at the naval base in Argentia, Newfoundland. “In view of the recognized desirability of meeting these mutual defense objectives as quickly as possible,” the State Department sought to conclude an agreement ahead of any other proposed nuclear arrangement between the two countries.³³ Concluding a timely agreement with Canada would prove to be difficult.

When Arnold Heeney presented his credentials to Eisenhower at the start of his second ambassadorial tour in Washington in March 1959, the president greeted him “with every appearance of warmth and friendliness,” yet some cracks in the Canada-US relationship were developing.³⁴ Several weeks after meeting Heeney, Eisenhower expressed to Prime Minister of Britain Harold Macmillan some disappointment with their Canadian counterpart. “When he sees him they agree,” the president said, referring to the Canadian leader, “but when Mr. Diefenbaker speaks in public he blames America for all Canada’s troubles.”³⁵ Diefenbaker and many Conservatives had consistently asserted Canada’s economic and cultural independence, and a sense of nationalism increasingly pervaded the domestic political discourse on Canada’s military cooperation with the United States. Heeney himself astutely analyzed the potentially baleful influence of creeping anti-Americanism at this time. Bilateral interactions, he observed in his diary, had “worsened materially” since the federal election in 1957 because of “a widespread ignorance in Canada of US intentions and habits” and a Canadian conviction equating criticism of the United States with healthy patriotism. “Without any justification,” the ambassador believed, Canadians were “smug and self-satisfied in the conviction that

somehow we have managed to combine the best qualities of Britain and America – and maybe France too, whereas the facts are quite often that we possess some of the least attractive characteristics of all.”³⁶

Heeney brought these concerns to the attention of Diefenbaker in June after they had returned to Ottawa following the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in a ceremony with President Eisenhower in attendance. The prime minister emphasized that his counterpart had “displayed real interest in the maintenance and improvement of good relations” between Ottawa and Washington. Nevertheless, Diefenbaker “mentioned the number of defence requests being made upon Canada,” which, Heeney recorded, “concerned Mr. Diefenbaker a good deal. All of them could not be met in the way they were being put forward.” Heeney attempted both to mollify the Conservative leader and to encourage a forthright and cooperative approach to bilateral security matters by observing that, “where such ‘requests’ were suggestions for action to improve the joint defence of North America which commended themselves as such to our own judgment, surely we should meet them.”³⁷

Arnold Heeney also met Howard Green the same day. The ambassador reiterated his view that the Eisenhower administration had worked hard to accommodate “reasonable Canadian demands,” and he judged “it vital that the United States should have no reason to doubt our reliability as an ally in joint policies which were sound.” Green, however, remained unconvinced, and referring to the many American requests for cooperation he “said that he felt the United States should be ‘held down’ in these matters,” adding that he believed that “he had a special responsibility to safeguard Canadian sovereignty.” Heeney continued to stress that the military interests of Canada and the United States were the same and that any American proposal “judged from the military point of view to be necessary or desirable in our joint interest” should be accepted. Green did not demur to Heeney’s principled argument “but simply reverted to his own difficulty in dealing with these questions without regard to the political, i.e., Canadian, considerations to which he had referred earlier.” Reminded by Heeney that he was viewed in certain quarters “as being prejudiced against the United States, even anti-American,” Green relented mildly and “agreed fully that he should get to know the Americans better.” The ambassador left the meeting convinced of the importance that Green attached to the bilateral relationship while

noting that the minister “continues to be worried by the risk of US dominance, particularly in matters of defence.”³⁸ It was clear to Heeney that defence relations were “going to be difficult in the months ahead.”³⁹

This analysis was quickly validated by a serious dispute concerning Operation Skyhawk, meant to be the first major test of continental air defence measures. NORAD officials began planning the operation in January 1959, with the exercise scheduled to occur on 3 October. The operation called for Strategic Air Command bombers to simulate a Soviet attack by approaching North America from all directions and using sophisticated electronic countermeasures to evade radar surveillance. As many as 1,500 interceptor aircraft and naval forces in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans would counter the mock attack. Most significantly, during the exercise, all commercial and private flights in Canada and the United States would be suspended for a period of six hours. President Eisenhower formally approved the operation on 5 August, and Washington assumed that the Diefenbaker government would quickly follow suit. Remarkably, Canadian cabinet ministers remained completely unaware of Operation Skyhawk during the seven-month planning period despite extensive bilateral consultations between defence and transport officials that had reached the deputy ministerial level in Canada.⁴⁰ US Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy informed his counterpart, George Pearkes, about the operation on 11 August, and the State Department provided the Canadian embassy in Washington with formal notice of the exercise the next day.

Nonetheless, neither Diefenbaker nor Green appears to have been aware of Operation Skyhawk until 21 August at the earliest.⁴¹ A briefing paper prepared subsequently for Green by DEA Assistant Undersecretary John Holmes on 25 August noted the danger of a comprehensive military exercise undermining reciprocal visits by Nikita Khrushchev and Dwight Eisenhower planned for September and October (discussed in [Chapter 5](#)). If the first visit went well, then Holmes predicted that Operation Skyhawk would not seriously jeopardize East-West relations. If Khrushchev’s talks with Eisenhower broke down, however, then Holmes predicted that “the exercise would be likely to appear as a warning to the Soviet Union about the magnitude and effectiveness of Western strength and to have an important effect on public opinion and on the political climate.” Holmes

also attached a draft press release to his memorandum scheduled to be released on 31 August. He recommended that substantive revisions be made to the text that would make a more effective case for grounding civilian air traffic during the operation. Furthermore, he advised that a phrase about SAC aircraft approaching over Canada be deleted since "it appears too obvious that an effort is being made to simulate a Soviet attack" and that "it is misleading in the sense that the aircraft which will be approaching Canada from the North are only a very small proportion of those engaged in the exercise as a whole." Green's terse marginal note on the paper conveyed his view of Operation Skyhawk: "Totally inappropriate and provocative now - Reserve right to consider proposal further."⁴²

At a cabinet meeting held the next day, Diefenbaker initiated the ministerial discussion of Operation Skyhawk by demanding to know how a major air defence exercise involving the grounding of civilian aircraft could be approved without reference to cabinet. Minister of Defence George Pearkes admitted that he had known about the operation on 9 August but had informed his American counterpart that he did not possess the authority to approve the operation formally. Nonetheless, Pearkes thought that the exercise was "a reasonable one." Cabinet records do not identify ministers who spoke against approving the operation, but Green no doubt led the charge during the discussion. Military planners were "assuming too much authority in many fields these days," and the timing of the exercise was particularly bad since the Soviet Union would look at it "as an attempt to show the iron fist."⁴³ Cabinet ultimately determined that the Department of External Affairs should inform the Americans that it was not an appropriate time to stage Operation Skyhawk. Instructions were issued to Ambassador Heeny the following day withholding Canadian approval of the exercise. The memorandum passed to the State Department on 28 August indicated that, since the operation "would cause an unusual interference with public transport" and be viewed as "having been inspired by extraordinary circumstances," the Canadian government "cannot avoid the conclusion that it would be looked upon, at this time, in many important quarters, as a gesture which might cast doubt upon the sincerity of our side in seeking peaceful solutions."⁴⁴

Canada's rejection of Operation Skyhawk stunned the Eisenhower administration. The State Department immediately summoned Heeney for consultations twice on 28 August. In the first meeting, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Foy Kohler emphasized that any hint of disunity in the West's defensive posture would be a "terrible setback" for Eisenhower in his upcoming discussions with Khrushchev.⁴⁵ In the absence of President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Christian Herter (who were in Europe), Undersecretary of State Douglas Dillon grilled Heeney in the second meeting, noting that Operation Skyhawk would be a "proper defensive exercise" and that its cancellation would be viewed as a sign of a serious split between NORAD partners.⁴⁶ In Ottawa the next day, US Ambassador Richard Wigglesworth met with a "much agitated" Diefenbaker and reiterated Washington's alarm at the Canadian government's action.⁴⁷ The prime minister remained unmoved by these representations. Although Diefenbaker admitted privately that "the blame lay with the Canadian side" for the confusion surrounding procedures for proper approval, he informed Wigglesworth that any exercise that closed civilian airspace would not be approved.⁴⁸

Washington worked rapidly to craft a response to Ottawa's intransigence. The State Department determined that a scaled-back NORAD exercise conducted within the United States would be of little value and rejected a proposal to lobby George Parkes directly since the Canadian defence minister already wholeheartedly endorsed Operation Skyhawk. Only a direct request from Eisenhower, Herter ultimately concluded, could influence Diefenbaker.⁴⁹ Contacting US officials on a purely personal basis, Heeney also indicated that a "reasoned appeal" by the president might prevent a "serious break" in bilateral relations.⁵⁰ Armed with these opinions, Eisenhower sent a personal message to Diefenbaker on 1 September asking his counterpart to reconsider. "I do not myself see anything provocative in such a defensive exercise," the president noted, and he anticipated no adverse effect on his upcoming talks with Khrushchev if Operation Skyhawk went ahead as planned.⁵¹

Conservative ministers addressed Eisenhower's message the next morning. Diefenbaker informed cabinet that he remained convinced that the government's previous decision should stand. Cabinet concurred with this assessment and authorized Howard Green to meet with Richard

Wigglesworth to reiterate Ottawa's view of the poor timing of the exercise and belief that removing civilian air traffic restrictions might allow the exercise to proceed.⁵² Green duly met with Wigglesworth for an hour that afternoon and rather bizarrely "compared Canada's position in this matter to the position of Belgium in 1914."⁵³ Operation Skyhawk, in Green's view, would alarm Canadians and severely damage Canadian-American relations, but he reiterated that a modified version of the exercise would pass muster. Green also showed the US ambassador the draft press release announcing the exercise. Wigglesworth – who seemingly had no knowledge of its contents – informed Washington that the release was "couched in such alarming terms" that "it made his hair stand on end" and contributed substantially to the position of the Canadian government.⁵⁴ The Department of External Affairs also subsequently informed the American embassy that Green's viewpoint expounded to Wigglesworth constituted the formal Canadian response to Eisenhower's message.⁵⁵

State Department officials now weighed their options. Wigglesworth reported that Canadian opposition to the operation remained "solid and deep" but that Ottawa would welcome a chance to save face if a modified version of the exercise could be staged.⁵⁶ Three courses of action, in the ambassador's view, were possible, each of which would produce specific results. First, a unilateral US operation would "rub very great quantities of salt in a very tender spot in US-Canadian relations" with nothing gained from a military standpoint. Second, a scaled-back exercise would allow both Washington and Ottawa to "extract themselves from a most awkward situation" and salvage at least some of the military value of the exercise. Third, postponement or cancellation of the exercise would signal the Eisenhower administration's "complete acquiescence" to Canadian views. Ultimately, Wigglesworth recommended a modified exercise; if Ottawa remained obstinate, then the United States should "calmly accept the Canadian veto as stemming from an honest difference of opinion between allies." Before considering Wigglesworth's blueprint, the State Department reminded the Ottawa embassy that Eisenhower expected a reply to his message to Diefenbaker and that no decision would be made about the future of the operation prior to its receipt.⁵⁷

Diefenbaker's reply came quickly after Heeney lobbied Ottawa to answer Eisenhower's missive both on the ground of protocol and because there

“was a great deal of doubt as to what precisely the Canadian attitude was and that this indecision could lead to difficulties.”⁵⁸ Following a cabinet meeting on 6 September, during which he received ministers’ backing for a modified exercise, Diefenbaker issued his reply to the president. The bulk of his message recounted the initial action taken by the Canadian government, noting the public concern that would be generated from a comprehensive defence exercise transpiring during a period when Cold War tensions appeared to be thawing. The US ambassador, additionally, had been fully briefed about the Canadian position that requested a modification of the exercise to exclude civil air traffic disruptions. “While fully realizing the importance of maintaining strong and efficient defences,” Diefenbaker concluded, “the foregoing considerations impel me to ask that you will entertain this suggestion favourably.”⁵⁹

With the prime minister’s reply in hand, the Eisenhower administration moved to postpone Operation Skyhawk. Livingston Merchant, the former US ambassador in Ottawa who had recently taken the third-ranking position in the State Department, railed against the “really shocking performance on the part of Canadians.”⁶⁰ Ottawa’s proposed modifications excluding the grounding of civilian aircraft or confining the exercise to US airspace, in Merchant’s view, were simply not feasible. The White House also received reports countering Ottawa’s insistence that the draft press release by the US Department of Defense had been prepared in isolation. The Canadian Joint Staff Committee in Washington and the Canadian embassy had been informed, and the Department of National Defence had even sent revisions duly incorporated into the text.⁶¹ A formal memorandum reached the president’s desk on 11 September recommending deferral of the exercise, and Eisenhower approved this course of action before sending a message to Diefenbaker on 15 September enumerating the reasons for the postponement. “I believe that it is important that our two governments ... consider together the anticipated political and psychological results” of a future NORAD defence exercise, Eisenhower concluded, and he hoped “that at such later time arrangements satisfactory to us both can be made.”⁶² Marking the nadir of the Eisenhower-Diefenbaker relationship, this moment was also the low point of bilateral defence relations during Eisenhower’s presidency. Recovery was slow going.⁶³

Extensive post-mortems of the Operation Skyhawk fiasco rippled through Ottawa and Washington. Heeney immediately reflected that the failed operation “has come closer to doing serious damage to the foundations of Canada–United States relations in joint defence than any other event in my experience.”⁶⁴ American officials were not inclined to adopt a conciliatory tone in their post-mortem of the affair. “The fact that the Prime Minister and Mr. Green were not informed of this project in an orderly fashion and at a comparatively early date,” Richard Wigglesworth bluntly concluded, “is clearly the fault of the Canadians.” Furthermore, the Canadian response to the exercise demonstrated that Diefenbaker and his ministers “attach less weight than we do to the need for ostensible military strength, display greater concern for the attitudes of neutrals, give greater credit to Communist good faith, worry more over Communist threats, and incline more to panic at suggestions involving risks.” Wigglesworth identified Green and his departmental advisers as the primary catalysts in mobilizing Canadian opposition to the air defence exercise:

Mr. Green, in playing the key role which resulted in the Canadians turning down Skyhawk, accurately reflected all of the divergent approaches to the Soviet Union noted above. He is in a particularly important position because of his influence with the Prime Minister. Furthermore, because of his newness in the foreign affairs field he is susceptible to influence from the Under-Secretary, Norman Robertson, who in my judgment is responsible, as much as any other high official in Canada, for Canada’s softer approach to the Communist world.⁶⁵

Merchant fully supported Wigglesworth’s analysis. Operation Skyhawk was “just one more manifestation of Canada’s softer approach to the Communist world,” Merchant noted, and “a tough educational job lies ahead to convince Canadian Cabinet leaders that we must deal with the Soviets from a position of strength and not relax our defense at this stage.”⁶⁶

Green remained unapologetic for Canada’s decision to thwart the exercise. He praised the performance of his key departmental lieutenants at the height of the crisis in the first days of September when the Skyhawk deliberations occurred at the same time as complex interdepartmental consultations on

the possibility of sending a UN emergency force into Laos. “These External Affairs officials are not clock watchers,” Green observed. “They have been excellent over the weekend. My own contact man Ross Campbell won’t leave the place as long as I am there, [and] I am growing very attached to him and to several of the others, including Norman Robertson.”⁶⁷ Green met Herter in New York on 21 September and admitted that Canada bore some of the responsibility for the “procedural failures” that had resulted in cancellation of Operation Skyhawk. But he highlighted again the role of the “distasteful press release” in shaping Canadian views and emphasized “the marked difference in judgment between Ottawa and Washington as to the international and domestic consequences of going ahead” with the exercise.⁶⁸ Green maintained this position during the Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence meetings held at Camp David in November 1959. The Skyhawk affair was “water over the dam,” he noted, but he continued to believe that defence exercises should be “as unprovocative as possible” and that “it did seem to him that the United States government placed more emphasis on the need to impress the Soviet Union with a show of force than did the Canadian government.”⁶⁹

At the same time as the Skyhawk controversy soured relations, the Canadian government was making incremental progress on the US request in April 1959 to station warheads on American leased bases at Goose Bay and Harmon, with Canadian officials approving an initial negotiating text that first came before cabinet in August 1959. The most contentious elements of the proposed agreement concerned the physical security and custody of the warheads, their removal from storage facilities, and their use by US forces. Green and his allies hoped that the negotiating text could be amended to allow Canadian troops to be involved in guarding the storage sites on US bases and to have a more decisive role for Canada in authorizing the release and use of the atomic warheads. In the end, cabinet approved a revised version of the document on 22 September reflecting Green’s positions. The Diefenbaker government believed that the negotiating text “should not for the most part present great difficulties for the United States,” and Arnold Heeney passed the document to the State Department in October.⁷⁰

By this time, though, military leaders and senior civil servants in both Canada and the United States increasingly expressed doubts about the

Diefenbaker government's ability to deal with the American request to store nuclear tips at leased bases. Before cabinet had considered the matter in late August, Robert Bryce, the influential clerk of the Privy Council, questioned Green's insistence that the Canadian government's approval be sought for the removal of nuclear weapons from storage at US leased bases. "I think the special precaution does not serve any vital purpose," he informed the prime minister, "and imposes a serious restriction on the defence of Canada."⁷¹ General Charles Foulkes echoed this evaluation of extra layers of approval leading to the use of nuclear weapons. Any controls should "not require consultation or authorization after an attack is imminent," Foulkes maintained. "The risks in removing defensive nuclear weapons from storage in Canada are negligible," he informed Bryce, "but the penalties of delay or failure to be ready when the attack comes may be stupendous."⁷² After consulting confidentially with DEA officials following delivery of the Canadian draft note on warheads at leased bases, Rufus Smith, the counsellor in the US embassy in Ottawa, noted the "doubts and misgivings regarding nuclear weapons" within External Affairs. Smith informed the State Department that "at the higher levels of the Canadian Government there is a pervasive, if not articulated, concern that civil authority over joint United States–Canadian military undertakings needs more frequent reaffirmation."⁷³ Bryce returned to the attack ahead of the meetings of the Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence to be held at Camp David on 8–9 November 1959. His handwritten notes describe his personal appeal to Prime Minister Diefenbaker on 6 November:

- US will make the necessary decision for the West on peace or war and not leave it to any group
- we are one of the few countries that can influence her to some degree
- we can differ on many things and still have that influence
- but they must believe we are *serious* about defence
- and that requires a willingness to do some unpopular things or even risky things
- that's why I think the SAC Goose more important than may look
- SAC the thing they take most seriously and I think they have some worries.⁷⁴

Bryce's hope that the joint committee's deliberations at Camp David would produce agreement on nuclear weapons was unrealized. Green had informed cabinet before his departure for the meeting that the response to US requests to enhance continental defence postures "should be governed by the prospect for disarmament." Green firmly believed, in fact, that international events were moving in favour of nuclear arms controls and that the "only people who were being really intransigent were certain elements in the Pentagon."⁷⁵ At Camp David, he emphasized to his hosts the progress being made in the field of disarmament, and he continued to insist that political consultations within NATO needed to be enhanced to include the views of the non-nuclear powers in advance of a proposed East-West summit meeting. In terms of the storage of nuclear weapons in Canada, he noted that an agreement for warheads at Goose Bay for use by USAF interceptors had been drafted by Ottawa with the stipulation that joint control of the weapons would be necessary. But the storage of warheads at leased bases for use by SAC bombers or US naval forces was a different matter. This proposal presented great political difficulties for the Canadian government. "It would not be easy to explain the need for such SAC facilities in Canada to Canadian public opinion," Green emphasized, "no matter how reasonable the case might seem to the United States Government."⁷⁶ These comments did little to reassure American officials in the wake of the Skyhawk imbroglio.

A more contentious element of the nuclear weapons question involved the provision of atomic arms to Canadian forces. A draft agreement initially negotiated in service channels received the approval of senior military and diplomatic officials in December 1959. It did not commit the Canadian government to acquire nuclear weapons, only to set out the broad principles by which individual weapons systems might be acquired, controlled, and used. The covering note to the draft agreement recognized that ownership and custody of atomic weapons provided to Canadian forces would remain with the United States. Five separate sections in the Annex outlined the terms under which negotiations for the acquisition of weapons systems would proceed. The critical Section B of the Annex stipulated that ownership and custody of the nuclear warheads would remain with the United States, with procedures by which the weapons would be released and employed based on the principle of joint responsibility. Section C of the

Annex dealt with the acquisition of atomic weapons by Canada-based forces and assigned to Ottawa the costs of transporting the weapons through Canadian territory and the construction of storage facilities. Section D of the Annex outlined the procedures for Canadian forces in Europe to acquire American nuclear weapons.⁷⁷

Cabinet considered this draft note for the first time on 12 January 1960. Diefenbaker and Green expressed serious reservations about equipping Canadian troops with atomic warheads. Having emerged as a leading spokesperson for international disarmament initiatives, Green rigidly insisted on absolute Canadian control over the potential use of nuclear weapons. The prime minister, clearly influenced by the growing antinuclear movement, emphasized "that no agreement should be signed with the US on this matter unless it was quite clear that there would be no use of these weapons without the consent of the Canadian government."⁷⁸ Cabinet supported these viewpoints, and Green inserted more rigorous language into Section B of the Annex mandating that the physical security of nuclear warheads on Canadian soil be provided by Canadian troops. Furthermore, he inserted a new paragraph into this section specifically outlining the control to be exercised by Canada over the use of atomic weapons: "Authorization of the use by Canadian forces of the nuclear warheads covered by this agreement subsequent to their release . . . will be the responsibility of the Government of Canada."⁷⁹ These changes were subsequently approved by the Department of National Defence and Diefenbaker, and additional language proposed that the agreement could be terminated on six months of notice.⁸⁰

While tinkering with the language of the acquisitions note, the Diefenbaker government also grappled with determining the text of a public statement on the nuclear weapons issue. Ottawa and Washington were at odds here. In his major policy statement in February 1959 on nuclear weapons, Diefenbaker promised Parliament that the Canadian public would be informed of the progress of negotiations with the United States but that the Eisenhower administration determined to have Canada-US discussions kept secret. The proposed Canadian statement on nuclear weapons went through multiple drafts in January 1960, with Green leading an ad hoc committee that shortened a convoluted original text to emphasize Canadian control over the use of any nuclear warheads that Canada might acquire. If negotiations succeeded, then the primary elements of

the agreement would require that the weapons would “only be used by the Canadian forces if the Canadian government so decides” and that nuclear warheads stored in Canada could “only be removed from the storage and maintenance area with the consent of the Canadian government.”⁸¹

Green delivered the draft statement personally to Wigglesworth in the afternoon of 15 January 1960.⁸² The US ambassador subsequently reported to Washington that the precise wording of the statement had not yet been composed and that the Diefenbaker government believed that Canadian forces should have the potential for a nuclear capacity – “Green stressed [the] word potential,” Wigglesworth noted, “as meaning eventual and not necessarily immediate.”⁸³ Green emphasized that Diefenbaker would make three points in the statement: that nuclear weapons would be used only with the Canadian government’s explicit consent; that warheads in Canada would be removed from storage only with the approval of the Canadian government; and that joint arrangements governing nuclear weapons in Canada would be reviewed annually.

The State Department quickly summoned Arnold Heeney to express concern that the planned statement pre-judged the outcome of bilateral negotiations. In terms of the specific points contained in the statement, the Eisenhower administration preferred that nuclear weapons would be used by Canadian forces in accordance with defined procedures previously sanctioned by the Canadian government to allow NORAD’s commander to act promptly in an emergency. Furthermore, the proposed Canadian approval of the removal of warheads from storage went beyond any existing bilateral stockpile arrangement and would result in “instant repercussions” in NATO capitals. Finally, Washington opposed the idea of an annual review of nuclear arrangements since no other agreement with a NATO country contained that provision.⁸⁴ Not content with leaving Heeney to convey these concerns to Ottawa, Wigglesworth arranged an emergency meeting with Green and delivered an *aide-mémoire* noting that the US government was “deeply disturbed and surprised” by the proposed statement and expressing the “earnest hope” that no public comment would be made about nuclear negotiations pending further consultations.⁸⁵ A concerned Green immediately conferred with Diefenbaker and personally redrafted the text of the statement.

The revised statement, which Diefenbaker issued in the House of Commons, sought to blunt some elements of the American criticism of the earlier draft while acknowledging that negotiations were proceeding to acquire nuclear weapons if and when they were required. Specific reference to the removal of warheads from storage sites for use by Canadian forces was struck from the text, and Diefenbaker informed MPs that a potential agreement would be subject to review at any time by either government without reference to a mandatory annual evaluation. Nonetheless, core elements of the original text remained intact and reflected Green's views. Although the principle of US ownership of warheads was inviolable, Diefenbaker emphasized that the procedures for the physical security of US warheads in Canada would be subject to Canadian approval and consent. Of greatest importance, the prime minister maintained, was that elected officials retained absolute control over the approval to use nuclear weapons. "I want to make it abundantly clear," Diefenbaker promised, "that nuclear weapons will not be used by the Canadian forces except as the Canadian government decides and in the manner approved by the Canadian government. Canada retains its full freedom of choice and decision."⁸⁶

The eleventh-hour changes to Diefenbaker's declaration at least partially mollified the Eisenhower administration. Heeney asked External Affairs to inform Green and the prime minister that US officials greatly appreciated Canadian efforts to meet their considerable concerns about the draft statement and that Canada's position on the acquisition of nuclear weapons had been made clear to the Americans. Nonetheless, he counselled Ottawa that "the important thing now is to press on with the negotiation and completion of the actual agreement between the two governments and to ensure so far as we can that the objectives set out in the original Canadian draft are embodied in the final text."⁸⁷ Despite his keen grasp of bilateral defence matters and the critical importance that Washington placed on incorporating nuclear weapons into the continental defence umbrella, Heeney seemed to have underestimated Green's determination to safeguard Canadian sovereignty and his increasing hesitancy to adopt measures that might hinder international disarmament efforts. By the end of January 1960, in fact, Green had rejected Heeney's advice and halted any momentum toward the Canadian acquisition of nuclear arms. Green's assistant, Ross

Campbell, informed DEA officials responsible for nuclear policy that these negotiations would cease:

I have been asked to pass on to you the Minister's instructions that the negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement between Canada and the United States covering the storage of nuclear weapons at the United States bases at Goose and Harmon are to be completed before any further attempt is made to negotiate a general agreement covering the acquisition of nuclear weapons for use by Canadian forces at Canadian bases.⁸⁸

Despite this narrowed scope, negotiations proceeded at a snail's pace. The State Department supplied Canada with a revised agreement to store air-to-air warheads at Goose Bay and Harmon in mid-January 1960, but cabinet did not consider these revisions for two months. US officials proposed to amend the original Canadian text in three substantive areas: 1) exclusive American ownership of the warheads would also include their custody; 2) physical security of the warheads on the bases would not be a joint responsibility; 3) explicit approval of the Canadian government to remove warheads from storage for operational use would not be required. Green briefed his ministerial colleagues about these US proposals – “some of which were useful and others which simply could not be accepted” – and provided a revised text that, if approved, could allow further negotiations to proceed.⁸⁹ The new draft did not mention US custody of warheads beyond ownership. It did, however, include a more precise definition of joint responsibility for the security of warheads by referencing the stationing of RCAF representatives at leased bases and clarifying the procedures for transporting the warheads through Canadian airspace. The revised negotiating draft also maintained that approval of the use of air-to-air nuclear weapons would be a joint responsibility of both governments and that the warheads would “only be used in situations of grave emergency in accordance with the plans and procedures governing the operations of NORAD.”⁹⁰ Although George Pearkes expressed skepticism that the United States would accept elements of the new Canadian draft, he supported the DEA memorandum, resulting in cabinet approving the revised agreement.

External Affairs forwarded the revised draft agreement to Arnold Heeney with detailed explanations of the textual changes that Ottawa authorized the ambassador to submit to the State Department as an unofficial “piece of paper.”⁹¹ Heeney duly met with American officials on 31 March and explained that the US custody of warheads did not need to be explicitly mentioned in the agreement text because, by definition, they were stored on American bases. Pressed to define the role of Canadian military representatives to be stationed at Goose Bay and Harmon, Heeney emphasized that they would only “certify” that the terms of the agreement were being carried out. Asked whether the text imposed any new requirements for approval by the Canadian government, Heeney reassured his interlocutors that necessary Canadian procedures for authorization were already defined by an overflight agreement in 1959 for the MB-1 air-to-air nuclear-tipped rocket and by NORAD states of readiness protocols. Heeney requested that the Canadian text be accepted with a minimum number of counter-suggestions, stressing that “questions concerning nuclear weapons are regarded by the Canadian government as matters of high policy.”⁹² American negotiators took these Canadian entreaties seriously. On 22 April, they provided Heeney with a draft letter of understanding that sought to formalize the contents of his “piece of paper” without proposing substantive revisions. In particular, the letter of understanding sought to confirm that existing NORAD procedures governing the use of air-to-air nuclear weapons by USAF fighters constituted Canadian approval “without the necessity for obtaining a further and specific Canadian authorization for operational use” in an emergency.⁹³ Lukewarm Canadian responses to this proposed course of action ultimately resulted in the State Department’s decision in early July 1960 to agree to the Canadian text of the draft agreement provided, though Heeney’s “piece of paper” could be supplemented with one additional provision allowing Washington to return nuclear weapons to the United States at any time without impairment.⁹⁴

While the negotiations on nuclear weapons transpired in the first months of 1960, Ottawa and Washington attempted to address the gap in continental air defence occasioned by the obsolescence of Canada’s antique CF-100 Canuck interceptor squadrons that American experts warned would not make a single interception in the event of a Soviet bomber attack on North America.⁹⁵ Although the Diefenbaker government cancelled the Avro

Arrow and acquired Bomarc missiles, Ottawa nonetheless realized that the RCAF required a modern interceptor capability. Service-level negotiations ultimately revealed that the United States would be willing to provide sixty-six F-101 aircraft worth \$187 million that could be acquired for the bargain price of \$62 million under a cost-sharing formula that allowed Ottawa to pay one-third of capital costs toward continental defence initiatives. But many Canadian ministers balked at this proposal. Leading the charge, Green complained that the scheme represented a “politically intolerable” form of mutual aid, and Diefenbaker noted that the Conservative government would be sharply criticized because official statements released during the Avro Arrow debate had emphasized the declining role of interceptors.⁹⁶ Ultimately, Ottawa rejected the F-101 purchase offer in February 1960.

Anxious to improve NORAD’s capabilities, the Eisenhower administration improved the original offer by hinting that the United States would consider purchasing \$150 million worth of CL-44 transport aircraft manufactured by the Canadian firm Canadair.⁹⁷ Diefenbaker immediately sent Raymond O’Hurley, the Conservative minister of defence production, to Washington in April 1960 to explore the proposal. O’Hurley surprised his American hosts by calling for a one-way US purchase of the CL-44 aircraft with no reciprocal Canadian purchase of the F-101 interceptors – a bargaining posture clearly reflecting Diefenbaker’s primary interest in reviving Canada’s moribund aircraft industry, which had been devastated by cancellation of the Avro Arrow. USAF negotiators held firm, however, claiming that any proposal to purchase the CL-44 without the RCAF purchase of the F-101 would be stillborn.⁹⁸ A further round of negotiations resulted in a tentative agreement in late May 1960 that called for the United States to pay \$155 million for the CL-44 transport and Canada to pay \$105 million for the F-101 interceptors.⁹⁹

Despite this seeming progress, the Eisenhower administration viewed these protracted negotiations on continental air defence matters with increasing suspicion. Thomas Gates found talks with Canadian ministers at the NATO defence ministers’ meeting in April “very disturbing.” As he informed his colleagues on the National Security Council, the Canadians had not voiced a belief that “peace and détente are just around the corner,” but they had emphasized a concern with American “‘domination’ of Canada.”

Alarmed by Gates's comments, Eisenhower mused about taking "this question up with Diefenbaker." In the interim, the NSC tasked the State Department with preparing a comprehensive paper, "Certain Aspects of the United States Politico-Military Relationship with Canada." Although a "very substantial reservoir of basic friendliness and respect" existed among Canadians for the United States, the document noted a softening of the Diefenbaker government's attitude toward the East-West struggle and a growing sense of disillusionment that Canada "can undertake no truly independent defense effort." Furthermore, in the State Department's view, Howard Green, as "a hypersensitive guardian of Canadian sovereignty," magnified Diefenbaker's own growing desire to push back against Washington's plans to improve the continent's defence posture. The NSC thoroughly discussed this paper on 31 May and concluded that Washington should actively promote the reciprocal aircraft purchase agreement to improve continental air defence and provide economic benefits to the Canadian aircraft sector, which would have a "considerable psychological impact" on Canada.¹⁰⁰

Eisenhower – who remained convinced that Diefenbaker "was not difficult to deal with if he was informed in advance" of any initiative emanating from Washington affecting Canada – worked quickly to improve bilateral relations.¹⁰¹ Telling Herter that he wanted to give the prime minister the "red carpet treatment," the president hosted his Canadian counterpart on 3 June at the White House. Their conversation focused primarily on the proposed reciprocal aircraft agreement. Diefenbaker initially refused to consider supporting the scheme, citing the "unreasonably high" price tag of \$105 million for the F-101 interceptors.¹⁰² Eisenhower's advisers then produced figures from the Department of Defense demonstrating that the \$1.6-million unit cost of each plane in fact represented a bargain price for Canadians since research and development costs were not included. This mollified the prime minister, who agreed to allow the negotiations to proceed and noted at the close of the meeting that "it was his impression that Canadian-American relations in the past couple of years had been very good and indeed had been unequalled in the past."¹⁰³ Clearly, the president's personal touch paid dividends. On Diefenbaker's return to Ottawa, US officials expressed optimism that Canada would take advantage of the liberal terms of the reciprocal purchase agreement but that additional American concessions would not be considered.¹⁰⁴

High-level consultations on nuclear weapons and the aircraft swap proposal continued at the Canada–United States Ministerial Committee on Joint Defence held at Montebello, Quebec, on 12 July 1960. Having stated that he viewed the meeting as the “last chance to attempt to change the Canadian attitude” on defence matters, Thomas Gates reiterated Washington’s position that the American purchase of CL-44 transport aircraft could be countenanced only with the reciprocal Canadian purchase of the F-101 interceptors to enhance the continental defence posture.¹⁰⁵ Canadian Minister of Finance Donald Fleming countered by claiming that, in cancelling the Avro Arrow, the Diefenbaker government had opened itself to the charge that it had “slaughtered a Canadian industry only to put itself in the hands of the United States.”¹⁰⁶ Canada could justify acquiring American-made interceptors, he asserted, only as part of a deal advantageous to domestic business interests. Ministers continued to discuss the prices of the two aircraft designs, and Gates sweetened the pot by claiming that two-thirds of the additional \$47 million for spares and ground-handling equipment accompanying the F-101s would be borne by the United States under the terms of existing production-sharing agreements. Both sides agreed that a final decision on the reciprocal purchase agreement should be reached quickly, and Fleming promised that the matter would be quickly referred to the Diefenbaker cabinet.

The ministerial committee also discussed the draft agreement for the storage of nuclear weapons at Goose Bay and Harmon airfields. Livingston Merchant, acting in place of Secretary of State Christian Herter, repeated the US position that the Canadian text could be accepted provided that official status be given to Arnold Heeney’s “piece of paper” used to explain Ottawa’s position on the matter and that warheads be transported back to the United States at any time. Green expressed no opposition to formalizing Heeney’s instructions and indicated that he was amenable to inserting a clause into the agreement permitting the unfettered return of the weapons from leased bases through Canadian airspace. Nevertheless, Green cautioned, cabinet would need to approve both measures. Green politely deflected attempts by Pearkes and American secretaries to discuss arrangements for the provision of American nuclear weapons to Canadian forces; “the Canadian government had many questions to resolve,” he noted, “before taking a decision on this matter.” Despite no breakthrough at the

ministerial meeting, Green subsequently expressed some satisfaction with the discussions:

The meeting with US ministers went off quite well ... It is quite a strain to chair one of these meetings – about 30 present – fortunately there is no formality and everyone is friendly. Anderson of the Treasury headed the US delegation – I rather like him – very solid person ... Gates of Defence is very good too – he has a tough job – has aged a bit under the strain. Twining, the Chairman of their Chiefs of Staff committee, is a tough type – when I shook hands with him as they departed I said “Now don’t let those Russians get away with anything.” I doubt whether he realized his leg was being pulled. They are all very much in earnest about keeping the communists in their place – and I think are very anxious for a little sympathy from their friends.¹⁰⁷

Despite the seeming unanimous support for the leased bases agreement expressed at Montebello, no further progress was made on any aspect of the nuclear weapons file before Eisenhower left office in January 1961. A draft memorandum to cabinet finalizing the text of the air-to-air weapons note was prepared by 15 July, but Green did not allow it to be brought forward. This delay confused and exasperated many senior American and Canadian officials. At the meeting of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence held on 24 August, Dr. John Hannah, the chairman of the US section, expressed concern that the Diefenbaker government’s approval of the agreement had been understood to be imminent as a result of discussions at Montebello.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Robert Bryce continued to lament the Canadian government’s inaction on the nuclear weapons file, noting that Green had been “sitting on [the] note” since the ministerial committee meeting; “someday,” he noted, “we may have trouble over delays.”¹⁰⁹ Sharing Bryce’s concern, George Pearkes, shortly before he resigned as minister of national defence, wrote in vain to Green on 21 September asking that action be taken. “We have been dealing with this matter for well over a year,” he pleaded, “and in the light of the discussions at Montebello it would be difficult to justify any further delay. I concur in the view that these weapons are required to give NORAD an increased defensive capability and I urge that arrangements for the exchange of notes now be concluded.”¹¹⁰

While the United States waited, Diefenbaker and Green continued to stymie any progress toward a bilateral agreement regarding nuclear arms. After the prime minister informed Bryce in late September 1960 that the issue of defensive nuclear weapons for Canadian forces would remain in abeyance, Heenev vigorously campaigned for a change in Canadian policies.¹¹¹ He ultimately met with Diefenbaker on Parliament Hill on 16 November to press the prime minister on the status of the air-to-air warheads agreement at leased bases. Diefenbaker admitted that he had been deferring approval of the agreement to win US concessions on the approval to use nuclear weapons. Eventually, the prime minister admitted that Canadian forces would have to be armed with nuclear tips, and the issue of joint control of their use “would have to be determined before long.” Heenev immediately walked down the corridor to consult with Green and again witnessed his minister express his adamant hostility to nuclear weapons:

Among the subjects we discussed was the MB-1 agreement and the wider problem of nuclear armaments for Cdn forces. Mr. Green expressed himself as strongly opposed to the latter; it would destroy the Canadian position on disarmament and at the UN, [and] the public was against having Canada having any part in nuclear arms. It might be possible to distinguish the storage on US bases but, otherwise, he would not agree to having any nuclear weapons in Canada. When I said that if Canada did adopt this attitude, of which as yet the USA was quite unaware for there had been no indication that this was Cdn policy, the Minister said that the Cabinet had still to reach a decision. The PM’s reference this morning to “joint control” (which I had reported to him) and the use of the MB-1 as a sanction for our insistence thereon, was, he thought, based on the assumption that the USA would never meet our requirement for participation in the decision to use the weapon. This was why Mr. D. had himself held up consent to the MB-1 agreement. The USA, he repeated, would never give us satisfaction on joint control.¹¹²

The promotion of Douglas Harkness to the post of minister of national defence in October 1960 altered the dynamics of the nuclear weapons debate within Diefenbaker’s cabinet. The hard-charging Harkness, a

decorated combat officer who had served in Sicily, Italy, and northwestern Europe during the Second World War, adopted a much more aggressive and less conciliatory stance than his genteel predecessor, and he immediately submitted detailed policy papers to the prime minister emphasizing Canada's obligations to integrate nuclear weapons into NATO and NORAD defence postures. His control of the defence portfolio also emboldened other influential nuclear weapons advocates within the civil and military bureaucracies. In late October 1960, Bryce sought to draft a basic memorandum on nuclear weapons within the Privy Council Office instead of allowing DEA officials to play the lead role; "External Affairs are not in a good position to prepare this," Bryce noted, "because Mr. Green is known to hold such strong views."¹¹³ Harkness also benefited from the recent elevation of Air Marshal Frank Miller to the position of chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee following the resignation of General Charles Foulkes "in protest," the Eisenhower administration asserted, "against Canada's current national and joint defense attitudes."¹¹⁴ Miller would prove to be more skilful in his efforts to modernize Canadian defence postures, and he worked closely and effectively with his minister to present a stronger front advocating the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

In tandem with these fresh appointments, the international disarmament debate spurred cabinet to revisit the nuclear weapons issue. A UN resolution sponsored by Ireland proposed temporary restraints on the spread of nuclear weapons, and it was accompanied by a resolution initiated by Canada calling for a neutral chairman of the Disarmament Commission and an ad hoc committee of the non-nuclear powers. Green reported to cabinet on 6 December 1960 that many NATO countries were considering abstaining on the Irish resolution and pressuring Canada to join them. An abstention on the Irish resolution would split Canada from the co-sponsors of the Canadian resolution on disarmament and personally place Green in "an impossible situation." Cabinet minutes do not identify speakers during the discussion that ensued, but the new minister of national defence no doubt stressed that a vote for the Irish resolution would immediately scuttle any proposed talks with the United States to acquire nuclear warheads for advanced delivery systems such as Bomarc. Diefenbaker expressed his concern about the political impact of conflicting statements being issued about disarmament and nuclear weapons and emphasized

that no final decision should be made on the acquisition of nuclear warheads at that time. For the moment, he emphasized that his statement in the House of Commons in February 1959 represented official government policy. In the meantime, Green should be instructed to vote for the Irish resolution while publicly proclaiming that Canada would review its position if immediate progress could not be made to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Cabinet complied with Diefenbaker's views and authorized further discussions with the United States on the acquisition of nuclear warheads for Canadian forces "as soon as they can usefully be undertaken" with joint control to be a basic principle. Furthermore, ministers recommended that an agreement with Washington on storing defensive nuclear warheads be delayed until other matters involving defence procurement were settled.¹¹⁵ These decisions concerning nuclear weapons – which completely countermanded Green's January 1960 directive that the Goose Bay negotiations be resolved before consideration of acquiring US warheads for use by Canadian forces would be contemplated – were subsequently passed to American representatives of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence.¹¹⁶

With this cabinet blessing, Harkness worked with his staff to draft a new version of the warheads acquisition agreement, and he informed Green on 30 December that this revised document should serve as the basis for negotiations with American officials that could hopefully be resumed the following month. Aware of Green's views, the defence minister emphasized that the draft agreement covered only the general principles for the future provision of warhead stockpiles and did not commit the Canadian government to any course of action.¹¹⁷ Green, however, was unwilling to adhere to Harkness's proposed schedule. Norman Robertson, Green's undersecretary, had informed his minister in early January 1961 that the draft nuclear weapons agreement was "but a slightly revised version" of the document considered by ministers a year earlier, and negotiations would "take some time and prove difficult."¹¹⁸ He also plied Green with yet another memorandum emphasizing the critical importance of controlling the use of nuclear weapons. NORAD's current operational policies for the joint control of nuclear weapons use were "reasonably clear," Robertson believed, and US defensive nuclear warheads could not be employed in Canadian airspace "if the Canadian government does not see fit to permit their use ... [T]he

control of the Canadian government amounts virtually to a power of veto.”¹¹⁹ Any proposed agreement for the stockpiling of warheads in Canada would also stipulate the Canadian government’s sole responsibility for their use. Thus reinforced in his own views, Green tersely informed Harkness on 13 January 1961 that he had asked his officials to examine the draft and provide comments; “when these have been received, I shall be in a position to reply more fully to your communication.”¹²⁰

Although a nuclear weapons agreement could not be reached in the months before the end of the Eisenhower presidency, cabinet did act more promptly on the reciprocal aircraft purchase agreement in the wake of the Montebello meeting in July 1960. On 9 August 1961, Diefenbaker called for the purchase of the F-101 interceptors since the Liberal Party led by Lester Pearson had indicated its support for the transaction and the political fallout from acquiring American-built aircraft had therefore been diminished.¹²¹ Three days later, however, Diefenbaker pressed to cancel the decision to go ahead with the swap purchase because the Progressive Conservative caucus had indicated deep opposition to the agreement.¹²² Washington quickly shot down a subsequent Canadian request to purchase the CL-44 despite Ottawa’s refusal to buy the F-101. “No alternative proposal whereby Canada did not acquire the US interceptors,” Thomas Gates bluntly informed George Pearkes, “would be acceptable and consequently the deal is off.”¹²³

Canadian defence officials, however, continued to insist that RCAF interceptor upgrades were necessary. In one of his last acts as minister, Pearkes reintroduced the swap agreement in cabinet on 6 September with a new element – Ottawa’s assumption of the costs associated with maintaining the radar stations of the Pinetree Line in Canada currently borne by the USAF to purchase the F-101s. Conservative ministers believed that this additional component would appeal to Canadian nationalist sentiment and reduce opposition to the acquisition of American-made interceptors, and cabinet formally approved a proposal consisting of three components on 21 September. First, Canada would take responsibility for sixteen Pinetree Line stations to save the USAF \$105 million over eight years. Second, Washington would supply sixty-six F-101 aircraft to Canada gratis with Ottawa assuming one-third of the cost of supplementary equipment and spares. Third, the United States would purchase thirty-seven CL-44 transport planes valued at \$155 million.¹²⁴

The Eisenhower administration considered these proposals in August and September 1960 in a time of increasing friction in the bilateral relationship resulting from the Diefenbaker government's heightened concern about – and embrace of – anti-American nationalism and Ottawa's refusal to address the nuclear weapons question expeditiously. James Minifie, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's correspondent in Washington, contributed to this growing malaise by releasing *Peacemaker or Powdermonkey? Canada's Role in a Revolutionary World*, which advocated a strict policy of neutralism for Canada – including withdrawing from NORAD and NATO. Diefenbaker expressed his concerns about anti-Americanism in private conversations with Heenev in Ottawa before the ambassador returned to Washington. On 30 August, the prime minister informed Heenev that “anti-American sentiment was now worse than at any time in his lifetime,” with popular criticism of the United States growing into an avalanche. Diefenbaker emphasized that, despite his deep personal respect for and friendship with Eisenhower, he was anxious that “there should be nothing done during the remainder of the Eisenhower administration to exacerbate relations between Ottawa and Washington.” Heenev countered the Progressive Conservative leader's gloomy assessment by noting that bilateral economic relations were sound but that the most serious issues arose in relation to continental defence, about which the United States was “currently worried” regarding “our cooperation” and “puzzled by our hesitancy to go along with them in matters such as nuclear storage.”¹²⁵

The conversation continued the next day. Diefenbaker showed Heenev a file of mostly handwritten letters from Canadians severely critical of American policies affecting Canada. The prime minister highlighted the influence of Minifie's book urging neutralism for Canada and noted that many newspapers were advocating a similar foreign policy stance. The ambassador attempted to mollify Diefenbaker, emphasizing that in his entire career “there had never been in Washington an administration which, first, knew more about Canada and Canadian affairs and, second, tried more to meet Canadian wishes than the present one.” The prime minister “agreed emphatically” with Heenev and had no official instructions to provide “other than to repeat his judgment of the very grave extent of the recent increase in anti-American sentiment in Canada and to ask me to let the authorities in Washington know how seriously he regarded it.”¹²⁶

Heeneey subsequently met with Merchant to relay Diefenbaker's concerns. Although the Canadian ambassador emphasized that any major departure from the traditional bilateral relationship was "unthinkable and unthought," he did articulate Canada's genuine anxiety about the prospect of nuclear conflict and the continued influence of American capital in the Canadian economy. Merchant expressed concern about Heeneey's report, but he also questioned Ottawa's lack of resolve to approve formally continental defence arrangements. The discussions at Montebello in July 1960, for example, had led American officials to conclude that virtual agreement had been reached on the storage of nuclear weapons at leased bases, and Merchant "had been surprised and puzzled that Cabinet approval in Ottawa had not swiftly followed."¹²⁷

The State Department also received first-hand reports from US Ambassador Richard Wigglesworth about increasing anti-American sentiment after he spoke separately with Diefenbaker and Green in Ottawa. "Seldom have I seen the Prime Minister so preoccupied with the domestic position," the ambassador noted, and, after Diefenbaker maintained that negotiations on nuclear weapons would likely remain deadlocked, he concluded that "we cannot expect courageous or forthright action" from Ottawa on bilateral defence matters.¹²⁸ Wigglesworth's conversation with Green proved to be equally troubling. Wigglesworth complained that the foreign minister's "persistent illusion" that progress in disarmament was being made provided an excuse for Canadian inaction in continental defence matters. Because the "alleged issues between Canada and the US appear to be totally of Canadian manufacture for domestic political purposes," Wigglesworth believed, a "certain amount of shock treatment" needed to be administered to discourage greater irresponsibility by Diefenbaker and Green and to encourage supporters of American defence initiatives within cabinet and the Canadian civil service.¹²⁹

Christian Herter took up this call to action in a series of meetings with his Canadian counterpart in New York during the early weeks of the UN session. Herter met with Green – Merchant and Heeneey were also present – on 20 September and immediately noted the very disquieting reports that he had received about "serious antipathy and antagonism towards the US in Canada." Green attempted to assuage Herter's concerns and believed that the situation was not as dire as the State Department might have been

led to believe. Fundamentally, Canadians were not as concerned about the Russian threat as Americans were, and the persistent calls from Washington for a stronger defence posture within NORAD and NATO alarmed politicians and the public in Canada. The “great problem” pertained to the acquisition of nuclear weapons; Green explained his personal opposition to Canada becoming another nuclear power, a stance that he believed would be “widely shared” across the country. Despite these expressed differences in outlook, Heeney noted Green’s great admiration for Herter in the aftermath of the meeting: “He was a fair man – ‘completely the opposite of what Canadians expect Americans to be!’”¹³⁰ Heeney also documented Green’s subsequent concern that Herter might have been offended by his comments:

September 21 Today the Minister expressed concern as to the Secretary of State’s reaction to yesterday’s talk. He was afraid that Herter would be “all upset.” The PM had exaggerated the situation. Could I find out from Merchant how Herter felt? I spoke to Merchant this evening ... He left me in no doubt that the Secretary of State was genuinely disturbed. I drew his attention to the central importance of Mr. Green’s personal reluctance to having Canada participate in nuclear arming. Merchant had seized the significance of this. *September 22* When I reported my conversation with Merchant to the Minister, he expressed the view that Herter was not unduly disquieted. I demurred; we had not heard the last of it, I felt sure.¹³¹

Heeney also met privately with Green at Mayfair House in New York to discuss bilateral relations with the United States. Of the two main causes of anti-American sentiment, Green believed that the fear of nuclear war posed a far more serious problem than did the American penetration of the Canadian economy. He informed Heeney that the Canadian public did not want to get involved in any aspect of the nuclear arms race and resented American aggressiveness in international affairs. Heeney recommended prompt approval of the agreement on air-to-air warheads for US forces at Goose Bay and Harmon. Green demurred, citing his own opposition to stationing nuclear weapons on Canadian soil and claiming that Prime Minister Diefenbaker refused to sanction the pact. The ambassador

pointedly argued that the basic principle of joint defence meant effective contributions from Canada. Lacking the will to shoulder these responsibilities, Heeney noted that the only alternative was to adopt a neutralist foreign policy along the lines indicated by James Minifie or to vacate the field and leave continental defence entirely to the United States. Green emphatically rejected this proposition. Although he was “certainly no neutralist nor follower of Minifie,” Green argued that Canada would be totally destroyed in the event of a war between the two superpowers. Heeney asked whether “a spirited public defence” of the general objectives of American policies would be politically feasible. Again Green refused to consider Heeney’s prescriptions for improving Canada-US relations; “such an attitude,” he argued, “would be very damaging in the present state of Canadian public opinion.”¹³²

A week after Green’s discussions with Herter and Heeney transpired, Diefenbaker and Eisenhower chatted about these matters on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly following the prime minister’s delivery of his famous “captive nations” anticommunist speech in which Diefenbaker excoriated Soviet colonialism under Nikita Khrushchev’s leadership (covered in [Chapter 5](#)). In emphasizing the merits of the swap proposal, Diefenbaker noted a marked increase in Canadian sentiment that the country was economically and politically falling under the control of the United States. He claimed that he had been actively refuting this viewpoint, but Washington could provide a “tremendous lift” to the Conservative cause if it would consider the triangular proposal involving the F-101 interceptors, the CL-44 transports, and the Canadian takeover of the Pinetree Line radar stations. Under no circumstances, though, could the transaction be viewed as a gift by the United States to Canada. Eisenhower patiently noted that no basis existed for any concern regarding American domination of Canada, but he recognized that “he knew well the spirit of nationalism occasionally gets out of bounds and this is one of our greatest troubles.” The president expressed his satisfaction that a new Canadian proposal had been formally tendered, and he requested a full investigation of its merits.¹³³

The US State Department and Department of Defense diverged sharply in their subsequent evaluations of Ottawa’s triangular scheme. Led by Livingston Merchant, State Department officials believed that the potential to improve bilateral political relations should be a key factor in accepting

the proposal in addition to any military considerations. USAF Secretary James Douglas, however, refused to accept this holistic rationale, noting that the \$155 million price of the CL-44 transports represented 70 percent of the entire transport budget and that the savings gained from the Canadian takeover of the Pinetree Line stations could not be immediately applied to the CL-44 purchase for accounting reasons.¹³⁴ Furthermore, the USAF head emphasized, the F-101 interceptors would be provided to Canada at no cost without any additional encumbering elements of the triangular deal designed solely to appease Canadian nationalist opinion within Conservative circles. The Department of Defense formally rejected Canada's proposal on 19 November, leaving the ultimate decision squarely in Eisenhower's hands.

Undaunted by the decision of the Department of Defense, Heeney appealed personally to Christian Herter to sway Washington's support in favour of the triangular transaction. Prior to this meeting, Livingston Merchant briefed Herter on the American dilemma of selecting a course of action guaranteed to exacerbate tensions with Ottawa or overruling USAF objections to the CL-44 transport purchase. During his discussion with Herter, Heeney repeated the Diefenbaker government's talking points that political considerations should override the Pentagon's concerns about the technical capability and high sticker price of the CL-44 aircraft. But Herter refused to be swayed by his Canadian interlocutor and only echoed Thomas Gates's view that Eisenhower would eventually decide the matter.¹³⁵

Herter and Gates consulted each other the next day and mutually determined that the triangular agreement should be rejected. Herter then submitted a memorandum to Eisenhower summarizing the facts involved in the matter. He emphasized that the decision to rebuff the deal would strain US-Canada relations, but he noted that "I am reluctant to recommend that foreign policy considerations should override the judgment of the Defense Department."¹³⁶ The text of the American reply to Ottawa's offer submitted for Eisenhower's approval contained the counterproposal that the United States would provide sixty-six F-101 interceptors to the RCAF in exchange for the Canadian takeover of eleven Pinetree Line radar stations. Eisenhower subsequently approved the rejection of the triangular proposal.¹³⁷ The formal written reply was withheld until Gates verbally

informed Douglas Harkness of the decision at the NATO ministerial meeting in Paris in December.

After being informed of the American decision, Harkness returned to Ottawa and recommended to Diefenbaker that Canada should accept Washington's counteroffer of F-101s in return for Canada's takeover of Pinetree Line stations; in Harkness's view, refusing this arrangement would be interpreted by the United States as Canada rejecting its continental defence commitments and thereby necessitating a complete overhaul of NORAD provisions.¹³⁸ But Diefenbaker steadfastly refused to consider the swap without the additional stimulus to Canada's aircraft sector that would be provided by the CL-44 purchase. Heeney subsequently met with State Department officials early in January 1961 and expressed his disappointment that the triangular deal could not be finalized. The ambassador wistfully admitted, though, that the Diefenbaker government should have accepted the earlier US proposal for swapping the F-101 and the CL-44.¹³⁹ Gates officially informed Harkness on 11 January that Washington had rejected the Canadian triangular proposal. Diefenbaker subsequently made one final attempt to change American attitudes during his visit to Washington to sign the Columbia River Treaty, but Eisenhower firmly vetoed the possibility that the United States would purchase the CL-44 transport aircraft because of the deteriorating state of the US aircraft industry.¹⁴⁰

Defence relations between the Eisenhower administration and the Diefenbaker government, then, experienced considerable strain between 1957 and 1961 despite some important continental defence improvements made through the implementation of the NORAD agreement and bilateral ministerial consultative machinery. But the initial momentum generated by the formation of NORAD could not be sustained, and Ottawa's increasing hesitancy to accept the almost inevitable American demands to improve the North American defence posture through the expanded deployment of nuclear weapons frustrated Washington. In a January 1961 conversation with Dean Rusk, the incoming secretary of state, Arnold Heeney noted the "difficult and complex" nature of bilateral defence connections and astutely emphasized the differences in outlook that inevitably separated the Canadian and American governments:

While it was true that the relations between our armed services remained uniquely close, I would be less than frank if I did not tell him that there existed on our side misgivings as to some elements, or perhaps more accurately some manifestations, in US policy. It was also probably true to say that, on the US side, there were reservations and worries as to the Canadian attitude and perhaps some growing doubt of the wholeheartedness of our support.¹⁴¹

These “misgivings,” “reservations,” and “worries” would continue to be evident in discussions about nuclear weapons and the iterations of a proposed swap agreement designed to provide modern interceptors to the RCAF undertaken during the Kennedy administration. Even so, ultimately in 1961 President John F. Kennedy did agree to a triangular swap deal, an early sign of his administration’s efforts to repair the strained Canada-US relationship.¹⁴²

The Kennedy years are not remembered as a good moment in Canada-US relations and for good reason. Overall, questions of national defence policy and defence procurement – notably the equipping of Canadian forces with nuclear weapons – ultimately poisoned relations between the Kennedy White House and the Diefenbaker government, precipitating a major diplomatic showdown that would turn into a political crisis for the Tories. In early 1961, as Eisenhower left office, no one could have foreseen this deleterious turn of events.

EPILOGUE

Canada in the Age of Eisenhower and Beyond

In one of his last acts as president, Dwight Eisenhower hosted Prime Minister John Diefenbaker at the White House, a visit arranged on short notice to coincide with the conclusion of the Columbia River Treaty. At a small ceremony on 16 January 1961, the two men signed the agreement governing water rights before retiring for a private discussion in which they reviewed the growth of the superpowers' atomic arsenals, the prospects for world peace, and defence relations between their two countries. Raising his own concerns, Diefenbaker voiced doubts about the incoming administration of John F. Kennedy, whose members seemed to know little about Canada.¹ Later that evening the president held his final official White House dinner, with the prime minister the guest of honour. Arnold Heeney, the Canadian ambassador in Washington, recorded Eisenhower's grace and public reputation that Diefenbaker himself had long admired:

He ... turned out most of the brass from Cabinet, Congress etc. and was at his most engaging. I sat on his left and he talked easily and confidently. Kennedy may well prove a better Pres. But no wonder everyone says that the US wd. choose Ike again if they had the choice. He spoke without rancor about Khrushchev; indeed there wasn't a bitter word from him about anyone. The PM was delighted with his treatment and responded most appropriately in his speeches.²

In his comments to the gathered diners, Diefenbaker praised the president, relating an anecdote about a young Canadian student who, when asked to name Canada's governor general, replied "General Eisenhower," a testament, he mused, to the esteem in which Canadians held the president. The warm sentiment on display was genuine, reflecting the close relations not just between Canada and the United States generally but also between Eisenhower and Diefenbaker specifically. As a prime ministerial aide observed, the visit to Washington was "all the more nostalgic" because of Diefenbaker's lack of a personal relationship with the incoming president. Certainly, to Canadian diplomats, it seemed that the absence of ties between Diefenbaker and Kennedy was "going to introduce an incalculable factor into relations with the United States."³

In retrospect, Canadian uncertainty about the trajectory of Canada-US relations at this transitional point in early 1961 is well founded. During Kennedy's presidency, disagreements between Ottawa and Washington became sharp and pronounced, with the bilateral relationship reaching a low point in the twentieth century when, in late 1962 and early 1963, the long-simmering nuclear weapons file exploded into mutual recrimination if not hostility between the two neighbours. Indeed, in 1963, Diefenbaker's government collapsed, and the Tories were then defeated in a resulting federal election amid charges, levelled by the ousted prime minister himself, that the Kennedy White House had orchestrated his downfall.⁴

Given this turn of events, it is common to contrast Kennedy's and Eisenhower's approaches to Diefenbaker and their wider handling of Canada-US relations. Whereas Kennedy had little patience for the prime minister, Eisenhower "understood how to jolly Diefenbaker along," hence the brief White House visit in 1961.⁵ Moreover, the Republican president had a track record of asserting US interests while often seeking compromise solutions or being mindful of not pressing Ottawa too hard to resolve various bilateral disputes. Yet this somewhat easygoing attitude meant that several significant matters were left for his successor to handle. Of course, it is impossible to know whether Eisenhower and his advisers would have reacted differently from the Kennedy administration to the issues that poisoned relations from 1961 to 1963: nuclear weapons and disarmament, the American confrontation with Cuba, and the ongoing impact of rising economic and cultural nationalism in Canada. Beyond the White House, many of the

Americans who oversaw the day-to-day functioning of the Canada-US relationship – a special relationship – were career officials serving regardless of administration. For instance, two senior State Department officials under Eisenhower, Douglas Dillon and Livingston Merchant, played prominent roles under Kennedy in which they handled Canadian matters, Dillon as treasury secretary and Merchant as ambassador in Ottawa. American disappointment with their northern ally was common in both administrations, even as the Republican White House perhaps did a better job either of hiding it or of displaying a greater willingness to placate Canada's Tories. Certainly, Eisenhower shared some of his successor's exasperation with Diefenbaker and his policies. In June 1960, he professed himself "distressed" to have concluded "that a Liberal government in Canada seems more desirable ... than a Conservative government."⁶

Eisenhower's sense that bilateral relations were smoother under Louis St. Laurent is in keeping with the view that the Liberals in the postwar years were a more pro-American party than the Conservatives, traditionally more skeptical of ties to the United States. In opposition and then on the hustings in 1957 and 1958, Diefenbaker had voiced criticism of Liberal foreign policy for its perceived close alignment with Washington. His views were *au courant*: the late 1950s saw the rise of an assertive Canadian nationalism, partly grounded in opposition to the United States and its preponderant economic, cultural, political, and military status in North America and beyond. This nationalism would only mount during the 1960s, especially, but not exclusively, among baby boomers. In the 1950s, though, it was a phenomenon present in the political philosophy of the conservative university professor George Grant, the economic views of businessperson and Liberal Party organizer Walter Gordon, the activism of the growing ranks of the nuclear disarmament movement, and the politics of John Diefenbaker. In *Peacemaker or Powdermonkey?*, published in 1960, journalist James Minifie called for Canada to leave NATO and NORAD and adopt a neutral position in the Cold War. This message evidently found a receptive audience, with the book becoming a bestseller that went through five printings.⁷ In one way or another, all of these nationalists questioned the close relationship forged between Canada and the United States during the Second World War and in the decade or so that followed: that is, during the Age of Eisenhower.

The president himself had been faintly aware of this development. In April 1960, he told Secretary of State Christian Herter that he had “been reading about our deteriorating relations with Canada,” yet he was flummoxed because “we have done so much to keep good relations.” To smooth over tensions, Eisenhower phoned Diefenbaker and invited him to the White House.⁸ While fêting his Canadian visitor, the president used the opportunity to decry the ability of the press to stir up public opinion and morph “potential trouble spots into causes of friction.” The prime minister likewise agreed that, public perceptions aside, “relations in the past couple of years had been very good and indeed had been unequalled in the past.”⁹ Yet nationalism in Canada continued to grow in the face of ongoing economic and cultural penetration from the south and the continued intertwining of defence links. In short, by the end of the 1950s, the postwar bilateral consensus between the two North American neighbours was showing its age. Eisenhower’s incomprehension of this turnabout was a sign of his investment in the status quo in which Canada was a supportive ally and reliable trading partner.

As Canadian nationalism grew and the postwar relationship between Canada and the United States frayed further, Eisenhower’s own status with the Canadian public declined. Crowds had turned out to see the general during a victory tour of Ottawa and Toronto in early 1946, and his election win six years later had been widely applauded by Canada’s press, which had praised him as the so-called leader of the free world. But as he left office in 1961 few commentators seemed to be particularly bothered about losing the “aging general.” The liberal *Toronto Star* judged that his administration was ending amid “a saddening atmosphere of anti-climax and disappointment, even downright failure,” and the conservative *Globe and Mail* lamented that Eisenhower had governed in a complacent style. “The greatest indictment of the departed Administration,” its editors wrote, “is the legacy of unsolved problems it left its successor.” History “may look on Mr. Eisenhower as a good man,” predicted one columnist, but “it will not consider him a great president.”¹⁰ Characterizations of Eisenhower as old, aloof, and out of touch were common in coverage of his departure in Canada as in the United States.¹¹

In the Canadian context, however, these views of Eisenhower were married to nationalist sentiment. Thus, dissatisfaction with the “amiable and

well-intentioned military hero who has failed to match the terrific demands of his job” paralleled distaste for the state of Canadian-American relations, fuelled by the sense that Canada was “falling more and more under the economic, cultural and military domination of the United States.”¹² Embodying this view was novelist Hugh MacLennan, a leading nationalist, who mused privately about “whether Eisenhower was a worse president than Ulysses Grant and [James] Buchanan,” concluding that “he certainly seems to belong in their company”: that is, the company of presidents seen to be failures. Publicly, MacLennan penned an essay in autumn 1960 calling for an anti-American nationalism to counteract the “Americanization of Canada,” meaning a process by which Canada was becoming, “at least on the popular level, *a mental and spiritual colony of the United States*; a conditioned-reflex colony of that cluster of ideas, values, habits and thought-patterns called by Mr. Harry Luce ‘The American Way of Life.’”¹³

Ultimately, when it came to Canada, Eisenhower’s legacy is the very thing that his Canadian critics charged: a close, cooperative relationship between Ottawa and Washington paralleling the increasing interdependence between Canadians and Americans. Over the course of the 1950s, the two countries did move closer together. This development was partly the result of decisions made by millions of individuals – shoppers, tourists, businesspeople – and partly because of active policy decisions made on both sides of the border. Many of these policy choices had enduring impacts, still affecting how both governments interact on files as diverse as continental defence and cross-border water management. At the same time, officials in both countries actively pursued their own interests, sometimes leading to conflicts. These disagreements ranged from minor disputes over trade quotas to severe differences of opinion on military intervention in Indochina and the Taiwan Strait. Although nationalists tended to assume that Canada followed the US lead and knuckled down to American pressure, in actuality Canadian authorities were adept at defending their views and advancing their objectives, especially on economic matters. Admittedly, Ottawa had less success in influencing Washington’s stance on key matters of war and peace, but any discord was overcome by both Canadian recognition of American power and responsibility and a shared ideological commitment to confronting communist totalitarianism emanating from Moscow and Beijing.

Although bilateral relations were not always easy, smooth, or automatic, they were marked by a concerted effort by Canadian and American officials to manage competing interests and build a cooperative partnership in a world wracked by the Cold War, the collapse of European imperialism, and the reordering of economic power. In short, they built a special relationship. From the president and prime ministers down to embassy staffers, these officials shared common ideological assumptions as well as a belief in the need for a common approach to a range of continental and international issues. The ground for the close relationship between them was laid during the Second World War but cemented during the Eisenhower administration with the establishment of joint cabinet committees, integrated defences, and resource management schemes, most notably the St. Lawrence Seaway. Building an institutional framework at the cabinet and bureaucratic levels to contain troublesome issues and forge common responses became the hallmark of Canada-US relations between 1953 and 1961. Indeed, tolerant accommodation has been a defining quality of bilateral relations ever since, a testament to the importance of developments during the Eisenhower era. In 1977, when the name Mount Eisenhower reverted back to Castle Mountain, local Alberta residents were keen to emphasize that their objection was that Canada's government had unilaterally changed the landmark's name in 1946 and did not spring from any "jingoistic and anti-American" motivations.¹⁴ In the end, they opted to ensure that one of Castle Mountain's many peaks would still be named for Ike, an enduring tribute to a figure who embodied the Canada-US consensus of the postwar era and beyond.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER 1: RETHINKING CANADA-US ECONOMIC COOPERATION, 1953–57

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CHAPTER 4: A NEW PARTNER IN OTTAWA AND CONVERGING ECONOMIC INTERESTS, 1957–61

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CHAPTER 5: OTTAWA, WASHINGTON, AND THE COLD WAR IN THE THIRD WORLD, 1957–60

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CHAPTER 6: THE CONTINENTAL DEFENCE DILEMMA, 1957–61

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