
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TRIANGLE AND
THE GENESIS AND LEGACY OF THE AMERICAN
OCCUPATION OF GREENLAND DURING THE SECOND
WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

The North Atlantic Triangle and the Genesis and Legacy of the American Occupation of Greenland During the Second World War

On April 9, 1940, Germany invaded Denmark. Instantly, the fate and status of Greenland, a Danish colony, was thrust into limbo. During the war, Greenland's vital mineral resources and location made it significant for the warring parties on both sides of the Atlantic. However, conflicting international corporate and political interests made any act to defend the island on the part of the Allies, or the officially neutral Americans, problematic.

Within a year of the Danish occupation, the American government had signed an agreement for the defense of Greenland, extending the protection of both the Monroe Doctrine and the American military to the island. This action was an important step in the formal expansion of American influence in the Western Hemisphere that occurred during the Second World War.

This thesis argues that global economic, political, and technological changes led to Greenland's increased geopolitical significance and set the stage for a shift in the balance of power within the North Atlantic Triangle. It demonstrates how decisions relating to the security of the island came to be made and how conflicting interests within and between governments affected the genesis of the occupation. It explores how Winston Churchill's decision to mine the North Sea led to the American occupation of Greenland and examines the ways in which the effects of Churchill's actions raised concerns in Canada about the possibility of a British defeat, which in turn led Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, to align his foreign policy closer to that of the United States' President Roosevelt. This thesis also asserts that Roosevelt successfully used the potential foreign occupation of Greenland to demonstrate to the American public the dangers of foreign conflicts to the United States and to further his hemispheric security objectives both domestically and abroad. These events had a profound and lasting impact on the relationships within the North Atlantic Triangle and on political identity in Greenland, and signalled an important shift in the foreign policy of the United States toward greater American involvement in world affairs.

Keywords: Greenland, United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Roosevelt, Churchill, Mackenzie King, Kauffmann, Hitler, Arctic, Cryolite, Second World War, Monroe Doctrine, Hemispheric Security, Nationalism, Empire, Resources, Technology, Meteorology, Aluminium, Aviation

HISTORY FACULTY ABSTRACT

The North Atlantic Triangle and the Genesis and Legacy of the American Occupation of Greenland During the Second World War

On April 9, 1940, Germany invaded Denmark. Instantly, the fate and status of Greenland, a Danish colony, was thrust into limbo. During the war, Greenland's vital mineral resources and location made it significant for the warring parties on both sides of the Atlantic. However, conflicting international corporate and political interests made any act to defend the island on the part of the Allies, or the officially neutral Americans, problematic.

Within a year of the Danish occupation, the American government had signed an agreement for the defense of Greenland that extended the protection of both the Monroe Doctrine and the American military to the island. This action was an important step in the formal expansion of American influence in the Western Hemisphere that occurred during the Second World War. The process through which this step occurred, however, was not straightforward.

The British, fettered by both a reluctance to challenge the U.S.'s Monroe Doctrine and a dearth of available military resources, requested that their Canadian allies occupy the island and defend it and its resources from the Germans. Canada's proximity to Greenland, Canadian corporations' reliance on Greenlandic cryolite, and its desire to keep the north Atlantic convoy line secure, in combination with the British request, prompted a quick response. The RCMP schooner *St. Roch* set out to serve as a communications vessel for a Canadian-led occupation of Greenland, and the Canadian military developed plans to mobilize a secret taskforce to secure the cryolite mine and defend it from the Germans.

In a strange turn of events, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt made efforts to block Canadian forces from defending the island. At a secret meeting on April 23, 1940, he convinced Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King not to dispatch the troops. The two eventually agreed to mutually "aid the people of Greenland," but leave any "real" military defense of the island to the British. However, a series of miscommunications led Roosevelt to subsequently belie this decision: American coast guard forces occupied Greenland in the summer of 1940. Within the year, American bases were established on the island and in April 1941, a controversial agreement made Greenland an American protectorate for the duration of the war.

When viewed in isolation, the American occupation of Greenland can appear simply as an interesting footnote to the history of the Second World War. Yet within the broader contexts of the war, Arctic security, and transatlantic relations, the incident takes on greater historical significance.

For the United Kingdom, the American occupation of Greenland is an important moment in the history of the British Empire because it marked a significant change in Britain's relationship with Canada. In addition, a re-evaluation of the causes of the German occupation of Denmark and Norway and the resulting collapse of the Chamberlain government reveal significant insights into the British role in the Second World War, in particular that Churchill's decision to mine the Leads in Norway gave Hitler cause to invade Scandinavia, and that this was linked to his invasions of the Low Countries and France. For Canada, Mackenzie King's handling of the Greenland situation is a significant

example of the way in which he attempted to establish an independent Canadian foreign policy at the time. It also provides insight into corporate-government interaction in Canada and the conflicting perspectives between different branches within the Canadian government itself. For the United States, the occupation of Greenland was its first belligerent act during the Second World War. It was also the first time the Monroe Doctrine was implemented in the North Atlantic. The occupation of Greenland also furthered American objectives of hemispheric security and helped to firmly establish the growing presence of the American military on the world stage. An examination of how Roosevelt handled the occupation provides insight into the domestic and foreign policies of one of the most enigmatic American presidents. For Greenland, the American occupation brought major political, social, and economic changes to the island that are still felt today.

Despite its significance, literature on this subject is extremely limited, and a dedicated monograph is yet to be produced. The little that is extant was written during the Cold War era and has not been re-evaluated to account for additional archival sources. Moreover, the existing work tends to fall along strict geographic and disciplinary lines and views the subject through either highly militaristic or strictly nationalistic lenses within a narrow timeframe. In contrast, this thesis takes an integrated approach to the subject, drawing from a wide variety of American, British, Canadian, Danish, and German, corporate, personal, military, and diplomatic archival documents in order to produce the first comprehensive international study on the events leading to and resulting from the occupation of Greenland.

An examination of the events that led to the American occupation of Greenland also provides the opportunity to understand the role that contingency can play in history. A particular combination of events in the early stages of the Second World War came together to make it possible for the United States to move into Greenland and for the British and the Canadians to acquiesce. Many of those same events in the spring and early summer of 1940 coalesced to make broader changes possible, which resulted in a shift of the global power dynamics. An in-depth analysis of the events leading to the American occupation of Greenland provides a fresh window through which to explore these events and the significance of the period more generally. This project examines the ways in which the little known events leading up to the American occupation of Greenland serve to challenge and modify traditional historical narratives relating to the early years of the Second World War. It will discuss the lasting effects that the situation in Greenland has had on continental security and Canadian-American and Canadian-British relations, particularly in the Arctic.

This thesis argues that global economic, political, and technological changes led to Greenland's increased geopolitical significance and set the stage for a shift in the balance of power within the North Atlantic Triangle. It demonstrates how decisions relating to the security of the island came to be made and how conflicting interests within and between governments affected the genesis of the occupation. It explores how Churchill's decision to mine the North Sea led to the American occupation of Greenland and examines the ways in which the effects of Churchill's decision raised concerns in Canada about the possibility of a British defeat, which in turn led Mackenzie King to align his foreign policy closer to Roosevelt's. This thesis also asserts that Roosevelt successfully used the potential foreign occupation of Greenland to demonstrate to the American public the dangers of foreign conflicts to the United States and to further his hemispheric security objectives

both domestically and abroad. Roosevelt's policies helped Americans become accustomed to the idea that they would have to do more to defend themselves during the war. It also had a profound and lasting impact on the relationships within the North Atlantic Triangle and on political identity in Greenland, and it signaled an important shift in the foreign policy of the United States toward greater American involvement in world affairs.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters within three sections. Section I includes Chapters 1 and 2 and provides background; Section II includes Chapters 3-6 and discusses the events leading to the occupation and the occupation itself; and Section III includes Chapters 7 deals with the effects of the occupation.

Chapters 2-6 comprise the main body of the thesis. "Chapter 2 - Greenland and The World in 1940" situates the occupation in a global context and examines the general state of international affairs in 1940. It argues that global economic, political, and technological factors set the stage for a change in relationship within the North Atlantic Triangle and for the increased geopolitical significance of Greenland during the Second World War.

Chapters 3-5 provide a triangulated account of the occupation from perspectives of the British, Canadian, and American governments respectively. "Chapter 3 - Mine Game" discusses the military, diplomatic, and political consequences of Churchill's decision to mine the Norwegian Leads, which not only necessitated the American occupation of Greenland, but also caused the collapse of the Chamberlain government during a critical phase of the war. "Chapter 4 - A Presidential Geography Lesson" focuses on President Roosevelt's strategic use of the Monroe Doctrine in domestic and international policy relating to Greenland during the war. "Chapter 5 - Of King and Cryolite" explores the interaction between the Canadian aluminum industry and the Canadian government during the months leading to the occupation. It examines the secret meeting between Mackenzie King and Roosevelt regarding Greenland and emphasises that conflicting interests within the Canadian government itself led to confusion over the handling of the Greenland situation.

"Chapter 6 - Opening a Long Closed Door: The Occupation of Greenland" brings together the narratives of the previous three chapters and details the process of the occupation and the impact it had on Greenlanders. "Chapter 7 - Conclusions" concludes the work and suggests areas for future research.

In addition to its relevance to the broader themes of the decline of the British Empire, the development of an independent Canadian foreign policy, the rise of the United States on the world stage, and the increasing significance of the Arctic in global affairs, this project provides a necessary link between the past and present. With the impact of climate change, the traditional views on the Arctic are being re-evaluated. A more complete appreciation of the historical background of military, diplomatic, and corporate negotiations involved in the American occupation of Greenland will aid in our contemporary challenges in the Arctic and the changing global balance of power.

The American occupation of Greenland is a tipping point in the relationships within the North Atlantic Triangle. The United States' global political power was waxing, the United Kingdom's empire waning, and Canada, stuck between the two, was in the process of exercising its maturing independent political identity. As a nation, Canada has been defined by its origins as a British colony and by its relationship to the United States. This

project is a case study in the relationships between all three and will influence the way we think about the connections between Canada, Britain, and the United States.

Although this project deals with the trilateral relationships within the North Atlantic triangle, Greenland is much more than a backdrop against which events took place. The people of Greenland affected and were affected by the American, Canadian, and British actions relating to the island during the Second World War. At the outset of war, militaries on both sides of the Atlantic were dependent on Greenlandic meteorological data and North American industry was reliant on the island's mineral resources. By the end of the war Greenland's predicted role in transatlantic air traffic had come to fruition. The onset of the Cold War made Greenland one of the most strategically significant sites in the Western Hemisphere for the staging of nuclear weapons.

As it was in 1940, Greenland is today a nation of increasing geopolitical significance. The effects of climate change on the island are revealing an incomprehensible wealth of natural resources at a time of high global demand and low supply. Additionally, the global economic crisis has not only accelerated the shifting balance of political power once again, this time from west to east, but has also reignited long dormant security debates in which Greenland plays an important strategic role. Greenland's position in the world has changed significantly over the past century; however, historically it has been the most noteworthy in times of political, economic, and technological flux. Seventy years ago Greenland's resources and strategic location made it the object of a truly international power struggle. Today, as we live through an important historical period, an examination of another such critical moment will not only help us understand our past, but will also give us insight into our present and future.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In late June of 1940, just days before the fall of France, four ships, two American, one British, and one Canadian, converged in a harbour off the southern coast of Greenland. Their subsequent standoff was the result of more than two months of complicated negotiations and miscommunications between London, Ottawa, and Washington regarding the security of the island following the surprise German occupation of Denmark on April 9th. The invasion had thrown the status of Greenland - a strategically situated Danish colony - into question. Although no shots were fired in the Greenlandic harbour, the encounter between the three nations was tense and in stark contrast to the narratives of transatlantic cooperation that have come to characterise the historiography of the North Atlantic Triangle during the Second World War.

Three weeks previously in the early morning hours of June 1st the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) *Nascopie* sailed up the Arsuk Fjord on the southern tip of Greenland. It dropped anchor off the coast of Ivigtut, a small mining town on the southwest side of the island. The *Nascopie* was on one of its seasonal journeys to deliver post and supplies throughout the Arctic, but that year its journey was more difficult than usual. Aside from its usual crew the *Nascopie* carried aboard several plainclothes Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers who were intending to survey the security of the island for the Canadian government. In addition to transporting the extra passengers, the *Nascopie* had been contracted by the government to retrieve a vital shipment of cryolite, a mineral unique to Greenland and essential for the war-time production of aluminum, for the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan).¹

¹H.J. Hendra, "Report on Ivigtut Cryolite Mine Ivigtut, Greenland: Mining Position and Particulars of the Mining Plant," Unpublished Report, Aluminum Company of Canada Global Mission Archives, Montreal: 6 July 1940, 1-52.

Complicating the situation, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt had previously made efforts to block Canadian military involvement on the island. At a closed-door meeting on April 23, 1940, he attempted to convince Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King not to dispatch a planned Canadian expedition to secure the island. The prime minister was not difficult to persuade. King was eager to ensure that cordial relations were maintained between Canada and the United States. He also was keenly aware of the Canadian military's limitations and had his own concerns about the potential consequences for Canada in the event of a British defeat in Europe. The two men eventually agreed to send diplomats in the form of consuls to the island and to mutually "aid the people of Greenland" but to allow any "real" military defence of the North Atlantic to be handled by the Royal Navy. Both leaders agreed to leave Greenland to "manage her own affairs."² Despite the apparently successful negotiations, Greenland's political status was still uncertain and both sides had maintained a desire to protect their own interests on the island.

When the reports of undercover RCMP officers aboard the *Nascopie* reached Washington, some in the American government believed King had betrayed his agreement with Roosevelt (which was in fact untrue), and Washington took the potential threat of a Canadian occupation of the island seriously.³ In response, the United States Coast Guard cutter *Comanche* was dispatched to ensure that American corporate and security interests

²Mackenzie King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," *Diaries*, 23 to 24 April 1940, 6. In William Lyon Mackenzie King, *The Mackenzie King Diaries, 1893-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), microfiche.

³One of the most vocal critics of the Canadians was American Undersecretary of State Adolf Berle. See Berle Diary, 20 May 1940, Berle Papers Box 211, 10–11. Adolf A. Berle, Papers 1912-1974. Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

in Greenland were protected. The *Comanche* was newer and faster than the aged *Nascopie* and it easily reached Greenland before the Canadians.⁴ When the *Nascopie* eventually approached the island it was blocked by armed American Coast Guard forces and refused landing rights. Those on the Canadian vessel were forced to languish aboard ship for several weeks while Americans fortified the island's coast and entered diplomatic negotiations with the Greenlandic representatives.⁵

In the midst of the tension between the Canadians and the Americans, the *Nascopie* was joined by the British-manned *Julius Thompson*. The *Julius Thompson* was a Danish ship that had been taken in prize by the Royal Navy. It was carrying Mr. Kenneth P. Kirkwood, the Canadian consular representative whose presence had been previously agreed upon by Roosevelt and King. Despite the prior arrangements, the British crew of the *Julius Thompson* and Mr. Kirkwood were similarly refused access to the island.⁶

It was only the subsequent arrival of another American vessel - the USCG cutter *Campbell* - a few days later that signalled the beginning of the end of the confrontation in Ivigtut's harbour. The *Campbell* was carrying Mr. Axel Svane, one of the two Greenlandic governors appointed by Copenhagen to manage the island's affairs, and James K. Penfield, the newly selected American Consul, to the island.⁷ It was also transporting a cargo of arms, including several anti-aircraft guns, for the fortification of Greenland's shores against potential belligerents. Following the *Campbell's* appearance in the harbour, the

⁴Patrick Abbazia, *Mr. Roosevelt's Navy: The Private War of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, 1939-1942* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 87.

⁵Hendra, "Report," 1-52.

⁶Hendra, "Report," 1-52.

⁷Hendra, "Report," 7.

Americans assisted with the installation of additional defences along Ivigtut's coast. They also finalised negotiations for the management of Greenland's most valuable assets: the cryolite mine's output and revenues. Once the additional defences had been instated and favourable contracts negotiated, those aboard the *Nascopie* were invited to dine with the Americans and Governor Svane on the island. Canadian crewmembers donated a large, and well-received, alcohol consignment to the dinner. This, in combination with the highly controversial handover of the *Julius Thompson* to the mine authorities, effectively ended the disagreement over access to the island and its resources, and began the American occupation of the island that lasted throughout the Second World War, the consequences of which are still felt today.

The story of the more than three-week forced confinement of the crew of the *Nascopie* is not well-known, nor is the history of American occupation of Greenland more generally. However, what could seem at first glance to be a simple case of American imperial aggression is not as straightforward as it appears. The standoff in the Ivigtut harbour involved a convoluted web of political, military, and corporate interests. It reached the highest levels of government in many countries around the world and was emblematic of the truly global nature of what was to become the Second World War.

The period between the German invasions of Denmark and Norway on April 9th and the resolution of the *Nascopie* incident in late June 1940 was a time of intense international uncertainty. The speed and ease of Hitler's advance across Western Europe had shocked many. In the short time between April 9 and June 22, Germany had gained control of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and, by the time the crew of the *Nascopie* was dining in Ivigtut, France. The United Kingdom, aided only by its overseas empire, was the last Allied power standing in Europe against Germany. The

disastrous Norwegian campaign, which was precipitated by Churchill's decision to violate Norwegian territorial waters and mine the North Sea, brought down the Chamberlain government at the very moment the British Empire needed strong leadership. It seemed clear to many at the time that the United Kingdom would inevitably be Hitler's next conquest. That made the threat to Greenland acute. The very fact that Canada, the United States, and Great Britain were interested enough in Greenland to expend resources to make the journey to the island at this critical moment of the Second World War highlights Greenland's increasing geopolitical significance on the world stage and to Second World War military strategy.

The *Nascopie* incident and the deliberations leading to the American occupation of Greenland occurred during a period of the Second World War when the United Kingdom was in turmoil; Canada was struggling to find direction with its new-found autonomy; and the United States, which was still formally neutral, was moving gingerly from a period of relative isolation to greater political engagement in global affairs. Greenland was concurrently emerging from centuries of physical and political isolation and colonial dependence on Denmark. The strong potential for German occupation of the island forced its leaders to make the difficult decisions of how to act and where to place their allegiance, and those decisions had lasting effects on both domestic policies and external relationships.

The interactions between the American, Canadian, and British ships in the harbour off the coast of Ivigtut in the spring of 1940 unfolded in real terms the shifting power balance between the three countries within the North Atlantic Triangle during the war. By the end of June 1940, the United Kingdom stood alone in Europe against Germany. Overstretched, and with priorities closer to home, a beleaguered Britain commandeered the *Julius*

Thompson to make its journey to Greenland. The neutral United States held the literal and figurative power position in the situation with both the *Comanche* and the *Campbell*. The small, aged *Nascopie* was an apt symbolic representation of the Dominion of Canada. Canada was in many ways the junior partner in the trio. It was a minor player, stuck between two great powers, attempting to please both sides. The incident also casts light onto the emerging importance of Greenland itself. Prior to the war, Greenland's remote location and small population gave it at best a minor role in international affairs.⁸ During the Second World War, however, several factors converged to dramatically increase Greenland's global geopolitical significance.

As mentioned, Greenland was the world's only significant source of natural cryolite, an essential component in cost-effective aluminium production. By 1940, military strength was increasingly seen in terms of air power.⁹ War-time aircraft were comprised of approximately 70 percent aluminium. As a result, cryolite, and by extension Greenland, were vital to governments and industry on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition, military strategists were beginning to see Greenland's central location in the North Atlantic in a new light. Scientific expeditions in the 1930s affirmed the island's utility for accurately predicting meteorological patterns in Western and Northern Europe (this information would prove particularly tactically advantageous in the context of war). A series of successful landings on Greenland's ice cap not only dramatically improved access to the island but also led many to consider its potential role in both transpolar aviation and as a location for airplanes to refuel during transatlantic crossings. This realisation also led some

⁸In the First World War the United States had abdicated any claim to the island in order to negotiate its purchase of the Virgin Islands. See "Denmark" in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1917* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), 457-706. This issue will also be discussed in chapters 3, 4, and 7.

⁹R.J. Overy, *The Air War 1939-1945* (New York: Stein and Day, 1981).

to fear that Germany would establish airbases on the island or capitalise on the island's coastline, with its many bays and inlets, for the use of U-boats and surface raiders.

Greenland's location within the Western Hemisphere made the possibility of a German presence on the island particularly problematic for the United States. The American government would potentially view any foreign occupation of the island as a violation of the Monroe Doctrine, which sought to prevent the extension of European powers in the New World.

Greenland's relations with the outside world were also affected by shifts in the geopolitical power shift during the war. Over the course of the Second World War, the United States went from a reluctant player in international affairs to one of only two global superpowers. The United Kingdom, by contrast, went from enjoying one of the world's largest empires backed by the world's best navy to a battle-scarred kingdom in serious debt and beginning the process of global decolonisation. Canada, which had begun the war as a British Dominion with a limited history of exercising independent political agency, ended in 1945 as a country with a new national identity, possessing the world's third largest navy, a significantly expanded army, and boasting a vastly improved and increased industrial output.¹⁰ While Canada's ties to the United Kingdom were weakening, in part as a result of Mackenzie King's policies, it was increasingly reliant on the United States both economically and militarily.

The Second World War also brought major changes to Greenland itself. In 1939 it was a closed-door colony that was entirely dependent on Denmark for all of its trade and

¹⁰Barry Broadfoot, *Six War Years 1939-1945: Memories of Canadians at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1974), xi. See also Roger Sarty, "How an Un-naval Country Became a Key Combatant in the Battle of the Atlantic," *War in the St. Lawrence: The Forgotten U-Boat Battles on Canada's Shores* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013), 15-49.

governance. When the war concluded, Greenland's increased geopolitical significance led Denmark to grant its colony two seats in the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen, beginning the path to home rule on the island. In addition, the onset of the Cold War further increased the island's strategic significance to the United States. The security arrangement signed during the Second World War gave the United States licence to establish additional bases on the island in the post-war period, one of which is still in operation today.

An examination of the events that led to the American occupation of Greenland also provides the opportunity to understand the role that contingency can play in history. A particular combination of events in the early stages of the Second World War came together to make it possible for the United States to move into Greenland and for the British and the Canadians to acquiesce. Concurrently, many of those same events in the spring and early summer of 1940 coalesced to make broader changes possible, which resulted in a shift of the global power dynamics. An in-depth analysis of the events leading to the American occupation of Greenland provides a fresh window through which to explore these events and the significance of the period more generally. This project examines the ways in which the little known events leading up to the American occupation of Greenland serve to challenge and modify traditional historical narratives relating to the early years of the Second World War. It will discuss the lasting effects that the situation in Greenland has had on continental security and Canadian-American and Canadian-British relations, particularly in the Arctic.

This thesis argues that global economic, political, and technological changes led to Greenland's increased geopolitical significance and set the stage for a shift in the balance of power within the North Atlantic Triangle. It will demonstrate how decisions relating to the security of the island came to be made and how conflicting interests within and

between governments affected the genesis of the occupation. It explores how Churchill's decision to mine the North Sea led to the American occupation of Greenland and examines the ways in which the effects of Churchill's decision raised concerns in Canada about the possibility of a British defeat, which in turn led Mackenzie King to align his foreign policy closer to Roosevelt's. This thesis also asserts that Roosevelt successfully used the potential foreign occupation of Greenland to demonstrate to the American public the dangers of foreign conflicts to the United States and to further his hemispheric security objectives both domestically and abroad. Roosevelt's policies helped Americans become accustomed to the idea that they would have to do more to defend themselves during the war. It also had a profound and lasting impact on the relationships within the North Atlantic Triangle and on political identity in Greenland, and it signaled an important shift in the foreign policy of the United States toward greater American involvement in world affairs.

The American Occupation of Greenland: A Historiographical Overview

There were a number of technological, military, and diplomatic factors that made Greenland strategically important during the Second World War, and there are several reasons that the American occupation of Greenland is historically significant. In spite of these, however, secondary literature relating to the island and the American occupation is extremely limited. The small amount of literature on the subject tends to fall along strict geographic and disciplinary lines and views the subject through either highly militaristic or distinctly nationalistic lenses, or both. This segmented view has meant that in spite of the role that Greenland played in developments in aviation, meteorology, and material production, its scientific significance has been almost completely overlooked. Existing work also tends to focus on the period after the signing of the US-Danish agreement for the defence of Greenland (April 1941). It ignores the critical period between the invasion of Denmark and the unofficial occupation of the island by American forces. By the time

the US-Danish agreement for the defence of Greenland was signed the following year, some of the most significant changes to western hemispheric security and to the power dynamics within the North Atlantic Triangle had already transpired. In addition, existing literature merely acknowledges that the occupation of the island happened, but does not explore the process by which the United States came to occupy Greenland nor the impact on American relations with Canada and Great Britain.¹¹ Current secondary literature also tends to ignore the role of political leaders in the genesis of the occupation; for example, both Mackenzie King and Roosevelt played an integral role in the management of the Greenland situation and their contributions have not been adequately addressed. Further, the ways in which the lack of strong political leadership in Britain affected the period is another important, and unexplored, aspect of the occupation. Finally, although there are a staggering array of personal, political, corporate, and military primary sources relating to the American occupation of Greenland, few have been consulted in conjunction with each other. This lack of integration has meant that the larger historical significance of the occupation has been missed.

History is often shaped by the events that follow it. The global nature of the Second World War, the great struggles and cataclysmic events that followed the war's opening stages, and the war's profound impact have led many historians to overlook events that carried a tremendous amount of contemporary significance at the time. In addition, concepts forged in the later stages of, and following the war, such as the special relationship a term used to describe the close relationship between the United States and Great Britain, have been

¹¹For example, Frode Skarstein's "A Cursed Affair" discusses Norwegian activities in Greenland during the Second World War, but the account focuses on 1941 and does not examine Canadian or British sources, and it references only online documents from the Roosevelt archive. Frode Skarstein, "A Cursed Affair - How a Norwegian Expedition to Greenland became the USA's First Maritime Capture in World War II," *Polar Research* 26 (2007): 181-194.

projected back on the earlier period. Although the United States did not officially enter the war until more than two years after it began, historians have continually looked backward at the period prior to the United States' entry into the war for indications that American participation in it was inevitable. Many histories of the American involvement in the Second World War begin after the fall of France in June 1940 or with the Destroyers for Bases deal, which is seen as a covert way the United States assisted the Allied cause and clear proof that the United States was determined to enter the war from that point forward.¹² Drawing from a wide range of sources, this thesis will argue that the roots of American involvement go back well before the fall of France and involve German moves in Scandinavia. This involvement, however, was not necessarily a straightforward outcome of the special relationship nor was it an indication that American entry into the war was inevitable. In addition, although the fall of France is seen as one of the pivotal turning points of the war, the German occupation of Norway in the spring of 1940 has received only limited historical attention and the German occupation of Denmark is either ignored entirely or glossed over as a stepping stone to Norway. The German invasions of Denmark and Norway, however, were extremely important not only for the fate of Greenland and for helping to shape American policy, but also for the historiography of the Second World War. Recent scholarship by historians like Ian Kershaw has sought to re-evaluate the significance of the earlier stages of the Second World War. In *Fateful Choices*, Kershaw points to several critical decisions between May 1940 and the autumn of 1941 that changed the war's outcome.¹³ This thesis will argue that for the North Atlantic Triangle and Greenland, Churchill's decision to mine Norwegian territorial waters, King's decision

¹²See, for example, Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt & American Entry into World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹³Ian Kershaw, *Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions that Changed the World 1940-1941* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007).

to side with Roosevelt on the issue of Greenland, and Roosevelt's decision to extend the Monroe Doctrine to the island were similarly significant decisions. It is true that there are many critical moments in the history of the Second World War. It is also true that the American government occupied a number of strategically significant locations in the Western Hemisphere and abroad over the course of the conflict, but it is the combination of the timing and the circumstances of the American occupation of Greenland that make it a particularly important case study.

Germany

The American occupation of Greenland was predicated on the threat of a German invasion of the island following the German occupation of Denmark on April 9, 1940. While there is no known evidence suggesting that a German takeover of the island was planned, Germany did have a longstanding military interest in Greenland for the acquisition of meteorological data. Germany conducted numerous studies on the island in the interwar period and established several covert weather stations on the island during the Second World War, one of which was bombed by American airmen in mid-May 1943.¹⁴ Over the past few years, there have been a number of excellent studies conducted on these stations and their significance.¹⁵ These studies, however, offer only limited information on the

¹⁴Bert Balchen et al., *War Below Zero: The Battle for Greenland* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1945), 33.

¹⁵Selinger, F., *Von 'Nanok' bis 'Eismitte': Meteorologische Unternehmungen in der Arktis 1940–1945* (Hamburg: Convent, 2001). In addition William Barr's account of German weather stations in Svalbard contains some information on Greenland. William Barr, "Wettertrupp Haudegen: The Last German Arctic Weather Station of World War II: Part I," *Polar Record* 23 no. 143 (1986): 143-157. Similarly, J.D.M. Blyth published a detailed account of German meteorological activities on the island based on German reports and on interviews with German scientists after the war. This account gives only limited background on the activities in Greenland prior to the German occupation of Denmark. J.D.M. Blyth, "German Meteorological Activities in the Arctic, 1940-1945," *Polar Record* 6 no. 42 (July 1951):185-226.

interwar period and the important role Greenland played in the development of both the science of meteorology and trans-Arctic aviation. An examination of scientific journals from the period provides the necessary context for the development of German interest in the island in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War.¹⁶ Many of the documents relating to Greenland were destroyed during the war; however, the British Archives contains a collection of documents captured during the war in addition to intelligence reports dealing with broader German concerns about the island during the period, including memorandums on the potential application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland.¹⁷ The lack of Greenlandic archival sources during the war has been addressed in an innovative way through a recent Danish National Museum project which used archaeological methods to investigate the remains of a Second World War-era German weather station. The article provides interesting insights into covert German activities on the island but does not examine British, Canadian, or American archival sources and

¹⁶See, for example, "Arctic Explorations May Locate the Origin of Storms," *Science News Letter* 8 no. 258 (March 20, 1926): 1-2; C.K.M. Douglas, "The Polar Front and its Place in Modern Meteorology," *The Geographical Journal* 94 no. 2 (Aug. 1939): 135-150; William Herbert Hobbs, "The First Greenland Expedition of the University of Michigan," *Geographical Review* 17 no. 1 (Jan. 1927): 1-35; Harry N. Holmes, "National Survival Through Science," *Science* 96 no. 2498 (Nov. 1942): 433-439; Raye R. Platt, "Recent Expeditions in the Polar Regions," *Geographical Review* 29 no. 2 (Apr., 1939): 303-309; Elmer Plischke, "Trans-Arctic Aviation," *Economic Geography* 19 no. 3 (Jul. 1943): 283-291; Alfred de Quervain and P.L. Mercanton et al., "Bericht und vorläufige Ergebnisse der Schweizerischen Grönland expedition 1912-1913," *Neue Denkschr. Schwiz Naturforsch. Gesell.* 53 (1920): 1-59; Jaquest W. Redway, "The New Meteorology," *Ecology* 3 no. 4 (Oct. 1922): 337-338; Carl Samuelson, "Studoem über die Wirkungen des Windes in den kalten und gemässigten Erdteilen," *Bulletin of the Geological Institute of Uppsala* 20 (1926): 58-230; Vilhjamur Stefansson, "A Ten-Year Program of Arctic Study," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82 no. 5 (Jun. 1940): 897-919 and *Greenland* (London: George G Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1943); Barrett Studley, "Bombing Planes or Battleships?" *North American Review* 227, no. 6 (Jun. 1929): 727-736; and Leigh Wade, "Aerial Globe Trotting," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 131 (May 1927): 86-93.

¹⁷The National Archives UK (TNA), ADM 223/330 GFM 33 (various).

focuses on the later period of the war.¹⁸ The published six volumes in the *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* series are also a useful source on the broader context of the war, particularly in the North Atlantic.¹⁹

Greenland and Denmark

Secondary sources in Greenlandic and Danish are also scarce.²⁰ Aside from the lack of information on the scientific significance of Greenland, there are additional factors that have contributed to a lack of Greenlandic scholarship both in general and with respect to the Second World War. These factors include Greenland's relatively small population, which has ranged from around sixteen thousand during the war to approximately fifty thousand today. This means there are few national scholars to contribute to Greenlandic secondary literature. Also, Greenlanders have the ability to complete their higher education at government-subsidised rates in Europe, resulting in few Greenlandic scholars remaining in, or returning to Greenland. Additional linguistic and cultural factors have also likely played a part in the lack of scholarship. Greenlandic (*Kalaallisut*, which translates literally as "the way of the Greenlander") was not a written language until relatively recently. It was first transcribed in the early eighteenth century and did not become an official language of the island until Greenland gained home rule status in 1979.²¹ The complicated

¹⁸Jens Fog Jensen and Tilo Krause, "Wehrmacht Occupations in the New World: Archaeological and Historical investigations in Northeast Greenland," *Polar Record* 48 no. 3 (July 2012): 269-279.

¹⁹*Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, 6 vols. ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (München: Deutsche Verlag Ansatalt, 1979-).

²⁰One local Greenlandic account written in Danish is Ulrick Luckow and Jorgen Fisker, *Arsuksfojorden: Ivigtut, Gronnedal, Arsuks* (Gothaab, 1977). This account mentions a Canadian presence in Greenland but does not provide a full account of the genesis of the occupation. There is significant scope for further research into oral histories.

²¹Mark Nuttall, "Greenlandic: Political Development of an Inuit Language," *Polar Record* 26 no. 159 (October 1990): 331.

structure of Greenland's government and its colonial relationship with Denmark has also likely contributed to the lack of literature on the occupation itself. Prior to the American occupation, Greenland was managed on a system of benevolent paternalism that sought to minimise Inuit Greenlanders' contact with the outside world in order to preserve their traditional lifestyle. The war-time government was primarily comprised of Danish expatriates who were on contract by the Danish crown; as such, they had little interest in encouraging a Greenlandic identity that was separate from Denmark.²² There were significant changes in the management of the colony following the war as a result of the occupation. Greenlanders tend to view the period as the beginning of the "liberation" from Denmark but do not see this as a result of American policies on the island during the war. A thesis on Eske Brun, one of the Greenlandic governors during the war, has recently been published in both Danish and Greenlandic.²³ It has made a major contribution to the literature but relies exclusively on Danish archival sources and does not consult American, Canadian, or British archives.²⁴

The relationship between Denmark and Greenland also complicates the limited primary sources that exist in archives. For example, in American documents from the period, the

²²The structure of the Greenlandic government will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Records of the communications between those authorities and Washington and Ottawa can be found in both the American and the Canadian Archives. See, for example, General Records of the Department of the Navy, RG 80, National Archives II, College Park Maryland; Roosevelt, Franklin Delano. Papers as President: Official File (OF), Personal File (PPF), President's Secretary's File (PSF), and Map Room File (MR). Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York; King, William Lyon Mackenzie. Papers, Memoranda and Notes. National Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

²³Jens Heinrich, *Eske Brun: og det moderne Grønlands tilblivelse 1932-1964* (Nuuk: Inussuk, 2012).

²⁴Heinrich, *Eske Brun*, 303-311.

term *Greenlander* is used interchangeably to refer to both the Danish expatriates who controlled the highest levels of Greenland's government and Greenland's Inuit peoples.²⁵ Opinions of some people living on the island can be found in British intelligence reports based on intercepted mail from Greenland to Denmark. Although the residents are called "Greenlanders" in the reports, it is likely, based on the content of their messages, that the term was referring to Danish expatriates living in Greenland.²⁶ Another complication is that until very recently traditional oral histories of the Arctic have not been recorded. Those that have been recorded have not always been seen as reliable by academics.²⁷ While this misconception is starting to be redressed, particularly within the field of Arctic anthropology, there is significant scope for additional research, particularly by historians. Finally, during the occupation, American policy explicitly stated that Americans should avoid interfering with the island's inhabitants to prevent the spread of disease and the disruption of their traditional way of life. The island's large landmass, small population, and near total lack of infrastructure meant that this policy was by and large adhered to. It is generally agreed that Americans had only limited contact with the island's inhabitants during the occupation. In addition, while the United States continued to operate a strategic military base on the island after the war, it returned the general stewardship of Greenland

²⁵See, for example, the contradictory (and in some ways racist) uses of the word *Greenlander* in the confidential report on Greenland (referring to Danish national Governor Svane as a Greenlander) compared to the letter from Cordell Hull to Frank Knox regarding the health risks of the American occupation to Indigenous Greenlanders. Confidential Report Greenland, Undated (estimated late 1940/early 1941), RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park Maryland, 18; and Cordell Hull to Frank Knox, Letter, 28 April 1941, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park Maryland, 1-3.

²⁶"Report on Greenland From Letters from Greenland to Denmark Intercepted at Bermuda," 10 December 1940, FO 371/24784, The British National Archives, 223.

²⁷For an excellent discussion on the issues of Arctic histories and historiographies, see Yvon Csonka, "Changing Inuit Historicities in West Greenland and Nunavut," *History and Anthropology* no. 16, 3 (2005): 321-334.

to Denmark. As a result, in spite of the occupations impact, little attention is paid to the period of the American occupation by Greenlanders themselves.

Although there is a dearth of Greenlandic secondary literature, the island's status as a Danish colony has prompted a relatively large amount of Danish scholarship on the island and the American occupation. There are several excellent Danish studies on the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Denmark during the period of the German occupation. These studies tend to focus on the controversial Danish Ambassador to the United States, Henrik Kauffmann, and the role that he played in the negotiations for the US-Danish Agreement for the Defence of Greenland (1941).²⁸ Examples of this literature include Bo Lidegaard's *I Kongens Navn: Henrik Kauffmann i dansk diplomati 1919-1958* and *Overleveren: Dansk Udrigspolitiks Historie, Bind 4, 1914-1945*; and Finn Løkkegaard's *Det danske Gesantskab i Washington 1940-1942*. All three examples offer superb analysis of Henrik Kauffman's actions and Danish-American relations during the war, particularly with regard to the defence agreement. In addition, Poul Villaume and Thorsten Borring Olesen's *I blokopdelingens tegn: Dansk Udenrigspolitiks Historie, bind 5, 1945-1972* offers excellent insight into the effects of the war-time Danish-American-Greenlandic relations in the post-war period.²⁹ Recently Axel Sørensen published

²⁸When Germany invaded Denmark, Kauffmann severed relations with the occupied Danish government and acted independently in negotiations with the United States concerning the security of Greenland and other Danish issues during the war. Kauffmann will be discussed at length in Chapter 6.

²⁹Bo Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn: Henrik Kauffmann i dansk diplomati 1919-1958*. (København: Samleren, 1997) and *Overleveren: Dansk Udrigspolitiks Historie, Bind 4, 1914-1945* (København: Gyldendaal, 2006); Finn Løkkegaard, *Det danske Gesantskab i Washington 1940-1942: Henrick Kauffmann som uafhae ngig dansk gesandt i USA 194 - 1942 og hans politik vedrørende Grønland og de oplagte danske skibe i America*. (Copenhagen: Glydendal, 1968); and Poul Villaume and Thorsten Borring Olesen, *I blokopdelingens tegn: Dansk Udenrigspolitiks Historie, bind 5, 1945-1972* (København: Gyldendal Leksikon, 2005).

Denmark-Greenland in the Twentieth Century in English. The work provides a useful overview of the relationship between Denmark and Greenland over the last century.³⁰

Although several chapters of the book are dedicated to the war, his analysis on its impact is limited (the author himself highlights the lack of secondary literature on the subject). In addition, the history of the Royal Greenlandic Trading Company published in the *Polar Record* in 1974 contains a useful section on the operation of the company during the war but does not cite any sources, although it can be inferred that it was most likely based on company records.³¹ Although the aforementioned studies provide extensive insight into the relationship between the United States, Denmark, and Greenland during the war, very little attention is given to the role that the United Kingdom or Canada play in the occupation, and Canadian and British primary sources are not consulted.

In addition, it is important to note that although there are a number of secondary sources that focus on the Danish role in the American occupation of Greenland, since Denmark was occupied by what was considered to be a hostile power, a large number of the decisions that resulted in the eventual occupation were made without consulting Greenlandic officials or Danish authorities and, therefore, more scholarly attention should be paid to those who did make the decisions that resulted in the occupation. As this thesis focuses on those decisions and on the role of the North Atlantic Triangle in the genesis of the American occupation of Greenland, it will rely heavily on sources from the United Kingdom, Canada, and Great Britain.

³⁰Sørensen, Axel Kjoer. *Denmark-Greenland in the Twentieth Century* (Copenhagen: The Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, 2006).

³¹Aage V. Strøm Tejsen, "The History of the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department," *Polar Record* 18 no. 116 (1977): 451-474.

The United Kingdom

Secondary literature on the British involvement in the American occupation of Greenland is virtually non-existent.³² Given the central role that the United Kingdom played in the war, this lack of literature is not surprising since Greenland was very much peripheral to other events. The invasions of the Low Countries, the fall of France, the Blitz, the Atlantic Charter, and more recently the African campaigns and the campaigns in Italy and the East have understandably occupied British historians' attentions for the decades following the war. In addition, during the war Greenland became an issue of public and corporate discussion in the United States and to some extent in Canada. In the United Kingdom, however, the strategic value of Greenland, particularly in light of its role in the Battle of the Atlantic in combination with the delicate nature of the negotiations with both the United States and Canada, was necessarily kept secret by the British government. This lack of public awareness about the issue during the war would have contributed to a lack of consciousness about the subject following the war.

Another reason for the lack of British literature on the genesis of the American occupation of Greenland relates to British war-time Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Churchill's personal papers and published works on the period provide important information into the contemporary handling of the situation in the United Kingdom. In addition, his historical

³²There is a similar dearth of literature for the Danish colonies that the United Kingdom occupied directly. There is a monograph on Iceland; see Donald Bittner, *The Lion and the White Falcon: Britain and Iceland in the World War II Era* (Conn: Archon, 1983), but the only books on the British occupation of the Faroe Islands (Operation Valentine) are largely based on "reliable web resources" (Wikipedia); see Jordan Naoum, *The British Occupation of the Faroe Islands* (DUC, 2011). As with Greenland, there is some Danish literature on the British occupation of the Faroe Islands. See, for example, Nils Arne Sorensen, "Militære aspekter af den britiske besættelse af Færøerne 1940-45," *Historie/Jyske Samlinger*, 1 (2000): 46-56.

writing has played a major role in shaping contemporary historiography on the war.³³

When Churchill wrote his *History of the Second World War*, he separated the German invasions of Denmark and Norway (for which he was at least partially responsible) from Hitler's invasions of the Low Countries and France (which have been seen as unprovoked). Churchill's artificial separation not only shifted focus from one of his major tactical errors but also from the domino effects that resulted from his decision, including the German invasions of Norway and Denmark. The former led to the collapse of the Chamberlain government (which ultimately resulted in Churchill's appointment as Prime Minister), and the latter necessitated the American occupation of Greenland. Another effect of Churchill's separation of the invasions has been that many later historians have used his accounts of the war as a basis for their studies. As a result the significance of the German invasions of Denmark and Norway in larger studies of the Second World War is continually overlooked. Some might argue that it was inevitable that Hitler would invade Scandinavia, but several historians, including noted military historian Liddell Heart and Hitler's biographer Ian Kershaw, have noted that he had shown little strategic interest in Scandinavia.³⁴ In addition, even if it was inevitable that Germany would invade Denmark and Norway, it should be remembered that the British action of mining the North Sea is what provoked the particular timing of the German invasion. For the American occupation

³³David Reynolds has explored the impact of Churchill's writing and provides a detailed analysis of his Second World War series in his work *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2005). The significance of Churchill's writing on Second World War historiography will be discussed more fully later in this chapter; however, some of the most useful sources on Churchill during the war are The Papers of Winston Leonard Spenser Churchill, Churchill College Cambridge and Churchill, Winston Churchill, *Complete Speeches Volume*, Robert Rhodes James ed. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974); *The Second World War Volumes I-VI* (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1948-1954); and *The War Speeches of Winston Churchill*, Charles Eade ed. (London: Cassell & Company, 1952).

³⁴B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (London: Cassell & Company, 1973), 53, and Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-45: Nemesis* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 286.

of Greenland this is a vital point as it was the German invasion of Denmark, which was prompted by the British mine laying, that not only led to the uncertainty over the island's future but also caused the collapse of the Chamberlain government, making it difficult for Canada to communicate with the British government over the issue of Greenland.

In spite of the dearth of British secondary sources on the occupation of Greenland, there are a number of Canadian-focused studies that take the British view into account, but very few of these make use of British archival sources. There is, however, a large amount of primary source material on the subject at the British National Archives at Kew Gardens, notably in the records of the Air Ministry, Cabinet Office, and Foreign Office.³⁵ The personal papers and memoirs of British politicians are especially pertinent to this study, particularly given the role that politicians, both within and outside of the War Cabinet, played in Churchill's ability to follow through with his plans to mine the Leads, manage the Norwegian campaign, and handle the eventual collapse of the Chamberlain government. The most significant records include the papers of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain at the University of Birmingham, which provide helpful information on the military and political issues of the period. His weekly letters to his sisters Ida and Hilda Chamberlain are particularly informative on his views regarding public opinion and the press and his relationship with Winston Churchill.³⁶ Another interesting source is the first authorised Chamberlain biography by Keith Feiling, published soon after Chamberlain's

³⁵See, for example, The British National Archives, AIR 2, 8, 10, 20, 38, 40; CAB 65, 66, 67, 68, 79, 92, 94, 100; FO 115, 211, 321, 337, 371, 414, 419, 461, 490, 649, 700, 749, 962, etc.

³⁶Neville Chamberlain Papers, University of Birmingham Information Services, Special Collections Department, GB 150 NC.

death.³⁷ The author was granted exclusive initial use of Chamberlain's personal and family papers, which he quotes liberally throughout his work. Many of Chamberlain's letters to his sisters have been recently published in a four volume series edited by Robert Self.³⁸ The 4th Volume, *The Downing Street Years*, is the most pertinent to this study.³⁹ It includes an introductory essay that provides an excellent overview of the period. Graham Stewart's *Burying Caesar* is a useful study on the relationship between Churchill and Chamberlain in the period.⁴⁰ The papers of John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the initial stages of the war, delve into great detail about the Norwegian campaign and the related collapse of the Chamberlain government,⁴¹ while the private papers of Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador to the United States, also contain useful documentation relating to the relationships between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, and the period in general. The Papers of Richard Austen Butler, located within the Conservative Party Archive at the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, include documents on pre-war planning in relation to the British Empire, as does his memoir for the period - *The Art of the Possible*.⁴² Other memoirs and biographies of key government

³⁷Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd, 1946).

³⁸Neville Chamberlain, *The Chamberlain Diary Letters, Vol. I-IV*, ed. Robert Self (London: Ashgate, 2000-2005).

³⁹Neville Chamberlain, *The Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume Four: The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940*, ed. Robert Self (London: Ashgate, 2005).

⁴⁰Graham Stewart, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999).

⁴¹John Allsebrook Simon, *The Correspondence and Papers of John Allsebrook Simon, 1st Viscount Simon*, Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

⁴²The Papers of R.A. Butler, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, RAB 1/1; and Richard Austen Butler, *The Art of the Possible: The Memoirs of Lord Butler* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971).

personalities are also useful in exploring the relationship between military actions and government activities and the divisions that existed both within and between parties at the time.⁴³ Printed parliamentary papers and British newspapers also provide useful insight into the British role in the occupation.⁴⁴ Finally, several Canadian and American archives contain additional correspondence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office relating to the occupation.⁴⁵

The United States

As mentioned, there are very few secondary American sources relating to the American occupation of Greenland; however, the largest number of primary sources on the topic are American. This would seem logical, as the occupation of Greenland was ultimately an American endeavour. Nonetheless, it should be noted that while the American occupation of the island has been largely forgotten, during the war it was a major news story. As a

⁴³Leo Amery, *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945*, ed. John Barnes and David Nicholson (London: Hutchinson, 1988); Clement Attlee, *As it Happened: His Autobiography* (London: Odhams Press Ltd.); Alexander Cadogan, *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1971); Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1957); The Earl of Avon, *The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1965); Harold Macmillan, *The Blast of War, 1939-1945* (London: MacMillan, 1967); and Harold Nicholson, *Harold Nicholson: Diaries and Letters 1939-1945*, vol. 1 (London: Collins, 1967).

⁴⁴United Kingdom. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 5th Series, Volumes 359 and 360 (1939-1940), Columns: 778-799; 181-182. See, for example, *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 April 1940, and *The Scotsman*, 13 April 1940.

⁴⁵See, for example, General Records of the Department of the Navy, RG 80, National Archives II, College Park Maryland; Roosevelt, Franklin Delano. Papers as President: Official File (OF), Personal File (PPF), President's Secretary's File (PSF), and Map Room File (MR). Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York; King, William Lyon Mackenzie. Papers, Memoranda and Notes. National Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

result, there is a significant amount of contemporary journalism on the issue.⁴⁶ In terms of impact, the *Harper's* magazine article entitled "Should We Buy Greenland?" was particularly important, as it was read by Congresswoman Edith Norse Rodgers, which led her to raise the question for debate in Congress.⁴⁷ The general interest in Greenland, both before and after the signing of the US-Danish Agreement for the Defence of Greenland in 1941, led to the publication of several scholarly articles on Greenland during the war.⁴⁸ One of the most interesting and useful primary sources on the handling of the American occupation of Greenland are Roosevelt's complete unpublished press transcripts.⁴⁹ Although the transcripts have not been utilised in other studies on the subject of the American occupation, they provide important insights into the central role Greenland played in American public discourse at the time, Roosevelt's use of the Greenland situation, and how the media encouraged Americans to accept his defence policies.

The significance of Greenland to the American government is also reflected in the memoirs of high level American statesmen like Cordell Hull and is discussed in Julius

⁴⁶For example, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *the United States News* all carried a number of stories on Greenland and its relationship to the United States immediately following the German invasion of Denmark.

⁴⁷*Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3rd Session, Vol. 86, Part 9, 7697; Earl P. Hanson, "Should We Buy Greenland?" *Harper's Magazine*, May 1940, 570-577.

⁴⁸For example: the explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson published several articles and books on Greenland, including "The American Far North," *Foreign Affairs* 17 no. 3 (1939): 508-523; "What is the Western Hemisphere?" *Foreign Affairs* 19 no. 343 (1940-1941): 343-346; and *Greenland* (London: George G. Harp and Co. Ltd., 1943). Other examples include Lawrence Martin, "The Geography of the Monroe Doctrine and the Limits of the Western Hemisphere," *Geographical Review* 30 no. 3 (1940): 525-528; Philip E. Mosely, "Iceland and Greenland: An American Problem," *Foreign Affairs* 18, no.1 (1939/1940):742-746; and Hans W. Weigert, "Iceland, Greenland and the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 23 no. 1 (1944/1945): 112- 122.

⁴⁹Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports of Press Conferences 1933-1945* (Washington, 1933-1945).

Pratt's study of Hull in *The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy* series.⁵⁰ In addition, the Council of Foreign Relations volume *The Undeclared War* discusses the significance of Greenland at length.⁵¹ There are also several early American monographs that concern themselves with Greenland during the Second World War, such as *War below Zero: The Battle for Greenland*,⁵² *The Third Front: the Strange Story of the Second World War in the Arctic*,⁵³ and *Lifelines through the Arctic*.⁵⁴ Although these monographs provide interesting firsthand accounts from Greenland during the war, they discuss events after the official agreement, they are written for a general audience, and they do not directly address issues related to Canada or the United Kingdom. In addition, Nancy Fogelson's article "Greenland: Strategic Base on the Northern Defence Line" provides excellent background on the history of American security interests in the island during the early twentieth century, but the author does not make use of either Canadian or British primary sources.⁵⁵

The American ships involved in the early stages of the occupation were Coast Guard cutters and destroyers, and as such, they, like the *Nascopie*, do not appear in official

⁵⁰Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume I* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 756-759.

⁵¹William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation 1937-1940* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), 64, 147, 169, 172, 173, 421, 427, and 428.

⁵²Colonel Bernt Balchen et al., *War Below Zero: The Battle for Greenland* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944).

⁵³Douglas Liversidge, *The Third Front: The Strange Story of the Second World War in the Arctic* (London: Souvenir Press Ltd., 1960).

⁵⁴William S. Carson, *Lifelines through the Arctic* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1962).

⁵⁵Nancy Fogelson, "Greenland: Strategic Base on a Northern Defense Line," *Journal of Military History* 53 no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 51-63.

histories of the United States Navy. Two books, however, provide incomplete and divergent accounts of the *Nascopie* incident. The first, a popularised and simplistic version of events, can be found in Madelyn Klein Anderson's chapter "Wars, Spies and Automatic cities" in *Greenland: Island at the Top of the World*.⁵⁶ The second, a patriotic American perspective on Greenland and the *Nascopie* incident, can be found in chapter six, "A Blue Flag at Ivigtut," in Patrick Abbazia's *Mr. Roosevelt's Navy: The Private War of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet 1939-1942*.⁵⁷

Although Greenland is not the focus of Justus Doenecke's exceptionally well researched study *Storm on the Horizon* he discusses Greenland several times and provides excellent context on the domestic issues that affected the United States at the time.⁵⁸ The American occupation of Greenland also appears in other large studies of American diplomacy and defence. For example, Julius W. Pratt mentioned the occupation in his *History of the United States Foreign Policy*, but like so many other works on the subject, he discusses the occupation only after the signing of the agreement between the United States and Denmark in 1941.⁵⁹ Similarly, in the midst of the Cold War, John Logan's *No Transfer* used Greenland as an example of the ways in which the American government attempted to

⁵⁶Madelyn Klein Anderson, *Greenland: Island at the Top of the World* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1983), 85-87.

⁵⁷Patrick Abbazia, *Mr. Roosevelt's Navy: The Private War of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, 1939-1942* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 83-95.

⁵⁸Justus Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: the Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941*. (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), 122-123, 178, 327, 498n17.

⁵⁹Julius W. Pratt, *A History of the United States Foreign Policy*, (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1955), 642.

insulate the Western Hemisphere during the war.⁶⁰ In addition, Edward W. Chester's "Greenland: Home of the Weather" in *The United States and Six Atlantic Outposts* provides a good overview of the strategic value of Greenland to the United States during the war.⁶¹ Although scholarship directly following the war and into the early Cold War years focused on the significance of Greenland for the hemisphere, recent studies have forgotten Greenland's former strategic value. For example, Brian Loveman's recent study *No Higher Law* provides a detailed and well-researched account of American foreign policy and the Western Hemisphere since the foundation of the republic. However, although he cites Alaska no fewer than eight times and Canada twenty-four times, he does not mention Greenland once in the study.⁶²

In addition to contemporary newspapers and magazines, a number of other collections are useful for the study of the genesis of the American occupation of Greenland. First, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Library and Archives houses many valuable sources, including Roosevelt's papers while president and the papers of Undersecretary of State Adolf Berle.⁶³ Cordell Hull's papers at the Library of Congress are also useful for examining American foreign policy in relation to the United Kingdom and Canada with

⁶⁰John A. Logan, *No Transfer: An American Security Principle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 296-306.

⁶¹Edward W. Chester, "Greenland: Home of the Weather," in *The United States and Six Atlantic Outposts: The Military and Economic Considerations*, (London: Kennikat Press, 1980), 184-215.

⁶²Brian Loveman, *No Higher Law: American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere since 1776* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁶³Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Papers as President: Official File (OF), Personal File (PPF), President's Secretary's File (PSF), and Map Room File (MR); and Adolf A. Berle Papers 1912-1974, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

respect to Greenland.⁶⁴ Finally, the collections of the United States Navy and Coast Guard in the American National Archives I and II offer insights into the strategic planning of the occupation and its legacy.⁶⁵

Canada

Although limited, there are significantly more Canadian secondary sources than there are British. Canadian scholarship on the genesis of the occupation of Greenland tends to view the issue from either Arctic, national-military, or national-diplomatic perspectives. Most Canadian studies rely heavily on Canadian archival sources, only rarely consulting archives outside of the country. Some of the earliest Canadian writing on the subject was produced directly following the war by the former Canadian consuls to the island. For example, Max Dunbar provides interesting firsthand accounts of the significance of Greenland and Canada's relationship to the island during the Second World War, but as a biologist he often underplays the larger geopolitical status of the island and does not cite primary sources.⁶⁶ Another former Canadian consul to Greenland, Trevor Lloyd, published "Progress in West Greenland" in 1950. His article provides a good overview of the island's modern history, but the author only briefly mentions the American occupation.⁶⁷

Canada's role in the American occupation of Greenland is discussed in a section of Robert MacGregor Dawson's *Canada in World Affairs 1939-1941*. While MacGregor Dawson

⁶⁴Cordell Hull Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁶⁵General Records of the Department of the Navy, RG 80, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁶Max J. Dunbar, "Greenland During and Since the Second World War," *International Journal* vol. 2 (Spring 1940): 121-1940; and *Essays from a Life: Scotland, Canada, Greenland, Denmark* (Montreal: McGill University Libraries, 1995), 65-74.

⁶⁷Trevor Lloyd, "Progress in West Greenland," *Journal of Geography* 49 (1950): 319-328.

provides an excellent description of American security interests in the island in his account, he does not deal effectively with the nuances in the relationship between the United States and Canada over the issue.⁶⁸ In addition, James Eayrs and C.P. Stacey discuss the issue in larger monographs; however, a large number of primary sources remain unexamined in both accounts.⁶⁹ In 1981 David Haglund contributed to the literature on the Canadian role in the American occupation of Greenland in his article “Plain Grand Imperialism on a Miniature Scale: Canadian-American Rivalry over Greenland in 1940.” Haglund’s article drew from American Undersecretary of State Adolf Berle’s journals to explore the tensions between the United States and Canada over Greenland during the war. Haglund, however, saw the issues as limited to Berle and ignored the role Roosevelt played in the eventual occupation. As a result, he missed the bigger picture and significance of the issue. At the time Haglund’s article was published, Michael Scheuer wrote a response stating that there may have been more to the story than Haglund claimed. Scheuer highlighted a number of sources that Haglund neglected, including a published collection of key Canadian documents related to the island.⁷⁰ Haglund has recently

⁶⁸Robert MacGregor Dawson, *Canada in World Affairs, 1939-1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 28, 242-245.

⁶⁹James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 165-172; C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, Vol II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 308-309; and *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945* (Ottawa: The Queen’s Printer, 1970), 367-370.

⁷⁰Michael F. Scheuer, “On the possibility that there may be more to it than that: Professor Haglund, the Documents of American External Relations Series and the Canadian-American Controversy over Greenland in 1940,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 12 (1982): 72-83.

produced an updated article on the subject, but it suffers from many of the same issues as the first.⁷¹

More recently, several other Canadian historians have peripherally addressed Greenland in larger monographs dedicated to various aspects of the Second World War. One such example is *No Higher Purpose: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War 1939-1943*,⁷² by W.A.B. Douglas et al. In addition, Shelagh D. Grant has made a number of contributions to the discussion of Canada's interest and involvement in Greenland during the war. Her monograph *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North 1936-1950* explores the impact of the war on Arctic security policies particularly in relation to the United States.⁷³ In the early 1990s Grant published an additional article that revealed that the *St. Roch*, the first ship to sail from the Pacific to the Atlantic through the Northwest Passage, was intended to act as the communications vessel for the planned Canadian occupation of Greenland.⁷⁴ Grant has revisited the issue in a chapter of her recent book *Polar Imperative*, which situates the American occupation of

⁷¹See David G. Haglund, "Greenland (1940) as an Instance of Pickwickian 'Cooperation' Between Mackenzie King's Ottawa and Roosevelt's Washington," *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 24 (2008/2009): 28-41.

⁷²W.A.B. Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War 1939-1943, Volume II, Part 1* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2004).

⁷³Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North 1936-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

⁷⁴Shelagh D. Grant, "Why the *St. Roch*? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions," 48 no. 1 (1993): 82-87. The Canadian National Film Board produced a short film based on Grant's research entitled *Mission: North West Passage*. The film describes the journey of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police auxiliary schooner *St. Roch*, the first vessel to navigate the Northwest Passage from west to east, the second to sail through the passage from east to west, and the first ship to circumnavigate North America. *Mission: North West Passage*, dir. Christopher Rowley, 52 min., National Film Board of Canada, 1994, videocassette.

Greenland during the Second World War in the larger context of North American Arctic sovereignty.⁷⁵

Although there are some publications on Canada's role in the American occupation of Greenland, there is very little secondary literature that directly addresses the *Nascopie* incident itself. As the *Nascopie* was officially the property of the Hudson's Bay Company, it does not appear in official histories of the Royal Canadian Navy.⁷⁶ Additional sources on the Canadian position relating to Greenland and the *Nascopie* incident can be gleaned from a variety of archives and printed collections. The Canadian National Archives possess extensive information on Canada's role in the American occupation.⁷⁷ Many of these sources have also been published in the *Documents on Canadian External Relations* series published by the Canadian Department of External Affairs (Volume VII is particularly helpful).⁷⁸ The diary entries of William Lyon Mackenzie King from the spring of 1940 to the spring of 1941,⁷⁹ are extremely useful, as are the memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside.⁸⁰

⁷⁵Shelagh D. Grant, *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2010).

⁷⁶Interestingly, although there are no fewer than eight articles, including three annual reports, relating to the *Nascopie* between the years 1939 and 1945 in the Hudson's Bay Company publication *The Beaver*, there is no annual report for 1939, the year of the *Nascopie* incident. Capt. G. Edmund Mack, "Nascopie downs Submarine," *The Beaver*, June 1939, 19-21; J. W. Anderson, "Trading North of Hudson's Bay," *The Beaver*, December 1939, 43-45; J. W. Anderson, "The 1941 Voyage of R.M.S Nascopie," *The Beaver*, December 1941, 7-9; J. W. Anderson, "Wartime Voyage: The 1942 Cruise of the HBC S.S. 'Nascopie,' " *The Beaver*, March 1943, 38-41; Tris Coffin, "My Trip Aboard," *The Beaver*, June 1943, 12-14; J. W. Anderson, "Nascopie 1943," *The Beaver*, December 1943, 15-17; J. Lewis Robinson, "The Battle of Fort Ross," *The Beaver*, March 1944, 4-7; J. W. Anderson, "Fort Ross Voyage," *The Beaver*, December 1944, 45-48; and "St. Roch," *The Beaver*, December 1944, 49.

⁷⁷William Lyon Mackenzie King, Papers, Memoranda and Notes. National Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

⁷⁸Documents on Canadian External Relations 1939-1941, Part I, Volume VII, ed. David R. Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974).

Some of the most significant, yet underexplored Canadian primary sources are found held in the archives of the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan).⁸¹ The company holds two bound volumes containing correspondence written during the Second World War relating to cryolite and war. The archives reveal the discussions between the company and the Canadian government at the time and include a large report relating to the island.⁸² Most interestingly, the report contains two descriptions of the *Nascopie* incident, the first being a day-to-day account aboard ship, and the second a general summary of the voyage. The Alcan archives are particularly important because the collection not only provides useful insights into the corporate interest in the island and its resources, but also because it brings together the diplomatic and military issues involved in the conflict that can be seen as separate in other sources. Alcan's official history provides a brief account of the company's role in the war.⁸³ The only academic to consult the Alcan archives to date is Graeme S. Mount, who presented an excellent paper on the subject in the mid-1980s, but it was not published.⁸⁴

⁷⁹William Lyon Mackenzie King, *The Mackenzie King Diaries, 1893-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), microfiche.

⁸⁰Hugh L. Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside: On the Bridge of Time* (Toronto: McClland and Stewart Limited, 1982).

⁸¹Aluminum Company of Canada Global Mission Archives, Rio Tinto Alcan Canada Ltd. Canadian Headquarters, Montreal, Canada.

⁸²H.J. Hendra, "Report on Ivigtut Cryolite Mine Ivigtut, Greenland: Mining Position and Particulars of the Mining Plant," Unpublished Report, Alcan, Montreal, July 6, 1940. 1-52.

⁸³Duncan C. Campbell, *Global Mission: The Story of Alcan* (Montreal: Alcan Aluminium, 1989).

⁸⁴Graeme S. Mount, "Canadian-American Relations and Greenland," Unpublished article, File: Greenland. Aluminium Company of Canada Archives, 1-21.

The Presidents and Prime Ministers of the North Atlantic Triangle

This thesis, by examining unused sources and bringing different material and perspectives together, will deepen and contextualise the history of an important episode in the war. It will also add to our understanding of the North Atlantic Triangle and the mind-set of the key decision makers within it. The relationship between King and Roosevelt played a major role in the genesis of the American occupation of the island. Given that both William Lyon Mackenzie King and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were two of the longest serving leaders of their respective countries and that their personal relationship had a lasting impact on the foreign policies of both the United States and Canada, it seems unusual that there is not more research on the pair. A dedicated monograph is yet to be written on the subject in general, and there is very little written on how their bilateral decisions concerning the island affected the occupation. The relationship between Roosevelt and Mackenzie King during the War, however, is discussed in Lawrence Martin's exceptional chapter the "Best Bilateral Years: Franklin Roosevelt and Mackenzie King," in his monograph *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers - Washington and Ottawa Face to Face: The Myth of Bilateral Bliss 1867-1982*.⁸⁵ Additionally, discussions of Canadian-American relations during the war can be found in Gordon T. Stewart's "An Objective of US Foreign Policy since the Founding of the Republic: The United States and the End of Empire in Canada," in *Canada and the End of Empire*.⁸⁶ One of the best and

⁸⁵Lawrence Martin, *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers - Washington and Ottawa Face to Face: The Myth of Bilateral Bliss 1867-1982* (Doubleday & Company Inc., 1982).

⁸⁶Gordon T. Stewart, "An Objective of US Foreign Policy since the Founding of the Republic: The United States and the End of Empire in Canada," in *Canada and the End of Empire*, ed. Phillip Buckner (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 94-116.

most prolific writers on the decline of the British Empire is John Darwin.⁸⁷ By far the best sources of information on this issue are King's diaries. As with so many issues, however, Roosevelt's papers reveal little on the surface about his feelings toward the Canadian Prime Minister.

Winston Churchill was not yet the Prime Minister during the early stages of the war; however, as mentioned, popular perceptions of the period continue to be largely based on his accounts. Churchill had a tendency to "overdo the rhetoric," but his rhetorical skills, even when overdone, were often convincing. He was by most accounts a master storyteller.⁸⁸ In addition to the division he created between Hitler's invasion of Scandinavia and the Low Countries, the story that we know today of the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom that was forged and strengthened during the Second World War is largely based on the account he wrote.⁸⁹

Churchill's substantial literary record along with several key war-time speeches have formed the foundation upon which much scholarship concerning transatlantic relations

⁸⁷Darwin, John. "Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars." *The Historical Journal* 23, No. 3 (Sep., 1980): 657-679; *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (London: MacMillan, 1988); and *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (London: Basil, 1991).

⁸⁸Geoffrey Best, *Churchill: A Study in Greatness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25.

⁸⁹To say that Churchill was a prolific writer would be something of an understatement. There are few other world leaders in recent history who have left historians with a comparable quantity of work as Churchill. His six volume study *The Second World War*, for example, is approximately four thousand pages long. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War Volumes I-VI* (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1948-1954). For a historical analysis of the work see David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing During the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2005).

during the Second World War has been based.⁹⁰ Through his writing and speeches Churchill forged the idea of the “special-relationship” with the United States. Churchill, born to an American mother and a British father, had an enduring faith in the English-speaking peoples of the Anglo-Saxon race. He strongly believed that both the Americans and the British possessed inherent traits of “democracy, industry, intelligence, and a shared cultural and legal heritage.”⁹¹ This sentiment of Anglo-Saxon unity gave Churchill a palpable sense of shared heritage and a “vision of a common destiny.”⁹² Churchill hoped that this common destiny would result in a new world order led by a close Anglo-American relationship in the post-war period.

In the Churchillian narrative of the Second World War, Winston Churchill bravely opposed Chamberlain-style appeasement tactics against the Germans and then went on to convince the United States to join the British in the fight against the Axis powers. By Churchill’s account, his meeting with Roosevelt on the deck of the HMS *Prince of Wales* in August 1941, which resulted in the Atlantic Charter, was the first concrete step to the Americans’ winning the war and eventually saving the world from both Hitler and Stalin.⁹³

Within this storyline Churchill wove an intricate narrative of the deepening relationship

⁹⁰Of particular importance is Churchill’s speech “The Sinews of Peace,” that he delivered on March 5, 1946, at Westminster College in Fulton Missouri. See Winston S. Churchill, *Complete Speeches Volume VI*, ed. Robert Rhodes James (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), 7289. See also Winston S. Churchill, *The War Speeches of Winston Churchill Volumes I-III*, ed. Charles Eade (London: Cassell & Company, 1952).

⁹¹Charmley, *Churchill’s Grand Alliance*, 3.

⁹²A.E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States 1895-1903* (London: Longmans, 1960), 26.

⁹³Winston Churchill, *The Second World War - Volume III: The Grand Alliance* (London: Cassell & Co., 1950), 384. For a detailed account of the meeting see Theodore A. Wilson, *The First Summit: Roosevelt and Churchill at Placentia Bay 1941*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969); and Douglas Brinkley and David R. Facey-Crowther, *The Atlantic Charter* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1994).

between both the political relationship between United States and the United Kingdom and the personal relationship between himself and Roosevelt.⁹⁴ In 1951 an early reviewer foreshadowed the significance that Churchill's writing would have for the work of modern historians. James L. Godfrey of the University of North Carolina called *The Second World War* "somewhat different than history in the way we usually think of it - it is the stuff from which history is written."⁹⁵ Churchill's work has continued to garner strong praise within the modern academic community. Recently, in a review of Churchill's *Second World War, End of History* author Francis Fukuyama stated that Churchill had a fine eye for detail and that "no figure was grander or more heroic than Churchill."⁹⁶

Godfrey's 1951 prediction proved true and many historians have since used Churchill's work as a basis upon which to write accounts of the Second World War. His carefully constructed narrative was buttressed by many. Most historians do agree that Churchill genuinely believed in the special relationship that he so often promoted and helped to create, but it is becoming increasingly clear that the Churchillian take on the Anglo-American relationship may not have been entirely accurate, particularly with respect to Roosevelt. Nearly every work on Churchill and Roosevelt written in the past three decades begins by criticizing the one-dimensional state of the Anglo-American war-time

⁹⁴Churchill, however, was not entirely naive in his accounts of the period. In *The Second World War* there are hints at his fears of the state of the British Empire in the post-war period, his growing mistrust of Stalin, and his worry regarding the faltering health of the American president. It should be noted, however, that the six volumes in the series were written after the war had ended. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War - Volume II: Their Finest Hour* (London: Cassell & Co., 1950), 22.

⁹⁵James L. Godfrey, "Review: The Second World War Vol. VI: Triumph and Tragedy, by Winston S. Churchill," *Social Forces* 32, no. 4 (May, 1954): 381.

⁹⁶Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992); and Francis Fukuyama, "Review: The Second World War by Winston S. Churchill," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (Sept-Oct, 1997): 215.

historiography. Few works, however, seem to justify this criticism. While this holds true for documentaries and popular histories, most scholarly literature on the pair examines, at least in part, the often ambiguous relationship between the two leaders.⁹⁷

One of the most difficult challenges facing historians of Roosevelt's foreign policy is the lack of personal writing by Roosevelt himself. While Churchill produced thousands of pages on the matter, Roosevelt, in contrast, "would never have been so unwise to commit himself to paper."⁹⁸ Roosevelt kept most of his thoughts and insights to himself. He avoided written records and was often purposely evasive. Roosevelt seems to have been aware of the challenges that his way of working would pose for historians. On the evening of the inauguration of the Roosevelt Library, for example, the president was in a particularly good mood. When asked why he responded: "I'm thinking of all the historians who will come here thinking they'll find the answers to their questions."⁹⁹

One of the main questions asked by historians visiting Roosevelt's library is whether or not Roosevelt actually wanted the United States to enter the European war. The strong

⁹⁷The complex nature of their relationship comes through in many book and chapter titles, such as *The Uneasy Alliance, Allies of a Kind*. This point is also made by David Reynolds in his article "Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Wartime Anglo-American Alliance, 1939-1945: Towards a New Synthesis," in *The Special Relationship: Anglo American Relations Since 1945*, eds. WM. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 18.; Robert Beitzell, *The Uneasy Alliance: America, Britain, and Russia, 1941-1943* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972); and Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978). A book entitled *Churchill and Roosevelt at War: The War They Fought and the Peace They Hoped to Make*, that one might expect to be fairly teleological, includes a chapter "Uneasy Partners: The Roosevelt-Churchill Relationship" that points to a more subtle treatment of the subject on the part of the author. Keith Sainsbury, *Churchill and Roosevelt at War: The War They Fought and the Peace They Hoped to Make* (London: MacMillan Press LTD., 1996).

⁹⁸John Charmley, *Churchill's Grand Alliance: The Anglo-American Special Relationship 1940-57* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 14.

⁹⁹Charmley, *Churchill's Grand Alliance*, 11.

isolationist sentiment in the country made negotiations between the president and Congress concerning increased military spending, even for defence, difficult. Although the United States was officially a neutral power, several authors suggest that Roosevelt personally earnestly wanted to enter the war, but he was perpetually hindered by a country that felt it had been tricked into the First World War and distrusted any action that could be seen as drawing the United States into another one. Historian Robert Dallek has suggested that although Roosevelt publically preached the doctrine of neutrality, he privately believed that morality and self interest “compelled American aid to Britain and France: the preservation of American values and national peace depended on the defeat of Berlin.”¹⁰⁰ Dallek’s argument is echoed by others, including Robert Divine, who points out that even though Roosevelt was a dedicated Wilsonian internationalist early in his career, the depth and breadth of isolationist sentiment in the United States fettered any possibility of a non-isolationist agenda. He argues that unilateralism (the belief that the United States should stand on its own in international affairs, free from treaties or commitments to other countries) coupled with a real fear of war united a broad range of both Democrats and Republicans under the banner of Neutrality.¹⁰¹ Others, however, argue that Roosevelt was less concerned about ideals and more concerned about the economy. Keith Sainsbury contends that Roosevelt was not only sceptical of both the British and French Empires, but that he doubted France’s ability to become a great power again following the war. Suspicious of German economic competition, Roosevelt was not interested in rebuilding

¹⁰⁰Robert Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 199.

¹⁰¹Robert A. Divine, *The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), 9.

the German economy in the same way that Churchill was.¹⁰² Some scholars have challenged this narrative and argued that the United Kingdom was not as important to Roosevelt as Churchill believed. The most acerbic argument is found in John Charmley's *Churchill's Grand Alliance*. Charmley's work responds to what he calls "Churchill myopia." While not blaming the Prime Minister for everything that went wrong, Charmley contends that Churchill's character flaws (impulsiveness, sentimentality, myopia, and lack of judgment) contributed to Britain's decline in the post-war period. His work goes against much of the body of research on transatlantic relations during the war and argues that counter to Churchill's own argument, he did not bring the Americans into the War - the Japanese and the Germans did. Similarly, Churchill did not get the Americans into the Cold War - the Russians did. In addition, Charmley emphasises that counter to his later writings, Churchill himself adhered to Chamberlain's views on appeasement in the 1930s and that Chamberlain's methods were perhaps correct for an empire on the brink of decline.¹⁰³ The question of Roosevelt's desire to aid the Allies, and the United Kingdom in particular, is intimately intertwined with the idea of the special relationship. Roosevelt's measures to protect the United Kingdom are seen as evidence for the unique relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States. David Reynolds, a professor of history at the University of Cambridge who has produced more than a dozen monographs on the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom, has long argued in favour of the existence of the special relationship.¹⁰⁴ In his work Reynolds has stressed that

¹⁰²Sainsbury, *Churchill and Roosevelt at War*, 3.

¹⁰³Charmley, *Churchill's Grand Alliance*; see also John Charmley, "Churchill and the American Alliance," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11 (2001): 353-371.

¹⁰⁴His first substantial scholarly contribution, based on his doctoral dissertation, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941*, focused on the period between Munich and Pearl Harbor. The story he tells "has two facets - the evolution of a unique alliance, and within that, the continental manoeuvring for advantage which was part of the

the period between 1939 and 1941 was particularly important for the establishment of the special relationship. In *From Munich to Pearl Harbor* he argued that during the period “Roosevelt created a new political consensus, built around aid to Britain and its allies. This replaced the policy of hemisphere defence that in the mid-1930s held sway.”¹⁰⁵ This thesis will argue that Roosevelt's policy of hemisphere defence was not replaced, rather that aid to Britain was an extension of hemispheric defence policies.

In the Greenland story, however, the relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt is less important than that between Mackenzie King and Roosevelt. From Churchill's perspective Canada was an important part of the British Empire, but the relationship between Canada and the United Kingdom held a different sort of importance in comparison with the relations between Great Britain and the United States. Churchill has been seen by many scholars as an ardent imperialist, but his relationship to the empire was complicated.¹⁰⁶

shift of world power from Britain to the U.S.A.” David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941: A Study in Comparative Cooperation* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1981), 2-3. Reynolds' later work such as *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century*, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945*, and *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* followed in a similar vein. Recently, Reynolds has revisited many of the issues brought up in his earlier work through his book *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s*. In it, he once again stresses both the need to “understand Anglo-American relations within the framework of ‘culture’ as well as ‘power’ ” and cites 1940 (the fall of France) as not only a critical moment in the war but also in Anglo-American relations. See David Reynolds and David Dimbleby, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988); David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945* (London: Random House, 1995); and David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁵David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 4.

¹⁰⁶See Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World That He Made* (London: MacMillan, 2010).

Canada's position as a part of the British Empire led to its loyalty to the Crown being taken for granted. Churchill held a personal affection for Canada, but he was not close with Prime Minister Mackenzie King.¹⁰⁷ King, a committed bachelor and teetotaler, had his own reservations about Churchill, whom he considered a drunk.

In August 1940, King and Roosevelt had signed what would become known as the Ogdensburg Agreement without consulting Churchill.¹⁰⁸ The agreement created a joint board of defence between Canada and the United States and committed the two nations to a common defence strategy. Later on, because the relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt was far stronger than that between Roosevelt and Chamberlain, King felt his role as the linchpin between the two countries had waned under the new Prime Minister. King was not present at the signing of the Atlantic Charter, something that he took personally.¹⁰⁹ Although King felt hurt when he was not invited to the signing of the Atlantic Charter, he was guilty of the same offence as Churchill. What the examples of the North Atlantic Charter and the Ogdensburg Agreement illustrate, however, is less about the personal disagreements between Churchill and King and more about Roosevelt's ability to manipulate situations and men to achieve his own political ends. An examination of Roosevelt's management of the Greenland situation both domestically and internationally with Canada, the United Kingdom, Greenland, and Denmark will reveal

¹⁰⁷David Dilks, *The Great Dominion: Winston Churchill in Canada 1900-1954* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2005).

¹⁰⁸Upon hearing news of the agreement, Churchill "grumbled bitterly about Canada scuttling to save its self." J.L. Granatstein, "The Man Who Wasn't There: Mackenzie King, Canada, and the Atlantic Charter" in *The Atlantic Charter*, ed. Douglas Brinkley, (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1994), 115-127.

¹⁰⁹J.L. Granatstein, "The Man Who Wasn't There: Mackenzie King, Canada, and the Atlantic Charter." in *The Atlantic Charter*, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1994), 115-127.

similar tactics on the part of the American president and will cast light on his way of thinking.

Domestically, Roosevelt understood the value of American public opinion, and he used the press to manipulate it and keep it on his side. Internationally, Roosevelt understood the importance of personal relationships. He used the relationships he established with foreign leaders to achieve American strategic aims. It is impossible for historians to discern precisely what Roosevelt's intentions were with respect to the war, particularly since he often purposely obfuscated them, but by triangulating sources relating to his work with the press, his diplomats, and foreign dignitaries with regard to the American occupation of Greenland; however, it is possible to reconstruct a side to Roosevelt that is underexplored in the existing historiography. This reconstruction will show that although he paid lip service to the special nature of the relationships between himself and both the Canadian and British prime ministers, he was more interested in securing the Western Hemisphere than in genuine collaboration with the English-speaking peoples of the North Atlantic. Roosevelt may have used the policy of hemispheric defence to eventually aid Britain and its allies, but the policy was most certainly not replaced by the policy of aid to Great Britain, as some scholars have claimed. He viewed the security of the United States in terms of its hemisphere. Roosevelt's motives were rarely transparent or altruistic. Aid to Britain was a priority for Roosevelt, yes, but that too was for the purpose of hemispheric defence. A victorious Britain meant a secure North Atlantic and a secure North Atlantic meant a more secure hemisphere. In addition, for Roosevelt the Western Hemisphere included both Canada and Greenland, and the war provided an opportunity to bring them closer to the United States, both economically and militarily.

The North Atlantic Triangle

This thesis will focus not only on the key decision makers but also on the relationships between their nations. It will explore the questions of what the North Atlantic Triangle actually meant and what it consisted of. While Churchill's writing has helped to establish the idea of the special relationship between the English-speaking peoples of the North Atlantic, the concept of the North Atlantic Triangle itself was coined by Professor John Bartlet Brebner in 1945 in his classic work of the same name.¹¹⁰ In order to understand Brebner's concept it is important to understand something about him and the context in which it was crafted. Brebner invested the notion of the triangle with a strong moral connotation, as a grouping which helped to ensure international peace and stability. He was an historian who attended the University of Toronto, the University of Oxford, and Columbia University. Brebner used the term *North Atlantic Triangle* to describe the trilateral relationship between Canada, the United States, and Great Britain.

Early in his career, Brebner established close ties with leading liberal internationalists and the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace.¹¹¹ He was mentored by one of the foundation's leading members, fellow Canadian James T. Shotwell.¹¹² In his role as director of Economics and History for the Carnegie Foundation, Shotwell oversaw the creation of 150 volumes of the social and economic history of the First World War as well

¹¹⁰John Bartlet Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

¹¹¹Founded by industrialist Andrew Carnegie, the organisation had the express purpose to "hasten the abolition of international war." The trustees of the organisation were given discretion to the measures in which they chose to achieve this goal. One way in which they promoted the ideals of the foundation was by supporting academic scholarship that promoted peace.

¹¹²A prominent internationalist of his time, Shotwell was a member of the "inquiry," Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy advisory group at the Paris Peace Conference. He was later appointed Bryce Professor of the History of International Relations at Columbia University (a post that Brebner later held himself).

as a series of twenty-five studies on Canadian-American relations. Shotwell commissioned Brebner to write *North Atlantic Triangle*, which was to be the last work in the Canadian-American series. Brebner's work would discuss the ways in which the United Kingdom affected the relationship between the United States and Canada: two former colonies that had taken very different paths to achieving independence from British colonial rule, while maintaining both parliamentary institutions and liberal values.

Brebner's *North Atlantic Triangle* was published in 1945, the same year that the United Nations charter was drafted at the San Francisco conference. Shotwell attended the conference as the president of the Carnegie Foundation. He saw a clear link between Brebner's work on the volume and the work of the conference. Published on the heels of the most deadly wars in modern history, the story of the North Atlantic Triangle was intended to serve as a model for international peace in the post-war world. Despite multiple disagreements within the triangle, there had not been a war between the three countries for more than a century. This example was in stark contrast with the European model in which the historic alliances between states had created a domino effect leading to inevitable wars.

North Atlantic Triangle has been called the high-water mark of continentalist scholarship. In his work, Brebner asserts that the North Atlantic Triangle emerges as a result of the Treaty of Washington (1871), which settled a number of ongoing border disputes including the Alabama claims. He argues that before 1871, the North Atlantic Triangle did not exist because Canada was not an independent nation (Canada had only achieved Dominion status through confederation four years earlier in 1867). Brebner contends that Canada's movement toward greater independence from London was stimulated by events such as the Alaskan boundary dispute of 1903. Brebner, however, does not minimise the multiple occasions when relations with the United States were strained. Rather, he used them as

examples to support his claim that the North Atlantic Triangle could be used as a model for peace. Following the War of 1812, all conflicts within the triangle itself were resolved through peaceful negotiation rather than armed combat. He stresses this point by highlighting the fact that despite “the perplexing triangular interplay during the prelude to war,” the three nations were the closest “in triangular economic integration for war.”

Discussion within the work about the three countries was not divided equally. Brebner asserted that he thought he gave a disproportionate amount of attention to Canada and did not adequately factor in the ways in which French-speaking Canada affected the country.

Brebner’s work has influenced most other scholarship on the subject since its publication.

It has, however, not been without its critics, one being Brebner himself. In 1948, three years after the end of the war, Brebner updated his seminal work in three key ways. First, he highlighted the growing importance of US/Canadian trade. Second, he noted the parallel trend in the political development of Canada and the US, to the extent that Canadians had been asking themselves if they had ceased to become a protectorate of Britain simply to fall under the domination of the United States. Third, he suggested that Canada was seeking to escape from singular political dominance through multiplying political commitments elsewhere (for example membership of the United Nations and of the Security Council in 1947 and taking part in the 1948 North Atlantic Treaty discussions). The most common criticism of Brebner’s work is that it overemphasises the role of Canada in the trilateral relationship, but this is something that Brebner himself addresses early on in *North Atlantic Triangle*.¹¹³ In addition, Brebner’s use of the term *North Atlantic Triangle* was descriptive, rather than theoretical. *North Atlantic Triangle* was not a work of international relations, political science, or even historical theory in the modern sense. Although the book was

¹¹³John Bartlet Brebner, “A Changing North Atlantic Triangle,” *International Journal* 3, no.4 (Autumn 1948): 309-19.

intended, at least in part, to serve as an example for peace in the post-war world, the term itself was a descriptive metaphor to explain the relationship between the countries within it. Brebner clearly stated that his “primary aim was to get at, and to set forth, the interplay between the United States and Canada - the Siamese twins of North America which cannot separate and live.”¹¹⁴ Most academics who were writing about the relationship between the United States, Canada, and Great Britain during the Cold War used the term at face value.¹¹⁵ Contemporary academics have interpreted Brebner’s central point differently. More recently, however, they have begun to ascribe complicated theoretical concepts to the term, and glean from Brebner’s work that “Canada’s foreign policy is best explained in terms of Britain and the United States.”¹¹⁶

This mistaken reinterpretation of Brebner’s term has led to significant historical disputes. Over the past few decades, scholarly debates around the utility, and in some cases existence, of the theoretical concept attributed to Brebner have been hotly contested. These debates have taken place within a small circle of primarily Canadian academics in journals such as the *London Journal of Canadian Studies*. The triangle’s critics include those who find the concept incomplete, inadequate, and incorrect. For example, in “The Thin Raiment of the North Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Decision for War 1938-1939,” Terry Crowley contends that Mackenzie King was more interested in domestic policies than in the opinion of the United States. While the United States may not have factored as highly in King’s decision to enter the Second World War, this thesis will show that his personal

¹¹⁴Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle*, xi.

¹¹⁵See, for example, Richard N. Kottman, *Reciprocity and the North Atlantic Triangle 1932-1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), which describes the ways in which economic factors influenced the relationships between the three countries.

¹¹⁶Tony McCulloch, “The North Atlantic Triangle: A Canadian Myth? *International Journal LXVI*, no.1 (Winter 2010/2011): 201.

relationship with Roosevelt had a significant impact on his policies. Justin Masse contended in “North Atlantic Quadrangle, 1940-1946: Mackenzie King’s Lasting Imprint on Canada’s National Security Policy,” that the concept of the triangle itself was problematic and that Canada’s foreign policy could best be described as a quadrangle that included French Canada and France itself. This concept might be helpful to explain the role of French Canadians on Canadian policies; however, following the fall of France in the context of war, this contention does not seem viable.¹¹⁷ Perhaps the most damning criticism has come from Gordon Stewart, who contends in “What North Atlantic Triangle?” that the North Atlantic Triangle is a flawed concept kept on life support by a small community of scholars rather than an accurate reflection of historical reality. In spite of these criticisms a number of scholars continue to defend the concept of the North Atlantic Triangle.¹¹⁸ The

¹¹⁷Terry Crowley, “The Thin Raiment of the North Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Decision for War, 1938-1939,” *The London Journal of Canadian Studies* 20 (2004-2005): 27-44; Justin Massie, “North Atlantic Quadrangle, 1940-46: Mackenzie King’s Lasting Imprint on Canada’s International Security Policy,” *The London Journal of Canadian Studies* 24 (2008/2009); and Gordon Stewart, “What North Atlantic Triangle?” *The London Journal of Canadian Studies* 20 (2004-2005): 5-6.

¹¹⁸These scholars include David Haglund, who has published a number of works on the subject including *The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited: Canadian Grand Strategy at Century's End*. Tony McCulloch has also supported the concept stating that it was a key theory for understanding Mackenzie King’s role leading up to the Second World War in pieces like “The Key in the Log Jam: Mackenzie King, the North Atlantic Triangle and the Anglo-American Rapprochement of 1935-1939.” University of Toronto Professor John English has also continued to support the use of the triangle. English makes the lucid, and seemingly self-evident, point that many other scholars have ignored that the North Atlantic Triangle is not equilateral. David Haglund, *The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited: Canadian Grand Strategy at Century's End* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 2000); and Tony McCulloch, “A Key Log in the Jam: Mackenzie King, the North Atlantic Triangle and the Anglo-American Rapprochement of 1935-1939,” *The London Journal of Canadian Studies* 20 (2004-2005): 45-68. Haglund and McCulloch are currently working on a book on the subject. McCulloch, “The North Atlantic Triangle,” 197. In the article, English asserts that at the outset of the Second World War the North Atlantic Triangle was isosceles, with the United States and the United Kingdom holding a fairly equal balance of power and Canada the shorter side of the triangle. Over the course of the war this relationship changed and became increasingly scalene, with the United States occupying the obtuse angle. John English, “Not an Equilateral Triangle: Canada’s Strategic Relationship with the United

merits of the enduring relevance of the theoretical concept of the North Atlantic Triangle may be debatable, but for the purposes of this study Brebner's original use of the descriptive term *North Atlantic Triangle* is extremely pertinent. As the genesis of the American occupation of Greenland helps to demonstrate, the United States, Canada, and Great Britain were the major players in the North Atlantic during the Second World War. Although the Greenlandic governors and the Danish Ambassador to the United States also played roles in the occupation, the German occupation of Denmark meant that their role was limited.

This thesis makes use of the North Atlantic Triangle to describe and illustrate the interconnections between the three countries in its endeavor to explore the American occupation of Greenland. First and foremost, it is used in a strictly descriptive sense to discuss the relationship between the United States, Great Britain, and Canada. Although the relationship was trilateral, it was by no means equal, and it evolved throughout the war. Second, if one were to trace the farthest south eastern point of the United Kingdom to the northernmost point of Canada, to the southwestern most point of the United States, the resulting triangle would encompass most of the island of Greenland. As such, the triangle will also be used as an illustrative tool to depict the physical area of mutual interest that physically exists between the three countries, which includes Greenland. Third, it will be used to triangulate the events that took place in the lead-up to the American occupation of Greenland. By describing events from British, American, and Canadian perspectives, this thesis aims to provide a more complete understanding of the occupation itself and the effects it had on the island. These multiple perspectives are unified in chapter 6 on Greenland and the occupation. Finally, as this thesis examines the moment in the Second

States and Britain 1939-1945," in McKercher and Aronsen, *The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World*.

World War when the triangle changed shape, it will also be used in the concluding chapters to illustrate the changing power balance between the three countries.

Many scholars contend that the utility of the North Atlantic Triangle ends with the Suez Crisis, beyond which point the relationship between the three countries is seen as declining.¹¹⁹ Common linguistic and cultural similarities, broadly speaking, along with geographic proximity have meant, however, that particularly for Canada, the significance of a North Atlantic Triangle has continued to persist.¹²⁰ This thesis does not claim that the North Atlantic Triangle is the only way to describe the foreign policies of the countries involved in it, rather that it is simply a useful means to explore the issues involved in the American occupation of Greenland and the relationship between the three countries more generally. Thinking about the triangle from a slightly different angle, however, is also a useful tool to understand the interests of the three countries in Greenland at the outset of the Second World War.

The occupation meant something different to each of the three powers involved and to Greenland itself. For the United Kingdom, the American occupation of Greenland is an important moment in the history of the British Empire because it marked a significant change in Britain's relationship to Canada. In addition, a re-evaluation of the causes of the

¹¹⁹McCulloch, "The North Atlantic Triangle," 206.

¹²⁰Recently, the significance of the relationship between Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States has once again taken on increasing importance. Prime Minister Stephen Harper is re-emphasizing Canada's relationship with Great Britain. The Monarchy also seems to place a high value on the relationships within the triangle. Prince William and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge's first royal tour following their marriage in 2011 was to Canada and the United States. With the United States losing its foothold as a global superpower, it is possible that its historic relationship with the United Kingdom and Canada could take on additional importance. In the recent UN vote to grant Palestine observer status at the United Nations, Canada was one of the few countries to support the United States and vote against the proposal, while American pressure on the United Kingdom led it to abstain rather than support the proposal.

German occupation of Denmark and Norway and the resulting collapse of the Chamberlain government reveal significant insights into the British role in the Second World War, in particular that Churchill's decision to mine the Leads in Norway gave Hitler cause to invade Scandinavia, and that this was linked to his invasions of the Low Countries and France. For Canada, Mackenzie King's handling of the Greenland situation is a significant example of the way in which he attempted to establish an independent Canadian foreign policy at the time. It also provides insight into corporate-government interaction in Canada and the conflicting perspectives between different branches within the Canadian government itself. For the United States, the occupation of Greenland was its first belligerent act during the Second World War. It was also the first time the Monroe Doctrine was implemented in the North Atlantic. The occupation of Greenland also furthered American objectives of hemispheric security and helped to firmly establish the growing presence of the American military on the world stage. An examination of how Roosevelt handled the occupation provides insight into the domestic and foreign policies of one of the most enigmatic American presidents. For Greenland, the American occupation brought major political, social, and economic changes. The history of the occupation also provides insight into the ways in which international interests influenced the decisions that led to it, as well as the island's governance and natural resource management practices. It also speaks more generally to broader themes of the North Atlantic Triangle, Canadian-American Bilateral relations, the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom, and the changing role of the Arctic in global military strategy.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters within three sections. Section I includes Chapters 1 and 2 and provides background; Section II includes Chapters 3-6 and discusses the events

leading to the occupation and the occupation itself; and Section III includes Chapter 7 deals with the effects of the occupation and provides suggestions for future work.

Chapters 2-6 comprise the main body of the thesis. "Chapter 2 - Greenland and The World" in 1940 situates the occupation in a global context and examines the general state of international affairs in 1940. It argues that global economic, political, and technological factors set the stage for a change in relationship within the North Atlantic Triangle and for the increased geopolitical significance of Greenland during the Second World War.

Chapters 3-5 provide a triangulated account of the events leading to the occupation from the perspectives of the British, Canadian, and American governments respectively.

"Chapter 3 - Mine Game" discusses the military, diplomatic, and political consequences of Churchill's decision to mine the Norwegian Leads, which not only necessitated the American occupation of Greenland, but also caused the collapse of the Chamberlain government during a critical phase of the war. "Chapter 4 - A Presidential Geography Lesson" focuses on President Roosevelt's strategic use of the Monroe Doctrine in domestic and international policy relating to Greenland during the war. "Chapter 5 - Of King and Cryolite" explores the interaction between the Canadian aluminum industry and the Canadian government during the months leading to the occupation. It examines the secret meeting between Mackenzie King and Roosevelt regarding Greenland and emphasises that conflicting interests within the Canadian government itself led to confusion over the handling of the Greenland situation.

"Chapter 6 - Opening a Long Closed Door: The Occupation of Greenland" brings together the narratives of the previous three chapters and details the process of the occupation and the impact it had on Greenlanders. "Chapter 7 - Conclusions" concludes the work and suggests areas for future research.

In addition to its relevance to the broader themes of the decline of the British Empire, the development of an independent Canadian foreign policy, the rise of the United States on the world stage, and the increasing significance of the Arctic in global affairs, this project provides a necessary link between the past and present. With the impact of climate change, the traditional views on the Arctic are being re-evaluated. A more complete appreciation of the historical background of military, diplomatic, and corporate negotiations involved in the American occupation of Greenland will aid in our contemporary challenges in the Arctic and the changing global balance of power.

The American occupation of Greenland is a tipping point in the relationships within the North Atlantic Triangle. The United States' global political power was waxing, the United Kingdom's empire waning, and Canada, stuck between the two, was in the process of exercising its maturing independent political identity. As a nation, Canada has been defined by its origins as a British colony and by its relationship to the United States. This project is a case study in the relationships between all three and will influence the way we think about the connections between Canada, Britain, and the United States.

Although this project deals with the trilateral relationships within the North Atlantic triangle, Greenland is much more than a backdrop against which events took place. The people of Greenland affected and were affected by the American, Canadian, and British actions relating to the island during the Second World War. At the outset of war, militaries on both sides of the Atlantic were dependent on Greenlandic meteorological data and North American industry was reliant on the island's mineral resources. By the end of the war Greenland's predicted role in transatlantic air traffic had come to fruition. The onset of the Cold War made Greenland one of the most strategically significant sites in the Western Hemisphere for the staging of nuclear weapons.

As it was in 1940, Greenland is today a nation of increasing geopolitical significance. The effects of climate change on the island are revealing an incomprehensible wealth of natural resources at a time of high global demand and low supply. Additionally, the global economic crisis has not only accelerated the shifting balance of political power once again, this time from west to east, but has also reignited long dormant security debates in which Greenland plays an important strategic role. Greenland's position in the world has changed significantly over the past century; however, historically it has been the most noteworthy in times of political, economic, and technological flux. Seventy years ago Greenland's resources and strategic location made it the object of a truly international power struggle. Today, as we live through an important historical period, an examination of another such critical moment will not only help us understand our past, but will also give us insight into our present and future.

Chapter II: Greenland and the World to 1940

With the rapid shrinking of distances in this age of speed and invention, Greenland may be of crucial importance to us in the future . . . Greenland in our hands may be a valuable piece in our defensive armor. In the hands of hostile interests it could be a serious menace.
Robert E. Peary, 1916¹²¹

With the improvement in aviation . . . that will follow the war it is within the bounds of probability that before long airships may at regular intervals cross the Atlantic, in which case Greenland would prove a convenient and important location on a Trans-Atlantic aerial route . . . Greenland should be acquired by Great Britain and placed under the control and form part of the Dominion of Canada.

J.D. Hazen, 1917¹²²

In 1916 American Arctic explorer Admiral Robert E. Peary launched a media campaign in an attempt to convince the American government and general public not to abdicate American territorial claims to Greenland.¹²³ Peary's campaign was in reaction to the recent Danish request for the United States to recognise Denmark's sovereignty over the entirety of the island. Peary, who himself had braved frigid temperatures and traversed thousands of kilometers of frozen tundra in order to claim large swathes of the northern half of the island for the United States, not only lamented the possible loss of his life's work, but also feared for the future security of the United States if Greenland was not brought under American control. He was particularly concerned about the potential implications of foreign military bases on the island in light of technological advances in air and sea power that could leave the United States vulnerable to attack in the event of a future conflict.¹²⁴ Peary, however, was fighting an uphill battle. The American recognition of Danish sovereignty over

¹²¹Robert E. Peary, "Greenland and the Danish West Indies," 1916, Official File (OF) 3953, Papers of Franklin Delano Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, 3-4.

¹²²J.D. Hazen to Lord Curzon's Sub-Committee on Territorial Desiderata in the Terms of Peace, Report, 20 April 1917, CAB 24, 11, The British National Archives, 1-2.

¹²³See, for example, Robert E. Peary, "Greenland as an American Naval Base," *New York Times*, 11 September 1916, 8.

¹²⁴Peary, "Greenland and the Danish West Indies," 3.

Greenland was a condition of the sale of the Danish West Indies to the United States.¹²⁵

The acquisition of the strategically situated islands of Santa Cruz, St. Thomas, and St. John were seen as vital to American economic and security interests, particularly given their proximity to the recently opened Panama Canal.¹²⁶

An additional challenge for Peary was that the discussions were taking place in the midst of the First World War. At the time, the United States and Denmark were both neutral in the conflict, but the belligerent actions of Germany in the Western Hemisphere were amplifying the perceived urgency of the negotiations. Germany had controversially attempted to draw Mexico into the war against the United States and was using unrestricted submarine warfare in the North Atlantic. Many saw these acts as provocations of war, which increased American desires to secure as much of the hemisphere as possible. In addition, unlike Spain, France, and Britain, Germany did not already possess a colony in the Caribbean.¹²⁷ There were growing concerns that Germany would attempt to garner a permanent foothold in the region by establishing a submarine base in St. Thomas.¹²⁸ Germany's willingness to involve itself in strategic areas of the Western Hemisphere was especially problematic in the United States in light of the Monroe Doctrine, which explicitly sought to prevent the extension of European powers in the Western Hemisphere.

¹²⁵“Denmark,” *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1917* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), 457-706.

¹²⁶The purchase of the Danish West Indies had been a longstanding interest of the State Department. Initial interest in the islands was expressed by William Seward in an attempt to secure a defensive naval base in the Caribbean. Charles Callan Tansill, *The Purchase of the Danish West Indies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 2.

¹²⁷Isaac Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands of the United States* (Epping: Caribbean University Press, 1974), 249, 258.

¹²⁸The fear that St. Thomas, in particular, would “fall into German hands” is cited as the main motivation for the purchase. Gordon K. Lewis, *The Virgin Islands, A Caribbean Lilliput* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 2.

In the American Congress, leading Republican Senators such as Henry Cabot Lodge were vocal in their support of the purchase of the islands in order to prevent any extension of German influence to the St. Thomas.¹²⁹

The German actions, in combination with the obvious potential advantages of an additional American territory close to the Panama Canal, made the strategic and commercial benefits of the purchase of the Danish West Indies evident. The discovery of coal in Spitsbergen, Norway, and the strategic use of Russia's Arctic port Archangel for supplies in the first part of the war should have made the public more aware of the economic and strategic potential of the Polar Regions.¹³⁰ Despite Peary's arguments and these developments, however, the value of retaining claims to Greenland was less clear to either the average American or politician. In addition to the lack of public support for its acquisition, Greenland continued to present practical problems in access. The island's unpredictable weather, heavy fogs, and pack ice made it extremely difficult to reach by sea for a large part of the year. Although Peary lauded the island's potential value for transatlantic air routes, aviation in the Arctic remained untested and was seen as extremely dangerous. In the end American policymakers decided to prioritise the tangible need to secure the Panama Canal over Greenland's future potential.¹³¹

¹²⁹Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, "Sign Agreement for Sale of Islands," *New York Times*, 5 August 1916, 10.

¹³⁰Peary, "Greenland and the Danish West Indies," 4-5.

¹³¹Very little attention was paid at the time to the abdication of American rights to Greenland in order to purchase the islands. Indeed, although it is mentioned extensively in the State Department records of the time, very few studies of the history of the Virgin Islands mention this was a condition of the sale. William W. Boyer, *America's Virgin Islands: A History of Human Rights and Wrongs* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1983); Lewis, *The Virgin Islands*; Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*; and, Tansill, *The Purchase of the Danish West Indies*.

The sale of the Danish West Indies to the United States was approved in 1916 and the islands were officially transferred on March 31, 1917.¹³² Once the \$25 million deal was ratified by the Senate and the House, Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, issued a statement that declared "the government of the United States of America will not object to the Danish government extending their political and economic interests to the whole of Greenland."¹³³

The American recognition of Danish sovereignty of Greenland did not go unnoticed in Canada or Great Britain. In a secret report for Lord Curzon's Sub-Committee on Territorial Desiderata on the Terms of Peace, J.D. Hazen, the Canadian Minister of Marine and Fisheries, strongly recommended that the United Kingdom acquire Greenland and place it under the control of the Dominion of Canada. Hazen, in a similar vein to Peary, noted the potential strategic benefits of the island for a high-powered wireless station, which would be useful for both submarines and aircraft and as a station on the transatlantic aerial route from Great Britain to the United States.¹³⁴ Greenland's potential strategic significance was evident to many, so much so that the British Foreign Office discussed following through on Hazen's report and raising the issue of Greenland at the Paris Peace Conference. It was decided, however, that the matter was "extraneous to the scope of the labours" of the conference and that it would be better to discuss the issue at the League of Nations at a

¹³²"Danish Pact is Signed," *Washington Post*, 16 August 1916, 1.

¹³³Interestingly, the statement did not explicitly abdicate its claims to the island but stated that the United States would not object to the extension of Danish Sovereignty over Greenland. Robert Lansing, Declaration [Copy], 4 August 1916, FO 608/120, The British National Archives, 1.

¹³⁴J.D. Hazen to Lord Curzon's Sub-Committee on Territorial Desiderata in the Terms of Peace, Report, 20 April 1917, CAB 24, 11, The British National Archives, 1.

later date.¹³⁵ As in the United States, the British discussions about the fate of Greenland were also preempted by more pressing security concerns.

In the years following the First World War, however, technology progressed rapidly, and in less than two decades the vision of Greenland held by Peary and Hazen would be realised. By the time of the Second World War, several technological and political factors converged to make the island one of the most geopolitically significant locations in the Western Hemisphere.

Some of the most important of these factors were related to technological advances in the interwar period. A 1938 memo circulated amongst British politicians, including the future Minister for Air, Richard Austen Butler, summarised some of the ways in which technology would change strategy in future wars. The memo noted that time would be the greatest difference between past and future wars. This change was as a result of the increased “speeds, carrying capacity, and endurance” of several modes of transportation. These improvements to transportation not only increased the speed of travel and shipping but also increased the global demand for the raw materials needed to produce and fuel them. It was noted that the rise of “instantaneous world-wide communication” as a result of improvements to wireless technologies would contribute to a change in the speed and strategy of the next war.¹³⁶ The development of these technologies necessitated the establishment of additional wireless stations to aid with communications. The memo made special mention of developments in airpower, stating that “the last war must not be taken as

¹³⁵Charles Tufton to Lord Curzon, Memo, 19 November 1919, FO 608/120, The British National Archives, 1-2.

¹³⁶Commander G.A. French, Confidential Memo, “Organisation of the British Empire for War,” Papers of R.A. Butler, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford RAB 1./1, 3.

an example of the power of the air, as even at the end of the war, the employment of military aircraft and the development of material was in its infancy.”¹³⁷ Airpower had indeed improved significantly in the interwar period in both range and carrying capacity.¹³⁸ These improvements had a major impact on the geopolitical significance of the Arctic Regions. New polar projection maps published in newspapers and magazines visibly illustrated both the strategic significance of the Arctic and Antarctic to international security and the potential of trans-Arctic aviation, which could reduce travel times significantly.

Flying was already changing the strategic thinking of the military. In military strategy the objective of an offensive attack was to gain control of an area while that of a defensive attack was to maintain control of an area. Historically, land areas had been controlled by armies and sea areas had been controlled by navies. Airpower, by contrast, had to be considered in terms of three areas: land, sea, and air.¹³⁹ The perceived superiority of airpower, that powers could attack land-based, sea-based and air-based targets, led to calls to replace entire naval fleets with airplanes. Airpower, however, was still in the nascent stages of development, and aircraft in the period had numerous limitations, particularly in terms of their range. The range of an aircraft was most affected by weight, but for planes to

¹³⁷Commander G.A. French, Confidential Memo, “Organisation of the British Empire for War,” Papers of R.A. Butler, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford RAB 1./1, 4.

¹³⁸For example, in 1939 the P-36 had a 300 miles per hour maximum speed and a 600 mile combat range; by 1945 the P-51H had a maximum speed of almost 500 miles per hour and the P47N had better than a 2,000-mile range. *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. VI: Men and Planes*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 196.

¹³⁹Barrett Studley, “Bombing Planes or Battleships?” *North American Review* 227, no. 6 (Jun. 1929): 727.

be effective militarily they needed to carry bombs, which increased the weight and decreased the range of flights.¹⁴⁰ Even without bombs or other cargo, few planes had the capacity to make a transatlantic crossing without refueling. In this context military strategists started to explore the possibility of aircraft carriers in earnest and began to see the potential defensive importance of refueling stations and aerodromes in the Atlantic.¹⁴¹

The technological advancements in airpower inspired fear as well as excitement in the general public. Events like Charles Lindbergh's inaugural transatlantic crossing in 1927 captured the imaginations of people around the world.¹⁴² Dystopian stories about the impact aviation would have on society had been published for decades.¹⁴³ Newspapers and popular fiction were replete with stories which "described skies full of airplanes that hurled incendiary bombs and chemical gasses on defenseless cities."¹⁴⁴ As one writer eloquently stated "there was no more evocative symbol for the dark side of progress than the long range bomber."¹⁴⁵ These fears were exacerbated by the growing instability in global economic and political systems in the period. The spring of 1940, when Greenland became an acute issue, was a time of great global upheaval. A war had been raging in the Far East for several years; there had been colonial wars; and now a second major war had erupted in

¹⁴⁰Studley, "Bombing Planes or Battleships?" 727.

¹⁴¹Gladys Jones, "Floating Islands for Transocean Air Routes," *The Science Newsletter* 12 no. 328 (July 1927): 49-50, 57-58.

¹⁴²Richard Bak, *The Big Jump: Lindbergh and the Great Atlantic Air Race* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

¹⁴³H.G. Wells, *War in the Air* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908).

¹⁴⁴Peter Fritzsche, "Machine Dreams: Air-mindedness and the Reinvention of Germany," *The American Historical Review* 98 no. 3 (Jun. 1993): 685.

¹⁴⁵Fritzsche, "Machine Dreams," 685.

Europe and threatened to spread. The economic crisis of the 1930s brought down governments and polarised populations. Fear, insecurity, and sometimes violence led to dictators on both ends of the political spectrum assuming the leadership of national governments. Desires for increased spheres of influence, living space, and natural resources led for calls to reclaim historical territory lost in the Great War and earlier in the Pacific, Europe, and Eurasia. With the majority of the globe already claimed, leaders, aided by new technologies, began looking to the Polar Regions to fulfill renewed imperial desires.

The unstable international situation emphasised the need for Arctic nations to fortify their borders and solidify their claims to territorial sovereignty. Nowhere was this truer than in the Soviet Union. During the interwar period, the Soviet Union began to pay more attention to the economic and military potential of its Arctic regions. It acquired additional Arctic territory through the annexation of Franz Josef Land (formerly Fridtjof Nansen Land) in 1929. In addition, the Soviet Union dedicated substantial resources to its existing holdings, establishing wireless and meteorological stations throughout its vast Arctic territory. Merchant shipping through the Arctic Northern Sea Route also increased dramatically, as did flights in the region. Between 1933 and 1936, flights in the Soviet Union's Arctic increased by 300 percent. Additionally, the first journey through the Northern Sea Route from west to east in a single season by the ice breaker *Sibiriakov* had a significant psychological effect on the country and immediately led to the creation of the Central Board of the Northern Sea Route, which was tasked with all aspects of development in the

region.¹⁴⁶ The USSR's successes in its Arctic regions led other countries to consider the strategic value of other parts of the Arctic including Greenland.

The geography of the Soviet Union made the fortification of its Arctic more pressing as it physically bridged the conflict in the Pacific and the developing conflict in Europe. In the East the Soviet Union had been involved in a series of clashes with Japan and was assisting China in the Second Sino-Japanese war in order to prevent Japanese expansion into its own territory. In the West, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Germany in August of 1939. Germany had been pursuing expansionist policies throughout the decade. It had annexed both Austria and Czechoslovakia. In this period Germany had also become a world leader in meteorology and polar aviation. It too had conducted numerous expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic to gather meteorological information and to establish German claims in the Polar Regions.

War was declared in Europe in September 1939. Expectations varied wildly as to what impact the war would have. As far as the Arctic was concerned, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, as well as a number of other countries, hoped to remain neutral in the conflict.¹⁴⁷ The United States also adopted the position of neutrality, and Canada entered the war on the side of the Allies. Although some anticipated significant land battles early on in the war, following the invasion of Poland, fighting had been limited and sporadic on the continent. Hopes were high, in spite of their proximity to Germany and Great Britain, that the Scandinavian countries would be able to maintain their neutrality. In late November of 1939, however, the Soviet Union invaded Finland in order to garner territory that would

¹⁴⁶Kenneth Mason, "Notes on the Northern Sea Route," *The Geographical Journal* 96 no. 1 (Jul. 1940): 27-41.

¹⁴⁷W. Glyn Jones, *Denmark: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 152.

help to insulate St. Petersburg (which lay a mere forty kilometers from the Finnish border) against potential attacks.¹⁴⁸ The occupation of Finland by Stalin's forces elicited sympathy across Europe and in the United States, but for the time being German and Russian aggression remained confined to the eastern regions of the European continent. In the winter of 1939-1940, the lack of military activity elsewhere in Western Europe led to the period being called the Phoney War. The relative calm of this period, however, was short-lived. The spring brought a flurry of troop movements across the continent, which included the German invasions of Denmark and Norway. The invasion of the two Scandinavian countries had repercussions far beyond Europe. Greenland, as a Danish colony, could now potentially be claimed by Germany. As in the First World War, Greenland was to become the subject of increased global attention. Unlike the First World War, however, Greenland was now strategically significant.

This chapter will trace the history of Greenland's interaction with Europe up to the German invasion of Denmark. It will argue that although Greenland had been significant in earlier periods, during the interwar period Greenland's strategic importance increased significantly as the war drew closer. Against the backdrop of political expansion and scientific discoveries in meteorology, flight, and material science, Greenland became an increasingly important location for weather stations, transpolar aviation, and raw materials for aluminum production in the interwar period. Drawing from contemporary scientific publications, this chapter will trace the developments in meteorology, aviation, and material production and will illustrate the ways in which the convergence of these factors made the security and control of the island acute, which resulted in Greenland becoming

¹⁴⁸In what has become known as the Winter War, the Finnish resistance fought from November 1939 until March of 1940, when they eventually succumbed to the Red Army.

the centre of an international power struggle after Germany invaded Denmark on April 9, 1940.

History of European Interaction with Greenland

*"There are few places where a sense of history and geography is so necessary to understand topical policies, as in connection with Greenland."*¹⁴⁹

Greenland, one of the largest islands in the world, is in many ways a place without a known history. It has been excluded from mainstream historiography partially because the failure of the first European settlement on the island meant there was little contact between it and the wider world for centuries, and also because so much of Greenland's past is itself a mystery. The original settlers of the island disappeared nearly a thousand years ago. Similarly, the Norse settlement on the island vanished without known cause.¹⁵⁰

Greenland's global political importance has waxed and waned over the centuries, coming into focus only when the natural resources it contains have been deemed to be of sufficient value to brave the island's inhospitable weather conditions and the treacherous journey there. Three hundred years after the failure of the first European colony on Greenland, the promises of adventure, untold mineral wealth, and potential new shipping routes to the East were the impetus for renewed European interest in Greenland in the 18th century. These journeys were later conducted in the name of science and took on mythological qualities as explorers and traders disappeared into the Arctic mists, returning with polar bear skins and narwhal tusks.

¹⁴⁹Tom Høyem, "Greenland: A Country in Transition," *Polar Record* 24 no. 148 (1988): 10.

¹⁵⁰There continues to be considerable debate over the causes of the failure of the colony during the middle ages. See Kristen A. Seaver, "Desirable Teeth: The Medieval Trade in Arctic and African Ivory," *Journal of Global History* 4 no. 2 (July 2009): 272-273.

As a result of Greenland's marginal place in global history, the island's modern history has been told piecemeal through various nationalistic lenses: as a Danish colony, as a traditional Norwegian fishing ground, or as a site of various international polar expeditions.

In spite of its remote location and harsh weather conditions, Greenland has a long history of interaction with Europe. This interaction, however, was inconsistent, involving long stretches of isolation punctuated by periods of intense contact and trade. Greenland's status as a European settler colony in combination with its distant location and low population meant that questions of its sovereignty played out in courts far removed from those who lived on the island. Adventurous Europeans were drawn to the island by its resources, but contact with Greenlanders was limited by Denmark's longstanding closed-door policy for the island.

Greenland was first colonised by Europeans in the late 990s following the discovery of the island by Icelandic explorer Erik the Red in 982 AD.¹⁵¹ Erik, who had been exiled from Iceland, encouraged others to join him with the promise of unlimited uninhabited land.¹⁵² The resulting colony thrived for centuries.¹⁵³ It is thought to have been most prosperous

¹⁵¹Ib Persson, "The Fate of Icelandic Vikings in Greenland," *Man* 4, no. 4 (December 1969): 620. Both the dates and validity of Erik the Red's discovery of Greenland are contestable. There are now questions surrounding Erik the Red's discovery itself, particularly the Icelandic sagas used to support the claim; see Donald R. Kelley, "The Rise of Prehistory," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 1 (March 2003): 32.

¹⁵²Jette Arneborg, "Norse Greenland: Reflections on Settlement and Depopulation," in James H. Barrett (ed.), *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Belgium: Brepols, 2003), 163.

¹⁵³Although the colony was successful, travelling to Greenland in the Middle Ages was always treacherous and required a knowledgeable captain and a competent crew. Guðmundur J. Guðmundsson, "Greenland and the Wider World," *The Journal of the North Atlantic* 2 (Spring 2009): 69.

between 1100 and 1200 AD, during which time it benefited from significant exchanges with Iceland and Norway.¹⁵⁴ In 1261 the colony declared its allegiance to the King of Norway.¹⁵⁵ The colony traded actively until the early 14th century when several factors converged to temporarily sever Greenland's ties with Europe.¹⁵⁶

The exact cause that led to the collapse of the initial European colony on Greenland is unknown; however, several events likely contributed to the disruption in communication between Greenland and Europe. These included political unrest in Norway, which altered the Kingdom's trading patterns with its colony, and the arrival of the Black Death in 1349, which devastated Norwegian shipping in the North Atlantic. In addition, the influx of the Thule Inuit in southern Greenland radically changed the social dynamics on the island. The Thule both marginalised the Tuniit people, the traditional trading partners of the Europeans, and threatened European farmers through constant raids in the Western settlement. Finally, the little ice age is thought to have caused significant changes to Greenlandic weather patterns and drastically affected the living conditions on and access to the island.¹⁵⁷ Whatever the reasons, international trade with the island, with the exception of the occasional whaling vessel, ended.¹⁵⁸ Greenland had very limited sustained

¹⁵⁴Herman R. Friis, "Greenland: A Productive Arctic Colony," *Economic Geography* 13, no. 1 (January 1937): 80-82.

¹⁵⁵P.T. Federspiel, "The Disputed Sovereignty over East Greenland," *International Affairs* 11 no. 6 (Nov. 1932): 784.

¹⁵⁶P.T. Federspiel, "The Disputed Sovereignty over East Greenland," *International Affairs* 11 no. 6 (Nov. 1932): 784.

¹⁵⁷Shelagh D. Grant, *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2010), 50-51.

¹⁵⁸The last recorded ship from the colony arrived in Bergen in 1410. Federspiel, "The Disputed Sovereignty," 785.

interaction with Europe for nearly three centuries. Consequently, European interest and scholarship on the subject were greatly reduced.

Although there was virtually no contact between Europe and its former colony, Greenland continued to be considered part of the Dano-Norwegian colonial Empire in the North Atlantic which included Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, the Orkney Islands, and the Shetland Islands.¹⁵⁹ In the 1720s Hans Egede, a Norwegian pastor who sought to resume contact with the descendants of the old Norse population and return them to Lutheran Christianity, organised a series of expeditions to the island.¹⁶⁰ When Egede arrived on the island, he is said to have found no evidence of the Old Norse population he was seeking, but he was successful in re-establishing a European colonial presence on the island and reopening trade between Greenland and Scandinavia.¹⁶¹ In addition, although Egede was unable to achieve his original goal of converting Norse-Greenlanders to Lutheranism, he set about reforming the lives of Greenlanders and establishing formal Danish control over the greater part of the island.¹⁶² The reestablishment of a European colony in Greenland, particularly one founded by a devout missionary on religious grounds, brought with it new social and cultural rules and expectations. Under the Royal Greenlandic Trading

¹⁵⁹Federspiel, "The Disputed Sovereignty," 785.

¹⁶⁰Egede struggled for years to garner the state backing in the form of a trading company in order to re-establish a colony and trade to the island. In 1721, after more than ten years, the Danish-Norwegian King granted Egede a Royal Charter for the Bergen Greenland Company. See Finn Gad, *The History of Greenland II: 1700-1782* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973) and Louis Bobe, *Hans Egede: Colonizer and Missionary of Greenland* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1952).

¹⁶¹Some believe that Egede did encounter the descendants of the original European settlers who had married into the Inuit population of the island; see Persson, "The Fate of Icelandic Vikings in Greenland," 627.

¹⁶²Charles Campbell Hughes, "Under Four Flags: Recent Culture Change Among the Eskimos," *Current Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (February 1965): 5.

Department (RGTD), which was established after the collapse of the Bergen Company, administrators attempted to create a “colonial society of distinct social categorization that classed, gendered and racialized” in order to prevent marriages between Inuit women and European men.”¹⁶³

The RGTD managed the island’s government from 1774 until 1908.¹⁶⁴ The company pursued a number of protectionist policies in order to do so. In 1776 the Monopoly Act was passed. The act was intended to secure the company’s exclusive trading rights on the island and to protect Greenlanders from “the violence of ignorant and rapacious seamen.”¹⁶⁵ The Monopoly Act effectively established a “closed-door policy” for the island, which served the dual purpose of reinforcing Danish sovereignty over the island while insulating native Greenlanders from disease.¹⁶⁶ In 1782 Greenland was divided into Northern and Southern halves which were each policed by a governor. At the same time marriage between Europeans and “unmixed” Greenlandic women was outlawed in spite of the fact that the island’s history meant that determining the background of Greenlanders was difficult.¹⁶⁷ Initially, trade between the RGTD and Greenlanders was done informally. As time went on, however, this was replaced by a strict Danish government-regulated state

¹⁶³Inge Seiding, “Colonial Categories of Rule – Mixed Marriages and Families in Greenland around 1800,” *Kontur*, No. 22 (2011): 56.

¹⁶⁴Aage V. Strøm Tejsen, "The History of the Royal Greenland Trade Department," *Polar Record* 18 no. 116 (1977): 451-474.

¹⁶⁵Federspiel, “The Disputed Sovereignty,” 786.

¹⁶⁶Cordell Hull to Frank Knox, Letter, 28 April 1941, RG 80, Box 192, American National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 2.

¹⁶⁷Seiding, “Colonial Categories of Rule,” 62.

monopoly that had the power to fix the prices of all articles of trade, including imports and exports.¹⁶⁸

Between 1908 and 1912 the company lost its exclusive control of the island and the management of the colony was transferred to the Danish Ministry of the Interior. In practice, however, very little changed and Greenland continued to have minimal interaction with the outside world. The Danish government continued the RGTD's longstanding closed-door policy with its northernmost colony. The Danish government endeavoured to keep the island and its First Nation's peoples isolated from foreign influences. The government was particularly concerned about the potential spread of European and American diseases to the island's inhabitants, who had no immunity against them. It also required special permits for visitors to the island and granted them to only a select few. As a result, Greenland's small population of approximately sixteen thousand only rarely had contact with non-Greenlanders.¹⁶⁹

The strict government trade monopoly persisted well into the 20th century, which contributed to the costs of administrating the colony while providing Greenlanders with basic necessities at reasonable prices, as well as concurrently controlling the types of outside goods offered them (such as alcohol, coffee and tobacco).¹⁷⁰ Although Greenlanders had some role in the island's governance, including responsibilities for the management of hunting stations and serving as justices alongside Danes in district

¹⁶⁸Herman R. Friis, "Greenland: A Productive Arctic Colony," *Economic Geography* 13, no. 1 (January 1937): 92.

¹⁶⁹Philip E. Mosely, "Iceland and Greenland: An American Problem," *Foreign Affairs* 18, no.1 (1939/1940):742.

¹⁷⁰Hughes, "Under Four Flags: Recent Culture Change Among the Eskimos," 5.

tribunals, the majority of high-level positions were held by the Danish.¹⁷¹ The Danes, who accounted for approximately three percent of the population, held the lion's share of professional jobs including administrators, missionaries, doctors, educators, and mine employees.¹⁷² In spite of the paternalistic nature of many of its policies and the relative isolation of its people, the Danish government's management of Greenland was highly regarded internationally.¹⁷³

Despite the international community's high regard for Danish policies relating to Greenland's Inuit peoples, Denmark's exclusive claims to the island did not go unchallenged. In the 18th and 19th centuries interest in the island was renewed as a result of its resources and the ongoing search for trade routes to the East. Denmark's closed-door policy meant, however, that few explorers or cartographers were permitted to visit the island. As a result, in the early 20th century large swathes of the island remained unmapped and much of the island's coast was uncharted. The lack of knowledge of large areas of Greenland meant that some other powers considered areas of the island, particularly in the north and east, to be *terra nullius* (no-man's-land) that could potentially be claimed by another nation. There are a number of ways by which a country can declare jurisdiction over another. At the time these included discovery, cessation, accretion, subjugation, prescription, and continuity.¹⁷⁴ Discovery alone, however, was incomplete. It was

¹⁷¹Stefansson, *Greenland*, 200.

¹⁷²Confidential Report Greenland, Undated (estimated late 1940/early 1941), RG 80, Box 192, American National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 18.

¹⁷³“Greenland, last of Denmark's colonies, has been administered by a benevolent bureaucracy whose enlightened social and educational policies have been highly beneficial to the natives,” C. Hull to F. Knox, Letter, 28 April 1941, RG 80, Box 192, American National Archives II, 2; see also Mosley, “Iceland and Greenland,” 742.

¹⁷⁴Lassa Oppenheim, *International Law - A Treatise* volume I (London: Longmans, 1905), 129.

necessary to prove “effective occupation” through settlement, governance, and the enforcement of laws.

In order for Denmark to claim sovereignty over Greenland, it needed to continually prove that it was effectively occupying it, but at the time only small pockets of the island were populated. Norway actively contested Danish claims to the sparsely populated eastern coast of the island, which had been Norwegian fishing ground for centuries.¹⁷⁵ The British, who themselves had a longstanding tradition of exploration in the region, had an interest in the island as a result of its proximity to Canada.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, many Americans felt as though they also had strong claims to sections of the vast island as a result of American discovery expeditions that had charted areas of previously unexplored Northern Greenland.

By the conclusion of the First World War, however, Denmark was actively seeking international agreements to strengthen its claims to Greenland. As mentioned, during the war the United States had implicitly abdicated its rights of discovery to the island in order to complete the purchase of the Danish West Indies. In 1925 Great Britain (and by extension the Dominion of Canada) recognised Danish sovereignty over Greenland but requested a first right to purchase the island if Denmark decided to sell it. As a result of this acknowledgement, the British were granted “most favoured nation status” on the island, which allowed the British special privileges relating to hunting and fishing and establishing

¹⁷⁵The nature of Scandinavian politics meant that Greenland was a colony of both Norway and Denmark at different times in its history. From 1380-1814 Norway was united with Denmark under the Danish Crown. The Treaty of Kiel ceded the rights to Norway to Sweden and Denmark retained its rights to Greenland. Following the signing of the treaty the Norwegians sought to retain the ability to hunt and fish in east Greenland which remained in arbitration until the 1930s. Federspiel, “The Disputed Sovereignty,” 786-787.

¹⁷⁶Some scholars contend that the United Kingdom was trading with Greenland in the Middle Ages and earlier. See, for example, Kristen A. Seaver, “Desirable Teeth: The Medieval Trade in Arctic and African Ivory,” *Journal of Global History* 4 no. 2 (July 2009): 272-273.

meteorological, telegraphic, and telephonic stations for scientific and humanitarian purposes.¹⁷⁷

In the 1920s, however, these discussions over the island's status and its uses remained largely theoretical. Apart from the short summer hunting season, Greenland remained difficult and dangerous to access and, apart from the ongoing disagreement with the Norwegians over fishing rights, there was little concrete international interest in the Danish colony. By the late 1930s, however, the situation had changed dramatically. Advances in meteorology were increasing the strategic significance of the island and assisting with navigation to and from Greenland. In addition, technological improvements in airpower placed Greenland directly on flight paths to Europe. Finally, Greenland's mineral resources became an essential component in the smelting of aluminum for aircraft manufacture. Each of these factors would have vastly increased Greenland's geopolitical significance even in peacetime; however, the confluence of these three factors in the midst of the Second World War heightened international interest in the island and Greenland's place in the world.

Greenland's Increasing Significance in Science and Technology

Some of the most important technological developments in the interwar period related to meteorology. Greenland not only played an important role in the development and refinement of meteorological science, but it was also revealed to be one of the most significant locations from which to predict weather patterns in Europe. Accurate meteorological data was generally important, but in the context of war it was vital for all branches of the military. The army needed precise weather details for troop movements. It

¹⁷⁷Most Favoured Nation Rights in Greenland, Convention, 4 June 1925, FO 93, 29/55, The British National Archives, 1.

was, for example, much more difficult to make progress over large land areas in a violent rain or snowstorm. The navy relied on accurate weather reports for safe sailing, and in northern waters for the prediction and detection of icebergs.¹⁷⁸ Finally the air force was reliant on the weather in order to function. Although airplanes were significantly more technologically advanced than in the First World War, they still lacked instrumentation that could assist with conditions of low visibility. Fogs and snow storms were especially precarious for landings, as pilots were still largely dependent on their sight for successful landings. Weather was also important for larger military strategies and coordinated attacks. With accurate weather reports, even bad weather could be made advantageous.¹⁷⁹ In order to best exploit the advantages afforded by good meteorological data, it was essential to understand how weather patterns functioned, to have means to accurately measure weather in a location, and to possess a method to convey and receive that information that was faster than the weather itself. Developments in all three of these areas occurred in Greenland in the interwar period.

War has long had an important role in the development of technology, and this is particularly true in the case of meteorology.¹⁸⁰ In 1854, during the Crimean War, a violent storm damaged and sank numerous ships and wrought havoc on the camps of Allied armies. The extensive damage and loss of life as a result of the storm highlighted the

¹⁷⁸Robert De C. Ward, "A Cruise with the International Ice Patrol," *Geographical Review*, 14 no. 1 (Jan. 1924): 50-61.

¹⁷⁹For example, the German invasion of Norway capitalised on heavy fog to evade detection by the British. Similarly, the D-Day invasions of Normandy used a short break in a heavy storm to launch a surprise attack on the Germans.

¹⁸⁰The relationship between war and meteorology is reflected in the commonly used term "weather front," which is a reference to the fronts of the Great War. C.K.M. Douglas, "The Polar Front and its Place in Modern Meteorology," *The Geographical Journal* 94 no.2 (Aug. 1939): 135.

necessity of establishing a regular telegraphic storm-warning service.¹⁸¹ Initially, this was done through wire telegraphy while radio was only used to communicate with ships, but there remained limited coordination of these services both within countries and internationally. During the First World War, meteorologists were relied upon to keep pilots informed of current and future weather conditions, but both the means to predict the weather and the methods to relay meteorological information often proved inadequate.¹⁸² When the Americans entered the war, they quickly realised that “Germans were abundantly provided with all of the necessary meteorological information of which they themselves were almost hopelessly destitute.”¹⁸³ As a result of the lack of knowledge and training in the new science of aerology (meteorology), the United States Weather Bureau detailed members of its staff to act as instructors and field officers for the American military during the First World War.¹⁸⁴

There was little standardisation in this developing science in the interwar period, and many violently disagreed on how weather should be measured, predicted, and communicated.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹“World Wide Radio Service Aids Weather Prediction,” *The Science Newsletter* 10 no. 294 (Nov. 1926): 133.

¹⁸²“World Wide Radio Service Aids Weather Prediction,” *The Science Newsletter* 10 no. 294 (Nov. 1926): 133-134.

¹⁸³Jaquest W. Redway, “The New Meteorology,” *Ecology* 3 no. 4 (Oct. 1922): 337.

¹⁸⁴One of these officers was Professor Alexander McAdie, who was appointed senior aerographic officer overseas. He produced one of the first publications on the new meteorology: the science of the air. Alexander McAdie, *The Principles of Aërography* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1921).

¹⁸⁵See, for example, C. LeRoy Meisinger, “Notes on Meteorology and Climatology,” *Science* 54 no.1395 (Sep. 1921): 276-277 for a discussion of some of the issues with this lack of standardisation, including the use of both Fahrenheit and Celsius in the measurement of temperature.

At the time, many of the leading meteorological scientists were Scandinavian. It was postulated that weather in some of the most populated areas of the United States and Europe might be the result of air pressure from the Polar Regions. The theory known as the Three Dimensional Cyclonic (or Frontal) Theory, developed by the Norwegian School of Meteorology, broadly contended that hot and cool air currents worked in a cyclonic pattern, and it was the movement of these currents that affected weather. In Europe the main currents were described as *tropical* and *polar*. Tropical currents originated from the southern hemisphere and polar air originated from the Arctic. Polar air warmed over the Atlantic, known as *maritime polar air*, it was particularly important for European meteorology. In the British Isles, for example, polar air occurred five times more frequently than tropical air.¹⁸⁶ The ability to measure polar air at its source, it was thought, would allow for much more accurate weather prediction.

The validation and acceptance of the Scandinavian theories on the part of the scientific community took a number of years.¹⁸⁷ A series of scientific expeditions in the 1920s and 1930s at the Greenland weather station sought to explore the role that Greenland played in global weather patterns.¹⁸⁸ Greenland had played a part in the development of the Scandinavian theories, but those theories needed to be tested by the broader academic community.¹⁸⁹ In 1926 William Herbert Hobbs embarked on the first University of

¹⁸⁶C.K.M. Douglas, "The Polar Front and Its Place in Modern Meteorology," *The Geographical Journal* 94 no. 2 (Aug. 1939): 137.

¹⁸⁷Mark Monmonier, *Air Apparent: How Meteorologists Learned to Map, Predict, and Dramatize the Weather* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹⁸⁸Jaquest W. Redway, "The New Meteorology," *Ecology* 3 no. 4 (Oct. 1922): 337.

¹⁸⁹See Carl Samuelson. "Studoem über die Wirkungen des Windes in den kalten und gemässigten Erdteilen," *Bulletin of the Geological Institute of Uppsala* 20 (1926): 58-230; Alfred de Quervain and P.L. Mercanton et al, "Ergebnisse der Schweizerischen Grönland expedition 1912-1913," *Neue Denkschr.Schwiz Naturforsch. Gesell.* 53 (1920);

Michigan expedition to Greenland. He sought to test the theory that Greenland was the “cradle” where the storms of Europe began their existence, and it was cold air from Greenland’s interior that was responsible for havoc-making storms on the coast. Hobbs spent more than a year on the island and established more than one hundred weather stations there.¹⁹⁰ He was the first to use *ballons sondes*, hydrogen-filled weather balloons that made meteorological data collection possible at higher altitudes, on the island.¹⁹¹ Before the end of the expedition, Hobbs contacted several European meteorological stations close to the island in order to confirm the movements of air currents from the island.¹⁹² These readings served to support the theory that Greenland could play an important role in European weather prediction.

The successful expeditions of Hobbs and several others in the interwar period led to the eventual acceptance on the part of the broader academic community of the Norwegian school’s theory. The acceptance of the front theory also reinforced the importance of Greenland in meteorological prediction. Maritime polar air was responsible for a significant proportion of weather in Europe, and maritime polar air emanated from the North American Arctic. Greenland was the farthest north-eastern landmass in North America. Thus, weather stations in Greenland were vital to European weather prediction.¹⁹³

Alfred Wegener, “Drachen-und Fesselballonaufstiege ausgeführt auf der Danmark-Expedition 1906-1908,” *Meddelelser om Grønland*, 40 (1909): 1-75.

¹⁹⁰William Herbert Hobbs, “The First Greenland Expedition of the University of Michigan,” *Geographical Review* 17 no.1 (Jan. 1927): 1-35.

¹⁹¹Hobbs, “The First Greenland Expedition of the University of Michigan,” 21.

¹⁹²Hobbs, “The First Greenland Expedition of the University of Michigan,” 21.

¹⁹³The sparsely populated eastern coast of the island was especially important in this process.

In 1930-1931 two British Arctic Air Route Expeditions provided additional information for the development of meteorology on the island. Hour-by-hour weather reports from sea level on the East and West coasts of the island were important, but they did not tell the whole story. In order to obtain the most accurate data, coastal reports needed to be supplemented by reports from inland ice, which was eight to ten thousand feet above sea level. The British expedition not only contributed to general scientific data, but also proved that a single competent man would be able to maintain a scientific post on the inland ice in the coldest period of the year (and therefore would be able to do this in all seasons). The British expedition had particularly interesting military potential because it showed that a single person could be parachuted in and could maintain a vital meteorological station with a minimal possibility of being detected.¹⁹⁴

German scientists had already shown significant interest in the viability of establishing stations on the island. In the same year as the British expedition, the Germans established a meteorological station called Esmitte on the island.¹⁹⁵ The expedition had a large staff of scientists on both coasts and published several volumes on the results of the experiments carried out in Greenland. Germany was not only a leader in polar meteorology, but as Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Steffansson noted, “the Germans are scholars; there is little that has been published in any country that has not been analysed and digested by them

¹⁹⁴Vilhjalmur Steffansson, *Greenland* (London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1943), 214.

¹⁹⁵F. Selinger, *Von 'Nanok' bis 'Eismitte': Meteorologische Unternehmungen in der Arktis 1940–1945* (Hamburg: Convent, 2001); see also J.D.M. Blyth, "German Meteorological Activities in the Arctic, 1940-1945," *Polar Record* 6 no. 42 (July 1951):185-226; and Jens Fog Jensen and Tilo Krause, "Wehrmacht Occupations in the New World: Archaeological and Historical Investigations in Northeast Greenland," *Polar Record* 48 no. 3 (July 2012): 269-279 for additional information on German activities in Greenland during the war.

particularly if it has a military application.”¹⁹⁶ It was suspected at the time that the German government was already censoring some of its scientific data and using it for military purposes.¹⁹⁷

The new developments in meteorology went hand in hand with developments in wireless communications. Early weather reports had been made via telegraph. While telegraphy was effective, messages could only be sent where wires were laid. Also, telegraph wires could be cut both accidentally and by acts of sabotage. In addition, wired cables proved inadequate for the demands of modern flight. During the First World War, pilots demanded faster service and required information at more frequent intervals and in greater detail than the Army or Navy had previously. Radio revolutionised the transmission of meteorological data and needed to be adjusted to meet the needs of the modern era. As atmospheric movements are not dictated by political boundaries, a coordinated effort would need to be made to gather and transmit meteorological data for use. In 1919 plans for a European radio weather service were outlined at an international meteorological conference held in Paris. A timetable was also created by international agreement, assigning countries meteorological broadcast hours and a cipher code for transmission. Several high-powered stations, which collated international reports and broadcast them several times per day, were also identified. The Eiffel Tower, for example, reported the weather for 50-60 locations in Europe four times per day.¹⁹⁸ In North America, reports were collated by the United States Weather Bureau and broadcast through commercial and naval radio stations (including a “floating Weather Bureau” in the North Atlantic).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶Steffansson, *Greenland*, 214.

¹⁹⁷Steffansson, *Greenland*, 214.

¹⁹⁸“Radio Service Aids Weather Prediction,” 134.

These North Atlantic reports were especially significant (particularly with regard to icebergs). In 1912 the Titanic sunk as a result of a collision with an iceberg. The catastrophic event led to the establishment of a North Atlantic Ice Patrol by the United States Coast Guard. Ocean currents were the main factor in determining the course of icebergs, which could be monitored through meteorological stations.²⁰⁰ The reports were also critical for predicting the violent storms in the North Atlantic that could affect transatlantic shipping routes. These advances in the ability to communicate meteorological information were also invaluable for another rapidly developing technology: flight. As mentioned, early airplanes were extremely vulnerable to harsh weather conditions. Greenland played an important role in the prediction and communication of weather patterns for Arctic flyers, and in the interwar period it also became an important location on global flight paths.

The idea of Trans-Arctic aviation had been around for several decades but only began to be realised in the years directly preceding the Second World War. The use of airpower during the First World War led to German strategist W. Brun proposing regular flights from Europe to Japan via Nome or Archangel, United States and Canada. In 1923 Sir Sefton Brancker, Director of Civil Aviation in the United Kingdom, declared that the Royal Mail would be sending mail via the Arctic within the next ten years. The next year, while the United States was preparing to launch the dirigible Shenandoah to explore the area between Alaska and the North Pole, William A. Moffett, Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics of the United States Navy predicted successful transpolar flights between

¹⁹⁹“Radio Service Aids Weather Prediction,” 134.

²⁰⁰“Coast Guard Now on Watch for Icebergs,” *The Science News-Letter*, 11 no. 310 (Mar. 1927): 175-176, 179-180. Robert De C. Ward, “A Cruise with the International Ice Patrol,” *Geographical Review* 14 no. 1 (Jan. 1924): 50-61.

England, Japan, Alaska, and Siberia in the near future.²⁰¹ In the early 20th century there were few planes that had the fuel capacity to make a transatlantic crossing.²⁰² Greenland, situated on flight paths between North America and Europe, was a possible location to refuel planes en route to the United Kingdom.²⁰³ In these largely theoretical discussions, Greenland was seen as having potential, but there were also concerns that Greenland's ice cap would make it unsuitable for landings.

In 1929 Lieutenant Barrett Studley, a military strategist in the United States Navy, derided those who insisted on continually lauding the strategic significance of the island. He argued that the technological limitations of aircraft diminished the value of the island for military applications:

A favourite variation of intercontinental bombing operations is the expedition via Greenland or Alaska. Air enthusiasts plan such campaigns with relish. The equipment essential to their successes consists of a comfortable arm chair and a four-foot globe. The latter is not affected by weather. But the accounts of recent flights in the far North have taught us something about Arctic storms. The fate of any such expedition can be deduced at first guess.²⁰⁴

Studley went on to cite that in addition to potential issues with weather, aeroplane engines had not yet been designed that were suitably reliable for transoceanic and Trans-Arctic

²⁰¹Elmer Plischke, "Trans-Arctic Aviation," *Economic Geography* 19 no. 3 (Jul. 1943): 283.

²⁰²Stark, "Clash Over Claims to Arctic Regions," *New York Times*, 5 August 1930, 10.

²⁰³Vilhjalmur Stefansson and a number of other Arctic explorers predicted that Greenland would be central to the future of Trans-Arctic aviation. Stefansson, "The American Far North," 523.

²⁰⁴Studley, "Bombing Planes or Battleships?" 730.

aviation. He noted that “the gentleman who scans our skies for transoceanic air raiders probably looks under his bed at night for burglars.”²⁰⁵

In spite of critics like Studley and the technological issues presented by aircraft, Greenlandic transpolar aviation continued to have a number of proponents particularly in the nascent field of commercial aviation. In 1926 American airman Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd garnered significant private funding for a major air expedition to Greenland and the Arctic North. Byrd’s expedition was backed by the most prominent industrialists of the day including John D. Rockefeller Jr., Edsel Ford, Vincent Astor, and Thomas Fortune Ryan. It was the first time any of the four men had backed an air expedition. Their investment was seen at the time to be “an indication of the development in store for aviation and polar research.”²⁰⁶ Although Byrd was in many ways one of the “air enthusiasts” criticised by Studley, his financial backers were cognisant of the time and distance that could be saved if transpolar aviation could be perfected. The Arctic air route, which often included a landing in Greenland, had the potential to significantly reduce travel times from the United States to Europe and Russia (see Table 1).

Polar projection maps, which had the North Pole at their centre, illustrated why the Arctic was expected to become “the great transportation crossroads of the world.”²⁰⁷ On these maps the Arctic looked like the hub of a giant wheel from which all land masses radiated.²⁰⁸ These maps, made possible by previous advances in aviation technologies that

²⁰⁵Studley, “Bombing Planes or Battleships?” 730.

²⁰⁶In 1925 admiral Byrd had been the first to fly over parts of Northern Greenland. “Byrd Party Leaves on First Leg of Trip to Explore Arctic,” *New York Times*, 6 April 1926, 1.

²⁰⁷Plischke, “Trans-Arctic Aviation,” 283.

²⁰⁸Plischke, “Trans-Arctic Aviation,” 283.

allowed for aerial cartographic techniques, made Greenland seem a lot closer to Europe and North America than the previous Mercator projection maps (which became wildly distorted in the Polar Regions). Although they too were not without their critics, they provided a new way of visualising the once distant Polar Regions.²⁰⁹

Table 1 ²¹⁰	Distance in Miles	Distance Saved via Arctic Route
New York to Moscow		
Steamship and Railroad - via Hamburg and Berlin	5,600	1,000
Air - via London and Berlin	5,000	400
Arctic Route - via Greenland and Iceland	4,600	
San Francisco to Moscow		
Steamship and Railroad - via New York, Hamburg and Berlin	8,300	2,650
via Tokyo and Vladivostok	15,500	9,850
Air - via New York, London, and Berlin	7,600	1,950
via Honolulu and Tokyo	10,900	5,250
Arctic Route - via Ellsmere, Greenland , Spitsbergen, and N. Cape	5,650	
San Francisco to London		
Steamship and Railroad - via New York	6,425	1,275
Air - via New York	6,025	875
Arctic Route - via Hudson Bay, Baffin Island, Greenland and Iceland	5,150	

One of the staunchest advocates of the strategic potential of the region was Arctic explorer Vilhjamur Stefansson. In 1928 Stefansson was hired as an advisor to Pan American

²⁰⁹John Q. Stewart, "The Use and Abuse of Map Projections," *The Geographical Review* 33 no. 4 (Oct. 1933): 589-604.

²¹⁰Table compiled from Plischke, "Trans-Arctic Aviation," 284.

Airways, which was studying the viability of an Arctic air route to Europe.²¹¹ Pan American also financed a flight by Charles Lindbergh to Greenland in 1933 and contributed to the cost of another four land expeditions to the Arctic.²¹² In 1927, the year before the Pan American study commenced, the German company Lufthansa announced that it would also be launching an expedition that would investigate the viability of an air route between Germany and the United States. The proposed German route would begin in Hamburg and pass Scapa Flow, the Faroe Islands, Reykjavik, and Cape Farewell (Greenland), ending in New York.²¹³ In the early 1930s, Lufthansa operated local services in Iceland (The Flying Company of Iceland) in conjunction with Flugfjlag Islands. When the Icelandic company folded, Lufthansa secured a letter from the Icelandic premier giving it flying rights on the Island until 1 April 1940. This competition highlighted the perceived importance of American proactivity with respect to the development of transatlantic aviation, particularly given how quickly aviation technologies were advancing.

The German route was just one of a number of exhibition and commercial test flights that landed in Greenland in the interwar period. The first circumnavigation of the globe landed in several locations on the island, including both Ivigtut and Cape Farewell. As Studley noted however, these early flights continued to be dangerous and, as mentioned, very dependent on weather conditions for their success. Low clouds, fog, snow, or wind could all damage the period's delicate aircraft. During the aforementioned around-the-world flight, a blizzard in Alaska brought down one of the planes.²¹⁴ In addition, there was still

²¹¹Philip E. Mosely, "Iceland and Greenland an American Problem," *Foreign Affairs*, 18 no. 1 (1939/1940): 745.

²¹²Mosely, "Iceland and Greenland an American Problem," 745.

²¹³W. Jefferson Davis, "Clearing the Air for Commerce," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 131 (May, 1927): 150.

significant scepticism about the viability of landing on the polar icecap and issues with navigating aircraft in the long Arctic nights. These challenges, however, were somewhat inadvertently overcome in a short period of time during Arctic airman Hubert Wilkins' search for another missing Arctic explorer, Russian pilot Sigismund Levanevsky. Wilkins flew 20,000 miles over the Polar Sea in the autumn and winter of 1937-1938. Some of his flights were 3000 miles long, many were conducted in the winter season without daylight, and over the course of his searches Wilkins made a number of landings previously thought impossible.²¹⁵ Although Wilkins was unsuccessful in locating Levanevsky, his search had the unintended consequence of proving that any camp located anywhere on the drifting pack ice could be reached by airplane at any time of year. In addition to Wilkins flights, in 1937-1938 alone, there were approximately one hundred expeditions to the Arctic, which demonstrated the increased interest in the region.²¹⁶

Although it was true that interwar period aircraft had several drawbacks, the exhibition and commercial flights of the 1920s and 1930s helped to improve the technologies that would be used during the Second World War. By 1939 many military strategists were thinking of distances in terms of global flight paths rather than sea or over-ground routes. The successful avian expeditions to the Greenland in the 1930s disproved the misconception that the polar icecap would make flight landings impossible. Greenland was beginning to play an important role in weather prediction, wireless stations, and shipping routes. It was becoming increasingly strategic with developments in flight, and the island was also

²¹⁴Leigh Wade, "Aerial Globe Trotting," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 131 (May, 1927): 86-93.

²¹⁵Vilhjammur Stefansson, "A Ten-Year Program of Arctic Study," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82 no. 5 (Jun. 1940): 897-919.

²¹⁶Rae R. Platt, "Recent Expeditions in the Polar Regions," *Geographical Review* 29 no. 2 (Apr. 1939): 303.

playing an important role in gathering and communicating weather reports for pilots. Following the confirmation that landings were possible on Greenland's ice cap, the island was also beginning to fulfil early 20th century predictions that it would become an important location in transpolar aviation. By the start of the war, the view that Greenland would become the "future crossroads of the air" was becoming a reality.²¹⁷

Greenland, however, played another role in the age of flight. Greenland was home to cryolite, a mineral that was essential to the aluminium smelting process. One of the major restrictions of early aircraft was their weight. The lighter a plane, the farther it could fly. Aluminium was light, flexible, and strong, and it became the preferred material for the construction of airplanes. By 1940 the average plane was comprised of 75 percent aluminium. Aluminium became so essential to war-time manufacturing that in the early stages of the war there were shortages of aluminium despite the doubling of production.²¹⁸

In the 1940s there were a number of methods available to produce aluminium, but in order to do so in the most cost-effective manner it was imperative to have access to two essential materials: bauxite and cryolite.²¹⁹ In the Hall-Héroult process of aluminium production, bauxite, an aluminium ore that is a composite sedimentary mineral rock, is heated and filtered to produce aluminium oxide. The aluminium oxide is then heated and cryolite is added as a flux and charged with an electric current to produce the metal.²²⁰ While bauxite is one of the most abundant materials on earth and was mined on nearly every continent,

²¹⁷O.D. Skelton to Mackenzie King, "Position of Greenland," Memorandum, 10 April 1940, *DCER*, 1106.

²¹⁸Harry N. Holmes, "National Survival Through Science," *Science* 96 no. 2498 (Nov. 1942): 435.

²¹⁹A "synthetic" cryolite had been developed but was not as cost-effective as natural cryolite.

²²⁰Carr, *Alcoa*, 127.

cryolite, by contrast, was only found and mined in Ivigtut, Greenland. Although minor deposits had been discovered in a number of locations, the only place that cryolite could be found in significant quantities was in Ivigtut, Greenland.

Ivigtut was home to the world's only working cryolite mine. Ivigtut itself was a closed company town with a population of approximately 150 miners and mining officials without their families. The mine employees were Danish and not Inuit. Although the cryolite mine was the backbone of the Greenlandic economy, there was a popular saying that "Ivigtut is not Greenland." The town was responsible to the shareholders of the Ivigtut cryolite mines, not the Greenlandic governors.²²¹ In accordance with Danish policy, miners had almost no contact with native Greenlanders who were "neither employed at the mine, nor allowed to enter the settlement, except once a week for the purpose of trading fish and other native produce for rye bread, coffee, tobacco, etc."²²²

Cryolite accounted for 99 percent of Greenland's mineral production in the first half of the 20th century. It was discovered in 1800, but did not begin to be mined and exploited until 1856.²²³ Cryolite was nicknamed *ice rock* because of its ice-like appearance. The Royal Greenlandic Company (KGH) of Denmark had held a near-monopoly of the mining, refining, and trade of cryolite for nearly 200 years. In 1865 the Pennsylvania Salt Company (Pennsalt) negotiated exclusive rights for the North American distribution of cryolite, which was mined in Greenland and refined in Denmark.²²⁴

²²¹Mount, "Canadian-American Relations," 3.

²²²Sparks, "Minutes Aboard RMS *Nascopie* June 1, 1940," in Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 38.

²²³Friis, "Greenland a Productive Arctic Colony," 89

Cryolite was so significant that an article in *Science* described the mineral the “Achilles heel” of supply, stating: “if Germany could capture the Greenland cryolite deposit, the only one in the world, it might seem our Achilles heel had been cut.”²²⁵ In addition to the supply of the mineral being limited, the cryolite mine itself was located about 200 meters below sea level and was extremely vulnerable to sabotage.²²⁶ Both the American and Canadian governments and aluminium industries were so concerned about the possibility of the Germans obtaining a monopoly over the cryolite supply that they considered permitting the assembly of reserve stocks as early as May 10, 1939.²²⁷ Less than a year later, those fears would be realised when Germany invaded Denmark.

Before dawn on 9 April 1940, Nazi ground troops and fighter planes crossed Germany’s northern border and invaded neutral Denmark and Norway.²²⁸ Now that Germany effectively controlled Denmark, it also had a strong legal claim to the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland. For thousands of years Greenland’s location had insulated it from foreign conflict. In the interwar period, however, technological innovations had proven Greenland’s utility in meteorological prediction, wireless communications, transatlantic shipping, aviation, and materials for war-time production. As a result of these developments, for the first time in Greenland’s long history it would be drawn into an international war.

²²⁴ Robert Keith Leavitt, *Prologue to Tomorrow: A History of the First Hundred Years in the Life of the Pennsylvania Salt Manufacturing Company* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Salt Manufacturing, 1950).

²²⁵ Harry N. Holmes, “National Survival through Science,” *Science* 96 no. 2498 (Nov. 1942): 437.

²²⁶ Leavitt, *Prologue to Tomorrow*.

²²⁷ R.E. Powell, Letter, 10 May 1939, Aluminum Company of Canada Global Mission Archives, 1.

Chapter III: Churchill's Mine Game - Great Britain and the German Invasions of Denmark and Norway

*Really, I must say that if a British government is not able to come to an understanding with a man like Adolf Hitler, it will one day be noted as one of the most remarkable and paradox [sic] facts in History.*²²⁹

Joachim von Ribbentrop

*It was not . . . until April 1940 that the decision I asked for in September 1939 was taken. By that time it was too late.*²³⁰

Winston Churchill

*Soon the ice would melt, and the Germans be masters of the North.*²³¹

On April 8th 1940 the British Admiralty gave notice that operation WILFRED was being undertaken.²³² In accordance with the plan, four destroyers had begun to lay a minefield in the Leads, the Norwegian territorial waters at the entrance of the Vest Fjord near Norway's northernmost, and most strategically important, port: Narvik.²³³ The controversial operation, which violated Norwegian neutrality, was advocated by First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, who had agitated for its implementation since the previous September.²³⁴ Churchill believed that given Hitler's previous actions, it was best to take a proactive offensive position in the war. He also knew that the supply of raw materials

²²⁹Letter Ribbentrop to Rothermere, 5 August 1939, The Correspondence and Papers of John Allsebrook Simon, 1st Viscount Simon, Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (MSS Simon 12).

²³⁰Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume I: The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1949), 483.

²³¹David Dilks, "The Twilight War and the Fall of France: Chamberlain and Churchill in 1940," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 28 (1978): 73.

²³²John Charmley, *Churchill: End of Glory* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), 383-384.

²³³Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, vol. I (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1970), 116; Geoffrey Best, *Churchill and War* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), 110.

²³⁴War Cabinet Memorandum, "Norway and Sweden," September 1939, National Archives, CAB 66/2/7; B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (London: Cassell & Company, 1973), 52.

could be a significant point of weakness for Germany. Mining the Norwegian Leads, he argued, would cripple Germany's war industry by cutting off vital shipments of Swedish iron ore to Germany, which passed through Narvik. In spite of Churchill's impassioned arguments, however, many in the War Cabinet, the Foreign Office, and the Allied French government remained concerned about the consequences such a belligerent action could have in the context of war.²³⁵ The planned operation was especially contentious as it was designed to purposely provoke the Germans into invading Norway. Once the Germans had landed in the Scandinavian country, "or showed they intended to do so," it was proposed that the Allies would themselves occupy Narvik and seize control of the railway line to the Swedish border.²³⁶

The opposition to WILFRED and other war-time developments meant that it took nearly seven months for the operation to be approved and implemented. The success of the plans relied heavily on the assumption that the Norwegians would not offer resistance to the British move and the Germans would be unable to mount an effective counterattack.²³⁷ Although the Norwegians' resistance was limited, the Allies were totally unprepared for the speed and effectiveness of the German response. Less than twenty-four hours after the mine-laying operation had been begun, the Germans launched an attack on both Denmark and Norway. In the process they successfully garnered control of the entirety of Denmark

²³⁵On the Cabinet and Foreign Office, see A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), 468-471, and Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 52-55; on France, see Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (London: MacMillan, 2001), 570-571.

²³⁶Len Deighton, *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), 98; also Peter Padfield, *War Beneath the Sea: Submarine Conflict 1939-1945* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1995), 76.

²³⁷Deighton, *Blitzkrieg*, 98.

and every significant port and airbase in Norway, including Narvik.²³⁸ The Norwegians, with assistance from the Allies, initially withstood total German occupation, but German successes continued as the Allied forces made a series of significant tactical errors that eventually resulted in their withdrawal from Norway.

The decision to mine the Leads and the resulting invasion of Denmark and Norway had immediate and far-reaching consequences. Not only did the events expand the war into two previously neutral countries, but it also brought active fighting closer to the United Kingdom and other strategic locations in the North Atlantic, including Denmark's colonies, (which included the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland). The Norwegian campaign also had disastrous consequences for the Chamberlain government and the British reputation abroad. Parliament was in a state of crisis from the time of the German invasions on April 9th until after Chamberlain's eventual resignation on May 10, 1940. Churchill's rise to power may have been one positive outcome, but the internal fissures in government, in combination with the shocking military defeats in Norway, led many to question the United Kingdom's ability to withstand Hitler. These concerns were compounded when Hitler chose the very day that the United Kingdom was without a leader to launch his campaign in the west against France and the Low Countries.

The British were necessarily so concerned with the immediate issues of governance resulting from the military failures that they were unable to deal effectively with other consequences of the invasion, including the exposed position of Greenland. Greenland was seen as inconsequential by comparison to some of the other issues facing Britain (including the increasingly real possibility of a British defeat). For the United States and Canada, however, Greenland was not inconsequential. The inability of the British to

²³⁸Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 116-117.

respond effectively to Canada's concerns about Greenland drove Mackenzie King and his administration closer to the United States at a critical period of the war and encouraged the United States into taking actions to protect Greenland.

In the historiography of the Second World War, one of the most significant consequences of the German invasions and Allied failures in Norway is the collapse of the Chamberlain government and the promotion of Churchill to the position of prime minister, and this was in time to have an impact on the position of Greenland. Although Churchill had more to do with the Norwegian defeat than Chamberlain, that is not how the public saw it at the time, or how historians have seen it since. The collapse of the Chamberlain government continues to be seen as an extension of Chamberlain's failure at Munich rather than Churchill's decision to mine the North Sea or the failed Narvik campaign. Churchill's accession to power is taken by many sources as either inevitable, or at the very least, a positive outcome of the Norwegian defeat. With the benefit of hindsight, biographers and historians often gloss over, or omit entirely, discussions of the tenuous position of the British government from April-June of 1940. The Norwegian campaign is seen as a setback for the Allies, but if it achieved nothing else it "did at least destroy the Chamberlain government, and bring to power an energetic coalition under the premiership of Churchill."²³⁹ These sentiments are also reflected in the later memoirs of some of Chamberlain's strongest supporters like R.A.B. Butler, who wrote, "It was a marvellous stroke of good fortune for the country that he [Churchill] should now have emerged as the hero and leader."²⁴⁰

²³⁹Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2010), 45.

²⁴⁰Richard Austen Butler, *The Art of the Possible: The Memoirs of Lord Butler* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971), 83.

Most accounts of the Second World War, including those written by Churchill himself, divide Hitler's advance on the Low Countries and France from the invasions of Denmark and Norway. These narratives similarly separate Chamberlain's failed leadership from Churchill's finest hour. The end of the Phoney War, or the Twilight War, as both Chamberlain and Churchill described it, continues to be seen as Hitler's invasion of the Low Countries on May 10, 1940, rather than the invasion of Denmark and Norway a month earlier on April 9th.²⁴¹ This false separation minimises the significance of the German invasions of Denmark and Norway in comparison with the Low Countries and France. In part as a result of Churchill's own accounts of the war, it is often forgotten that it was his decision to pre-emptively mine the North Sea, which gave Hitler the justification to invade Denmark and Norway. When the reasons for the German occupation are discussed, it is often emphasised that Germany was gearing up for war anyway and that invasions were inevitable. While Hitler's advances on the continent may have been inevitable, numerous sources show that Scandinavia was not where the Germans had planned to attack first, if at all. Moreover, in the limited literature on the American occupation of Greenland, it is simply stated that the invasion of Denmark led to the occupation, whereas British actions and German reactions, as well as the subsequent Canadian ones, played a key role in shaping American policy. Neither the circumstances by which the German occupation of Denmark occurred nor the British role in this process is examined in existing scholarship.

²⁴¹Studies dealing with the Scandinavian invasions themselves often have an earlier date, but many other general studies and those on Churchill use the invasion of the Low Countries as the end point of the Phoney War. See, for example, Charles Cruickshank, *The German Occupation of the Channel Islands* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), 42, or Geoffrey Best, *Churchill: A Study in Greatness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 165.

The implications of the German successes in Scandinavia were more devastating and far-reaching than contemporary historiography suggests. In the spring and summer of 1940 the outcome of the war in Europe was not a foregone conclusion. The ease of German successes in Denmark and Norway sent shockwaves throughout Europe and abroad. The failure on the part of the British to defend yet another neutral nation dealt the seemingly invincible Royal Navy a serious reputational blow. In addition, the decisive German victory in Denmark brought the issue of control of Greenland into the forefront of American and Canadian concerns and significantly affected the way in which the British, Canadian, and American governments handled the Greenland situation. In addition, the weak state of the British government also provided another opportunity for the Germans to expand their military operations on the continent. The German invasions on the Low Countries on May 10th took place the same day that the British government was, for all intents and purposes, without a leader. In addition, this perceived weakness, in combination with the continued successes of Hitler in Europe, also gave cause for the United States to consider strengthening Western Hemispheric security arrangements that would be essential in the event of an increasingly likely British defeat. American plans included Canada and would eventually incorporate Greenland.

This chapter will discuss the ways in which the British decision to mine the Leads contributed to the German occupation of Denmark and Norway, which in turn necessitated the occupation of Greenland. It will argue that the British decision to violate Norwegian neutrality gave Hitler the pretext for the invasions of Denmark and Norway, which caused the Chamberlain government to fall at a critical period of the war. The collapse of the Chamberlain government both provided Hitler an opportunity to advance on the continent and weakened Britain's ties to the Empire, allowing room for the United States to exert greater influence on Canada and the North Atlantic, including Greenland.

Churchill: Mining of the Leads

Winston Churchill was a vocal proponent of proactive offensive military tactics both during and prior to the Second World War. While the Munich negotiations were taking place, Churchill was heavily criticised for his bellicose opinions and lack of faith in the peace process. He was labelled a rogue elephant, a militarist, and a fire-eater by the press.²⁴² Post-Munich, however, Churchill's previously disregarded opinions seemed sage. When the war began, Prime Minister Chamberlain, with some reservations, invited Churchill back into Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty.²⁴³ In a letter to his sister Ida early on in the war, Chamberlain wrote of Churchill, "Up to the present I can't say that I think WC has been particularly helpful though certainly he would have been a more troublesome thorn in our flesh if he had been outside."²⁴⁴ Churchill's appointment is also said to have met with consternation by Hitler, who later called him a warmonger in a speech.²⁴⁵ Hitler was right to be worried about Churchill, who, unlike many of his colleagues, favoured proactive operations in war. Churchill was actively looking for ways to forestall potential German advances in Europe by offensive military means. In early September he was investigating the feasibility of "Catherine," a proposed British naval attack into the Baltic. Catherine was intended to isolate Germany from Norway and Sweden by intercepting iron ore, food, and all other shipments from Scandinavia to

²⁴²Andrew Roberts, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 245.

²⁴³For a discussion of Chamberlain's views on Churchill, see Dilks, "The Twilight War and the Fall of France," 62-65.

²⁴⁴Letter Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 17 September 1939, Neville Chamberlain Papers, The University of Birmingham, NC18/1/1125.

²⁴⁵Churchill thought it was "the speech of a conqueror" and that Hitler would not get away with that. Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: A Portrait of A Friendship* (London: Granta Books, 2004), 42-44.

Germany.²⁴⁶ At a meeting on September 19, Admiral Drax, Commander-in-Chief of the Nore, highlighted the particular need to prevent Germany from receiving the shipment of Swedish iron ore that was vital to the war industry.²⁴⁷ It was suggested that every possible diplomatic effort should be made to stop the ore shipments, but if that failed, then the British should be prepared to take "more drastic action."²⁴⁸ While Catherine was being considered, Churchill developed an alternative to a direct naval attack on shipments from Scandinavia to Germany. He suggested that mining the Leads could be an effective way to deny German vessels the protection of Norwegian territorial waters.

During the war, Germany had two major supply weaknesses: iron ore and oil. If either supply were cut off, it would greatly hamper Germany's military capacity. The two products came from opposite ends of Europe. Oil came from the Romanian and Baku oil fields, and iron ore from Sweden. Attacks on Baku were also considered, but it was thought that this might risk war with Russia which, although it had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany, was not yet at war with Great Britain or France.²⁴⁹ The prospect of halting Scandinavian supplies to Germany seemed the less perilous of the two options. The Gällivare and Kiruna Swedish iron ore mines were located in Lapland, north of the Arctic Circle. The Swedish Baltic ports Luleå and Oxelösund, through which ore was shipped to Germany, were frozen in the winter months. In the winter, shipments of the

²⁴⁶Martin Gilbert, *Finest Hour: Winston S. Churchill 1939-1941* (London: Heinemann, 1983), 26.

²⁴⁷The Nore is a sandbank near the River Medway, and the position was one of the most significant operational commands in the war because it was used to guard the east coast convoys to Northeastern England.

²⁴⁸War Cabinet Memorandum, "Norway and Sweden," September 1939, National Archives, CAB 66/2/7.

²⁴⁹Charmley, *Churchill*, 383.

ore went through the Norwegian Arctic port at Narvik, which was open for shipping throughout the year and was the last stop on a direct train line from Gällivare. For Germany, shipments through Narvik offered additional tactical advantages. The port was surrounded by a number of tiny uninhabited islands, which in addition to the three kilometres of neutral Norwegian waters, provided cover for the German vessels transporting the ore. Placing mines in areas close to the port, Churchill argued, would force German ships into open water, which would make them more vulnerable both to mines themselves and Allied attacks. The action also had the potential to greatly disrupt German production, which Churchill stressed was “of the highest importance in crippling the enemy’s war industry.”²⁵⁰

In a war where Britain was fighting for the rights of small nations, the issue of violating Norwegian neutrality had ethical as well as practical implications.²⁵¹ In response to this criticism of his plan, Churchill often pointed to precedents from the First World War; for instance, mines had been used by the British off the coast of Flanders in 1918. Following the American entry into the war in the spring of 1917, the British, French, and American governments had agreed to lay a mine field in Norwegian territorial waters in an attempt to curtail the use of U-boats in the area.²⁵² Churchill’s precedent, however, was not entirely analogous. In spite of the multilateral agreement, the Allies did not follow through with the plans in the First World War, partially because officers in the Royal Navy considered the violation of Norwegian neutrality unacceptable.²⁵³ Eventually, however, in September

²⁵⁰Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume I: The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1949), 480.

²⁵¹The Earl of Avon, *The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning* (London: Cassell, 1965), 93.

²⁵²Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. I*, 479; Gilbert, *Finest Hour*, 35.

1918 the Norwegians agreed to the mine-laying operation under the stipulation that they themselves would lay the mines and were doing so strictly in their own national interest. They emphasised that their actions did not imply the right of belligerent countries to request such an action from neutral countries.²⁵⁴ In the end all of the discussions about mining the Leads in the First World War came to nothing, because by the time the arrangement was agreed to, the war was nearly over and there was no reason to follow through with the operation.

In spite of his flawed analogy, Churchill had strong arguments in favour of the possible employment of mines in Norway and elsewhere. Germany was already effectively using mines against Britain.²⁵⁵ In the interwar period Germany dedicated substantial resources to the development of mine technology in the Mine Barrage Test Command (*Sperrversuchskommando*). In 1929 Germany procured its first magnetic ground mines and soon developed special magnetic sea mines that could be laid by U-boats or dropped from the air.²⁵⁶ Unlike traditional contact mines, which floated and needed to be touched to detonate, magnetic mines could be covertly planted on shallow sea beds and would detonate by the magnetic field of passing ships.²⁵⁷ Although the Royal Navy was actively conducting mine-sweeping operations in September and October of 1939, more than two

²⁵³Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 53.

²⁵⁴Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, 43.

²⁵⁵See Chapter 23 "German minelaying Campaign in British home Waters," *Confidential Naval Staff History - Defeat of the Enemy Attack on Shipping (1939-1945) A Study in Policy and Operations*, ADM 234/578, 187-190.

²⁵⁶Bernd Stegeman, "Part VI: The Mine War," in *Germany and the Second World War Volume II: Germany's Initial Conquests in Europe*, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 174.

²⁵⁷Robert Self, *The Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume Four: The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940* (London: Ashgate, 2005), fn 476.

dozen ships had been sunk by German mines. In the first two months of the war, losses by mines, primarily Allied and neutral, amounted to 56,000 tons. These figures were especially upsetting to Churchill as six of the ships had been sunk in the approaches to the Thames, which was too close to the heart of British government for comfort. By late 1939 the Germans had dropped so many magnetic mines that the Thames Estuary and much of the east coast were almost closed to shipping in November.²⁵⁸ At the time, neither Churchill nor the Admiralty knew what was causing the losses, though they suspected that the new undetectable magnetic mines were being dropped by air into strategic locations. Their suspicions were confirmed in late 1939 when two mines were seen being dropped by a German aircraft and were recovered from the mud during low tide.²⁵⁹

According to Churchill, some in the Cabinet seem to have been supportive of his initial proposal to mine the Leads, but the Foreign Office was staunchly opposed to the idea. The Secretary of State, Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, 1st Earl of Halifax (Halifax), worried about how the breach of Norway's neutrality would be viewed in the neutral United States. He also argued that the action could be used as a pretext for Germany to move through Belgium and Holland.²⁶⁰ The majority of the Cabinet agreed with Halifax, but Churchill continued to press on with his idea. On November 19th Churchill submitted another note arguing in favour of a "Scandinavian Barrage" that would extend into Norwegian territorial waters. As the plan would take six months to prepare, Churchill argued that there

²⁵⁸Self, *The Chamberlain Diary*, fn 476.

²⁵⁹Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. I*, 453-454.

²⁶⁰David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2005), 122; Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, 44-45.

²⁶⁰R.A. Butler, 6 December 1939, in *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1971), 235.

would be no need to raise the matter with Norway until the plans were more fully developed. This too met with resistance, but the Ministry of Economic Warfare was asked to consider the economic aspects of the proposal. In mid-December while the report was being prepared Churchill submitted another memo stressing the importance of Norwegian iron-ore traffic. It argued that stopping Norwegian ore supplies was one of the most important offensive operations of the war, and that a technical violation of Norwegian neutrality should not preclude the necessary action which had the potential to save lives. "Humanity, rather than legality," Churchill argued "must be our guide."²⁶¹ When the ministry's report was eventually published on December 20th Churchill had another justification for his plan, which resulted from the Russian invasion of Finland.²⁶²

The Winter War

On November 30, 1939, Russian troops entered Finnish territory, following alleged artillery fire on November 26 across the Russian border from Finland. The Russians had been in discussions with Finland since 1938 about territorial adjustments between the two nations that would fortify Leningrad's defences, which lay a mere forty kilometres from the Finnish border. These initial discussions did not result in a settlement. Following the signing of the Russian-German non-aggression pact, which included Finland, East Poland, and eventually all three Baltic States in the Russian sphere, these talks were renewed. Both the Russians and the Finns believed that an agreement could be reached, but talks ended in a stalemate on November 9, and the situation between the two nations deteriorated quickly.²⁶³ For the remainder of November, Russian newspapers were replete with stories

²⁶¹ War Cabinet Memorandum, "Norway Iron-Ore Traffic," 16 December 1939, National Archives, CAB 66/4/12

²⁶² Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, 44-45.

²⁶³ Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 100-101.

attacking the Finns, their American and British supporters, and the "Scandinavian lackeys of British and American capital."²⁶⁴ Russia re-articulated an expanded series of demands for Finnish territory that included significant defensive fortifications within Finland. While no one thought Russia would launch an attack in the depths of winter, Finland remained in a vulnerable position. Russia was in an alliance with Germany, and Finland's closest neighbours, Sweden and Norway, were doing everything possible to avoid conflicts that could draw them into the war with Germany. They made it clear that although they were sympathetic to Finland's position, they would not be able to offer much support in the event of a Russian invasion. When the Russians eventually invaded in late November, the small Scandinavian nation stood alone against the might of the Red Army.

The attack put Great Britain in a difficult position. British public support was on the side of the Finnish people. Many in government felt a moral responsibility to aid the Finns, but at the same time feared entering their own war with Russia.²⁶⁵ In addition, Foreign Office intelligence on the Russian attack on Finland was confused. Reports indicated that the attack took the German government by surprise and that German leaders were divided in their opinions about it. Some reports said that Germany saw the Russian move as an opportunity to blackmail Norway and Sweden into economic subservience; other reports showed that some in the German government, like Göring, had argued in favour of assisting the Finns in their fight against Russia, despite their non-aggression pact.²⁶⁶ Rumours had previously been circulating that the German General Staff, fearing a Soviet

²⁶⁴Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, 39.

²⁶⁵R.A. Butler in Cadogan, *The Diaries*, 235.

²⁶⁶Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, 45.

Germany, was now against Hitler, and would soon offer to depose him.²⁶⁷ The Russian invasion of Finland further fanned these rumours and speculation.

The plight of the Finnish resistance drew attention from around the world. In Britain, France, and the United States, the Russian invasion had the powerful effect of uniting support from opposite ends of the political spectrum in support of the Finnish cause, from anti-Russian conservatives to Labour organisations, with their enthusiasm for small nations.²⁶⁸ Chamberlain wrote, "It has added a great deal to the general feeling that dictators make things impossible in the rest of the world, and in particular it has infuriated the Americans who have a sentimental regard for the Finns because they paid off their war debt."²⁶⁹

Within the Allies both the British government and France wanted to send aid to the Finnish resistance, but there were disagreements over what form that assistance would take and how it would be delivered. As mentioned, sending troops would immediately spell war for the Allies against Russia. In addition, any troops would need to be transported to Finland. The most obvious path would be through neutral Norway and Sweden. Fearing that the conflict would extend over all of Scandinavia, these two countries blocked efforts to send Allied expeditionary forces to aid the Finnish resistance. Publically, the British government announced that it would only send troops if Finland appealed for them, but it would have been difficult for Finland to make this request. The Finns were concerned that

²⁶⁷Letter Philip to Dalton, 17 November 1939, The Papers of Hugh Dalton, Nuffield College Library, University of Oxford.

²⁶⁸Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd, 1946), 427.

²⁶⁹Letter Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 30 December 1939, NC18/1/1125.

a direct appeal for foreign assistance against the Russians would also draw German forces into the conflict on the side of Russia.²⁷⁰

The French agitated for sending troops and supplies to the Finns and made substantial promises to the Finnish government concerning both military aid and troops, but the British Cabinet remained concerned they had inadequate supplies for their own defence and worried about the perception of Americans to any expansion of the European war. In February 1940 Churchill delivered an unauthorised speech on the subject in an attempt to elicit support for Allied intervention in Finland from neutral Norway and Sweden. The speech, however, was almost universally denounced for its insensitivity to the internal politics of a number of neutral countries.²⁷¹ Churchill, however, was growing increasingly frustrated with the stance of neutral nations. Not only were Sweden and Norway blocking efforts to aid the Finns, but they were also supplying the Germans and profiting from the war. He argued that their situation was lamentable, but it would become much worse:

They bow humbly and in fear to German threats of violence, comforting themselves with the thought that the allies will win, that Britain and France will strictly observe all of the laws and conventions, and that the breaches of these laws are only to be expected from the German side. Each one hopes that if he feeds the crocodile enough, the crocodile will eat him last.²⁷²

Churchill's reference to Allied adherence to laws and conventions was intended to address the continued issue of mining the Leads near Narvik. Churchill viewed the Russian invasion of Finland as an opportunity for the Allies to strike at Germany under the guise of

²⁷⁰John Allsebrook Simon, Diary, 13 April 40, MSS Simon 11. The Correspondence and Papers of John Allsebrook Simon, 1st Viscount Simon, Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

²⁷¹The Papers of Sir Winston Churchill, GB/014/CHAR 23/3.

²⁷²Churchill in Philip Guedalla, *Mr. Churchill: A Portrait* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1941), 284.

sending aid to Finland.²⁷³ He said that he “welcomed this new and favourable breeze as a means of achieving the major strategic advantage of cutting off the vital iron ore supplies of Germany.”²⁷⁴ Following the Russian invasion, his previous plans to mine the Leads were adjusted to include a general British occupation of Narvik while British troops were on their way to fight in the conflict between Russia and Finland. The action, it was argued, would safeguard the ore fields from falling under German control, and if “Narvik was to become a kind of Allied base to supply the Finns it would certainly be easy to prevent German ships from loading ore at the port and sailing safely down the Leads to Germany.”²⁷⁵ Churchill added that although the action would technically be a violation of Norwegian neutrality, these minor violations of international laws were necessary in order to win against an opponent like Germany.

Generally, international opinion continued to strongly favour the Finns. The British and the French sent supplies at the expense of their own war-time needs.²⁷⁶ The Italians also sent munitions and aircraft to Finland until it was forbidden by Germany. The overarching argument for Allied military support of the Finns, however, was simply the need for some action “never mind where or who against.”²⁷⁷ Subsequent discussions with the French about sending troops to assist Finland were confused.²⁷⁸ Some in the French government

²⁷³Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 53.

²⁷⁴Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. I*, 489.

²⁷⁵Churchill quoted in Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, 295; see also A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), 468-469.

²⁷⁶Chamberlain quoted in Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 436.

²⁷⁷Taylor, *English History*, 469.

²⁷⁸War Cabinet Memorandum, "The Scandinavian Situation - Possible Use of Force," 4 March 1940, National Archives, CAB 63/160, 1-5.

hoped to use the invasion to mount an anti-Bolshevik campaign against Russia. Several ministers held the hope that the Germans would overthrow Hitler in order to assist with the cause. The resulting plans were ill conceived and under-researched, and they drew from limited intelligence. The expeditionary force was meant to land in Narvik and then proceed to Finland, but there was only one railway line and no road from Narvik to Sweden. The plans were debated on sixty distinct occasions in the war cabinet, but they remained controversial and nearly impossible to implement as the Norwegian and Swedish governments persistently refused to join staff talks regarding the passage of Anglo-French troops to Sweden.²⁷⁹

In mid-February a minor violation of neutrality of a different sort occurred in Norwegian territorial waters. The German vessel *Altmark* had taken a number of British sailors prisoner in the South Atlantic. The vessel was being chased by British destroyers and hid in the waters off Norway. Both Churchill and Chamberlain agreed on the necessity of the technical violation in the case of the *Altmark*.²⁸⁰ Churchill sent a direct order to the captain of HMS *Cossak* to violate Norwegian neutrality, board the ship, and rescue the British prisoners. Although the British sailors were successfully rescued, two Norwegian gunboats were present at the scene of the incident, and the Norwegian government later protested the British intrusion into their waters.²⁸¹ Following the *Altmark* incident, Churchill continued to press for the mining of the Leads as a first step to an occupation of Narvik, but as the Finnish resistance began to falter, Chamberlain firmly decided not to lay the

²⁷⁹Taylor, *English History*, 469.

²⁸⁰"Chamberlain Statement on *Altmark*," 21 February 1940, *New York Times*, 5.

²⁸¹Edwin Borchard, "Was Norway Delinquent in the Case of the *Altmark*?" *The American Journal of International Law* 34 no. 2 (Apr. 1940): 289-294; Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 55.

mines. He came to this decision because he did not want to take any action that might prejudice the small remaining chance that Norway and Sweden would allow the Allies to go to the aid of Finland. Chamberlain also remained concerned about American opinion and how the violation of the neutral rights of a country would be perceived in the United States in an election year.²⁸²

The Winter War lasted just over three months. It came to an end on March 13, 1940. Approximately 25,000 Finns and 200,000 Russians are estimated to have been killed in the conflict.²⁸³ The Finnish surrender was a major blow to the Allies, particularly in France where the failure to adequately help the Finnish resistance ultimately ended the Daladier government.²⁸⁴ Member of Parliament Harold Nicolson was in France lecturing on British war aims for the Ministry of Information when the Finnish surrender was announced. He met with George Mantel, the French Minister for the colonies, at the Colonial Ministry. Mantel informed Nicolson that the effect of the Finnish defeat would be "tremendous" in France. He was critical of the lack of military support offered to Finland and argued that "at the moment we are trying to fight a war of appeasement, which means Hitler may win."²⁸⁵

The collapse of Finland was also affecting the reputation of the Allies abroad. Both France and Britain had promised to assist Poland, and it was invaded by both Germany and Russia while the Allies stood by. Now Russia had invaded and claimed a large part of Finland, and although the Allies had sent much needed supplies, they were once again unable to

²⁸²Dilks, "The Twilight War," 72-73.

²⁸³Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 106.

²⁸⁴Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 428.

²⁸⁵Harold Nicolson, *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters 1939-1945*, vol. 1 (London: Collins, 1967), 60-62.

adequately aid a small neutral nation. In the weeks following the Finnish defeat, Gallup polls in the United States were showing for the first time that American opinion was turning toward the view that the Allies "could not, and would not, win the war."²⁸⁶

Following the collapse of Finland, four factors were seen by the British government as favouring Germany in comparison with the last war. First, there was no large-scale military activity, which was allowing the Germans to build up their supplies. Second, the naval blockade, which had been seen to be so successful in the last war, was incomplete. Supplies were being delivered to Germany both overland and by neutral countries. Third, the German public were used to a lower standard of living, which was consequently saving both food and materials. Finally, the German government was seen as far stronger than it was in the previous war. It was thought that there was no way the Allies could win if Germany continued to build up supplies in the absence of serious attacks on it. It was argued that Germany would be able to hold out indefinitely if the Allies did not make an offensive move that would deplete Germany's resources.²⁸⁷ More importantly, the Allies could not stop and defeat Germany unless they engaged in a war with it.

The Finnish surrender and the renewed focus on the need to stand up to Germany gave new impetus for Churchill and his mine-laying plans. Throughout the Winter War, Churchill had continued to promote the operation to anyone who would listen, but it was not until the end of the hostilities in Finland that Churchill's plans began to gain traction in the Cabinet. Churchill's proposal was intended to "provoke" Germany into action.

Following the Finnish surrender, Chamberlain, who had long been staunchly opposed to

²⁸⁶Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, 296.

²⁸⁷These views were discussed between Hugh Giatskell, Head of Intelligence for Enemy Countries at the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and Hugh Dalton in late March; see Dalton *The Fateful Years*, 296.

any violation of the neutrality of non-belligerent countries (except in the most extreme cases like the *Altmark*), became determined to protect Scandinavian neutrality from Germany, even if it meant violating the law. He ended his speech on March 19th with a warning to the neutral Scandinavian states that the danger of foreign aggression remained on their doorstep: "nothing will or can save them, but a determination to defend themselves and to join with others who are ready to aid them."²⁸⁸

After some resistance from the new French government in the final planning stages of the operation, which necessitated a trip to Paris by Churchill, the orders to go ahead with the mining operation were given. Many years later Churchill would write, with the benefit of hindsight, that "it was not . . . until April 1940 that the decision I asked for in September 1939 was taken. By that time it was too late."²⁸⁹ It is debatable whether the plan would have been successful in the early stages of the war when Churchill first proposed it. Several prominent members of government, like Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, still opposed the plan. He wrote in his diary "we lay 'Narvik' mines tomorrow morning if the S. gale subsides. This I think is silly—unless it induces Hitler to do something sillier."²⁹⁰ What neither Churchill, Cadogan, nor anyone within the Allied governments knew, however, was that the drawn out deliberations over the plan and its implementation meant that by the time it was finally enacted on April 8, 1940, the German military had anticipated the move. They had gathered intelligence on the

²⁸⁸Neville Chamberlain quoted in Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 436.

²⁸⁹Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume I*, 483.

²⁹⁰Cadogan, *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, 268.

British operation and were in the process of implementing their own military action that would completely overwhelm the Allies.²⁹¹

Germany

Hitler was initially reluctant to involve Germany in Scandinavia, and no operations in either Norway or Denmark were initially planned for the spring of 1940. On September 2, 1939, Germany declared the inviolability of Norway as long as its neutrality was not threatened by a third power.²⁹² Hitler, however, quickly changed his mind as German intelligence on the Allied mining operation was relayed back to him over the coming months.

The security of Swedish iron ore shipments had been a longstanding concern of the German military.²⁹³ As early as 1934, Hitler noted that provisions would need to be made to secure iron ore shipments from Sweden through the Norwegian port of Narvik in the event of war.²⁹⁴ Similarly, discussions over the need for German bases in the event of a war with Britain in “order to break out of the confines of the North Sea” had gone back decades in German naval circles, and were taken up again by German naval leadership early on in the war.²⁹⁵ In spite of its strategic significance, however, at the outbreak of war the navy had not developed any concrete operational plans for Scandinavia. In October

²⁹¹Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 436.

²⁹²Cajus Bekker, *Hitler's Naval War* (London: Macdonald & Company Ltd., 1974), 97.

²⁹³A.D. Wolfgang Wagner, *Die Seestrategie des Weltkrieges* (Berlin, 1929).

²⁹⁴Kaus A. Maier and Bernd Stegeman, “Part V: Securing the Northern Flank of Europe,” in *Germany and the Second World War Volume II: Germany's Initial Conquests in Europe*, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 185.

²⁹⁵Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 113.

1939 Grand-Admiral Raeder, the recently promoted Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, discussed with Hitler the question of obtaining bases on the Norwegian coast peacefully with the help of Russian pressure.²⁹⁶ Raeder also stressed the importance of securing Narvik, perhaps through the use of force if necessary, and expressed concerns that the Norwegians might open their ports to the British military.²⁹⁷ Although he would later consider Norway part of his plans for the "Teutonic Empire of the German Nation" and commission Albert Speer to redesign many of its cities, Hitler initially brushed aside Raeder's suggestions.²⁹⁸ The Fuhrer was concentrating on an attack on the west, in order to force France to make a separate peace with Germany. He did not want to be drawn into operations that would divert needed resources from his existing plans.²⁹⁹ As important as it was to him to secure supplies of iron, it was more important to keep Britain off the European continent.³⁰⁰

Following the Russian invasion of Finland, Raeder expressed serious concerns about the possibility of a British occupation of Norway under the pretext of aid to Finland in its fight against the Soviet Union.³⁰¹ Raeder continued to press Hitler for action in Norway and

²⁹⁶Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 53.

²⁹⁷Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 113-114.

²⁹⁸Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs by Albert Speer* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), 181-182.

²⁹⁹Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 53.

³⁰⁰Andreas Hillgruber, "Der Factor Amerika in Hitlers Strategie 1938-1941," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte Beilage zur Wochenzeitung 'Das Parlament'*, 19 no. 66 (May 1966): 49-50.

³⁰¹Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-45: Nemesis* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 44.

introduced him to the pro-Nazi Norwegian Nationalist leader Vidkun Quisling.³⁰² Quisling, a former Norwegian minister of war, was the head of the small Norwegian Fascist party. Quisling asked for money and support for his plans to overturn the current administration and put in place one more favourable to Germany. Neither German naval leaders nor Hitler seemed to take much stock in Quisling's promises of a fascist revolution, but Hitler did appear to be interested in Quisling's reports that Britain was planning an intervention in Norway.³⁰³ Following his meetings with Quisling on December 16th and 18th Hitler said, "He would prefer Norway, as well as the rest of Scandinavia to remain completely neutral," because he did not want to "enlarge the theatre of the war," but "if the enemy were preparing to spread the war he would take steps to guard himself against that threat."³⁰⁴ Raeder's persistence, in combination with intelligence reports on the Allied discussions of the mine-laying plan and potential occupation of Narvik, prompted Hitler to order his staff to prepare *Studie Nord*—a plan for the German invasion of Denmark and Norway.³⁰⁵

As late as February 1940, the German government took the position that "so long as Norway remains neutral, and understands she must remain so, we have no grounds for occupying her."³⁰⁶ In mid-February 1940, however, the aforementioned *Altmark* incident

³⁰²On Quisling, see Hans-Dietrich Looock, *Quisling, Rosenberg und Terboven: Zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Revolution in Norwegen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1970).

³⁰³Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, fn. 114.

³⁰⁴Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 53.

³⁰⁵Deighton, *Blitzkrieg*, 98.

³⁰⁶Bekker, *Hitler's Naval War*, 97.

led to Hitler's decision to carry out the invasion plans.³⁰⁷ Hitler viewed the incident as an Allied trick intended to conceal a secret relationship between Britain and Norway. This view was reinforced by Quisling, who had reported that the non-interventionist approach on the part of the Norwegian gunboats in response to the action of the *Cossack* had been pre-arranged.³⁰⁸

Hitler's primary motivation for the invasions of Denmark and Norway was to forestall an Allied invasion of Norway. Although Hitler was not initially interested in Scandinavia, by the end of the Winter War he was aware of the tactical opportunities an invasion of Denmark and Norway could offer. Paul Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister of Propaganda, said that even prior to the war, Hitler was always casting a watchful eye over Europe for opportunities for German expansion.³⁰⁹ On February 29 rumours from Sweden reached Hitler of an imminent major Allied action in Scandinavia. This "gave Germany the pretext it had been waiting for."³¹⁰ The order to complete the operation was given on March 7, but on March 13 the conflict between Finland and Russia ended. Ernst von Weizsäcker, Germany's Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, was particularly glad when the Winter War came to an end. He found it difficult to face the Finnish foreign minister during the conflict. The end of hostilities not only "lightened" Germany's moral burden, but also negated the justifications of the Western powers and Hitler for occupying the Norwegian coast.³¹¹ As a result, German military leaders doubted Allied intentions to

³⁰⁷Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, fn. 114.

³⁰⁸Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 53.

³⁰⁹Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-45*, 44.

³¹⁰Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-45*, 288.

³¹¹Ernst von Weizsäcker, *Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951), 227.

continue with their planned operation. Raeder told Hitler that although the risk of an Allied invasion of Norway was no longer acute, an invasion might still be necessary in the near future, and after April 15 the nights would be too short in the Arctic waters near Narvik for a force to pass undetected.³¹² The final impetus to follow through with the operation came from the Finnish ambassador in Paris who repeated a remark from the French Premier about British plans to mine Norwegian territorial waters.³¹³ The final date for the attacks, April 9, was decided by Hitler on April 2. The first related movements at sea began on April 3.³¹⁴ Hitler called Goebbels to the Reich Chancellery to inform him of the plans. Resistance was not expected, and Hitler was not interested in what the immediate reaction would be in the United States. He highlighted the need to win the war against the Allies in 1940. A long war would be psychologically difficult, and if it took any longer it would give Americans time to assist the British and French with supplies, which would give them a material advantage in the war. As for Denmark and Norway, he told Goebbels, “First we will keep quiet for a short time once we have the two countries and then England will be plastered. Now we possess a basis for attack.”³¹⁵ The German operation involved coordinated action on land, sea, and in the air. Landings were planned in seven places in Norway and seven places in Denmark. It involved nearly the entire German navy, which was responsible for the transport of the landing troops. U-boats were tasked with reconnaissance and protection of the transport vessels. The Tenth Flying Corps and the

³¹²J.R.M. Butler, *Grand Strategy Volume II September 1939 - June 1941* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957), 124.

³¹³Maier, “Part V: Securing the Northern Flank of Europe,” 195; Deighton, *Blitzkrieg*, 99.

³¹⁴Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, fn. 114.

³¹⁵Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-45*, 288.

Luftwaffe were responsible for the transport of paratroopers and the protection of landing forces from the Allies.³¹⁶ The German admiralty said that the operation was “one of the boldest in the history of modern war.”³¹⁷ It was highly ambitious, incredibly risky, and completely unanticipated by the Allies.³¹⁸

German Invasions of Denmark and Norway

By the time the Allies were laying mines off the coast of Norway on April 8, the initial stages of operation *Weserübung* (Norway) and *Weserübung-Süd* (Denmark) were already underway on ships, planes, and trains across northern Europe and the North Atlantic.³¹⁹

Weizsäcker noted:

Those responsible for the direction of war in England rendered Hitler useful assistance; on the day before the German landing they laid a minefield in Norwegian waters and publically announced that they had done so. From a military point of view this step was quite futile, but politically it was, after the so-called *Altmark* affair, yet another violation of Norwegian neutrality, and an additional excuse for Hitler's invasion of Scandinavia.³²⁰

In anticipation of a coordinated British action, all available German submarines were sent to the area. Half were sent to Norway to screen off the invasion and the other half to Scottish waters to intercept the British fleet. Several reports of these German naval movements were relayed to the Allied Naval Intelligence on April 8.³²¹ The reports stated

³¹⁶Maier, “Part V: Securing the Northern Flank of Europe,” 195.

³¹⁷Bekker, *Hitler's Naval War*, 97-98.

³¹⁸Geoffrey Best, *Churchill and War* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), 110. "The Germans achieved total surprise in their invasion of Norway." F.H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations*, vol. I (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1979), 127.

³¹⁹For an in-depth account of the operation, see Walther Hubatsch, *Weserübung: Die deutsche Besetzung von Dänemark und Norwegen 1940* (Göttingen, 1960).

³²⁰Weizsäcker, *Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker*, 229.

³²¹Norway, National Archives, CAB 63/160.

that a German invasion of Scandinavia might be imminent, but the assumption that Germans would only risk invading Norway after being provoked by the mining operation was so strong that the intelligence was discounted.³²² In addition, inaccurate rumours of German movements had been circulating throughout the war, which gave additional cause for the Cabinet and Admiralty to doubt the reports.³²³

It is difficult to express the disbelief felt by most all members of the Allied military and government leaders as the reports of the German action on April 9 filtered back to London. The secret Cabinet War Room Record revealed considerable activity off the Norwegian coast. At 2:35 a.m. four large German warships entered Oslo Fjord. At 4:07 a.m. two German warships entered Trondheim. At 6:20 a.m. aircraft reported five enemy war craft off the Naze. Several destroyers were engaged and suffered serious damage off the Norwegian coast. The entry for Denmark read simply, "German troops are reported to have crossed the frontier into Denmark early this morning."³²⁴

The Allied leaders assumed that the very presence of British ships in the area would be enough to deter German advances on strategic Norwegian ports. The Admiralty remained so convinced of Britain's naval superiority that they did not believe initial reports that Hitler had ventured as far north as Narvik.³²⁵ Nicolson recorded in his diary on that day that news of the invasions was extremely vague and the 1:00 p.m. wireless indicated that Oslo, Bergen, and Narvik had been captured. Nicolson was assured by Ned Gregg, the

³²²Padfield, *War Beneath the Sea*, 77.

³²³Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, fn. 114.

³²⁴Cabinet War Room Record No. 219, 9 April 1940, National Archives, CAB 100/3.

³²⁵Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 51.

Financial Secretary to the War Office, that there was no chance Narvik was captured.

Gregg assumed the report was a misspelling of Larvik, a town on the south coast.³²⁶

Nicolson was not alone in his confusion over the possible occupation of Narvik. Alexander Cadogan expressed similar disbelief in his diary that evening: "The Germans seem to have gotten into Narvik! How?!"³²⁷

By April 10, events of the previous day became clearer. German Naval Units had arrived in Oslo, Trondhjem, Bergen, Egersund, and Narvik. Germans also occupied Kristiansand and Stavanger and landed at the Fornebu and Sola aerodromes.³²⁸ Although the German military controlled every major town, port, and airstrip in Norway, the Norwegian government refused to give in to German demands. While the Norwegians battled against Hitler and appealed to the Allies for assistance, in a few short hours the Germans totally overran Denmark. The invasion of Denmark was timed to coincide with the German arrival in Norway. The Danish capital was easily accessed from the sea, and just before 5:00 a.m. three German ships backed by air cover arrived in the Copenhagen harbour while German troops entered Denmark from the south. The Danish offered almost no resistance to the German invasion. The War Room Records on April 10th confirmed that Germany had taken over the whole of Denmark "under protest, but without outward incident."³²⁹ The capitulation of Denmark gave the Germans additional airstrips and a

³²⁶Nicolson, *Harold Nicolson: Diaries*, 69.

³²⁷Cadogan, *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, 268.

³²⁸Cabinet War Room Record No. 219, 10 April 1940, National Archives, CAB 100/3.

³²⁹Cabinet War Room Record No. 219, 10 April 1940, National Archives, CAB 100/3.

sheltered sea corridor from their own ports to southern Norway.³³⁰ It also caused a new set of problems for the Allies in the North Atlantic.

Military, Diplomatic, and Political Consequences

The invasions of Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940, had major military, diplomatic, and political consequences for the British Government and obliged it to deal with the sudden vulnerability of the Danish colonies in the North Atlantic to seizure by Germany. As will be shown, what complicated the issue of what to do about the colonies was the strong interest that both Canada and the United States took in the fate of Greenland. Denmark had not featured in Churchill's plans to mine the Leads nor in any of the discussions around the need to secure Narvik; however, its occupation by Germany had immediate and unanticipated effects for the British military. The German occupation left Denmark's strategically-situated colonies, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland, vulnerable to attack. The Faroe Islands, the closest of the three colonies to the British mainland, were the first concern of the British. Almost immediately, the Governor of the Faroe Islands communicated with the British. In an urgent and confidential telegram it was expressed that "the population was getting nervous in unsettled position and therefore prompt action was necessary."³³¹ Operation "Valentine," the British occupation of the Faroe Islands, was planned and implemented quickly. The British requested accommodation from the Faroe Islanders but did not inform the governor that an expeditionary force was already en route to the island. The operation, which began on

³³⁰Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 61.

³³¹Telegram, Decipher, His Majesty's Consul (Thorshaven) to War Cabinet, 10 April 1940, National Archives, FO 371/24783.

April 11 and was completed on April 13, landed at Tórshavn from the *HMS Suffolk*.³³² G.A. Hilbert, the Governor of the Faroe Islands, was informed that the British had “arrived to ensure the safety, liberty, and sovereignty of the population.” The governor formally protested the action stating that “he had not given this undertaking, or asked H.M. Government for help.” The governor was told to submit his complaint in writing to the Foreign Office.³³³ Despite the lack of consent to the British occupation by the local government, the initial response from the population was said to have been “friendly” to the British presence on the islands.³³⁴ The Faroe islanders were generally perceived to be pro-British, which facilitated the British occupation. In Iceland, however, allegiances were more politically divided than in the Faroe Islands, which made an occupation difficult.³³⁵ Iceland’s location on both air and shipping routes made it extremely important in the Battle of the Atlantic. German U-boats had made visits to the island prior to the war.³³⁶ The pro-German population in Iceland was a major concern for the British. Although it was suspected that there was proportionally more support for the Allies in Iceland, the pro-German party was “undoubtedly much better organised, and German propaganda is

³³²Telegram, Foreign Office to Consul-General Lutzen (Thorshaven), 11 April 1940, National Archives, FO 371/24783; Cabinet War Room Record No. 225, 15 April 1940, National Archives, CAB 100/3.

³³³Memo, Operation Valentine, FO 371/24783.

³³⁴Cabinet War Room Record No. 225, 15 April 1940, National Archives, CAB 100/3.

³³⁵“Note on Iceland,” CAB 21/1424.

³³⁶Letter, British Consulate Hamburg to the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 15 July 1939, FO 371/23640.

rife.”³³⁷ These concerns caused delays in the planning of the Icelandic operation throughout the month of April and early May.³³⁸

Very late on the night of the invasions of Denmark and Norway, the government of Canada sent a secret telegram to the Foreign Office. The telegram stated that the Canadians had received reports of enemy ships heading in the direction of Iceland and Southern Greenland. While the British were already thinking of occupying Iceland in a manner similar to the Faroe Islands, the fate of Greenland had not been considered. The Canadian cable, however, stressed that there was a risk of Germany interfering with the cryolite production at Ivigtut that was necessary for “the maintenance of essential aluminium output.” The winter’s aluminium production depended on a shipment of cryolite that had not yet been received. If the stocks were threatened, it would “seriously threaten [the] planned rate of aluminium production in Canada and other Allied countries and the United States.”³³⁹ The Dominions Office entered discussions with the Canadian government on the question of how to best “protect the cryolite field” in Greenland.³⁴⁰

Although neither Denmark nor Greenland had figured in the Admiralty’s plans for Norway, Greenland had already provided Germany with a secret tactical advantage in its invasion of Denmark and Norway. As discussed in Chapter two, the Germans had been interested in Greenland from a strategic point of view in the 1930s, particularly in terms of weather. By the spring of 1940 the Germans were relying on Greenlandic meteorological

³³⁷“Note on Iceland,” CAB 21/1424.

³³⁸Cadogan, *The Diaries*, 277.

³³⁹Telegram, Government of Canada to the Foreign Office, 9 April 1940, National Archives, FO 371/24783, 250.

³⁴⁰Handwritten note on file E.O. Coote, 11 April 1940, National Archives, FO 371/24783, 249.

data for the implementation of operation Weserübung. For the German navy, the longer journey to Norway around the west coast of neutral Ireland would have a high probability of detection by the British home fleet. The shorter route through the North Sea was equally perilous. If there was good visibility, it would have been impossible to make the journey without being detected. Information gleaned from the German weather station in Greenland, however, let the German forces know that they could pass within miles of Dover screened by heavy fog.³⁴¹ Throughout the British reports and recollections of the events of April 9, 1940, the weather is consistently highlighted as the factor that both prevented the British from acting more effectively and that allowed for a decisive German victory. John Simon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made this point about the tactical success of the German invasions of Denmark and Norway:

Unquestionably, it is technically a great achievement, and its clock-like precision is terrifying. Naturally a large part of our own public is asking why the British Navy could not stop it. The answer is, in part, the sea is a very large place, and secondly, that the weather was awful; and though we had news that the German navy had come out and was proceeding northward it was almost impossible with such poor visibility to know what they were doing.³⁴²

Although tactically and materially important, the issues of the three Danish colonies were necessarily overshadowed by events in Norway. Immediately following the German invasion of Norway, the British government also responded to the Norwegian request for assistance. Norway, unlike Czechoslovakia or Poland, was in close range of the United Kingdom.³⁴³ In addition, Allied militaries had been preparing to invade Norway following the anticipated German response to the mine-laying campaign. Despite their perceived position of strength, however, most everything went wrong. Land forces were untrained

³⁴¹Douglas Liversidge, *The Third Front: The Strange Story of the Secret War in the Arctic* (London: Souvenir Press Ltd, 1960), 10.

³⁴²Simon, Diary, 12 April 1940, MSS Simon 11, 75.

³⁴³Taylor, *English History*, 470.

and unprepared for immediate action upon landing. The navy and the army found it impossible to operate within range of the German air force, which had strategically claimed the majority of Norwegian airstrips. In addition, there were significant disagreements regarding tactics within the government and military leaders. The Admiralty and War Office issued contradictory orders to their officers in the field.³⁴⁴

Conservative MP Leo Amery, later one of the most vocal in his denunciation of Chamberlain, recalled that the Allies had been "caught napping . . . we don't appear to have made any special preparations to deal with a possible counter-stroke to our mine-laying . . . The House is much puzzled and broke up early."³⁴⁵ Churchill, who was initially optimistic about the Allies' chances of recapturing Norway, was given the task of reporting the events of the previous days to Parliament on April 11.³⁴⁶ Harold Nicolson recorded that it was one of the worst performances he had seen Churchill give. The house was expecting good news, which Churchill was unable to give them. His "lamentable performance" began with hesitation. He got his notes out of order, fumbled for his correct pair of glasses, and continually mixed up Denmark and Sweden. He also did not give a real reason how the Germans managed to capture Narvik.³⁴⁷ Nicolson recalled Churchill mentioning that "[T]he Faroe Islands have been captured and that Iceland will be protected," but that Churchill's "references to the Norwegian Army are vague in the extreme. One has the impression that he is playing for time and expects that at any moment some dramatic news

³⁴⁴Taylor, *English History*, 470-471.

³⁴⁵Leo Amery, *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 586.

³⁴⁶The press and a number of ministers, including both Churchill and Chamberlain, were said to have been overly optimistic at the start of the Norwegian campaign. Harold Macmillan, *The Blast of War: 1939-1945* (London: MacMillan, 1967), 64-65.

³⁴⁷Nicolson, *Harold Nicolson: Diaries*, 70.

will be brought to him. It is a feeble, tired speech and it leaves the house in a mood of grave anxiety.”³⁴⁸

Against the backdrop of the continuing disaster that was the Norwegian campaign on April 16, 1940, MP Dingle Mackintosh Foot raised the question of the position of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland in Parliament.³⁴⁹ R.A. Butler, who was praised by Churchill for his “delicate manner of answering parliamentary questions without giving anything away,”³⁵⁰ replied to the question in his usual style. He stated that the Icelandic Parliament had transferred all functions previously exercised by the King of Denmark and the Danish government to the Icelandic government. He also said that the Governor of the Faroe Islands had agreed to grant facilities to the British government to prevent German forces from establishing themselves on the islands. He had “no statement to make at present about Greenland.”³⁵¹ The notes on the file made it clear that the government did not want to say much about any of the three Danish colonies. The Admiralty did not want to say any more about the occupation of the Faroe Islands than “a force has been landed in the islands.” It had not yet been decided what was to be done about Iceland, and little could be added to Churchill’s earlier statement that the Germans would not be permitted to

³⁴⁸Nicolson, *Harold Nicolson: Diaries*, 70.

³⁴⁹Parliamentary Question (Mr. Foot), 16 April 1940, National Archives, FO 371/24783, 284.

³⁵⁰Churchill quoted in Butler, *The Art of the Possible*, 85.

³⁵¹Parliamentary Question (Mr. Foot), 16 April 1940, National Archives, FO 371/24783, 288.

establish themselves in Iceland. Regarding Greenland, it was made clear that “there was nothing that can be said about Greenland at the moment.”³⁵²

The Faroe Islands were occupied, and although there were some concerns about the long-term intentions of the British presence on the island, the situation was resolved as far as it could be. As far as Iceland was concerned, there were issues relating to Icelandic sovereignty that needed be dealt with before any further measures could be taken by the British to “protect” its neutrality. Greenland, however, was even more complicated than the other two. From the British perspective Greenland was the most remote of the three North Atlantic colonies. From the United States and Canada, however, Greenland was the closest Danish colony. In addition, its position in the Western Hemisphere meant that the Monroe Doctrine might be applied to it. Given the potential constraints of the Monroe Doctrine it was decided that Canada, which had much more to lose in the event of a German occupation of Greenland, would be able to manage the protection of Greenland without alarming the Americans. The worsening Allied position in the European war meant that even close allies like Canada had begun to pursue policies of self protection. Prime Minister Mackenzie King had good reason to doubt that the British would be able to win the war against Germany, and this was driving him closer to the American President.³⁵³

Canada and the Empire

Significant changes had taken place in the Empire since the First World War. While many territories were still directly managed by the Crown, in 1931 the Treaty of Westminster

³⁵²Parliamentary Question (Mr. Foot), 16 April 1940, National Archives, FO371/24783, 285.

³⁵³Simon, Diary, 12 April 1940, MSS Simon 11, 84.

had given British Dominions new autonomy over their foreign policies. Now there was no guarantee that the Dominions would continue to support the British in the context of war. In Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, costly campaigns in the First World War had ignited nascent national consciousnesses, and even before the war there were fissures between the Dominions and Whitehall. Indeed, one of the justifications Chamberlain later gave for Munich was that it was necessary for the defence of the Empire. In the later writings of those who were active in formulating Britain's foreign policy in the interwar period, the fear that war with Germany would provoke the breakup of the commonwealth is often cited as a crucial factor in their decision to pursue the policy of appeasement with Hitler in 1938.³⁵⁴ The war itself would bring further strains.

There is some debate over the extent to which Chamberlain considered the position of the Dominions in formulating his policies in the 1930s, or whether he simply invoked them in order to push difficult issues through the Cabinet. Documentary evidence from the Conservative Party Archives, however, suggests that the Dominions played a significant role in pre-war planning for the British government.³⁵⁵ The tumultuous nature of the 1930s meant that many British politicians had been planning for another European war years before it began. A confidential memo circulated throughout the Conservative Party in

³⁵⁴Robert Self, "Introduction," *The Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume Four: The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940* (London: Ashgate, 2005), 14-15.

³⁵⁵See D.C Watt, "The Influence of the Commonwealth on British Foreign Policy: The Case of the Munich Crisis," in *Personalities and Policy: Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longmans, 1965), 139-174; Richie Owendale, *Appeasement and the English Speaking World: Britain, the United States and the Dominions and the Policy of Appeasement 1937-1939* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1975); and Christopher Hill, *Cabinet Decisions on Foreign Policy: The British Experience October 1938-June 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 125-127.

August 1937 articulated the challenges the Empire would have to overcome if faced with another war.³⁵⁶ The four issues highlighted by the memo were:

1. The TIME factor and the advent of AIR FORCES
2. THE INCREASED INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE ARMED FORCES UPON EACH OTHER
3. COMPLETENESS OR TOTALITARIAN NATURE OF WAR involving as it will every soul in the country, and all the resources. Limitless war.
4. STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER, which enables each Dominion to decide for itself whether or not it will give its support to the BRITISH Commonwealth in the War. This factor applies, of course, only to the British Empire.³⁵⁷

The first three factors outlined above were discussed in the last chapter; however, as the memorandum points out, the fourth factor is one unique to the British Empire. Prior to 1932, a declaration of war by the British Parliament implied a declaration of war by the whole empire. The Statute of Westminster gave every self-governing Dominion the right to decide for itself whether or not it would support the British government on the outbreak of war. Although it was noted that as a result of sentimental and economic ties, it was “improbable” that any Dominion would remain neutral, it was noted that Dominions “contributing armed forces to the common imperial cause,” would “demand some say in their employment and control.”³⁵⁸

Within the Empire itself, Canada was becoming increasingly problematic. While the British government could continue to rely on the loyalty of the Canadian military (many of whom had been trained in the United Kingdom and had close ties with the British military), Mackenzie King, the recently re-elected Liberal Prime Minister, was of

³⁵⁶Commander G.A. French, Confidential Memo, “Organisation of the British Empire for War,” Papers of R.A. Butler, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford RAB 1/1, 1-13.

³⁵⁷French, “Organisation of the British Empire for War,” 2.

³⁵⁸French, “Organisation of the British Empire for War,” 8.

particular concern. King was openly pro-American and had long sought means to reinforce Canadian political autonomy from Britain.³⁵⁹ During the Chanak Crisis of 1922, he shocked many in the Empire by refusing to support the British without the consent of the Canadian parliament. At the Imperial Conference of 1937, Chamberlain said the Canadian Prime Minister was “generally considered the weakest member of the team.” At the outbreak of war between Britain and Germany, both Australia and New Zealand declared war alongside Great Britain on September 3, 1939, while Canada, in a calculated exercise of its post-Westminster independence, chose to declare war on Germany a week later on September 10, 1939.³⁶⁰

The British Dominions, including Canada, were a long way away from the United Kingdom. Despite this distance, Canada had long relied on the strength of the British navy to maintain the security of the North Atlantic and the convoy system. The Phoney War had lulled neutral countries in Europe, along with the United States and Canada, into a false sense of security, but the swift German victory in Denmark and its strong showing in Norway raised doubts about Britain’s ability to withstand a direct German attack. The continued British failures in Norway did little to assuage these fears. The shock of British losses in Norway and the resulting leadership crisis gave Mackenzie King concrete reasons to re-evaluate his own country’s security measures.

As Chamberlain had suspected when he prevented the mine-laying plan from going ahead in February, many Americans thought that the British were at fault for the German

³⁵⁹Letter Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 2 June 1937, NC18/1/1125.

³⁶⁰This issue had been the subject of an ongoing debate in Canada and was particularly important to Canada’s Secretary of State O.D. Skelton, who corresponded within Canada and the Dominion on the issue. See The Papers of O.D. Skelton, The National Archives of Canada, MG30/D33/Vol.5.

invasion of Denmark and Norway because they had provoked the Germans into action by mining the Norwegian waters.³⁶¹ Several members of Roosevelt's administration held this opinion including Sumner Welles, one of Roosevelt's closest advisors.³⁶² Although many of Chamberlain's decisions had been dictated by his concerns about the perception of the United States and the Empire, Chamberlain and his government had very little time to think about the impact the events in Norway had abroad. Internally, the fissures in the British government that resulted from the failures in Norway were about to force him out of power.

John Simon realised the significance the British political issues were having abroad but stressed, "Far more serious than this however is the encouragement these events give to the enemy, and the doubts which they raise in neutral minds as to our power and will to win. Chamberlain's position as Prime Minister is certainly shaken, largely because his followers are themselves very much shaken by these occurrences in Norway."³⁶³

Collapse of the Chamberlain Government

*"It shall certainly be an odd result if Churchill, who winds up the debate tonight, and who is more directly responsible for recent decisions on tactics and strategy in Norway than any of his colleagues, should be elevated into the P.M.'s place."*³⁶⁴

John Simon

On May 9, 1940, exactly one month after the German invasion of Denmark, Neville Chamberlain's government was in crisis. The news of the evacuation of the majority of the British troops from Norway had a devastating effect on public confidence, especially after

³⁶¹For American opinion on the issue see, for example, Villard, "Issues and Men," *Nation* 150 (20 April 1940).

³⁶²Justus D. Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention 1939-1941* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 84.

³⁶³Simon, Diary, 8 May 1940, MSS Simon 11, 84.

³⁶⁴Simon, Diary, 8 May 1940, MSS Simon 11, 85.

the positive terms in which Chamberlain and Churchill had spoken of the expedition in the initial stages of the operation.³⁶⁵ The government yielded to demands, and a debate was held in Parliament over the failure of the British attempt to expel German forces from Norway.³⁶⁶ Over the course of the debate on the Norwegian debacle, the speeches began to focus less on the defeat in Norway and more on the personal failings of the prime minister. The speeches of Chamberlain's critics became increasingly vitriolic and many began calling for Chamberlain to step down. A particularly painful indictment for the prime minister came from Conservative MP Leo Amery who invoked Oliver Cromwell's famous words of dismissal to the long Parliament, "You have sat here for too long for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!"³⁶⁷ Chamberlain, however, would not go quietly.

Neville Chamberlain had experienced a very difficult few months governing the country since the outbreak of the war with Germany the previous September. He had been heavily criticised throughout the war for his failure of Munich. Patient and methodical, Chamberlain was perceived as a good colleague, but he had problems gaining popular support.³⁶⁸ His small Cabinet caused him to be seen by some as distant and aloof, and it alienated and polarised his opponents. It also facilitated the assigning of blame to the

³⁶⁵The Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax: The Life of Lord Halifax* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965), 452.

³⁶⁶Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, 128; See also Copies of the House of Commons Official Report (Hansard) for the Debate on the Conduct of the War, CHAR 2/407, 1-82.

³⁶⁷Amery's remarks have been re-printed in nearly all political memoirs in the period. See for example Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, 304.

³⁶⁸Max Beaverbrook mentioned Chamberlain's excellent ability but lack of popular support in a letter to Canadian Prime Minister Bennett that was mentioned to Chamberlain. Letter Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 2 June 1937, NC 18/1/1125.

prime minister when inevitable disaster struck. Following the surprise German attacks on Scandinavia, Chamberlain was lambasted by the press and his political opponents. His previous comments that Hitler had “missed the bus,” the same week that German troops successfully secured airstrips and ports throughout Denmark and Norway, only served to underline his ineptitude in the minds of his critics (and some of his friends).³⁶⁹ On the second day of the Norway debate, a re-invigorated Chamberlain defied his critics and appealed to his friends in the party to support him in an open vote. This action, in particular, seemed to incite another former war-time prime minister, David Lloyd George, who was noted as being the most vocal of all MPs in his denunciation of Chamberlain’s ability to continue leading the country.³⁷⁰

The vote, in reality, was an unofficial vote of confidence in the prime minister. Future Prime Minister Harold Macmillan wrote that the division was the most tense he had ever known and that the “whole future of Britain and the Empire was at stake.”³⁷¹ The vote ended in a tally of 281 to 200 in Chamberlain’s favour. Macmillan remembered “the house was staggered for the normal majority was 240 or more. Now it was only 80 odd.”³⁷²

Although he technically received a majority, the outcome was not positive for the sitting

³⁶⁹Chamberlain had used the phrase “missed the bus” throughout the war. He believed that Hitler would have had a better chance of winning against Britain in 1938 because Britain was far better prepared in 1939-1940 than it was in 1938. See Letter, Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 30 December 1940, NC NC18/1/1125. The phrase has been used as a point of Chamberlain’s weakness in several other biographies and memoirs. See, for example, The Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax*, 452.

³⁷⁰Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, 472; John Allsebrook Simon, *Diary*, 9 May 1940, MSS Simon 12, 1.

³⁷¹Harold Macmillan, *The Blast of War: 1939-1945* (London: MacMillan, 1967), 75.

³⁷²Although it technically amounted to the same thing, the vote was not one of no confidence or censure, rather it was a division on a motion (this house do now adjourn). A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), 472.

prime minister. The 200 votes that were cast against him constituted a very serious revolt against him, particularly in the context of war.³⁷³

On the morning after the debate, the press viewed the result as a direct condemnation of Chamberlain and his government, and *The Daily Herald* called for Chamberlain to immediately step down.³⁷⁴ That day, in spite of the result of the vote the previous evening, Chamberlain looked for support to lead a coalition War Cabinet. The past few years, however, had left Parliament deeply divided, and many refused to work under Chamberlain. Chamberlain invited Clement Attlee, the head of the Labour Party, and Arthur Greenwood, to meet with him at Downing Street. Joined by Lord Halifax and Churchill, Chamberlain asked if they would continue to serve in a reconstructed Cabinet drawn from all parties.³⁷⁵ Attlee recalled, “It was not a pleasant task to tell a Prime Minister that he ought to go, but I had no option but to tell him the truth.”³⁷⁶ Attlee posed the question to the Labour conference that was being held in Bournemouth. His party agreed with his comments to the prime minister the previous day. Chamberlain would have to resign, but they would continue under another Conservative leader.³⁷⁷ A number of highly placed officials and MPs urged Lord Halifax to assume leadership of the country,

³⁷³This number included forty-three Conservatives, the Labour Party, and the opposition Liberals who had voted against him. In addition there were more than eighty deliberate abstentions. Macmillan, *The Blast of War*, 75.

³⁷⁴Simon, Diary, 9 May 1940, MSS Simon 11, 2.

³⁷⁵Allan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin: Volume I Trade Union Leader 1881-1940* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 651.

³⁷⁶Clement Attlee, *As it Happened: His Autobiography* (London: Odhams Press Ltd.), 131.

³⁷⁷Clement Attlee, *As it Happened*, 132.

but he refused and it was left to Winston Churchill, the architect of the failed Norwegian campaign, to succeed Chamberlain.³⁷⁸

More significantly for German military strategists, however, was the potential tactical advantage of the collapse of an enemy government in a time of war. John Simon noted the danger of how a government crisis in Britain would be perceived in Germany. He accurately predicted that Germany's long awaited attack in the west would begin before the "domestic controversies" of the British Parliament were settled.³⁷⁹ Before it was decided who would succeed Neville Chamberlain, the German army struck in the west with a "speed and force that swept aside fixed defences like cardboard, and through the gaps poured German tanks and dive bombers."³⁸⁰ By the time Churchill was appointed prime minister on the afternoon of May 10, Hitler had already capitalised on the government crisis and invaded Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg and was en route to France.

Chamberlain's government had lost more than a battle when it lost the fight against Germany for Norway. One of Chamberlain's primary reasons for delaying entry into the war was his concerns about protecting the British Empire. Another of his key aims in going to war against Germany was to protect the sovereignty of small neutral countries. His government had been unable to protect Czechoslovakia, Poland, Finland, Denmark, and Norway. Now, as Hitler moved across the Low Countries, both the United States and

³⁷⁸For a detailed account on the collapse of the Chamberlain government, see Larry L. Witherell, "Lord Salisbury's 'Watching Committee' and the Fall of Neville Chamberlain, May 1940," *The English Historical Review* 116 no. 469 (Nov. 2001): 1134-1166.

³⁷⁹Simon, *Diary*, 8 May 1940, MSS Simon 11, 85.

³⁸⁰Bullock, *The Life and Times*, 651.

Canada had good reason to believe Britain was no longer able to defend itself, let alone its Empire or Greenland.

**Chapter IV: A Presidential Geography Lesson
Roosevelt, the Monroe Doctrine, Greenland, and the Politics of Protection in 1940**

“The Press came in the other day and asked me whether Greenland belongs in the Monroe Doctrine. I stalled. I told them that I had looked up the fauna of Greenland and the fauna of Greenland were more American than they were European . . . they pressed it home, and I took a very righteous tone, saying that I am more interested in the 17,000 splendid Eskimos who are living in Greenland, than I am in the Monroe Doctrine, and I am still stalling.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt³⁸¹

On Monday April 9, 1940, Senator Robert Reynolds from North Carolina cleared his throat and stepped onto the Senate Floor. Reynolds, a leading isolationist in the Democratic Party, delivered a passionate speech against President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s defence measures. He argued that in order to ensure the safety of the United States the government should abandon the foreign policies of the current administration and adopt those of the truly neutral great Scandinavian nations: Denmark and Norway. Only then, he stressed, would the United States be safe from foreign aggression. Unbeknownst to Reynolds, however, at the very moment that he was delivering his pre-prepared speech, the great Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Norway were being invaded by German forces.³⁸²

President Roosevelt loved this story and recounted it publically several times in the following weeks and months of 1940.³⁸³ For Roosevelt there could be no better illustration of his arguments in favour of proactive American defence and hemispheric security than the tale of Senator Robert Reynolds from North Carolina.

³⁸¹Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports of Press Conferences 1933-1945* vol. XV (Washington, 1933-1935), 280.

³⁸²Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 274-5.

³⁸³Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 274.

Roosevelt had a passion for geography. When he was bedridden with polio, he dedicated a significant amount of time to his stamp collection. When a particular stamp caught his attention, he was inspired to learn more about the country that issued it. This, in combination with his long-held fascination with naval history, gave him unique insights into the strategic significance of distant and obscure parts of the globe.³⁸⁴ Over time, Roosevelt developed an integrated concept of the world and the role the United States played in it.³⁸⁵ This knowledge of geography contributed to his growing concerns about the dangers of ignoring foreign aggression and totalitarianism abroad.

In the latter years of his first term, he made these concerns public, asserting, "We are not isolationist except in so far as we seek to isolate ourselves completely from war. Yet we must remember so long as war exists on earth there will be some danger that even the nation that most ardently desires peace may be drawn into war."³⁸⁶ The American people, however, were not yet ready to accept the possibility that the United States might have to play an active role in global conflicts. A strong isolationist sentiment persisted throughout the public. Many Americans felt as though they had been tricked into entering the First World War and were unwilling to consider any action on the part of the president that could be seen as leading the country into another foreign war. Even though the public sympathised with the Allies, "They were determined not only to keep out of the war but also to maintain a strict physical neutrality, no matter where their sympathies lay."³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴Robert H. Jackson, *That Man: An Insider's Portrait of Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, ed. John Q. Barrett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.

³⁸⁵Alan K. Henrikson, "FDR and the World-Wide Arena," in *FDR's World: War, Peace, and Legacies*, ed. David Woolner et al. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 36.

³⁸⁶Franklin Delano Roosevelt in Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952), 108-109.

³⁸⁷Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 182.

While Roosevelt agreed in principle with this sentiment, he had no time for those who said the European war was not the business of the United States. Roosevelt believed that a Nazi victory in Europe would necessarily have an impact on the lives of the American people, and he constantly made efforts to illustrate the potential effects of a Nazi victory in Europe would have in the United States.³⁸⁸

Roosevelt met with similar challenges in both the Senate and the House. The government was starkly divided over the extent to which the United States should involve itself in global affairs. Anti-interventionist, or isolationist, politicians were comprised of individuals from across the political spectrum. Both Democrats and Republicans opposed Roosevelt's efforts to show Americans the threat foreign wars posed to American security.³⁸⁹ In the 1930s a series of neutrality acts were passed that limited the president's ability to involve the United States in foreign conflicts unless it was attacked directly. In the autumn of 1937 Roosevelt felt the full brunt of American opposition to the possibility of war when he attempted to lobby against anti-interventionists through his Quarantine Speech. Samuel I. Rosenman, one of the President's speech writers and a close advisor, recalled that following the President's Quarantine Speech the public's reaction was "quick and violent—and nearly unanimous."³⁹⁰ Roosevelt was condemned as a sabre-rattling warmonger and was attacked by the majority of the press. Rosenman argued that "he had made a mistake he seldom made—the mistake of trying to lead the people of the United

³⁸⁸Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 182.

³⁸⁹See Justus Doenecke, "Introduction: The Many Mansions of Anti-interventionism," in *Storm on the Horizon: the Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), 1-8.

³⁹⁰Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 160.

States too quickly.”³⁹¹ Through the public reaction to the Quarantine Speech Roosevelt learned an important lesson about the necessity of articulating policies: to do so only when he knew the public had been educated on the facts and was prepared to listen.

In early 1939 Roosevelt lost an important battle to extend the cash-and-carry provision of the Neutrality Act, which was set to expire. It had been added two years earlier and allowed for the sale of arms to belligerents as long as countries could pay in cash and arrange for their own shipping. As the United Kingdom and France controlled the majority of shipping in the North Atlantic, it was essentially applicable only to them. When the provision lapsed, the president was left with little room to manoeuvre. From the outset of the war in Europe, Roosevelt continued to fight an uphill battle with isolationists in Congress. Although he was successful in passing a new Neutrality Act that reinstated the cash-and-carry provision, by spring of 1940 global tensions were reaching a crisis point. Diplomatic tensions were increasing internationally, and domestically, interventionists and anti-interventionists were nearing physical fights in Washington. *The United States News* reported in the last week of March 1940 that "the head of a government agency who favours more cooperation with Great Britain and a prominent senator who doesn't came close to taking off their coats during a dinner party argument."³⁹²

Divisions with respect to American foreign policy existed even among those with whom he worked most closely. Although he was supported by, among others, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., Roosevelt sometimes bypassed his Secretary of State,

³⁹¹Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 161.

³⁹²"Neutrality's Headaches: Official Nerves Rased over How Far U.S. Should Aid Allies," *The United States News*, 29 March 1940, 12.

Cordell Hull, on international issues.³⁹³ Hull, a slow-speaking, thoughtful southerner, had been a leading figure in Democratic politics for decades.³⁹⁴ He was nearly seventy when the war broke out in Europe. Dean Acheson, the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs under Hull, recalled that Hull was "suspicious by nature, he brooded over what he thought were slights and grievances," and many of "Mr. Hull's feuds grew out of his relations with President Roosevelt."³⁹⁵ In the initial stages of the European war, Hull's pace remained slow. As the war progressed, Hull "continued to speak out in the interests of peace without ever really accepting the need for war until the war had all but arrived."³⁹⁶ The lack of urgency on the part of Hull and personality differences often led Roosevelt to go over Hull and deal directly with diplomats and government officials. Although tensions were high and there was a terrible war at sea, fighting in Western Europe was limited. The American media began calling the war "the Phoney War," a phrase that was resented by those fighting in it.³⁹⁷

When the German military advanced on neutral Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940, it had a greater impact than simply undermining Senator Reynolds' argument. The invasions marked the end of the so-called "Phoney War" and the beginning of active fighting in the western-Europe. The invasion also moved the European front markedly closer to the United States. The capitulation of the Danish Kingdom in a matter of hours left its colonial

³⁹³Julius W. Pratt, "The Ordeal of Cordell Hull," *The Review of Politics* 28 no. 1 (Jan. 1966): 76-98.

³⁹⁴Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969), 9.

³⁹⁵Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 9.

³⁹⁶Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information 1942-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 43.

³⁹⁷"Neutrality's Headaches," 13.

empire in the North Atlantic in a state of limbo. Now that Germany's control over Denmark could potentially be exerted in the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland, something would need to be done to prevent the extension of German power into the American sphere of influence.

The British military moved swiftly to secure the Faroe Islands and Iceland, which were of utmost strategic importance given their proximity to Great Britain. Greenland, however, was a problem. In spite of its low population and harsh climate the island could not be left to its fate because its vital mineral resources and location made its protection essential for North Atlantic security. Greenland, it could be argued, also lay within the geographic limits of the Western Hemisphere, which for Roosevelt immediately raised the question of the Monroe Doctrine.

The Monroe Doctrine, that hopeful American statement that insisted outside powers stay out of the Western Hemisphere, was one of the cornerstones of American foreign policy. If the Monroe Doctrine applied to Greenland it would mean that the President would almost certainly have to act to prevent any European power from exerting control over the island. The Monroe Doctrine, however, had never been applied to the North Atlantic and there were conflicting interpretations of its meaning both internationally and within the United States. If it did apply, its very application might deter a foreign occupation of Greenland. Neither the Germans nor the British wanted to risk violating the Monroe Doctrine and alienating the United States. The Canadians were unsure if it applied to Canada itself, as Canada was both geographically situated within North America and was closely tied to Great Britain as a member of the British Commonwealth. To further complicate the issue, the Japanese were also watching the situation closely and were hoping to use any American intervention in Greenland as a precedent for expanding their own sphere of

influence in Asia. In addition, any extension of the Monroe Doctrine without consultation with Latin American countries could also be problematic for the president. Roosevelt was attempting to recalibrate hemispheric security arrangements with other American states and could not risk estranging the rest of the hemisphere with unilateral action. Greenland was by many accounts geographically situated within the Western Hemisphere, but in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the Quarantine Speech and upsetting the international community Roosevelt would need to have some measure of domestic support and understanding before the Monroe Doctrine could be applied to Greenland. In order to gain that support, the president would need to buy himself time.

What made this process more complicated for Roosevelt was that he was in a difficult position in the spring of 1940. He was in the final year of his second term as president. His party was facing another election in November, and he was conflicted about seeking an unprecedented third term. Roosevelt had presided over the United States through a long and devastating depression. Now there was a war in Europe, and Japan was pursuing aggressive expansion policies in Asia. New aviation and submarine technologies were shrinking distances, changing military strategies, and bringing the threat of enemy attack closer to the United States.³⁹⁸ The potential for a truly global multi-fronted war was not lost on Roosevelt, yet his efforts to increase military spending for American defence were being met with resistance at every turn.³⁹⁹ Although many segments of the American public were vehemently opposed to American involvement in a foreign war, Roosevelt suspected that even without an armed conflict (which probably was not to be avoided in

³⁹⁸Robert H. Jackson, *That Man: An Insider's Portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 81.

³⁹⁹Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

the long run), a Europe dominated by Germany and an Asia dominated by Japan would harm American economic and strategic interests in both regions.

Although most Americans passionately defended it, the shifting nature of the Monroe Doctrine over time meant that few really knew what it was. In order to garner more support for his policies he would also need to give the American public a geography lesson. The potential belligerent occupation of Greenland brought the European conflict into the Western Hemisphere in a way that both tangibly illustrated Roosevelt's worries for the security of the United States and provided him with an opportunity to demonstrate to the American people that its geography alone would not ensure American security. For a country that has always seen itself as physically distant from Europe, Greenland provided a physical bridge between the Old World and New. If he could convince the American public that Greenland was within the Western Hemisphere and persuade them to demand that it be included within the Monroe Doctrine's influence, he could use the doctrine as a justification to protect the island and increase defence spending while maintaining American neutrality. Although war was still out of the question, defence was acceptable for some. While some isolationists like Senator Reynolds argued that even defence preparations would inevitably lead to war, others understood that measures to protect the United States from foreign aggression might be necessary. If managed properly, the president's potential application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland had the power to unify isolationists and interventionists within the United States while forestalling a foreign occupation of the island.

This is exactly what Roosevelt did. Reconstructing the way he did this, however, is not a straightforward process. Roosevelt was the United States' longest serving president, and he is also one of the most enigmatic. In 1940 the press nicknamed him "the sphinx" for his

ability to deftly avoid answering questions directly.⁴⁰⁰ He did not keep a diary and loathed record-taking. Although this enabled him maximum room for political manoeuvre and to cover his tracks when necessary, it has made the job of historians more difficult.⁴⁰¹ Very little secondary literature exists on the president's handling of the Greenland situation, and primary sources are also problematic. When managing the Greenland situation, the president used divergent tactics for his domestic and international policies. Domestically, Roosevelt used the press; diplomatically, Roosevelt used his Secretary and Undersecretary of State. Roosevelt's aversion to written records greatly increases the historical significance of his interactions with the press. He held hundreds of press conferences during his presidency, and all were meticulously recorded by a stenographer. Selections of his speeches and his press conferences have been published, but it is the complete unpublished transcripts of press conferences that provide the greatest insight into Roosevelt's interaction with the press and the information he wanted to share with the American people. Although Roosevelt's comments must be viewed critically, his off-the-record comments and cordial relationship with the press provide colour to and flesh out Roosevelt's textual record. This is particularly true in the case of his application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland. In terms of his foreign policy, there is limited direct evidence from Roosevelt himself. However, there is significant documentation regarding Greenland from the records of the Secretary and Undersecretary of State, and the diaries of Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

⁴⁰⁰This was particularly true in regard to questions relating to a possible third term. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1956).

⁴⁰¹David B. Woolner, introduction to *FDR's World: War, Peace, and Legacies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 4.

While little has been written on the American occupation of Greenland or the president's handling of the issue, there is a large body of literature discussing Roosevelt's efforts to support the Allied war effort prior to the American entry into the war.⁴⁰² David Reynolds has argued that in 1939-1941 "Roosevelt created a new political consensus, built around aid to Britain and its allies. This replaced the policy of hemisphere defence that in the mid-1930s held sway."⁴⁰³ This chapter will argue that this was not the case. The policy of hemispheric defence was vital in securing aid to Britain and its Allies, but it was not replaced by aid to the Allies. Rather aid to the Allies was an extension of the earlier policy of hemispheric defence. Tracing Roosevelt's actions relating to Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine not only provides insights into this issue, but also offers an enlightening case

⁴⁰²Very little attention has been paid to the subject of the American occupation of Greenland in the English language in general. In the small amount of work that is extant, most mention the Monroe Doctrine as a justification for the occupation. The doctrine itself, however, is never the focus of the work. As a result, it is not adequately discussed, explained, or contextualised in relation to the American occupation of Greenland. See, for example, Edward W. Chester, "Greenland: Home of the Weather," in *The United States and Six Atlantic Outposts: The Military and Economic Considerations* (London: Kennikat Press, 1980), 184-215; and David G. Haglund, "Plain Grand Imperialism on a Miniature Scale: Canadian-American Rivalry over Greenland in 1940," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 11 (1981):15-37. Haglund has recently produced an updated article on the subject, but it suffers from the same issues as the first. See David G. Haglund, "Greenland (1940) as an Instance of Pickwickian 'Cooperation' Between Mackenzie King's Ottawa and Roosevelt's Washington," *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 24 (2008/2009): 28-41; and Graeme S. Mount, "Canadian-American Relations and Greenland," Unpublished article, File: Greenland, Aluminium Company of Canada Archives, 1-21. Its meaning and application are taken for granted, and contemporary public opinion on the subject is all but absent. Greenland is rarely mentioned in monographs relating to the Monroe Doctrine because most focus exclusively on Latin America in earlier time periods. When Greenland is mentioned, it is cited after the official treaty is signed with the Danish "Government in Exile" in 1941, as an outcome of the Act of Havana in July 1940. The use and eventual application of the doctrine to Greenland beginning in 1940 are not examined. See Dexter Perkins, *A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (London: Longmans, 1960) 360, 365, 385-386; and John A. Logan's *No Transfer: An American Security Principle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

⁴⁰³David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 4.

study on the workings of the presidential mind and the intricacies of domestic politics and international diplomacy in 1940.

In order to understand Roosevelt's handling of the American occupation of Greenland, it is imperative to understand his use of the Monroe Doctrine. As such, this chapter will first discuss the Monroe Doctrine itself, Roosevelt's interpretation of it, and the diplomatic challenges involved in Roosevelt's applying it to Greenland in 1940. It will then detail how Roosevelt used the doctrine with the domestic press and the governments of the United Kingdom and Canada in the weeks immediately following the German invasion of Denmark. Drawing from Roosevelt's private papers, his unpublished press conference transcripts, contemporary periodicals, and a combination of published and unpublished diplomatic, military, and corporate documents, this chapter will argue that when Germany invaded Denmark, Greenland's status under the Monroe Doctrine was made deliberately unclear by the president. Roosevelt, as part of a broader strategy of western hemispheric security, used the Monroe Doctrine as a tool to bring public opinion in line with larger security aims and to forestall action relating to Greenland by the United Kingdom and Canada.

Section 1: Monroe, Roosevelt, Greenland, and the World

"I only know two things about the Monroe Doctrine: one is that no American I have met knows what it is and the other is that no American I have met will consent to having it tampered with."

Salvador Di Madriaga⁴⁰⁴

The Monroe Doctrine

Like Roosevelt, the Monroe Doctrine is something of an enigma. It is an ambiguous and often misunderstood tenet in American foreign policy. In its simplest terms, it was a re-

⁴⁰⁴Salvador de Madriaga, *Latin America Between the Eagle and the Bear* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1962), 74.

articulation of the relationship between the Old World and the New. The doctrine was part of President James Monroe's address to Congress in 1823. It recognised the political systems of Europe and their existing colonies in the Western Hemisphere. It also acknowledged that European colonies had political systems distinct from that of the United States. The doctrine sought to prevent both the expansion of European empires in the Western Hemisphere and the transfer of existing colonies there between European states. The United States would view any attempt on the part of European powers to extend their political system in the hemisphere as dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States.⁴⁰⁵ In exchange for the lack of interference on the part of Europe, the United States would agree not involve itself in European internal affairs.⁴⁰⁶

By the end of the American Civil War, three dominant strands had emerged in relation to the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. Some continued to view the doctrine as an assertion of the irreconcilable struggle between Old World and New. This interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine was anti-colonial and isolationist and saw the doctrine as a necessary tool to protect the United States from the dangerous entanglements of the Old World. The second strand saw the doctrine through an international lens and highlighted links between the United States and democratic states of Europe, like France. The third interpretation emerged in the decades following the Civil War. In contrast to conservative isolationists' and liberal internationalists' interpretations of the doctrine, some saw the doctrine as "the

⁴⁰⁵Monroe, James, "Message to Congress December 2, 1823," in *The Monroe Doctrine: A Landmark in American Foreign Policy*, by Harold Cecil Vaughan (New York: Franklin Watts Inc., 1973), 51-56.

⁴⁰⁶H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1954), 376.

symbol and instrument of an assertive and nationalist foreign policy" that sought to "establish strategic and commercial control of the Western Hemisphere."⁴⁰⁷

This third strand was formalised in the early 20th century by Franklin Roosevelt's distant cousin Teddy Roosevelt. Teddy Roosevelt changed the nature of the doctrine substantially from a reactive policy to one of proactive interventionism.⁴⁰⁸ The Roosevelt Corollary patently bestowed upon the United States the power to police the Western Hemisphere. It altered the doctrine from one denying the right of Europe to intervene in the Americas "to one sanctioning the process when conducted by the United States."⁴⁰⁹ The Corollary essentially bifurcated the meaning of the doctrine into "two ultimately incompatible strains: on the one hand a revulsion from European entanglements which underscored their belief in neutralism and isolation; on the other an aggressive expansionism."⁴¹⁰ The multitude of interpretations of the doctrine meant that it could now be invoked by politicians for a variety of political ends.

The Monroe Doctrine—like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—is part of the bipartisan backbone of the American political landscape. Unlike the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights, however,

⁴⁰⁷Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 162.

⁴⁰⁸Kagan argues that the Monroe Doctrine "opened the door to further territorial expansion and staked a claim to American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere; Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America and the World 1600-1898* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), 179. Kagan's comments touch on the idea of American Manifest Destiny. For a general overview see Anders Stephenson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

⁴⁰⁹George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt 1900-1912* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958), 159.

⁴¹⁰Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Great Experiment: An Introduction to the History of the American People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 287.

the Monroe Doctrine is not a physical document, but rather a variable political ideal. It has adapted over the centuries, and has meant different things to different people in different places in different times.⁴¹¹ As a result, the doctrine was continually used by Presidents and Secretaries of State in the 19th and early 20th centuries to support a range of diametrically opposed foreign policies.⁴¹²

During the First World War President Woodrow Wilson sought to use the doctrine as a tool for peace. On January 22 he outlined his updated interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine in a statement on foreign affairs in the Senate. He said:

I am proposing, as it were that the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the World: that no nation should seek to extend its policy over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.⁴¹³

Wilson was seeking to replace the "balance of power" with a "community of power" based on American principles.⁴¹⁴ Although Wilson's statements on the subject were well received domestically and internationally, he failed to live up to his promises.⁴¹⁵ At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, although Wilson neglected to defend the self-determination of small nations, he did manage to have the American Monroe Doctrine begrudgingly recognised by the international community. During the discussions, Great Britain, France, Honduras,

⁴¹¹Frank Donovan, *Mr. Monroe's Message: The Story of the Monroe Doctrine* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1963), 2.

⁴¹²To illustrate this point one general text on the doctrine begins with ten divergent interpretations of the doctrine from presidents and prominent politicians. See W. Allen Wilbur, *The Monroe Doctrine* (London: D.C. Heath and Company Boston, 1965), 1-3.

⁴¹³Woodrow Wilson in Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace 1916-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 266.

⁴¹⁴Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine*, 241.

⁴¹⁵Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine*, 242.

and Japan all voiced concern against the inclusion of a reservation for the Monroe Doctrine within the League Covenant.⁴¹⁶ President Woodrow Wilson, however, was eventually successful in both temporarily satisfying American “reservationists” and negotiating the controversial reservation that stated that nothing in the League Covenant would invalidate the doctrine, as it was designed to preserve peace.⁴¹⁷

In spite of the ambiguity of the doctrine it was something that most Americans ardently believed in and few wanted tampered with.⁴¹⁸ Langer and Gleason asserted that in 1940 the “Monroe Doctrine was the most firmly established and most popular of the foreign policies of the United States, and its obligations were taken as seriously by the man in the street as by the high official of government.”⁴¹⁹ It was this obligation that Franklin Roosevelt would tap into when discussing Greenland.

Roosevelt and the Monroe Doctrine

Franklin Roosevelt's interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine incorporated elements of many earlier interpretations of the doctrine. Like Wilson, he wanted the doctrine to be interpreted multilaterally. Unlike Wilson, however, Roosevelt initially limited its application to the Western Hemisphere. The president had a vision of a Western Hemispheric Security Zone, or “safety belt,” that encompassed the entire Western Hemisphere, stretching from the North Pole to the South Pole, but he realised that the United States would not be able to

⁴¹⁶David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant vol. I* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), 95, 336-337, 369, 384, 443, 450.

⁴¹⁷Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), 95-97; Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations Volume III: The Globalising of America, 1913-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 70.

⁴¹⁸de Madriaga, *Latin America Between the Eagle and the Bear*, 74.

⁴¹⁹William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation 1937-1940* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), 622.

defend this vast territory on its own. From the outset of his presidency he sought to make the Monroe Doctrine “a Pan American Doctrine of continental self defence,” rather than strictly an American one.⁴²⁰ From his inaugural speech to the repeal of the Platt Amendment (which had given the United States control over Cuba’s foreign policy) and withdrawal from Haiti in 1934, to his government’s active involvement in the Pan-American conferences at Montevideo (1933), Buenos Aires (1936), Lima (1938), and Panama (1939), Roosevelt built on the work of American Ambassador to Mexico Dwight Morrow and President Herbert Hoover to establish better relationships and stronger economic and diplomatic ties with Latin America.⁴²¹ He also sought to unify the security policies of Latin American states.

Prior to the ratification of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, Canada, as a British colony, had been excluded from these conferences. In 1938, however, Roosevelt also included Canada in his vision for a hemispheric application of the Monroe Doctrine. Canada’s close relationship with Great Britain meant that it had historically been excluded from discussions of hemispheric defence, but in 1938, Roosevelt delivered a speech in Kingston, Ontario, that included Canada in the “ample folds of its principles.”⁴²²

In 1941 the president publically articulated a clear view on the Danish colonies in the North Atlantic. He stated that Greenland was vital to American security, “very definitely”

⁴²⁰Letter, Gaston Nerval to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 25 November 1933, Official File (OF) 637, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President.

⁴²¹See Thomas A. Bailey, “Good Neighbours South and North, 1917-1941,” in *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958), 676-691.

⁴²²Dexter Perkins, *Hands Off: A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1941), 357-358.

part of the Western Hemisphere, and within the jurisdiction of the Monroe Doctrine.⁴²³ In his radio address announcing the “Proclamation of an Unlimited National Emergency” he called Greenland and Iceland “stepping stones” to “the United States itself, including the great industrial centres of the North, East and Middle West.”⁴²⁴

Roosevelt was not yet able to publically articulate this view in the spring of 1940. The president had to weigh many considerations before confirming that Greenland lay within the jurisdiction of the Monroe Doctrine.⁴²⁵ As mentioned, these considerations included a necessary sensitivity to the opinions of the American public and Congress, both of which included a large proportion of isolationists on both sides of the House and Senate who would potentially see any change in policy as a way to ease the United States into war.⁴²⁶

The president also had to worry about the impact that the inclusion of Greenland under the Monroe Doctrine would have internationally, particularly in Latin America. The German invasion of Denmark happened less than a week before Roosevelt was due to give a radio address before the Pan American Governing Board on April 15, 1940.⁴²⁷ The Nazi party

⁴²³Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Seven Hundred and Thirty-Fourth Press Conference,” *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1950), 110.

⁴²⁴Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Proclamation of an Unlimited National Emergency,” *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1950), 188.

⁴²⁵This subject was actively discussed by geographers of the time. See Lawrence Martin, “The Geography of the Monroe Doctrine and the Limits of the Western Hemisphere,” *Geographical Review* 30 no. 3 (1940): 525-528; and Vilhjalmur Stefansson, “What is the Western Hemisphere?” *Foreign Affairs* 19 no. 343 (1940-1941): 343-346.

⁴²⁶This issue will be discussed in the next section.

⁴²⁷Franklin D. Roosevelt, “The Inter-American Order was not built by Hatred and Terror. It has been paved by the Endless and effective work of Men of Good Will,” *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: 1940 Volume War—and Aid to*

had strong support in many areas of Latin America, especially in Argentina. Both Germany and Italy had economically been advancing “their penetration into the Western Hemisphere” through Latin America.⁴²⁸ In addition, the United States had a long and complicated relationship with the Latin American states, including Teddy Roosevelt's Corollary, which predisposed many to be wary of the intentions of the United States. One Columbian journalist described Roosevelt's Corollary as an “audacious alteration to a formula of imperialism.”⁴²⁹ The late 1920s and early 1930s saw a shift away from Teddy Roosevelt's Big Stick and William Howard Taft's Dollar diplomacy. The United States began abandoning imperialist policies in favour of multinational negotiations under Pan-American auspices. Morrow's Mission to Mexico in 1927-1928 and President Hoover's goodwill tour of Latin America in 1928-1929 were followed by a series of withdrawals and readjustments that sought to improve inter-American relations. The Clark Memorandum, prepared by the former Undersecretary of State J. Ruben Clark in 1930, articulated this reversal in American policy. It stated that the Roosevelt Corollary was unjustified by the Monroe Doctrine and that the doctrine was primarily intended to protect Latin American states from Europe, not to victimise them.⁴³⁰ The Monroe Doctrine continued to be viewed with suspicion in many Latin American countries. This change of direction, however, was continued by Franklin Delano Roosevelt when he took office in

Democracies, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1941), 158-162.

⁴²⁸ John Morton Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of Urgency 1938-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 50.

⁴²⁹ See *Nation* 19 March 1930, 312; and John Bartlet Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada the United States and Great Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), 313.

⁴³⁰ J. Reuben Clark, *Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930).

1933. A unilateral extension of the Monroe Doctrine to include Greenland on the part of the president without consulting the Latin American states had the potential to undo the many years of diplomatic effort to create the unified Western Hemispheric security policy with South and Central America that Roosevelt so strongly desired.

The extension of the Monroe Doctrine would also have repercussions in occupied Denmark, Germany, and Japan. The Danish could possibly view the inclusion of Greenland as a way for the United States to garner control over the territory that the American government had abdicated its claim to in 1916 in order to purchase the Danish West Indies.⁴³¹ The Germans would most likely see it as an act of aggression, but the president and the Secretary of State were most concerned about the Japanese.⁴³² Tensions had been mounting between the United States and Japan for years. Roosevelt had considered a blockade with the British against the Japanese three years earlier, following the attack the U.S. gunboat *Panay* in China.⁴³³ The Japanese had discussed the viability of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia for decades. Now high-level Japanese officials, including Kensuke Horinouchi the Japanese Ambassador to the United States in Washington, were watching the situation in Greenland closely and hoped to use any

⁴³¹See "Denmark" in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1917* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), 457-706.

⁴³²For a detailed study of German interest and activities in the Western Hemisphere see Alton Frye, *Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere, 1933-1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

⁴³³Robert Shogan, *Hard Bargain: How FDR Twisted Churchill's Arm, Evaded the Law and Changed the Role of the American Presidency* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995), 47.

American actions in the Western Hemisphere as a precedent to seize the colonial holdings of occupied territories in the Pacific, specifically the Dutch East Indies.⁴³⁴

Following the German invasions of Denmark and Norway, the Japanese Embassy issued a press release on the potential vulnerability of the Dutch East Indies in the event of a German occupation of the Netherlands. It stated that any change in the status of the islands resulting from hostilities in Europe would "not only interfere with the maintenance and furtherance of co-existence and co-prosperity, but would also give rise to an undesirable situation from the standpoint of the peace and stability of East Asia."⁴³⁵ Two days later the State Department responded with its own release on the islands. It highlighted the significance of the islands to global commerce and for the production of rubber, tin, quinine, and copra. It urged all nations to uphold and respect the rights of Dutch sovereignty over the islands.⁴³⁶

The obvious parallels between Japanese interest in the Dutch East Indies and American interest in Greenland were not lost on the Japanese Ambassador. When the Ambassador met with the Secretary of State Horinouchi stressed that the State Department had misinterpreted the Japanese message, and he criticised the American response to it. Hull responded that He wished he could get across to the ambassador and his government the fact that there was no more resemblance between the U.S. Monroe Doctrine, as it had been interpreted and applied uniformly since 1823, and the so-called Monroe Doctrine of Japan,

⁴³⁴Cordell Hull, "Memorandum by Secretary of State," *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan: 1931-1941 (In Two Volumes) Volume II* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 284.

⁴³⁵"Press Release Issued by the Japanese Embassy on April 15, 1940," *FRUS-J*, 281.

⁴³⁶"Press Release Issued by the Department of State on April 17, 1940," *FRUS-J*, 281-2.

than there was between black and white. He said, "our Monroe Doctrine only contemplates steps for our physical safety while the Monroe Doctrine, as practiced by Japan, is seemingly applicable to all other purposes and all objectives, including economic, social, political etc."⁴³⁷

The Japanese Ambassador sought to counter Hull's description of the Japanese Monroe Doctrine. Hull, however, reminded him of its recent application to Manchuria, China, and now the Dutch East Indies. Once again the Ambassador tried to convince Hull that Japan was motivated only by innocent purposes, but Hull rebuked his comments arguing that this was not how it was working out in practice, particularly with respect to "economic opportunity."⁴³⁸ At the end of the increasingly tense meeting, the Ambassador inquired about "new developments with respect to Greenland."⁴³⁹ Hull responded tersely "that there were no new developments and no relations about which the slightest question could be raised."⁴⁴⁰

It was clear from the Ambassador's comments that a link was being drawn between American policies in the Atlantic and Japanese policies in the Pacific. To further complicate the already difficult position, however, Roosevelt also had to negotiate the diplomatic and security concerns within the North Atlantic Triangle. Both the United Kingdom and Canada had their own vested interests in the fate of Greenland, and Canada, as a result of the Aluminum Company of Canada's (Alcan) mineral interests in the island, was mobilising to defend it. Roosevelt and many in the State Department were reluctant to

⁴³⁷Hull, "Memorandum by Secretary of State," 283-284.

⁴³⁸Hull, "Memorandum by Secretary of State," 283-284.

⁴³⁹Hull, "Memorandum by Secretary of State," 283-284.

⁴⁴⁰Hull, "Memorandum by Secretary of State," 283-284.

see any change of power in the Western Hemisphere, even if it was by their friendly neighbour to the north, which was not only an active participant in the European war, but was also seen by many as an extension of Great Britain.

The Significance of Greenland in 1940

In spite of these concerns, Greenland was too important to ignore. Even prior to the German invasions, the president included Greenland and the Polar Regions in his defence plans.⁴⁴¹ American interest in the island had waxed and waned over the centuries, but its security was particularly significant in the context of the Second World War.⁴⁴²

To begin with, as discussed, Ivigtut, Greenland, was home to the world's only working mine and known deposit of natural cryolite, a mineral essential to the aluminium smelting process. The Danish had been in control of cryolite mining and refining since its initial commercial development in the 19th century.⁴⁴³ The American Pennsylvania Salt Company had secured an exclusive contract for the North American distribution of cryolite in the 19th century. An exposed Greenland could pose a real threat to American industry.

In addition, there were three other major factors that made Greenland of particular strategic importance in the context of the Second World War. First, meteorological information from Greenland provided important information for North Atlantic shipping

⁴⁴¹Letter, Sumner Welles to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 6 January 1939, Official File (OF) 3673, Papers as President, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

⁴⁴²In the late 19th century, William Seward, who is perhaps best known as the controversial mastermind behind the Alaska purchase, also had designs to purchase Greenland, Iceland, and Jan Mayen Island in order to secure the continent. Madelyn Klein Anderson, *Greenland: Island at the Top of the World* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1983), 86.

⁴⁴³Duncan C. Campbell, *Global Mission: The Story of Alcan* (Montreal: Alcan Aluminium, 1989).

routes and iceberg patrols.⁴⁴⁴ Second, as discussed, technological advancements were making the island more accessible than it had been previously. In addition, in the 1930s Greenland's potential role in aviation was now affirmed (it was previously suspected that the icecap made landings impossible).⁴⁴⁵ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Arctic explorer and geographer, predicted that Greenland would be central to the future of "trans-Arctic aviation."⁴⁴⁶ By the 1940s there were few planes that had the fuel capacity to make a transatlantic crossing. Greenland, situated on flight paths between North America and Europe, was an ideal refuelling point. These improvements not only made Greenland a potentially lucrative stop on transpolar air routes, but they also made the United States more accessible from the island. Given the island's proximity to North America, there was now palpable danger that North American shores would be at risk of attack if the island were not secured. The island's topology lent itself to military activity. Its varied coastline with its numerous inlets, bays, and harbours made it an ideal base for German submarines and surface raiders.⁴⁴⁷ The improvements in aviation increased concerns that Germany would develop its own airbases on the island in order to interfere with both transatlantic air traffic and the North Atlantic convoys, which as the experience of the First World War had shown, were of vital importance to the Allies.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴Robert De C. Ward, "A Cruise with the International Ice Patrol," *Geographical Review* 14 no. 1 (Jan. 1924): 50-61.

⁴⁴⁵Louis Stark, "Clash Over Claims to Arctic Regions," *New York Times*, 5 August 1930, 10.

⁴⁴⁶Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "The American Far North," *Foreign Affairs* 17 no. 3 (1939): 523.

⁴⁴⁷Keenleyside, "Memorandum by Counsellor," *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER) 1939-1941, Part I, Volume VII.*, ed. David R. Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 950.

⁴⁴⁸Keenleyside, "Memorandum by Counsellor," *DCER VII*, 951.

Finally, Greenland's proximity to the United States was significant because it brought a distant European war closer to home for the American people and provided a means for President Roosevelt to bring American public opinion in line with his hemispheric security aims. Although Canada had been involved in the war since September 1939, the fresh prospect of a hostile power occupying Greenland could prove a useful tool for the president.

The United States and Greenland

As discussed, the United States had abdicated its rights to Greenland during the First World War in order to purchase the Danish West Indies. The arguments put forth for the purchase of the Danish West Indies during the First World War were strikingly similar to those advanced during the Second World War for Greenland. These included a relatively low population unable to defend itself, harbours conducive to naval bases, the threat of a German attack, and the Monroe Doctrine. There had been no serious opposition to the acquisition of the Danish West Indies except complaints that the \$25 million price tag was too high. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge emphasised in a public statement regarding the purchase that if the islands were not bought by the United States, then they "might fall into the hands of some European power and involve the government in difficulties under the Monroe Doctrine that might easily lead to war. . . . In the interests of peace it is of great importance that the islands should pass to the United States. From a military view their value can hardly be overstated."⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁹Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, "Sign Agreement for Sale of Islands," *New York Times*, 5 August 1916, 10; see also "Danish Pact is Signed," *Washington Post*, 16 August 1916, 1.

Although there was no serious opposition to the purchase of the Danish West Indies, there was criticism of some of the terms of sale. Arctic explorer Admiral Edward Peary argued adamantly against the abrogation of Americans' rights to Greenland.⁴⁵⁰ Peary, who himself explored vast areas of Greenland, argued that "Geographically Greenland belongs to North America and the Western Hemisphere, over which we have formally declared our sphere of influence by our Monroe Doctrine. Its possession by us will be in line with the Monroe Doctrine and will eliminate one more possible source of future complications for us from European possession of European territory in the Western Hemisphere."⁴⁵¹

When the Americans decided to abdicate their claims of discovery to Greenland in order to purchase the islands, a journalist at the time said that Wilson's government betrayed "the Monroe Doctrine by abandoning the arctic portion of our hemisphere."⁴⁵² In the context of the First World War, the strategic importance of the Danish West Indies to Western Hemispheric security far outweighed those of a distant Greenland. Technology had not caught up to Peary's vision for Arctic airfields and naval bases, but advances in aeronautical engineering and naval technologies meant that Greenland was far closer to North America in the Second World War than it was in the First.

Roosevelt was keenly aware of the importance of the Polar Regions and had been working on plans to colonise both poles throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s. In the 19th and

⁴⁵⁰Robert Edward Peary was an Arctic explorer best known for being the first man to reach the North Pole. This claim has been contentious for some time. An account of Peary's journey in Greenland first delivered in 1895 was re-read at the American Philosophical Society's meeting in February 1940. See Hugh J. Lee, "Peary's Transections of North Greenland, 1892-1895," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82 no.5 (1940): 921-934.

⁴⁵¹Peary, "Greenland and the Danish West Indies," 2.

⁴⁵²"The Real Issue in Greenland," *Puck*, 9 September 1916, 9.

early 20th centuries polar exploration captured the imagination of people around the world. Much like the space race in the mid-twentieth century, arctic expeditions opened new worlds for imperial powers, and the United States was a major player in the race to the poles. Throughout the period a series of privately funded expeditions, including those of Admiral Peary and Rear Admiral Byrd, were front page news. These expeditions, however, were not mere spectacle. They were also part of plans for territorial expansion, military strategy, and economic investment.⁴⁵³

In the spring of 1938 President Roosevelt was growing increasingly wary of the potential ramifications of polar exploration by other countries. He wanted to secure as much of the Polar Regions for the United States as possible. He directed Sumner Welles and the State Department to formulate a policy designed to enforce territorial rights of the United States in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.⁴⁵⁴ The resulting study noted a number of factors that warranted the serious consideration of the United States to assert claims to Arctic and Antarctic regions including “the development of trans-arctic aviation; reports of valuable mineral and fuel resources, the strategic interests of our War and Navy Departments, [and] the measures taken by the Soviet, British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, French and Norwegian governments to establish their polar claims more firmly.” The study also noted

⁴⁵³In 1926 Rear Admiral Byrd embarked on a major air expedition to Greenland and the Arctic north. “Byrd Party Leaves on First Leg of Trip to Explore Arctic,” *New York Times* 6 April 1926, 1.

⁴⁵⁴In typical Roosevelt style, this instruction was given orally to Sumner Wells and was later discussed with Cordell Hull. Roosevelt Letter, Sumner Wells to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 6 January 1939, Official File (OF) 3673, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President; Letter, Cordell Hull to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 13 February 1939, Official File (OF) 3673, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President.

the interest expressed in Washington by the German and Japanese embassies in news reports of possible American claims.⁴⁵⁵

Roosevelt enlisted Rear Admiral Richard Byrd to head up a series of American Antarctic expeditions. Roosevelt's pet project became more urgent a year later when he discovered that a German Antarctic expedition, dispatched by Hermann Goering, claimed a section of the continent already held by Norway.⁴⁵⁶ German expansion in the region led Roosevelt to throw his full support behind Byrd. He worked behind the scenes to secure Byrd's expeditions' funding. Roosevelt was eventually approached by the State Department to approve an appropriation for Byrd after a memorandum from the Division of European Affairs was circulated within the State Department. The memo cited a Nazi report that indicated the Germans were preparing to send another "expedition to the Antarctic to assess their claims." Roosevelt's response was clear that the United States should oppose the German move and support Byrd financially. He wrote: "In view of recent events, especially the maintenance of the Monroe Doctrine, I am strongly in favour of it."⁴⁵⁷ In a letter the next week, Roosevelt wrote to Senator Byrnes regarding the appropriation stating, "I do hope you can get this on. It is really important to keep the Germans out of that section of the Antarctic immediately south of South America."⁴⁵⁸ Roosevelt's belief that the Monroe Doctrine was a hemispheric policy came into play in this context. When

⁴⁵⁵Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume I* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 753.

⁴⁵⁶"Antarctic Colony Claimed by Reich," *New York Times*, 12 April 1939, 1. Official File (OF) 3673, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President.

⁴⁵⁷Memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to R. Walton Moore, 15 June 1939, Official File (OF) 3673.

⁴⁵⁸Memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to Jim Byrnes, 23 June 1929, Official File (OF) 3673.

the Argentineans voiced concerns over the American expedition, Roosevelt couched the intentions of the expedition in the aforementioned Pan-American terms. Although it was plainly clear that Roosevelt was dispatching the mission primarily for the interests of the United States, he argued that the purpose of the mission was to secure and protect the wide sector of the Antarctic directly south of the American continent for the twenty-one American Republics and said, “Any question of ultimate or final sovereignty as between individual members of the twenty-one American Republics is, of course, premature. Good faith and common sense on the line of good neighbour and continental ideals will work it out.”⁴⁵⁹

In his memoirs Cordell Hull noted that the Antarctic expedition was culminating in the south “at the very moment that Greenland, far to the north, was drawing our attention in the spring of 1940.”⁴⁶⁰ Hull, who had also been in communications with the Japanese, was intimately involved in both projects. When Germany invaded Denmark, he noted that immediately his “associates in the State Department brought me maps showing that

⁴⁵⁹Memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Secretary of State and the Undersecretary of State, 29 July 1939, Official File (OF) 3673. In addition to his Antarctic, Arctic, and Caribbean defence plans, on 30 April 1940 Roosevelt also made plans to occupy the islands of Fernando Noronha, 354 km from the Brazilian coast. He stressed to the Chief of Naval Operations that there should be “immediate conversations with Brazil in order to make definitely certain that this island will not be used by any European nations in case the European war spreads” and that in the case of emergency there would be two options: “(a) To occupy the island with sufficient forces to repel an attack from the sea or an attack from the air and (b) To be ready to destroy the airfield so that it cannot be used by land planes or amphibians,” Memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to Admiral Stark, 30 April 1940, (PSF) 3114, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President.

⁴⁶⁰Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume I* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 758.

Greenland was wholly, and Iceland largely in the Western Hemisphere. Therefore the islands fell within the provisions of the Monroe Doctrine.”⁴⁶¹

Given Roosevelt’s intimate involvement in the Antarctic expeditions and his interest in establishing American claims to the Polar Regions, it is very unlikely that Roosevelt did not have a clear view on the application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland in 1940. The president, however, had to tread carefully in order to avoid resistance to his policies by the American public and Congress. Roosevelt negotiated these tensions with skilful adeptness. In this context the ideals promulgated by the Monroe Doctrine and self-preservation through hemispheric security was an easier sell to the American people for Roosevelt than intervention in the European or Pacific theatres, but even these ideas had to be approached with caution.

The British Ambassador to Washington Lord Lothian observed that it was “public opinion itself which is continually decisive.”⁴⁶² As Roosevelt had learned earlier in his tenure as president it was impossible to overstate the importance of American public opinion to the politics of the day. In order to influence the American people he needed the press.

Section 2: Roosevelt, the Monroe Doctrine, Greenland, and the Press

“It is highly speculative the whole damn thing.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt⁴⁶³

Keenly aware of the sway the American people had over their government, Roosevelt enlisted the press to keep the American people on side with his foreign and domestic

⁴⁶¹Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume I* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 758.

⁴⁶²Letter Lord Lothian to Viscount Halifax, 1 February 1940, MSS Simon 86, The Correspondence and Papers of John Allsebrook Simon, 1st Viscount Simon, Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

⁴⁶³Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 242.

policies. Roosevelt was coached in the art of press management by his close friend and long-time advisor Louis McHenry Howe.⁴⁶⁴ Howe, a former newspaperman himself, encouraged Roosevelt to be more accessible and informal with journalists.⁴⁶⁵

A contemporary of Roosevelt observed that Roosevelt's relaxed style and easy-going manner with the press were greatly appreciated, especially following the years of formality and negativism under Calvin Coolidge and the intransigence of Herbert Hoover.

Roosevelt's relationship with the press occasionally grew strained when Roosevelt the man was not living up to Roosevelt the myth, but his interactions with the press were generally positive.⁴⁶⁶ His international policies, however, had alienated him from a number of business leaders including anti-interventionist business leader William Randolph Hearst, who controlled the country's leading newspaper chain (in 1940 Hearst owned fourteen dailies). Roy W. Howard, who owned the Scripps-Howard chain, oversaw nineteen papers. Howard, who had backed Roosevelt in two previous elections, had ceased supporting him in 1940 over foreign policy issues.⁴⁶⁷ These papers helped to publicise the views of leading isolationists like aviator Charles Lindbergh, Senator Wheeler, and Congressman Fish. Samuel Rosenman, one of Roosevelt's speech writers and close advisors, recalled that "the President felt that his first and most essential job was to convince the American people of the folly and danger of isolationist thinking."⁴⁶⁸ Roosevelt told Rosenman that he "hoped

⁴⁶⁴ Alfred B. Rollins Jr., *Roosevelt and Howe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

⁴⁶⁵ Leo C. Rosten, "President Roosevelt and the Washington Correspondents," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1937): 37. For a study on Roosevelt's relationship with the press see Betty Houchin Winfield, *FDR and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁴⁶⁶ Rosten, "President Roosevelt and the Washington Correspondents," 37.

⁴⁶⁷ Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon*, 3.

⁴⁶⁸ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 185.

we shall have fewer American ostriches in our midst. It is not good for the ultimate health of the ostriches to bury their heads in the sand."⁴⁶⁹

Unfortunately for Roosevelt there were a large number of American ostriches in the spring of 1940. In 1936 one of the first ever public opinion polls revealed that 95 percent of Americans wanted to stay out of any conflict, even if it was to contain Hitler. By January of 1939, only 43 percent of Americans would be willing to come to the aid of Mexico with armed force if it were invaded, while 40 percent would oppose any armed assistance. Little had changed by November 1939. Only 20 percent of those polled in a *Fortune* magazine study clearly favoured aiding the Allies short of war, while 54 percent agreed with the policy of selling goods to both sides in the conflict.⁴⁷⁰ Hitler's ability to remobilise the German people following the economic crisis, in combination with his blatant violations of the Munich agreement, gave Roosevelt serious cause for concern. He had doubts about the Allies' abilities to withstand a sustained attack from Germany and was also worried about the safety of the United States. He was disturbed by the intransigence of public sentiment regarding the European war. He complained, "The country as a whole does not yet have any deep sense of the world crisis. What worries me, especially is that public opinion over here is patting itself on the back every morning and thanking God for the Atlantic Ocean (and the Pacific Ocean)."⁴⁷¹

In spite of the resistance to his warnings, the press played a key role in the transmission of Roosevelt's ideas to the general public. In line with his policy of accessibility, Roosevelt

⁴⁶⁹Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 185.

⁴⁷⁰Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 23.

⁴⁷¹Franklin Roosevelt in Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 25.

held numerous informal meetings with the press, who often travelled with him. On the day of the German invasions of Denmark and Norway he held one such meeting. Roosevelt was in his special presidential train car en route between upstate New York and Washington. As usual the president was in a jovial mood. He joked with reporters calling one “big boy” and jesting that another was from “Milk of Magnesia Monthly.” The mood in the railroad car turned sombre very quickly when the president was asked to make a comment on the foreign situation in light of the recent German invasions of Denmark and Norway. Many news outlets had received cables from Denmark earlier in the day before the cables had been cut, and the implications of the German invasions were at the top of many reporters’ minds. Wanting to avoid any suggestion that the United States might respond militarily, Roosevelt flatly responded “no” to questions about possible American military intervention. Roosevelt swiftly returned to joking with the reporters, but he evaded the majority of their questions. When one questioned the German claims to Iceland and Greenland, the president immediately defended the pre-existing sovereignty of Iceland. He indirectly supported the idea of Iceland’s political independence through his comments that “it has the oldest parliament in the world,” and is an “independent nation.”⁴⁷² The press then turned their attention back to Greenland. The president continued to evade the first questions on the subject. When he was directly asked, “If Germany has taken Denmark, does that extend Germany’s domain into Greenland?” Roosevelt joked that the questions were “getting a little tough now,”⁴⁷³ which provoked laughter in the car and a further response from Roosevelt. “You see, the trouble is this: we are all talking about things we don’t know anything about. Nobody knows what has

⁴⁷²Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 9 April 1940, Volume XV, 240.

⁴⁷³Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 241.

happened to Danish Sovereignty at the present time . . . So it is one of those things we can't talk about. Denmark has sovereignty over Greenland . . . It is highly speculative the whole damn thing.”⁴⁷⁴

Three days later on April 12, at 10:40 a.m. the president met with the press in the executive offices of the White House. This time he had slightly more to say on the Greenland question. He was asked “Would the violation of the integrity of Greenland raise the problem of the Monroe Doctrine?” Roosevelt responded, “Oh I think you are about—very, very premature.” He then said that he had been speaking with experts and reading the encyclopaedia and other material on Greenland and had concluded that “from the point of view of very, very ancient history, the Island of Greenland, in its fauna and its flora and its geology, belongs much more closely to the American continent than to the European continent; that is the very simple fact.” Roosevelt, however, said that his primary concern was delivering humanitarian aid to the people of the island. He thought that “the American people would be glad to chip in and help out those people if their supply ships were cut off.”⁴⁷⁵

The next reporter, Fred Essary, asked what would happen if Germany occupied any part of Greenland.⁴⁷⁶ The president interjected before he had finished the question and called his question “awfully hypothetical.” Essary responded emphatically, “Well there are a lot

⁴⁷⁴Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 242.

⁴⁷⁵Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 249-250.

⁴⁷⁶Jesse Frederick “Fred” Essary was Chief Washington Correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun* from 1912-1940. He was well-known to Roosevelt and was a “personal friend” to many presidents. He went with President Wilson to cover the Versailles Peace Conference, and “President Roosevelt came to know his deep baritone” voice so well that he could hear it in crowded Washington press conferences. See “J.F. Essary Dead; Noted Journalist,” *New York Times* 12 March 1942, 19; and “J. Fred Essary, Noted Reporter, Dies Here of Heart Attack,” *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*; Mar 12, 1942.

more like me. I hear it discussed everywhere and read it in discussions in nearly all the papers I read.” Roosevelt responded:

I think it is grand that the American people are learning about something that very, very few people have thought about before. The number of people in the last three or two days who have come up to me and said, ‘By gosh have you looked at the map?’ ‘Sure I have been looking at the map.’ Everybody has been pulling out an atlas. They have been reading the Encyclopaedia Britannica, just the way I did, but it is all to the good.⁴⁷⁷

Roosevelt continued, saying that his interest in the island was sparked four or five years previously when a friend, Mrs. Ruth Bryan Owen,⁴⁷⁸ stopped off in Greenland on her way back from Denmark. She had shown the president the photos from her time in Greenland one evening in the White House and he was “quite thrilled” by them. The present situation reminded Roosevelt of the people he saw in the photos and drove a desire to help them.⁴⁷⁹

At his next press conference, on the morning of April 18, 1940, Roosevelt was far less forthcoming on the Greenland situation. This was most probably as a result of the aforementioned exchange between the Japanese Embassy and the State Department over the Dutch East Indies.⁴⁸⁰ At the press conference the president affirmed Secretary of State Cordell Hull’s position on the Dutch East Indies and “hoped that the status quo could be maintained in the whole Pacific arena in the interest of peace.” When he was then asked to

⁴⁷⁷Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 251.

⁴⁷⁸Roosevelt appointed Ruth Bryan Owen the American Minister to Denmark and Iceland, 1933-1936. She was the first woman to represent the United States as the head of a diplomatic legion. She was extremely popular in Denmark and was close with both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. She was forced to give up her post in 1936, following her marriage to a Danish member of the Kings Life Guards. See Sally Vickers, “Ruth Bryan Owen: Florida’s First Congresswoman and Lifetime Activist,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (1999): 445-474 and “People, Feb. 4, 1935,” *Time Magazine*.

⁴⁷⁹Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 251.

⁴⁸⁰“Press Release Issued by the Japanese Embassy on April 15, 1940,” *FRUS-J*, 281; “Press Release Issued by the Department of State on April 17, 1940,” *FRUS-J*, 281-2.

comment on Massachusetts Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rodgers' suggestion that the United States make Greenland an American Protectorate and on a *Harper's Magazine* article suggesting the United States buy the island, the president interjected with a firm "no" and dismissed any further questions on the matter. Undersecretary of State Adolf Berle previously met with Congresswoman Rodgers about the issue, but was critical of her intentions:

Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rodgers showed up. She wants to make speeches about Greenland and to awaken public opinion to the necessity of doing something about it. This is what she says. Her real desire is to get in the papers.⁴⁸¹

Although Berle had his suspicions about her intentions Rodgers was an outspoken advocate for the American protection of Greenland. She was instrumental in raising the profile of the Greenland situation in congress. In addition to delivering several addresses to the house on the issue, Rodgers also placed "two very fine maps which show Greenland's relation to Europe, Greenland's relation to the Western Hemisphere, and its great significance to us," in the lobby of the Capitol in order to illustrate the significance of Greenland to the security of the country.⁴⁸² Rodgers also brought several copies of *National Geographic Magazine* with stories on Greenland and urged her fellow congressional representatives to examine them. Rodgers addresses were met with applause, an indication of the subtle shift taking place in American thinking about the place of both Greenland and the United States in the Western Hemisphere in the spring of 1940.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹Berle, Diary, 23 April 1940, Box 211, Adolf A. Berle, Papers 1912-1974, 4; Earl Parker Hanson, "Should we buy Greenland?" *Harper's Magazine*, May 1940, 570-577.

⁴⁸²*Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3rd Session, Vol. 86, Part 9, 7697.

⁴⁸³*Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3rd Session, Vol. 86, Part 9, 7697.

Later in the evening of the April 18, the president hosted 275 members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in the State Dining Room for their annual press dinner.

Roosevelt was quick to remind the audience that many had accused him of being “alarmist” following his warnings of an impending war at the 1939 meeting. He stated, “The fact remains that I was right and most of you, the majority of you were wrong.”

Roosevelt then made it clear what he now expected from the press:

I am only wondering as to whether the country realises the possibilities of a world situation and I am trusting very largely to the press to bring the situation frankly to the attention of the American public because I think they are entitled to know it. You can do it just as well as I can; I don't have to tell you anything. All you have to do is to read the dispatches from across the ocean.⁴⁸⁴

He went on to highlight the nascent willingness on the part of the American public to ask questions regarding the future of the United States following the invasions and noted that this willingness was not as readily apparent before the invasions of Denmark and Norway. He then told the reporters it was their job to get people thinking “What happens to the United States if?” This was a masterful political move on the part of Roosevelt. If it was the press reading the dispatches and presenting information to the American people, rather than Roosevelt, he would be in a position to respond to the will of the people and avoid criticism that he was driving the country toward war.

Although it is clear from Roosevelt's Presidential papers that he and his government considered Greenland within the jurisdiction of the Monroe Doctrine long before 1940, this was not the impression he gave the press. He said that he made a “very bad mistake” the previous week with regard to Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine:

I don't suppose any of us had ever given any thought to where Greenland was. Let's be honest; we never thought about Greenland in terms of the United States. I haven't. The Press came in the other day and asked me whether Greenland belongs in the

⁴⁸⁴Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 265.

Monroe Doctrine. I stalled. I told them that I had looked up the fauna of Greenland and the fauna of Greenland were more American than they were European. They picked up the question and they asked me, they pressed it home, and I took a very righteous tone, saying that I am more interested in the 17,000 splendid Eskimos who are living in Greenland, than I am in the Monroe Doctrine, and I am still stalling. (Laughter)

Now, wait a minute. Where I went wrong is this: I did not think the American people would support me if I said that Greenland belongs in the Monroe Doctrine. But the American people are way out ahead of me and I think I am right in saying that most American people today, as most of you sense, would O.K. if the Government said tomorrow that Greenland is inside the Monroe Doctrine. They are ahead of their Government. Now that is the actual fact.⁴⁸⁵

In spite of the implication in his statement that Greenland was covered by the doctrine, when pressed with additional questions for an explicit statement on the relationship between Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine the president still refused to answer directly, stating: "If you have ever followed the proceedings in a domestic relations court, you will probably realise that the first time that the husband and wife come before you it is not necessary to make a final decision."⁴⁸⁶ Roosevelt wanted the people to tell him that Greenland fell within the bounds of the Monroe Doctrine, not the other way around.

It does not seem that Roosevelt was being entirely straight with the reporters or the American people regarding his views on Greenland. It does seem, however, that his tactics of flattery and evasion worked. The press played a significant role in the dissemination of information regarding the situation. Following the invasions and subsequent press conferences on April 9, several news agencies were quick to discuss the implications that the German occupation of Denmark would have for Greenland and the United States, particularly in relation to the Monroe Doctrine. Some examples of this include the *New York Times*, which featured dozens of stories on Greenland in the days and weeks

⁴⁸⁵Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 279-280.

⁴⁸⁶Roosevelt, *Complete Typescript Reports*, 286.

following the invasion. These included front page headlines like "Greenland Raises Hemisphere Issue." In the article the author, Frederick T. Birchall, discussed the issues surrounding the security of Greenland in relation to the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. The author suggested that Canada was not anxious to assume the burden of Greenland; Great Britain was not able to defend Greenland under the Monroe Doctrine; Germany must not be allowed to; and "the only alternative was the United States." He then expressed the hope that "in the interests of peace the United States will step in, under the Monroe Doctrine, and act as Greenland's protector until Denmark is able to resume her control."⁴⁸⁷ Another article featured on the same day mentioned that the president met with the Danish Minister in Washington regarding Greenland and stated that "if necessary the Monroe Doctrine would be invoked over the large island."⁴⁸⁸ In another article that day, Colonel Henry Breckenridge, Assistant Secretary of War Under President Wilson from 1913-1916, urged the United States to declare war on Germany if it made moves to occupy Iceland or Greenland. "If Hitler makes one move to touch Iceland or Greenland, the United States should occupy them and loose its sea power and air power upon the Nazi bandit, whose victory would mean the end of all civilized freedom in the world."⁴⁸⁹ April 14th's paper had a number of similar stories about Greenland, which included rumours of Goering investigating the island on a falconry trip in 1938 and an article that highlighted Greenland's distance from Canada and the United States in light of the Monroe

⁴⁸⁷Frederick T. Birchall, "Greenland Raises Hemisphere Issue," *New York Times*, 11 April 1940, 1.

⁴⁸⁸"International Situation," *New York Times*, 11 April 1940, 1.

⁴⁸⁹"Urges U.S. Watch Nazis: Breckenridge Would Declare War if they Take Greenland," *New York Times*, 11 April 1940, 2.

Doctrine.⁴⁹⁰ The "Who's Who? What's What? Twenty News Questions" quiz on that day explicitly drew links between the position of Greenland and other European possessions in the Western Hemisphere. Question four, couched between questions about Allied mining and Paul Renaud's comments that the United States had a tendency to underestimate German strength, asked:

Germany's seizure of Denmark has called American attention to Greenland, Danish colony in the Western Hemisphere. Name the other European nations with possessions in this hemisphere?⁴⁹¹

The answers, found on page two, informed readers that Britain, France, and the Netherlands all had possessions in the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁹²

The "Letters to the Times" began to reflect the American public's growing concern for the island. In a letter to the editor on April 15th John H. Laval, with reference to the extension of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland, wrote of "the importance of setting up a geographical fence around this country within which all land and ocean would be a protectorate under the doctrine."⁴⁹³ On April 20th Harold Roland Shapiro expressed similar sentiments, stating, "If the Nazi conquests should continue it may become necessary to invoke the Monroe Doctrine again in the Western Hemisphere with regard to Danish Greenland."⁴⁹⁴ Others like F.G. Thomas Sr. expressed "satisfaction and relief that . . . the

⁴⁹⁰"Hints at Goering Aim in Visiting Greenland: Ex Air Corps Pilot Suspects a Purpose Behind Falconry," *New York Times*, 14 April 1940, 41; "Denmark's Big Island Off American Shores," *New York Times*, 14 April 1940, 74.

⁴⁹¹"Who's Who? What's What? Twenty News Questions" *New York Times*, 14 April 1940, 2.

⁴⁹²"Who's Who? What's What? Twenty News Questions" *New York Times*, 14 April 1940, 2.

⁴⁹³"Letters to the Times," *New York Times*, 15 April 1940, 10.

⁴⁹⁴"Letters to the Times," *New York Times*, 20 April 1940, 10.

United States is considering sending food and medical supplies to Greenland, which is feeling the effects of the European war. To me this is the part that the United States should play in this war overseas, the good Samaritan." He went on to say that he could not see "what the killing of hundreds of thousands in Europe has to do with civilisation here or there."⁴⁹⁵ While it remained clear that opinion on entry into the war in Europe was still deeply divided, it is also evident that the *New York Times* readers were beginning to think about Greenland and other European possessions in the Western Hemisphere in connection with the war in Europe.

This was also the case with other magazines and periodicals. The *United States News* frequently discussed the possibility of an American occupation of the island.⁴⁹⁶ The first issue after the German invasion was littered with references to both Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine. In a feature column entitled "Eyes on Greenland: A New Defence Factor," the author highlighted the risks an exposed Greenland had on American security and stressed Roosevelt's desire for hemispheric security. The article, however, stopped short of directly applying the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland, invoking the president's comments that "it was premature to consider whether the Monroe Doctrine applies to Greenland."⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵"Letters to the Times," *New York Times*, 20 April 1940, 10.

⁴⁹⁶*The United States News* merged with the *World Report* in 1948 and is now known as the *US News and World Report*.

⁴⁹⁷"Eyes on Greenland: A New Defence Factor," *United States News*, 19 April 1940, 12. The *Scotsman* also reported that the President refused to answer the direct questions on Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine because they were "too hypothetical"; however, the author had evidently been at the April 12 press conference and wrote that the president had been "studying the conditions in Greenland and had come to the conclusion that the fauna and flora showed that it was more a part of the North American Continent than the European." See "America and Greenland: Mr. Roosevelt's Statement," *The Scotsman*, 13 April 1940, 10.

While letters from concerned American citizens poured into the news rooms of the nation regarding the status of Greenland under the Monroe Doctrine, the *United States News* posed the following question to “outstanding authorities on international law and foreign relations” about their views on Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine:

Do you believe that under the Monroe Doctrine the United States should object to transfer the sovereignty of Greenland to any other European nation? If you so believe, would you favour annexation of Greenland by the United States?⁴⁹⁸

The respondents were a virtual *Who's Who* of contemporary politics.⁴⁹⁹ Their answers varied widely. For some, the Monroe Doctrine most certainly applied; for others, it most certainly did not. Many, like leading Republican isolationist Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, favoured the purchase of Greenland over any suggestion of military intervention. He said that he did “not believe that Greenland is covered under the Monroe Doctrine either as originally announced or as now interpreted. But I do agree it would be well worth our while, as a matter of national defence, to own Greenland if it can be made voluntarily available at a reasonable price.”⁵⁰⁰

Although there was no consensus on the application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland on the part of the politicians quoted in the article, the fact that the question was highlighted as the question of the week in a major weekly political periodical and that respondents answered with thoughtful consideration is an indication of the importance of the issue in

⁴⁹⁸“Should the U.S. Allow Control of Greenland to Pass from Denmark to Another Nation?” *United States News*, 26 April 1940, 24-25.

⁴⁹⁹The respondents included Henrik de Kauffmann, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, W.R. Castle, James W. Gerard, Senator Elbert Thomas, Theodore Roosevelt Jr., Arthur Deerin Call, A.J. May, James Truslow Adams, George Wharton Pepper, and Senator Guy Gillette.

⁵⁰⁰“Should the U.S. Allow Control of Greenland to Pass from Denmark to Another Nation?” *United States News*, 26 April 1940, 24.

the spring of 1940. These discussions also inspired two bills advocating the purchase of Greenland for the purpose of Western Hemispheric security.⁵⁰¹ The answers given by the politicians also illustrated the variety of interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine at the time. By the end of April Roosevelt was successfully using the press to stimulate discussion regarding the application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland. In less than two weeks, however, the German invasions of the Low Countries and France would make the issue of American hemispheric security far more urgent.

Section 3: The Monroe Doctrine, Greenland, Great Britain, and Canada

Although Roosevelt was apprehensive about explicitly applying the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland publically, he did not have problems with his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, doing so in closed-door meetings with diplomats from Great Britain and Canada.⁵⁰² In *The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy*, Julius W. Pratt argues that Cordell Hull was “touchy” about Greenland and “the United States had long since asserted that Greenland was covered by the Monroe Doctrine.”⁵⁰³ As a result, in the days following the

⁵⁰¹Lundeen, S.J., *Congressional Record*, 17 June 1940, 8392; Fish, *Congressional Record*, 18 April 1940, 4770.

⁵⁰²For an additional British perspective see Leonard Axel Lawson, *The Relation of British Policy to the Declaration of the Monroe Doctrine* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co. 1922); for a Canadian perspective see Pierre Sebilleau, *Le Canada et la Doctrine de Monroe: Étude historique sur l'influence de l'imperialisme américain dans l'évolution de l'Empire Britannique* (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1937).

⁵⁰³Julius W. Pratt, *The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy, Volume XII: Cordell Hull 1933-1944, Volume I* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers Inc., 1964), 343.

invasion of Denmark, Cordell Hull called the British and the Canadian representatives to his office to “bring the situation up to date.”⁵⁰⁴

Great Britain

The British had just occupied the Faroe Islands and were making plans to occupy Iceland, but an occupation of Greenland was virtually impossible for the British government given its resources.⁵⁰⁵ The United Kingdom was now fighting a war on several fronts: the campaign in Norway was going horribly wrong, the fate of the Chamberlain government was in jeopardy, and the fear that Hitler would advance on France would be realised in a matter of weeks. Moreover, the United States remained neutral, and the overstretched United Kingdom could not risk upsetting a potential future ally over an invasion of Greenland. The recognition on the part of the United Kingdom that Greenland potentially fell within the jurisdiction of the Monroe Doctrine forestalled any remaining possibility of a British occupation of the island.

The relationship between the United States and Britain tense beginnings, but by the early 19th century British and American foreign policies had converged in a number of areas. So much so that George Canning, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, suggested issuing a joint declaration in 1823 that would prevent continental European intervention in the Western Hemisphere.⁵⁰⁶ Although the United States relied on the British to maintain the security of the North Atlantic, what would become the Monroe Doctrine was

⁵⁰⁴Cordell Hull, “Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Hull and the British Ambassador, Lord Lothian,” 12 April 1940, Reel 29 [Micro fiche], Papers of Cordell Hull, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 1-2.

⁵⁰⁵“Danes' Possessions Present Problems: Britain Studies Status of Iceland—May Hold Faeroes for duration of the War,” *New York Times*, 10 April 1940, 7.

⁵⁰⁶Thistlethwaite, *The Great Experiment*, 70.

specifically articulated not to include the United Kingdom.⁵⁰⁷ The Monroe Doctrine was created, less than ten years after the end of the War of 1812, Americans were still suspicious of British Imperialism, and that suspicion lingered on during the next century.

The fact that the British recognised the need not to upset the Americans over the Monroe Doctrine was underlined when the British Ambassador, Lord Lothian, met with Cordell Hull on 12 April 1940. Hull called Lothian to his office in order to “bring the Greenland situation up to date as it related to the Monroe Doctrine.” Hull noted that “there was already propaganda by anti-British or pro-German individuals and by extreme isolationists demanding some expression of the attitude of his country on the question” and that “this would probably increase to the harm of the United States and Great Britain as well.” Hull then reminded Lothian of Roosevelt’s “Monroe message” announcing that it covered the hemisphere without qualification, and that coverage extended to British actions in North America.⁵⁰⁸

Great Britain and the United States had a longstanding, yet somewhat tangential, tension over the status of Greenland, which Hull then raised. As mentioned, in 1916 the American government abdicated its claims to Greenland and agreed to recognise Danish sovereignty over the island as a term of the purchase of the Danish West Indies. In 1920 the British government said they would agree to do the same and recognise Denmark’s right to Greenland as long as it “would notify Great Britain should it be disposed to alienate or dispose of Greenland” in order that Britain could have the first right of purchase over the

⁵⁰⁷Thistlethwaite, *The Great Experiment*, 71.

⁵⁰⁸Cordell Hull, “Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Hull and the British Ambassador, Lord Lothian,” 12 April 1940, Reel 29 [Micro fiche], Papers of Cordell Hull, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 1-2.

island. The United States, citing the Monroe Doctrine, voiced strong objections to the British proposal. The British acquiesced on the first right of purchase but maintained that they wanted to be notified if there was to be any “alienation of Greenland by Denmark.”⁵⁰⁹

Hull, according to his memorandum of the conversation, “clearly stated that there is the express application of the Monroe Doctrine by this country regarding Greenland; and there appears to be no serious question about Greenland forming a general part of this continent.” Hull noted that Lothian seemed very interested in the matter, and they agreed to put the position of the United States government in writing so there could be no confusion on the issue. According to Hull, Lothian “treated the matter in the friendliest spirit and incidentally remarked that, of course, this could be worked out without friction or serious discussion.”⁵¹⁰

The subsequent Aide-Memoire produced by the State Department described the previous arrangements made between the United States, Denmark, and Great Britain concerning Greenland, and stated:

Without assuming that the government of Great Britain has any thoughts of interfering with the present status of Greenland, but having in mind the existing situation resulting from the war in Europe and particularly as it relates to Denmark, it is deemed appropriate to call attention to the abovementioned communication of 1920 and to say that the position of the United States remains unchanged.⁵¹¹

Following the meeting Lothian gave several press interviews on the subject. Lothian stated that neither the United Kingdom nor Canada would occupy Greenland unless it was certain that Germany was sending troops. He said that “Greenland might make a good airbase for

⁵⁰⁹Hull, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 2.

⁵¹⁰Hull, “Memorandum of Conversation,” 2.

⁵¹¹Aid—Memoire, 13 April 1940, Reel 29 [Micro fiche], Papers of Cordell Hull, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1.

Germany, but they could never maintain it. We could give them a knock-out blow there without any trouble.”⁵¹² He also highlighted the fact that if an occupation were ever necessary that Canada would be a more appropriate choice to occupy Greenland as it “would avoid complications with the Monroe Doctrine.”⁵¹³ Lothian’s indiscrete remarks about the British position on Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine were read by MPs in the United Kingdom and were raised in Parliament. The question in fact had first been brought up a week earlier on the 16th of April. A Member of Parliament asked the Prime Minister, still Neville Chamberlain, if he had any comment to make on the position of Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Richard Austen Butler, provided a detailed response for both Iceland and the Faroe Islands but offered “no statement” with respect to Greenland.⁵¹⁴

Lothian’s comments were specifically raised on April 24th by another MP, Geoffrey Mander, who asked Butler if he had any statement to make on the future of Greenland in light of the comments made by Lothian on the issue. The Undersecretary of State responded that he had no statement, but the issue was “being considered by His Majesty’s governments in the United Kingdom and Canada.” When Mander pressed further and asked specifically if the Ambassador to the United States made reference to the Monroe Doctrine and what the Ambassador had said. Butler evaded the question and refused to answer it.⁵¹⁵ While the British refused to answer questions about Greenland publicly they

⁵¹²Lothian’s comments appeared in several newspapers at the time including the *Manchester Guardian*. See “Greenland and Iceland,” *Manchester Guardian*, 17 April 1940, 7.

⁵¹³O.D. Skelton Secret Memo to Prime Minister, W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950, [Microfilm] H-1555, C277358.

⁵¹⁴Mr. Butler, 16 April 1940, Parliamentary Debates Commons. 1939-1940, vol 359. 799.

were privately negotiating with Canada regarding a potential Canadian occupation of the island.

Canada

Thanks to the meeting between Lothian and Hull the British government was now certain that the Monroe Doctrine would apply if it occupied Greenland, but it was not clear whether the same would be true if its eldest daughter of the Empire, Canada, took action. Because Canada itself is located in the Western Hemisphere, most in the Canadian and British governments believed that the Monroe Doctrine would certainly not apply against Canada. This assumption on the part of many high-level British and Canadian officials was not shared by those in similar positions within the American government. Many in the United States continued to view the British, and by extension the Canadians, with distrust. Some, including American Under-Secretary of State Adolf Berle, were particularly wary of Canadian motivations.⁵¹⁶ On April 20th the Royal Canadian Mounted Police asked, through the FBI, if the American government objected to the Canadians sending a force to the island to investigate the situation in Greenland. Berle wrote about the inquiry in his diary that evening “I think that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police should mind their own damned business, and let the governments handle high policy. We politely indicated that, both then and to the Canadian minister.”⁵¹⁷

Given the island’s strategic and economic importance, it was clear that neither Berle nor any other government officials wanted anyone other than the United States in control of Greenland.

⁵¹⁵1940 Parliamentary Debates Commons, 182.

⁵¹⁶Berle, Diary, 27 April 1940, Box 211, 4.

⁵¹⁷Berle, Diary, 20 April 1940, Box 211, 5.

As mentioned earlier, President Roosevelt had unofficially brought Canada under the Monroe Doctrine during a speech at Queen's University in Kingston in 1938, but the doctrine had never been applied to Canada in practice. The president clearly stated that "the people of the United States will not stand idly by if the Domination of Canada's soil was threatened by any other empire."⁵¹⁸ He clearly did not say, however, that he, or the people of the United States, would support Canada occupying the territory of another empire within the Western Hemisphere.

Canada had its own self-interested concerns for the fate of the island and in many ways was more invested in the issue than Britain. The reasons for this were summarised in a secret memo to Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King around the time of the invasion. They included the obvious factors of Canadian defence and the importance of maintaining the cryolite supply for the Canadian aluminium industry. The memo also included the slightly less immediately evident element of "national prestige." It stated that "the Canadian government would be exposed to criticism both at home and abroad if Ottawa left the whole problem to be handled by Washington." The memo also highlighted humanitarian concerns but notes these were "relatively unimportant" by comparison to the other factors."⁵¹⁹

The question of the Monroe Doctrine was of great importance for Canada, but opinions were mixed on whether it applied or not. Canadian Under-Secretary of State O.D. Skelton wrote to Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King that if Canada were to occupy

⁵¹⁸Franklin Delano Roosevelt in C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies—Volume 2: 1921-1948 The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 277.

⁵¹⁹Secret Memo to the Prime Minister W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950, [Microfilm] H-1555, C277353.

Greenland it would be “more acceptable to the United States in view of the Monroe Doctrine” than an occupation by either the United Kingdom or France.⁵²⁰ Hugh L. Keenleyside, a high level government advisor and later Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, assumed, incorrectly, that a small Canadian force occupying Greenland would “arouse sympathetic interest throughout the United States. There will be front page headlines and favourable editorial comment in almost every newspaper in that country.”⁵²¹

Following his meeting with Hull, Lord Lothian had been slightly less enthusiastic about the idea than Keenleyside, but he still agreed that the Monroe Doctrine would not apply to Canada. The interviews he held with the press following his meeting with Hull were later lambasted by Canadian government officials as “the most incredibly stupid and embarrassing interviews ever given by a public representative.”⁵²² The Canadian officials were particularly angry that Lothian was attempting to speak for Canada, because under the Statute of Westminster, Canada was meant to have full control over its external affairs. In addition, while many in the Canadian government fully supported a Canadian occupation of Greenland they did not want those intentions broadcast in the American media, which could be read by Germans.

Lothian’s initial opinions on the matter, however, were not actually in line with those of Cordell Hull or the president. On April 13, 1940, the day after Cordell Hull met with Lord Lothian, he called on the Canadian Minister to Washington, Loring C. Christie, to meet

⁵²⁰O.D. Skelton, “Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Prime Minister, April 10, 1940.” *DCER VII*, 949.

⁵²¹H.L. Keenleyside, “Memorandum,” *DCER VII*, 951.

⁵²²Extract from Memorandum ODS, 18 April 1940, Secret, W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950, [Microfilm] H-1555, C277336.

with him regarding the Greenland situation. Hull's conversation with Christie was a carbon copy of his conversation with Lothian. (He even presented him with a carbon copy of the Aide-Memoir produced from the meeting).⁵²³ But because the conversation centred on the American position relating to the British rather than Canadian agreements, Christie did not leave with a clear sense of whether the Monroe Doctrine would apply to Canada if it attempted to act with regard to Greenland.

In a confidential dispatch to the Canadian secretary of State for External affairs Christie summarised the historical agreement between Denmark, the United States, and the United Kingdom. He also made a particular point of noting that "Hull said that at present it was not his intention to publish the fact of his having made this communication with either the British or the Canadian Governments." And he added that, in view of Hull's communication to Lothian and himself, "it would seem a reasonable deduction that the United States Government as at present advised, regard Greenland as a part of the Western Hemisphere and subject to the Monroe Doctrine."⁵²⁴

Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King eventually decided to discuss the situation in person with the president. King had been planning to visit with the president soon after he was re-elected on, but the German invasions of Denmark and Norway had forced him to delay his trip. After attending to a number of domestic issues caused by the invasions King left Ottawa for a vacation in the United States which included a visit with his friend Franklin Roosevelt.⁵²⁵

⁵²³ Memorandum of Conversation Secretary of State Hull and the Canadian Minister Loring C. Christie, 13 April 1940, Reel 28 a [Micro fiche], Papers of Cordell Hull, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1.

⁵²⁴ Loring C. Christie, "Memorandum," *DCER VII*, 959.

Diplomatically Canada was in a difficult position. Confusion over the Monroe Doctrine, Canada and Greenland persisted in Ottawa. This misunderstanding would eventually result in a skirmish between the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom in Greenland in June of 1940. For the time being, however, Roosevelt had been successful in buying himself time in order to move American public opinion closer to accepting the possibility of intervention in Greenland in particular and war in general.

⁵²⁵Felix Belair Jr., "President Has Mackenzie King as Guest; 'Visit Means Nothing,' Press is Barred," *New York Times*, 24 April 1940, 1.

Chapter V: Of King and Cryolite

"This matter, in fact, is so important to us and to the Allied aluminum industry that we urge the Canadian Government to see that immediate action is taken to protect the Greenland cryolite mines and ensure their production for the Allies."

F.W. Bruce, Vice President, Alcan⁵²⁶

"Apparently Ralston being concerned about aluminum and S. zealous to have Canada rather than England handle Greenland matters on a North American basis, had between them gone farther than I think was wise. I thought the position taken by the Americans was wise . . . clearly our people had been a little over zealous in preparing for a little war on Canada's own account."

W.L.M. King, Prime Minister of Canada⁵²⁷

In the early morning hours of April 9, 1940 R.E. Powell, the president of the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan), received word that Denmark had been invaded by Germany. Powell knew that Alcan's aluminium production for the war effort was dependant on cryolite from Greenland. As Greenland was a Danish colony, the invasion of Denmark immediately raised serious concerns for the fate of Alcan's vital cryolite supply.⁵²⁸ Alcan required approximately 3,500 tons of cryolite in order to complete its yearly production rate of 160,000 tons of aluminium.⁵²⁹ Without the cryolite it would be impossible for Alcan "to produce a pound of metal."⁵³⁰ The growing demand for aluminium, as a result of the war in Europe, necessitated that the company double its usual cryolite order from Greenland. Any disruption to Alcan's cryolite shipment had the potential to seriously hinder the company's ability to keep to its production schedule. The simultaneous German

⁵²⁶F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, Alcan Global Mission Archive (AGMA), 1.

⁵²⁷William Lyon Mackenzie King, 28 April 1940, *The Mackenzie King Diaries, 1893-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), [microfiche], 425.

⁵²⁸Duncan C. Campbell, *Global Mission: The Story of Alcan* (Montreal: Alcan Aluminium, 1989), 328.

⁵²⁹F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 1.

⁵³⁰F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 1.

invasion of Norway along with Denmark on April 9th increased the significance of Alcan's aluminium production for the Allies. Prior to the invasions, Great Britain and France had been relying heavily on Norwegian smelters for a significant percentage of their aluminium needs.⁵³¹ The extension of the war to Norway would make Norwegian smelters, at the very least temporarily, inaccessible to the Allies. As a result of the German invasions Canada found itself having to consider what to do about Greenland and that in turn raised issues of its own relationship with both Britain and the United States. The Canadian government had to keep on as good terms as possible with both powers and do its best to ensure that Alcan got the crucial supplies of cryolite.

The news of the German invasions prompted Powell to act. He telephoned his Vice President, Fraser Bruce, to discuss the situation. Following their conversation, Bruce immediately made contact with several high-placed government officials in Ottawa. Through phone calls and letters, Bruce stressed the necessity of the cryolite supply for both Alcan and Canada's war effort. In a letter to Norman Robertson at the Canadian Department of External Affairs, he said that "the importance of Canadian aluminum production, and, consequently, Greenland cryolite, cannot be stressed too strongly."⁵³² He also noted that if the government decided to occupy Ivigtut, Alcan would "be only too glad to place our extensive mining experience at your disposal, and operate the mines for the benefit of the Allies."⁵³³ Bruce's correspondence regarding the potential impact of the German invasions on the Canadian aluminium industry was taken extremely seriously by the Canadian government. In less than two days Canadian prime minister William Lyon

⁵³¹F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 1.

⁵³²F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 2.

⁵³³F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 2.

Mackenzie King had been briefed on the vital importance of both the mineral and the need to secure Greenland.⁵³⁴

There were a number of opinions within the Canadian government about how to manage the Greenland situation. Some, like Norman Robertson and Canada's Minister of Finance, J.L. Ralston, agreed with Alcan and advocated sending a force to Greenland to protect the mine. For Mackenzie King, however, the decision was not as clear cut. King, who would later become Canada's longest serving prime minister, had just won a hard-fought election victory. He was concerned about both the cryolite supply and the exposed position of Greenland in light of its proximity to Canada; however, he wanted to ensure that any Canadian action taken with respect to Greenland was made in agreement with the United States. Positive bilateral relations between the United States and Canada had long been a priority for Mackenzie King, as was maintaining a good personal relationship with its president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, particularly in the context of war.

Canada was in an especially difficult diplomatic position with respect to Greenland. The Aluminum Company of Canada had requested that the Canadian military secure the island and its vital cryolite supply in order to defend it from the Germans. The British, who were unable to occupy the island themselves for fear of antagonizing the Americans by breaching the Monroe Doctrine and more serious direct threats to its own shores from Germany, agreed in principle with the decision of Ralston and Robertson for Canada to defend the island which might not be seen by the Americans as breach of the Doctrine. The Americans, on the other hand, wanted to prevent the further spread of belligerent nations in the Western Hemisphere including Canada. The American government had serious concerns about the fate of other European colonies in the Western Hemisphere and

⁵³⁴King, 11 April 1940, *Diaries*, 371.

preferred that the Canadians leave Greenland to manage its own affairs. As it was the eldest sister of the British Empire and the northern neighbour of the United States, Canadian politicians and military remained deeply divided on the subject of the potential Canadian occupation of Greenland. Mackenzie King had to choose between the two powers. Following a two-week vacation in the United States where King consulted President Roosevelt, the Secretary of State, several State Department officials, and diplomats regarding the issue. He eventually took the American position, and decided that Canada should not take any military action to either defend or occupy the island.

King's decision not to approve a Canadian occupation of Greenland, however, was not entirely accepted by certain government ministers. King was away from Ottawa from April 12 until May 1, 1940. While he was away his government began preparations for a Canadian occupation of Greenland. Although he communicated frequently with his ministers while he was away he was surprised by the advanced state of planning for a Canadian military expedition to Greenland when he returned to his meetings later that month. King was clearly on the side of President Roosevelt on the issue; however, miscommunications between King and members of his staff led to actions that fuelled suspicions about Canadian intentions in Washington. This eventually resulted in the *Nascopie* incident between Great Britain, Canada, and the United States off the coast of Ivigtut from early to late June of 1940.

The tensions and misunderstandings between King and members of his government over the handling of the Greenland situation are illustrative of broader tensions within both Canada and the North Atlantic Triangle at the time. Canada had emerged from the First World War with greater independence and a newfound sense of national identity. By the time of the Second World War some Canadians, including King and Dr. Oscar Douglas

(O.D.) Skelton, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs and one of the prime minister's most trusted advisors, were eager to foster this new-found political freedom by building closer ties with the United States, while others sought to retain existing close ties to the United Kingdom. As a result of the significant aid that Canada gave to the United Kingdom both in terms of materials and manpower, however, the Second World War has not generally been seen as a particularly important moment in the formation of Canada's independent foreign policy. Hugh Keenleyside, who worked in the Canadian Department for External Affairs during the war, noted that there has been a tendency in recent years to "pooh-pooh" the fight for Canadian independence from British rule. In contrast to popular perceptions, Keenleyside argued that the fight for self-government in Canada "was long, bitter, and devious."⁵³⁵ A significant portion of that fight occurred under the leadership of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. It has been argued that during Mackenzie King's time in office "he was resolutely preoccupied with Canadian domestic politics" and "like most of his electors, King remained British in his view of the world."⁵³⁶ In contrast to this assertion, however, this chapter will show that King was interested in much more than Canadian domestic politics and will illustrate how, against the backdrop of war in Europe, Mackenzie King sought to pursue policies that were in the interests of Canada, rather than Britain. With respect to the issue of Greenland, King sought a solution that would both be agreeable to the United States and safeguard Canadian corporate interests in Greenland's cryolite mine.

⁵³⁵Hugh L. Keenleyside Fonds, "Canada and the United Kingdom," n.d., National Library and Archives of Canada, MG/31/E102 1, 1-2.

⁵³⁶Robert Bothwell, *Canada and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 11.

As with many other aspects of the American occupation of Greenland, there is limited work on both Mackenzie King's role dealing with the Greenland situation, and on the significance of cryolite and the Aluminum Company of Canada in bringing the exposed position of Greenland to the attention of the Canadian government. As mentioned, there is very little secondary literature directly relating to the American occupation of Greenland during the Second World War in English, but even the Danish studies, which explore the political aspects of the occupation in depth, focus primarily on the relationship between Denmark and the United States and pay limited attention to Canada. By extension, existing studies do not address the important role the Aluminum Company of Canada played in the handling of the Greenland situation.⁵³⁷ Current work in English tends to gloss over the vital significance of cryolite as just one of many factors that made Greenland strategically important during the war, and focuses on other aspects of the occupation, such as Greenland's potential as an air base or the diplomatic negotiations undertaken between Canada and the United States to resolve the security concerns relating to the island.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷There are a number of excellent Danish-language sources that examine bilateral relations between Denmark and the United States during the war. Major Danish works on the period are Bo Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn: Henrik Kauffmann i dansk diplomati 1919–1958* [*In the Name of the King: Henrik Kauffmann and in the Danish Diplomatic Service 1919–1958*] (København: Samleren, 1997); *Overleveren—Dansk Udenrigspolitik Historie, Bind 4, 1914–1945* [*The Survivor—Danish Foreign Policy History, Volume 4, 1914–1945*] (København: Gyldendal, 2006); Finn Løkkegaard, *Det danske Gesandtskab i Washington 1940–1942* [*The Danish Legation in Washington 1940–1942*] (Copenhagen: Glydendal, 1968); Paol Villaume and Borring Olesen Thorsten, *I blokopdelingens tegn: Dansk Udenrigspolitik Historie, bind 5, 1945–1972* [*In the Time of Bloc Division: Danish Foreign Policy History, Volume 5, 1945–1972*] (København: Gyldendal Leksikon, 2005).

⁵³⁸See, for example, Max Dunbar, "Greenland During and Since the Second World War," *International Journal* 121 (1950): 121-140; David G. Haglund, "Greenland (1940) as an Instance of Pickwickian 'Cooperation' Between Mackenzie King's Ottawa and Roosevelt's Washington," *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 24 (2008/2009): 28-41; "Plain Grand Imperialism on a Miniature Scale: Canadian-American Rivalry over Greenland in 1940," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 11 (1981): 15-36; and Michael F. Scheuer, "On the Possibility that There May Be More to It Than That: Professor Haglund, the Documents of American External Relations Series and the

While it is true that cryolite was one of many factors that made Greenland significant, for Canada—at least initially—the security of the cryolite supply was the primary motivation for Canadian involvement in Greenland.

In addition, while studies have been published on the American Undersecretary of State's management of the Greenland situation with respect to Canada, no study to date has explored Mackenzie King's involvement in the situation, or utilised British, American, and Canadian sources in conjunction with each other in relation to the issue. King's visit with Roosevelt at the Little White House in Warm Springs, Georgia, in addition to his meetings in Washington with American Secretary of State Cordell Hull and other ministers and friends, not only altered King's position on the matter of Greenland, but also affected Canadian policy relating to the war more generally by making it more attuned to that of the United States. In addition, although this is the period in which Canada has been seen to be the closest with the United Kingdom, domestic politics in London and the deteriorating situation in Europe made it difficult for Canada to remain a priority for the British.

Responses to Canadian requests were delayed and diplomats, for instance Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador in Washington, perpetuated the outdated colonial relationship with Canada, which frustrated ministers in Mackenzie King's government.

Canadian-American Controversy over Greenland in 1940,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 12 (1982): 72-83. Two exceptions are Graeme S. Mount, “Canadian-American Relations and Greenland, 1940-1941,” Conference Paper Delivered May 31, 1985, Unpublished article, File: Greenland, Aluminum Company of Canada Archives, 1-21; and Shelagh D. Grant, “Why the St. Roch? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions,” *Arctic* 48 no. 1 (1993): 82-87, both of which directly address the importance of cryolite in their work. Neither, however, goes into great detail on the issue or discusses the political issues between the Canadian, American, and British governments.

Drawing from materials in the closed company archives of the Aluminum Company of Canada, the Canadian National Archives, the private diaries of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, the British National Archives at Kew, the Library of Congress, and the Roosevelt Presidential Library and Archives, among others, this chapter will first illustrate the importance of cryolite in the development of Canadian policy relating to Greenland and will then discuss the evolution of Mackenzie King's position of the issue over the course of his time in the United States.⁵³⁹ This chapter will illustrate the tension generated from the need for the Canadian military to secure the cryolite supply from Greenland for the Canadian aluminium industry and the necessity for Mackenzie King to maintain cordial relations with the United States. This chapter will also explore the roles that both cryolite and Mackenzie King played in the genesis of the American occupation of Greenland. It will argue that cryolite was the motivation for the Canadian government's initial interest in the island. However, Mackenzie King's desire to foster positive bilateral relations with the United States, in combination with the worsening situation in Europe and communication problems with the British, led the Canadian prime minister to order the cancellation of the Canadian military's plans to occupy Greenland and to adopt American policies relating to the island.

⁵³⁹Aluminum Company of Canada Global Mission Archives (AGMA), Rio Tinto Alcan Canada Ltd., Canadian Headquarters, Montreal, Canada; William Lyon Mackenzie King, Papers, Memoranda and Notes, National Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa and *The Mackenzie King Diaries, 1893-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), microfiche; The British National Archives, Kew Gardens, AIR; CAB; FO; WAR; Cordell Hull, Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Adolf Berle, Adolf A. Berle, Papers 1912-1974, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York; and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Papers as President: Official File (OF), Personal File (PPF), President's Secretary's File (PSF), and Map Room File (MR), Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

Aluminium, Cryolite, and Alcan

*"The Importance of Canadian aluminum production, and, consequently Greenland cryolite, cannot be stressed too strongly."*⁵⁴⁰

Although the early stages of the war have been called the Phoney War, the "struggle at sea was waged with unremitting vigour from the start."⁵⁴¹ In the spring and summer of 1940, Great Britain was reliant on Canada and the North Atlantic convoy system for a number of raw materials including aluminium, the loss of even a small percentage of which would greatly hamper war-time production. Greenland, however, was not just logistically important, but the island was itself also the source of cryolite, a rare and strategically important material that was critical to aluminium production.

In 1940 military defence was increasingly dependent upon air power. Airplanes were composed of nearly seventy-five percent aluminium, or aluminium alloy, which made it one of the most essential war materials. Aluminium was so vital to aircraft production and defence that propagandistic films were dedicated to the subject telling audiences "without aluminium, we have no wings, without wings we have no defence."⁵⁴² As the war progressed, the British government grew ever more dependent on Canadian aluminium. Following the German invasions in the spring of 1940, Great Britain diverted its aluminium orders from foreign sources like Switzerland and Norway, whose supply lines had become either unavailable or unsafe. While the United Kingdom could supplement this loss from either the United States or Canada, Canada had two distinct advantages over the United States. First, unlike the neutral United States, Canada was already an ally in the

⁵⁴⁰F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 2.

⁵⁴¹David Dilks, "The Twilight War and the Fall of France: Chamberlain and Churchill in 1940," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 28 (1978): 64.

⁵⁴²Aluminium: A Defence Report on Film, United States Government, Office of Production Management and Office for Emergency Management Film Unit, 1941.

war. Second, as a Commonwealth country, Canada was able to obtain the raw materials needed to produce aluminium at lower rates from other Commonwealth countries and was able to pass the savings on to the United Kingdom. Alcan, however, was not yet able to produce aluminium on the scale the British needed. In order to expedite the expansion of Alcan's production, the British government invested heavily in the company. In the early spring of 1940 alone, it provided more than \$40 million in loans to the company. The investment proved fruitful, and over the course of the war Alcan increased its shipments to the United Kingdom almost six-fold from seventy-four thousand tons in 1939 to more than 440 thousand tons in 1944.⁵⁴³

The rarity of cryolite, the mineral needed to smelt aluminium, meant that Alcan had longstanding concerns about its supply, and the company was working even before the war to find alternatives to the material. These alternatives included both "reclaimed" cryolite recycled from pot linings and "artificial" cryolite made from fluorospar, but problems persisted with both of these options. Reclaimed cryolite was usually of low quality and limited quantity, and Alcan had not yet developed the facilities to fully exploit and refine their existing resources. Additionally, artificial cryolite was not as effective as natural cryolite; the fluorospar needed to create it was not available in significant quantities in Canada and it could be both as costly and difficult to obtain as natural cryolite.⁵⁴⁴ As a result of these issues, natural Greenlandic cryolite continued to play a vital role in Alcan's aluminium production.

⁵⁴³Duncan H. Hall, *History of the Second World War United Kingdom Civil Series: North American Supply* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office and Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), 366-367.

⁵⁴⁴A. Johnstone to R.E. Powell, Letter, 6 December 1939, AGMA, 1.

Alcan usually received one or two shipments of natural cryolite per annum from Ivigtut. The sea ice and fog around Greenland's coasts meant that the shipping season to and from the island was relatively short, lasting only from June until September. In 1939 Alcan had arranged for one shipment of three thousand tons of cryolite early in the 1940 season, and as a result of increased demand resulting from the European war, was negotiating with PennSalt for a second shipment of equal tonnage.

In addition to their own concerns about the cryolite supply, in late 1939 Alcan began to receive requests for cryolite from foreign suppliers because they were having difficulty obtaining it through their usual channels. In December 1939, the French aluminium company Cie Alais Forges et Camargue requested two thousand metric tons of natural cryolite from Alcan. Pennsalt's exclusive North American distribution contract meant that Alcan could sell natural cryolite to a third party, but Alcan did offer the French company a limited amount of artificial cryolite, because it was not bound by the contractual constraints of PennSalt.⁵⁴⁵

The growing demand for aluminium, in combination with the French company's difficulty obtaining cryolite, did little to alleviate Alcan's concerns about the mineral. In an internal memo, Alcan's President R.E. Powell wrote to Vice President Fraser Bruce that the French request was "a large quantity that I wouldn't want to see leave North America even if there were no other complications."⁵⁴⁶ Powell also thought that the government should be kept abreast of the new developments, and Alcan notified relevant Canadian officials of the international requests for cryolite and highlighted the potential supply problems for Canada. Powell stressed that "representatives of the governments of the United Kingdom

⁵⁴⁵R.E. Powell to F.W. Bruce, Letter, 14 December 1939, AGMA, 1.

⁵⁴⁶R.E. Powell to F.W. Bruce, Letter, 18 December 1939, AGMA, 2.

and Canada should be reminded that the production of aluminium is apt to stop if cryolite can't be obtained." He also suggested a naval convoy might be needed to protect future Canadian cryolite shipments.⁵⁴⁷

To further compound the potential issues with Alcan's cryolite supply, in early January the company received a disturbing report that the cryolite mine in Greenland was nearing exhaustion and would be mined-out within the decade (ten years sooner than previously expected).⁵⁴⁸ In addition, a month later Alcan received word that a German vessel carrying a shipment of bauxite had been sunk. The sinking of the German vessel demonstrated the vulnerability of shipments during the Battle of the Atlantic and reinforced the necessity to protect Alcan's cryolite shipment, the loss of which would be a "serious blow" to Canadian aluminium production, and it prompted Powell once again to raise the question of naval protection for shipments of vital materials.⁵⁴⁹

On April 9th when news of the German invasion of Denmark reached Alcan's corporate headquarters, Powell (who, the company's official history claims, "had a mind like a steel trap") immediately set to work to ensure that Alcan had sufficient stocks of cryolite to meet its production needs.⁵⁵⁰ Powell realised that the occupation of Denmark by Germany would necessarily affect the status of both KGH (the Danish Crown corporation) and the mine itself. At the very least, the German occupation of Denmark would complicate the process of obtaining natural cryolite from Greenland.

⁵⁴⁷R.E. Powell to F.W. Bruce, Memo, 3 January 1940, AGMA, 1.

⁵⁴⁸P. Weigel to W.R. McConnell, Letter, 29 January 1940, AGMA, 1.

⁵⁴⁹R.E. Powell to W.R. McConnell, Letter, 20 February 1940, AGMA, 1.

⁵⁵⁰Campbell, *Global Mission*, 328.

Alcan already had a long list of reasons to be concerned about the supply of the rare mineral, and the German occupation of Denmark was the final push Alcan needed to develop a commercially viable synthetic alternative. Upon hearing news of the invasion, Powell's first act was to send an internal memo to Alcan employees both at the headquarters in Montreal and on the ground at the Alcan plant in Arvida, Quebec. His message was concise: "The invasion of Denmark may create a shortage of natural cryolite, I think that you should cause to be prepared plans for the production of the synthetic substitute [*sic*]." ⁵⁵¹ Although plans for producing an alternative to natural cryolite on a large scale had been in progress for years, putting them into action would take both resources and time. Powell was doing all he could to expedite the production of synthetic cryolite within Alcan, but he needed to ensure Alcan would still have access to the maximum amount of natural cryolite from Greenland. To do that he would need to contact the Canadian government. Powell then telephoned Fraser Bruce (who was in Ottawa to apprise him of the potential implications of the Danish invasion) to convince him to inform his contacts on Parliament Hill of the importance of the situation for Alcan, Canada, and the Allied war effort.

Alcan and the Canadian Government

On the day of the German invasion of Denmark, Alcan needed to impart the magnitude of the potential loss of Greenlandic cryolite for Canadian war-time aluminium production to the highest levels of the Canadian government. Following his conversation with Powell, Fraser Bruce immediately got in touch with Norman Robertson at the Canadian Department of External Affairs. They discussed the developments and the logistics of the cryolite mine at Ivigtut (which Robertson was unable to find on his map). Following their

⁵⁵¹R.E. Powell to O.M. Montgomery, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 1.

lengthy conversation, Bruce prepared a letter for Robertson detailing in writing the issues that they had discussed. That day Bruce also spoke with several other key figures in government including Colonel J.L. Ralston, the Canadian Minister of Finance, and Dr. W.C. Clark, the Canadian Deputy Minister of Finance, who were both “most interested” in the Greenland situation. Ralston asked for a copy of the letter Alcan was preparing for Robertson because he would be taking the train with Norman Rogers, the Minister of National Defence, that afternoon and he wanted to “have all the facts, so that they could discuss the matter together.”⁵⁵²

The letter Bruce prepared highlighted the significance of the German invasions, the uniqueness of cryolite, the significance of cryolite for Alcan and aluminium production, the problems with artificial cryolite, and the potential ramifications of a disruption in Alcan’s cryolite supply as a result of the invasion. He stated that the conditions of the war meant that “the importance of Canadian aluminium production, and, consequently cryolite, cannot be stressed too strongly.”⁵⁵³ He went on to suggest that if Canada decided to occupy Ivigtut, Alcan would operate the mines for the benefit of the Allies. He concluded by stating:

This matter, in fact is so important to us, and to the Allied aluminium industry, that we urge the Canadian government to see that immediate action is taken to protect the Greenland cryolite mines and ensure their production for the Allies.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵²F.W. Bruce to R.E. Powell, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 1.

⁵⁵³F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 2.

⁵⁵⁴F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, AGMA, 2.

Bruce and Powell's actions had an immediate effect within the Canadian government.⁵⁵⁵ The next day Greenland and the cryolite issue reached the Canadian Prime Minister. King was given a memorandum on the "The Position of Greenland" by O.D. Skelton. The memo presented to the prime minister stressed the importance of cryolite and raised the issue of preventing a German occupation of Greenland through Canadian action, noting that if Canada were to occupy "strategic coastal points in Greenland," it would be preferable to similar action on the part of the British or French. Skelton stressed that if any action were contemplated it would be desirable to discuss it "not only with London, but with Washington."⁵⁵⁶ Prime Minister King wrote in his diary that he "found little comfort in the new problem of enemy approach to our shores through Greenland, having the one mine which can supply cryolite for aluminium manufacture."⁵⁵⁷

The next day Skelton also briefed the prime minister about a meeting between Colonel Ralston, the Chief of the Naval Staff, and the Chief of the General Staff, regarding the Greenland situation. It was suggested that Canada send the ice-breaker *McLean* to protect the mine and prevent the Germans establishing bases in Greenland's harbours.⁵⁵⁸ Skelton also drafted a telegram on the matter to Vincent Massey, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, which he had vetted by the prime minister. Although King did ultimately approve the telegram, he warned Skelton that Canada should not move too quickly with

⁵⁵⁵Copies of the letter were circulated among government officials, and copies can still be found in several files in the Canadian Archives. It is also published in the Canadian Documents on Foreign Relations collection. F.W. Bruce to N.A. Robertson, Letter, 9 April 1940, *DCER*, 1104.

⁵⁵⁶O.D. Skelton to Mackenzie King, "Position of Greenland," *DCER*, 1106.

⁵⁵⁷King, 11 April 1940, *Diaries*, 371.

⁵⁵⁸O.D. Skelton to Mackenzie King, "Greenland Situation," *DCER*, 1108.

respect to any Canadian action in Greenland.⁵⁵⁹ King thought that it would be impossible to foresee either the short-term or long-term implications of such an action.

Although he was concerned about the fate of the mine, he stressed that if Canada occupied Greenland it might be expected to do the same for Newfoundland, then still a separate colony. The war in Europe would inevitably lead to increasing demands on the Canadian military and those demands would be more difficult to fulfil if the military was involved in various other operations. King, however, was most concerned about the danger of “disturbing American opinion” through Canadian action in Greenland.⁵⁶⁰

Mackenzie King and Canada, 1940

For King, the events in Europe put a greater emphasis on the significance of Canada's relationship with the United States. Throughout his career King established numerous personal and professional connections in the United States. He held degrees from both the University of Chicago and Harvard University and had previously worked as an advisor on matters of labour for the Rockefeller Foundation. King's exposure to elite society through education and employment helped him forge high-placed personal friendships in American government and industry. He was, however, aware that his personal background and policies left him open to criticism within Canada for being too pro-American, indeed he had been nicknamed “the American” by the press.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹O.D. Skelton to V. Massey, Telegram 393, 12 April 1940, *DCER*, 1110; O.D. Skelton, “Greenland,” *DCER*, 1108.

⁵⁶⁰O.D. Skelton to V. Massey, Telegram 393, 12 April 1940, *DCER*, 1110; O.D. Skelton, “Greenland,” *DCER*, 1108.

⁵⁶¹J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, “A Self Evident National Duty: Canadian Foreign Policy, 1935-9,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* ii (1975): 215.

King had been acting as a middleman between the United States and Great Britain during the early stages of the Second World War. Like Roosevelt King was initially reluctant to involve his country in war, but he soon realised that war with Germany would be impossible for Canada to avoid. At the Imperial Conference in 1937 King told Chamberlain that if Hitler should ever aggress in a way to injure the United Kingdom that Canadians would swim across the Atlantic rather than be prevented from coming to the aid of the British.⁵⁶² When war eventually came he was soon championing the Allied position in defending the rights of neutral nations.⁵⁶³ King had a good working relationship with Roosevelt. He was simultaneously urged by the British to prompt American assistance in the Allied war effort, and encouraged by the Americans to have the British act more decisively against Hitler.

As a result of his country's close relationship with Great Britain, as part of the British Commonwealth and Canada's physical and cultural proximity to the United States, King felt that he was "greatly needed as an intermediary between England and the U.S."⁵⁶⁴ King, however, aspired to be more than a go-between for the United States and Great Britain. He was highly intelligent and had an excellent mind for economics and matters of

⁵⁶²Letter Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 2 June 1937, NC18/1/1125.

⁵⁶³King's policies with respect to appeasement and Canada's policies with respect to Canadian political autonomy are the subject of a number of excellent studies. See, for example, John D. Meehan, SJ, "Steering Clear of Great Britain: Canada's Debate over Collective Security in the Far Eastern Crisis of 1937," *The International History Review* 25 no. 2 (June 2003): 253; J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, "A Self Evident National Duty: Canadian Foreign Policy, 1935-9," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* ii (1975): 212-233; J. Eayrs, *In defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965); R. Owendale, "Canada, Britain, the United States, and the Policy of Appeasement," *In Kith and Kin: Canada, Britain, and the United States from the Revolution to the Cold War*, ed. C.C. Eldridge (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977), etc.

⁵⁶⁴King, 30 April 1940, *Diaries*, 445.

trade. He had little faith in diplomats: he believed that "Legations and Embassies were not to be much relied on," and that "these men took themselves too seriously and often were little governments in themselves." He believed that it was "all wrong to have great international affairs settled by a few individuals; much better to have a more frequent exchange of views between leading members of government. Individuals entrusted with a special mission."⁵⁶⁵

It is clear from King's somewhat contradictory writings that he saw himself as one of these individuals with a special mission. In King's case that mission not only involved mediation between the United Kingdom and United States, but also the re-positioning Canada on the world stage. Throughout his long career as prime minister, King pursued policies that loosened Canada's imperial ties to Great Britain and set it on the path to a fully independent foreign policy and national identity. From his earliest time in office, King began to champion a course that was distinct from Great Britain.

In the Chanak crisis of 1922 after Lloyd George had publically requested military support from Canada in the Dardanelles before any official request had been made to Ottawa. King refused to offer Canadian assistance without first consulting his parliament.⁵⁶⁶ At imperial conferences in 1923 and 1926, King argued against collective security measures and stressed that "Canada should not be expected to involve itself in any conflict in which its interests were not at stake; and that the Canadian parliament alone would determine the

⁵⁶⁵King, "Memorandum Re Conversation with the President," 23-24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 414.

⁵⁶⁶John D. Meehan, SJ, "Steering Clear of Great Britain: Canada's Debate over Collective Security in the Far Eastern Crisis of 1937," *The International History Review* 25 no. 2 (June 2003): 253; Max Beloff, *Dream of Commonwealth, 1921-1942* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1989); David Walder, *The Chanak Affair* (London: Hutchinson, 1969).

extent, if any, in overseas military operations."⁵⁶⁷ King's government lost the 1930 election on the issue of a reciprocity treaty with the United States. During his time out of office the Statute of Westminster (1931), something King had been instrumental in promoting, was approved giving Canada full legislative control over its foreign policy.⁵⁶⁸

After the difficult depression years of the early 1930s under the unpopular Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, King won the 1935 election with a substantial majority. King reassumed his role as prime minister in 1935 with new powers over foreign affairs and a mission to re-define Canada's role in global affairs. Unlike some previous prime ministers, Mackenzie King did not simply see himself as heading a provincial extension of the British government in the Western Hemisphere. He saw himself as the leader of an independent, self-sufficient nation and sought to promote policies that he thought were in the best interest of his country, rather than the Commonwealth as a whole. One of the ways King exercised his country's newfound independence was by waiting a full week until Canada joined with the United Kingdom and declared war on Germany.⁵⁶⁹

The war had greatly increased the difficulty of King's role both domestically and internationally. Canada itself was a deeply divided nation, particularly with respect to the linguistic and cultural divides between the English- and French-speaking populations in the country. English-speaking Canadians were far more supportive of policies like aid to the Allies and more open to the policy of conscription. Whereas French Canadians had

⁵⁶⁷Meehan, "Steering Clear of Great Britain," 253.

⁵⁶⁸J.M. Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 252.

⁵⁶⁹O.D. Skelton, *The Papers of O.D. Skelton*, The National Library and Archives of Canada, MG30/D33/Vol.5.

only marginal loyalty to Britain and felt little allegiance to France.⁵⁷⁰ As a result, they were vehemently opposed to conscription.⁵⁷¹ The Canadian government itself was similarly divided between those fiercely loyal to Great Britain, particularly those in the military, and others who preferred to act in Canada's national interest like O.D. Skelton. King's election victory had guaranteed his leadership position domestically for several years which gave him more leeway to dedicate himself more fully to international affairs.⁵⁷²

The lack of active fighting in the early months of the war made it easy for King to maintain confidence in a British victory while he campaigned for re-election. The German invasions of Denmark and Norway, however, raised broader questions for King about the direction the war might take and the potential implications for Canada. In addition, the occupation of Denmark also drew King's attention to the inadequacies of Canadian defences. Greenland was only twenty-six kilometres from Canada in the far north. Since at the time of the German invasion, Greenland was a Danish colonial possession. Hitler now had a legal claim to at least some rights to the island because it belonged to an occupied Denmark. The Danish government had been forced to acquiesce in relinquishing the control of their possessions abroad when the Nazis overran the country.⁵⁷³ Thus, the

⁵⁷⁰See Robert Bothwell's *Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), for an examination of the differences in French and English speaking Canada in the period.

⁵⁷¹Some of the tension between French and English Canada over the war in Europe is explored in studies on the St. Pierre Miquelon Affair. See Martin F. Auger, "A Tempest in a Teapot: Canadian Military Planning and the St. Pierre Miquelon Affair, 1940-1942," *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* 33 no. 1 (Autumn/Automne 2003):47-72; and Martin Thomas, "Deferring to Vichy in the Western Hemisphere: The St. Pierre and Miquelon Affair of 1941," *The International History Review* 19 no. 4 (Nov. 1997): 809-835.

⁵⁷²King, 20 April 1940, *Diaries*, 392.

⁵⁷³Hugh L. Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside: On the Bridge of Time* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1982), 189.

occupation of Denmark by the Germans made the possibility of a German occupation of Greenland increasingly likely. During the First World War, little attention had been paid to Greenland.⁵⁷⁴ In the context of the Second World War, however, Greenland's strategic location and mineral resources, in combination with rumours of German designs for the island, led to increased international interest in the fate of the Danish colony on both sides of the Atlantic. Not surprisingly, it was one of the issues King wanted to discuss with the Americans.

In spite of the criticisms about his pro-American attitude, King was in the habit of spending a significant amount of time in the United States. He also made it a priority to personally visit with Roosevelt once or twice each year following their first meeting in 1935.⁵⁷⁵ Indeed, when Mackenzie King was re-elected on March 26, 1940, one of the first acts of his renewed mandate was a "vacation" to the United States. Although, he did spend a little over a week relaxing by the sea at the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, his purpose in travelling to the United States was not strictly personal.⁵⁷⁶ He made plans to meet President Roosevelt in Warm Springs, Georgia. He also made appointments with Lord Lothian, British Ambassador to the United States, and American Secretary of State Cordell Hull. He had originally planned to leave for his trip on April 9; however, as a result of Germany's invasions of Denmark and Norway, King felt it unwise to leave Ottawa or delay Parliament later than the 16th of the next month.⁵⁷⁷ He left three days later on April

⁵⁷⁴Aage V. Strøm Tejsen, "The History of the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department," *Polar Record* 18 no. 116 (1977): 461-462.

⁵⁷⁵Granatstein and Bothwell, "A Self Evident National Duty," 215.

⁵⁷⁶King, 14 April to 23 April 1940, *Diaries*, 380-395.

⁵⁷⁷King, 9 April 1940, *Diaries*, 369.

12, 1940. King was keen to avoid any action that would alienate either the American government or American public opinion. Rather than speculate with his advisors as to which action with respect to Greenland would be preferable to the United States, he decided to ask the president directly when he stayed with him at the Little White House in Warm Springs, Georgia.

The Canadian Government and the American Government

American policy relating to Greenland was still evolving. The State Department was already independently working with the Danish ambassador to the United States, Henrik Kauffmann, and the two Greenlandic governors, Aksel Svane and Eske Brun, on issues relating to the defence of Greenland. All three parties (the Danish ambassador, the Greenlandic governors, and the American government) wanted to continue to keep Greenland isolated from the European conflict by preventing any belligerent presence on the island.⁵⁷⁸

Prior to his trip, Mackenzie King had been briefed on the existing American's position on Greenland by Skelton and Loring C. Christie, the Canadian minister to the United States in Washington, who had recently met with the American Secretary of State Cordell Hull on the issue. Christie had more knowledge than most people about Greenland. During the First World War, Christie was an advisor to Prime Minister Robert Borden and handled files relating to Canada's position regarding the potential recognition of Danish sovereignty over Greenland.⁵⁷⁹ During the meeting, Hull made it very clear to Christie that

⁵⁷⁸Lidegaard discusses this issue in detail along with the resulting conflicts between the Greenlandic governors and Kauffmann in *I Kongens Navn*. See pages 643-660 for an English language summary.

⁵⁷⁹Loring Cheney Christie Fonds, National Library and Archives of Canada, MG 30/E15, C-3880 [Microfilm], 5831-6008.

the United States would not be happy with any British involvement in Greenland.

Following the meeting, however, Christie was still not entirely clear about the American position with respect to potential Canadian military action in Greenland.⁵⁸⁰ Christie raised the question of Greenland with the Secretary of State again later that week. He asked what the State Department's attitude would be toward the Canadian government sending a small force to Greenland to protect the cryolite mine and if the Americans were themselves planning any action on the island. Hull let Christie know that he would inform him of the government's position within a few days.⁵⁸¹

One of primary questions that needed to be resolved prior to Hull's response was the government's position with respect to Canada and the Monroe Doctrine. As discussed in the last chapter, following the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 which stated that the American continents are "hence forth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power." The American government was reluctant to see any change in the status of European colonial possessions in the western hemisphere. In other words, the Americans were not prepared to approve of colonies being swapped about by the European powers.⁵⁸² Some in the State Department, like the Undersecretary of State Adolf Berle, thought that the occupation of Greenland by Canada would violate the Monroe Doctrine. Although Canada, like Greenland is geographically considered a part of the western hemisphere, Berle and many Americans continued to view the British with suspicion.

⁵⁸⁰Hull, Memorandum, 13 April 1940, Microfilm, Reel 28 A, The Papers of Cordell Hull.

⁵⁸¹O.D. Skelton, "Extract from Memorandum ODS 18 April 1940," W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, The National Library and Archives of Canada, Reel H-1555, C277326.

⁵⁸²James Monroe, "Message to Congress December 2, 1823," in *The Monroe Doctrine: A Landmark in American Foreign Policy*, by Harold Cecil Vaughan (New York: Franklin Watts Inc., 1973), 52.

Canada, as a British Dominion, was also seen as an extension of British Imperialism. For the first few decades following the American revolution “Americans viewed Canada as an active aggressive agent of British Imperialism that sought to check US expansion westward.”⁵⁸³

Although both countries were democratic, they had very different origins. While the United States was founded on the rejection of colonialism, Canada was the opposite, imperial by design. Rather than accept their so-called geographic destiny and overthrow European rule:

The remaining North American colonies banded together to form the Dominion of Canada in 1867. Between 1880 and 1914 this enlarged colonial state viewed itself as a vital link in the British worldwide empire . . . The flag waving rejection of the 1911 reciprocity treaty by Canadians on the grounds that Canada did not wish to undermine the imperial connection seemed to confirm that Canada’s imperial orientation remained strong even into the first decade of the new century.⁵⁸⁴

While imperial history and differing interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine continued to make some Americans wary of Canadian intentions, others saw the Second World War as an opportunity for Canada to cut its remaining ties with Britain and establish closer relations between the United States and Canada. While after the American Revolution Americans had been concerned that Canadians would act as agents of the British and try and subvert the government or invade, so too had Canadians been suspicious of American intentions towards Canada. Canadian historian C.P. Stacey, writing in 1937, argued that the policies of the Canadian military thinking itself can be divided into three phases in relation to the United States. The first was that "in which the United States was an omnipresent menace, and Canadian defensive measures were devoted almost exclusively

⁵⁸³Gordon T. Stewart, “An Objective of US Foreign Policy since the Founding of the Republic: The United States and the End of Empire in Canada,” in *Canada and the End of Empire*, ed. Phillip Buckner. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 95.

⁵⁸⁴Stewart, “An Objective of US Foreign Policy,” 95.

to providing against an American attack." The second was a period of transition from 1871 to the turn of the century, and during the third, the one in which Mackenzie King was governing, "American hostility is assumed to be virtually impossible and Canadian military measures are directed at other contingencies."⁵⁸⁵ This change in defensive needs shifted Canada's focus from one of the large infantry that was needed to defend Canada's southern border when there was an assumption of American hostility, to a focus on coastal defences.⁵⁸⁶ In the interwar period, however, the improvement of relations with Canada did not entirely allay American concerns about it. Canadian defensive capabilities, particularly along its coasts, were extremely limited, which was a concern for Americans who desired to keep the Western Hemisphere safe from foreign aggression.

The United States had long desired a policy of Western Hemispheric security. Throughout Roosevelt's presidency he and his government publically stated that the friendly relationship between the United States and the other republics of the American continent "must be regarded as a cornerstone of American foreign policy."⁵⁸⁷ It was also stressed that the Monroe Doctrine as it has been interpreted was essentially a continental self-defence policy. The government encouraged the adoption of the Monroe Doctrine by all Latin American states as a part of their own national policies. That way, it was argued, the impression that the adoption of the Monroe Doctrine would constitute a threat to sovereignty of any republic in the Western Hemisphere would be overturned. Roosevelt's government also stressed that Western Hemispheric states must each accept equal

⁵⁸⁵C.P. Stacey, "Canadian Defence Policy," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Sciences/Revue canadienne d'Economique et de Science politique*, 4 no. 4 (Nov. 1938): 490.

⁵⁸⁶Stacey, "Canadian Defence Policy, 499.

⁵⁸⁷"Speech on the Monroe Doctrine and Latin America," 1933, PSF 28 Diplomatic Cuba, 1-3.

responsibility for the defence of the hemisphere, and that there was a continental responsibility for the maintenance of peace in this hemisphere.⁵⁸⁸ As a result of global political uncertainty, in the 1930s the United States was able to craft important mutual defence treaties with Latin America, through the Pan American Conferences such as the Lima Conference in 1938 and the subsequent Panama Conference in 1939. The Lima Conference was of particular importance as it essentially secured and assured mutual defence for all twenty-one signatory nations in attendance.⁵⁸⁹ The declaration, however, stopped short of adopting the Monroe Doctrine itself as the mechanism through which this was achieved.

Canada, as part of the British Empire, was not included in Pan-American Conferences, the Pan-American Union, or the related hemispheric security agreements. In 1941, however, the preeminent Monroe Doctrine scholar Dexter Perkins noted:

The most significant development of the Monroe Doctrine since 1938 was the inclusion of Canada in the ample folds of its principles . . . Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, so great was the power of imperial Britain, so unquestioned her naval supremacy, that it could have occurred only to the boldest and most speculative mind that, so far as Canada was concerned it would be challenged.⁵⁹⁰

That challenge came from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, when he famously declared “I give to you the assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire,” during a speech at

⁵⁸⁸"Speech on the Monroe Doctrine and Latin America," 1933, PSF 28 Diplomatic Cuba, 1-3.

⁵⁸⁹Edward O. Guarrant, *Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1950), 140.

⁵⁹⁰Dexter Perkins, *Hands Off: A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1941), 357-358.

Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, in 1938.⁵⁹¹ Canadians were now granted American protection under the Monroe Doctrine for the first time in history. Roosevelt's statement took on even greater importance when in interviews following the speech, the American president directly linked his earlier remarks to the Monroe Doctrine.

Roosevelt's statement was also indicative of a larger trend of closer ties between the United States and Canada in the pre-war period, a trend that can be attributed, at least in part, to the close relationship between Mackenzie King and Franklin Roosevelt. The nature of King's relationship with Roosevelt is the subject of some debate. It is clear, however, that their relationship was significantly more positive than that between Roosevelt and King's predecessor, R.B. Bennett. Bennett was a Conservative. His party was closely associated with London and favoured high levels of protection for Canadian markets.⁵⁹² Not only was Bennett part of the pro-British party in Canada, but he was a member of the United Empire Loyalists and was descended from American Conservatives who fled to Canada during the American Revolution.⁵⁹³ Bennett's correspondence with Roosevelt was formal and reserved and in stark contrast to the style of his successor.⁵⁹⁴ Just prior to the 1935 election that would return King to power, Warren Delano Robbins, a cousin of Roosevelt and the Chief of the Mission to Canada, wrote to the president about the future prime minister:

⁵⁹¹Franklin Delano Roosevelt in C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies—Volume 2: 1921-1948 The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 277.

⁵⁹²"Department of State Memorandum," 18 April 1933, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

⁵⁹³"Memorandum R.B. Bennett," 26 April 1933, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

⁵⁹⁴R.B. Bennett to Franklin Roosevelt, Letter, 30 October 1934, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

Yesterday was Mackenzie King's sixtieth birthday and I wrote him a polite note of congratulations. I enclose his letter, also written by hand, which I received within three hours of the time that I sent mine to him. I only send you this and make this remark because I think it shows a little bit that he is inclined far more than any other party to play the game with us.⁵⁹⁵

In a postscript Robbins noted, "King was a prolific writer and I think inclined to indulge in poetic licence."⁵⁹⁶ Roosevelt read King's letter to Robbins with interest, and it was apparent to the president that his cousin's comments were accurate. King's note highlighted his happy years spent in the United States and the many friendships he made while studying at Harvard. He also noted that he wished "more friendships could be formed between the peoples of our respective countries. I become increasingly convinced that along that path more than any other lies not only the hope of progress but, in our day the hope of the world."⁵⁹⁷

When King was re-elected in 1935, he was true to his word to Robbins and made a sustained effort to maintain the aforementioned friendship. Both leaders spent a substantial portion of their formative years in the other's country, which gave them a unique basis to strengthen bilateral relations between the United States and Canada. From the time he was a young boy until he contracted polio on the island at age thirty-nine, Roosevelt spent the majority of his summers in the small Canadian island town of Campobello, New Brunswick, and he maintained close relationships with many locals throughout his life.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁵Warren D. Robbins to Franklin Roosevelt, Letter, 18 December 1934, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 4.

⁵⁹⁶Warren D. Robbins to Franklin Roosevelt, Letter, 18 December 1934, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 5.

⁵⁹⁷Mackenzie King to Warren D. Robbins, Letter, 17 December 1934, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 2.

⁵⁹⁸Lawrence Martin, *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers—Washington and Ottawa Face to Face: The Myth of Bilateral Bliss 1867-1982* (Doubleday & Company Inc., 1982), 114-115.

Similarly, Mackenzie King spent considerable time in the United States as a child. King also lived in the United States while he completed an MA in Sociology from the University of Chicago in 1897,⁵⁹⁹ and a PhD from Harvard in 1909. The fact that King and Roosevelt were both Harvard educated was significant for both leaders. In 1935 at the first of their eighteen meetings, “the two leaders . . . had one big thing in common. They were Harvard men . . . One meeting the president and prime minister went on at length about their Harvard days and forever after, Roosevelt alluding to King, would almost always draw the link.”⁶⁰⁰ Following their initial meeting Roosevelt wrote to King:

I have thought much of you since the autumn and have been wishing that we might meet much more often . . . I really hope to pay a visit to you at the end of June . . . because this creates a new precedent and because I hope that it will be followed by many similar visits in both directions . . . we should keep it as informal and unostentatious as possible. It will be a good thing for both countries if . . . in the days to come we can drop in and visit each other.⁶⁰¹

The meeting marked the beginning of a close personal and working relationship and also resulted in the Reciprocal Trade Treaty, which was signed on Armistice Day 1935.⁶⁰² King had long been in favour of freer trade and lower tariffs between the United States and Canada. In 1911 he, and then Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, had lost the election on that issue.⁶⁰³ What other leaders had been unable to accomplish in decades, King and Roosevelt accomplished over a few short days.

⁵⁹⁹Kenneth Westhues, “Sociology for a New Century: Mackenzie King’s First Career,” in *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community*, ed. John English et al. (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002), 206.

⁶⁰⁰Martin, *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers*, 118.

⁶⁰¹Roosevelt to King, letter, April 16, 1936, PSF Canada File 2, in William Lawrence Matson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King and Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Their Effect on Canadian-American Relations, 1929-1935* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilm International, 1973), 21 (unpublished dissertation).

⁶⁰²Martin, *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers*, 121.

⁶⁰³Stewart, “An Objective of US Foreign Policy,” 101.

Although the pair had some things in common, the factor that made these negotiations and the relationship itself so easy was King himself. From the outset of the trade negotiations he made it clear that he would only come to Washington if the negotiations would result in an agreement.⁶⁰⁴ He thought that trade between the two nations would be good for the morale of both countries and that it would be good for the world to see two countries as "powerful as the United States and Canada ironing out their trade difficulties and ready to face the world situation together."⁶⁰⁵ King felt that Canada could be of great use as a link between Great Britain and the United States, a role King had played before while he was Deputy Minister of Labour in the Laurier government. He acted as an intermediary between Theodore Roosevelt and Lord Grey regarding Japan, and with Lord Salisbury and Stanley Baldwin over American prohibition regulations.⁶⁰⁶ King used these examples to illustrate his commitment to positive bilateral relations with the United States. He told the new American Chief of the Mission in Ottawa, Norman Armour, that he was "not in favor of annexation. I don't think that would be good for either country. Certainly you have enough troubles of your own without wanting to add us to them." However, short of this he did feel that there must be close economic and political cooperation between Canada and the United States and that in-person meetings between the two leaders would be beneficial.⁶⁰⁷ During the period of the trade negotiations, Canada was at a crossroads in its foreign policy. O.D. Skelton advised that if a trade agreement could not be reached then "Canada would of necessity be forced back within the Empire; into the arms of the

⁶⁰⁴"Memorandum," 25 October 1935, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

⁶⁰⁵"Memorandum," 25 October 1935, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

⁶⁰⁶"Memorandum," 25 October 1935, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

⁶⁰⁷"Memorandum," 25 October 1935, PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

British—but of course at a price."⁶⁰⁸ That price was becoming a part of Neville

Chamberlain's world-wide British economic empire. A memorandum for the president on the subject noted:

[it] is vitally important for our political future that we have next to us a Canada interested in developing her trade with the United States, interested in regard to Latin America, possibly a member of the Pan American Union, the Far East and elsewhere, and feeling in a thousand and one ways that they are bound to us in practical things even though sentimentally and politically they are part of the British Empire.⁶⁰⁹

Following the successful negotiations of the trade agreement, King and Roosevelt met with each other fairly regularly. King's visits were followed by lengthy letters of thanks to Roosevelt. In 1937 he wrote, "You, it seems to me, more than any other living man, are in a position to save the world situation, and, with it, civilization."⁶¹⁰ Despite King's flowery prose, Roosevelt continued frequent correspondence with him and also encouraged in person "chats." Roosevelt told King that the "White House door stands ajar" for him and if he wanted to visit, King should "disregard legations and call me up personally to tell me you are coming for a little visit."⁶¹¹ King, however, was aware of the power of Canadian public opinion and said that he would have to be cautious of the way that his visits were framed in order to avoid "comment and speculation" that would be embarrassing for both leaders. He told Roosevelt how honoured he felt to have the ability to drop in on the president at any time, and he hoped "the world would will come to comprehend that the

⁶⁰⁸"Memorandum," 22 October 1935 , PSF Canada 25, File 1, 1.

⁶⁰⁹"Memorandum," 22 October 1935 , PSF Canada 25, File 1, 4.

⁶¹⁰Mackenzie King to Roosevelt, Letter, 17 March 1937, PSF Canada 25, File 2, 1-2.

⁶¹¹Roosevelt to Mackenzie King, Letter, 21 December 1937, PSF Canada 25, File 2, 1.

more those who are responsible for the administration of public affairs see each other, the better it will be for mankind."⁶¹²

King's Vacation in the United States

King's decision to leave for the United States in April 1940 was received critically by the Canadian press and many in the government, particularly in light of the worsening European situation. Part of the issue with the public perception of King's trip to the United States was that publically it was stated that his time in the United States was strictly personal, and that no issues of government business would be discussed during any of his meetings while he was away. While this was clearly not the case, it was deemed necessary to avoid press speculation as to the content of the secretive discussions he would have while he was away. King was often upset by the press reports during his time in the United States. Following a critical editorial in the *Ottawa Gazette* about his trip, King complained about the illogical partisan hatred of him on the part of the Conservative Party. He wrote:

I fortunately am now in the position that I can do pretty much as I please and intend to do so, exercising my judgement with respect to what is most, in the long run, in the country's need . . . I believe firmly, however, that there is a real purpose behind my seeing the President and that I can do more in one week spent to that end than might be accomplished in months of remaining in Ottawa, and giving attention to national rather than international aspects of the present world situation.⁶¹³

It took King two days to travel to the southern United States on board the *President Warfield*. The first stop on his American tour was the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, where he would relax on his own for a week prior to meeting with Roosevelt in Warm Springs, Georgia. King was driven to the hotel in a new Chrysler Royal, and in spite of the unusually cold weather for the time of year, he was pleased by the sight of flowers and

⁶¹²Mackenzie King to Roosevelt, Letter, 30 December 1937, PSF Canada 25, File 2, 1.

⁶¹³King, 20 April 1940, *Diaries*, 392.

shrubs on his drive. He also enjoyed the Canadian flag positioned next to the stars and stripes in his honour at the hotel.⁶¹⁴ King, who was sixty-four years old in 1940, felt he was in need of a rest after the election. He spent the majority of his time at the Cavalier Hotel relaxing, but he also took a keen interest in the news reports from Europe. The prime minister paid particularly close attention to the events in Norway. King felt that Germany's invasions of Denmark and Norway had affected Americans deeply. Norway and Denmark were both "peace-loving neutral democracies. It makes it clear the job that Britain has tackled in trying to destroy a brutal beast that is devouring nations like a wolf would individuals."⁶¹⁵ Prior to his leaving Ottawa, however, the reports from Europe on the Norwegian Campaign were sporadic and confusing and the initial broadcasts were positive. The day after the invasion, King noted in his diary that the reports affirmed accounts of Allied successes in the North Sea. Many German ships were said to have been sunk in comparison with the British. It was also announced that the British had recaptured both Bergen and Trondheim, and that forty thousand tons of shipping had been destroyed in the Oslo Fjord itself. King noted that "it would look as though Hitler has at last gone too far in his attempt to seize neutral countries."⁶¹⁶ The next day King listened to Churchill's broadcast on the campaign and concluded that although the battle was "definitely on Britain's side," there were "more serious losses for the British than assumed by press accounts."⁶¹⁷ By his first night in Virginia on April 14, King was again buoyed by the broadcasts from Europe. Although he had received a memo from O.D. Skelton to the effect that there had been little change on the war front, he noted enthusiastically, "Quite clearly

⁶¹⁴King, 14 April 1940, *Diaries*, 380.

⁶¹⁵King, 13 April 1940, *Diaries*, 377.

⁶¹⁶King, 10 April 1940, *Diaries*, 370.

⁶¹⁷King, 11 April 1940, *Diaries*, 371.

the British have won a smashing victory which I should think will help to change the whole course of the war . . . Great triumph for the importance of the navy in times of war."⁶¹⁸ Two days later King stayed awake later than usual to listen to the news reports on Norway. The reports were vague, and King concluded that Scandinavia would be a "battle ground for some months" and the saddest part of it was the "thousands [of] British, Norwegians and Germans slain over an effort to gain control of Iron ore."⁶¹⁹ Another memo from Skelton brought news of the British re-capture of Narvik, but raised new questions as a result of the Japanese announcement opposing British or American interference in the Dutch East Indies, which was regarded by the Canadian government as an indication that Japan itself would attempt to seize the islands if the Netherlands were invaded. Skelton's memo concluded with an important message that London would be glad to see Canadian action in Greenland, which he termed "our own north-eastern orphan."⁶²⁰ Two days later he received another memorandum on the situation from Skelton. Skelton wrote that Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador to the United States

Gave one of the most stupid and embarrassing interviews ever given by a public representative. The Associated Press reported that he had said neither Britain nor Canada would occupy Greenland unless absolutely certain that Germany was sending an expeditionary force, which was most unlikely . . . This apparent assumption of a right to speak for Canada was greatly resented by Colonel Ralston and other members of the council.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸O.D. Skelton, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister," 13 April 1940, *Diaries*, 378; King, 11 April 1940, *Diaries*, 383.

⁶¹⁹King, 11 April 1940, *Diaries*, 383.

⁶²⁰O.D. Skelton, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister," 16 April 1940, *Diaries*, 386 iii.

⁶²¹O.D. Skelton, "Extract from Memorandum ODS 18 April 1940," Reel H-1555, C277326.

Lothian, who was given a memorandum on Canada's position on Greenland, told the Canadian legation that he was misquoted and had not made a statement that implicated Canada.⁶²²

Throughout the week King continued to be "confused" with respect to the Norwegian situation. He suspected it was more difficult for the British than was generally assumed. On April 20 King received another message that caused him concern. In a memorandum from Skelton he learned that Andrew McNaughton, the Commander of the First Canadian Infantry Division, and Vincent Massey, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, had agreed between them to send thirteen hundred Canadians to Norway without asking Ottawa first.⁶²³ Both the actions of McNaughton and Massey and those of Lothian clearly went against King's hard fought efforts to consolidate control of Canadian affairs in Ottawa rather than London.

King and Roosevelt's Visit

On April 23, 1940, , while the outcome of the fighting in Scandinavia was still unclear, King descended from a Seaboard Railway car onto a train platform in Warm Springs, Georgia. He met President Roosevelt, who later that afternoon personally took the prime minister on a guided tour of Warm Springs and the surrounding countryside. Dressed in his grey flannel suit, King chatted with Roosevelt and enjoyed his first cocktail since the Great War.⁶²⁴ King recalled that "the visit might truly be described as a wholly informal personal visit," and that "nothing was discussed in an official way though many subjects of

⁶²²O.D. Skelton, "Extract from Memorandum ODS 18 April 1940," Reel H-1555, C277326.

⁶²³ King, 20 April 1940, *Diaries*, 392.

⁶²⁴ King, 23 April 1940, *Diaries*, 396-397.

mutual interest naturally developed in the course of the conversations."⁶²⁵ Publicly, the president repeated these sentiments and stated that "no questions of American or Canadian policy were involved in the discussions"; however, in reality one of the main issues King discussed with Roosevelt was cryolite and the options for the defence of Greenland.⁶²⁶ Over the course of his visit, Roosevelt continued to build trust between himself and the Canadian prime minister. Roosevelt insisted that King remain in the room during all of his phone calls, including one with Cordell Hull in which he discussed sensitive issues of national security. Roosevelt also showed King the many letters he had on his desk. Amongst them was a memorandum from Hull about Greenland and confidential reports from American ambassadors based abroad describing the ever worsening situation in Europe and the potential threat of Japan.⁶²⁷

The pair briefly discussed concerns about Japan. King mentioned he had heard that many commentators thought that war between the United States and Japan was inevitable. The president was "terribly annoyed" by those sorts of comments and told King that it was the "worst thing that could have been said." King did not mention to Roosevelt that he himself had similar views. A few days prior to the meeting, King had recorded in his diary that the "US and Japan are already beginning to show their teeth to each other over the possible control of the Dutch East Indies in the event of Holland being invaded by the Germans." He also noted that he would "not be at all surprised to see Japan in a war with the

⁶²⁵King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 1.

⁶²⁶Cornell, "Roosevelt Warns of Conclusions as Mackenzie King Visits Him," *The Atlanta Constitution*, (24 April 1940), A1.

⁶²⁷Cordell Hull to Franklin Roosevelt, Letter, 22 April 1940, PSF Canada 25, File 4, 1-5. King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 1.

states."⁶²⁸ Roosevelt knew that Canada was developing its own issues with Japan. Prior to the meeting, Secretary Morgenthau phoned Roosevelt's office to tell the president that as of the first of April, Canada, "despite great pressure," had stopped selling nickel to Japan.⁶²⁹

Although Japan was significant, the expanding war in Europe was of primary concern to both men and monopolised the conversation during their visit. It was clear to King that there was no doubt that Roosevelt's sympathies lay with the Allies, but he also had very serious concerns about the decisions that both the British and the French had taken in the war to date. Roosevelt thought that neither power was acting quickly enough, enlisting enough men, or sending enough troops in the current battle in Norway. Both leaders agreed that Hitler would bring on a "totalitarian" war before the end of spring and that Britain and France were "going to have a very hard time."⁶³⁰ Roosevelt's conclusions had been partially formed as a result of Sumner Welles' recent mission to Europe, which Roosevelt described at length to King over the course of his visit.⁶³¹ With respect to Britain and France, Roosevelt had little to report except that they had both welcomed Welles in the best possible manner. The president also noted that Welles reported that Churchill had drunk to excess: "When Welles had a talk with him he drank a lot of whisky and made a speech of an hour's length to Welles. At the end of the hour's talking he

⁶²⁸King, 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 1.

⁶²⁹"Memorandum for the President," 23 April 1940, PSF Canada 25, File 4, 1.

⁶³⁰King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 1.

⁶³¹See Stanley E. Hilton, "The Welles Mission to Europe. February-March 1940: Illusion or Realism?" *The Journal of American History* 38, no.1 (June 1971): 93-120.

became sober." Roosevelt said that he "regretted that he seemed to be drinking too much even yet."⁶³²

In Italy, Welles was welcomed by Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, who had invited him to his home, but noted that while Mussolini was pleasant, he was non-committal on the subject of war. Welles had told Roosevelt that Mussolini had a falling out with the British ambassador to Italy and that he had visited Hitler shortly after.⁶³³

Mussolini was said to have been captivated by the German strength in aircraft and arms and believed from that day forward that "Germany could win in any European country . . . from that day to this he had been pro-German."⁶³⁴

Roosevelt recounted that in contrast to Welles' reception in England and France, and to some extent Italy, the situation in Germany "had been one of almost rudeness."⁶³⁵ Welles had previously met Ribbentrop in the United States. After the pair greeted each other in English, which Ribbentrop spoke well, he turned to the translator and, in German, asked him to translate the conversation. Then Ribbentrop proceeded to "deliver an harangue to Welles . . . he showed him no courtesy whatever, not hospitality of any kind."⁶³⁶ When Welles met with Hitler, the latter spoke with him courteously enough but repeated

⁶³²King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 5.

⁶³³Paul Baxa, "Capturing the Fascist Moment: Hitler's Visit to Italy in 1938 and the Radicalization of Fascist Italy," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (April 2007): 227-242.

⁶³⁴King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 5-6.

⁶³⁵King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 5-6.

⁶³⁶King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 6.

Ribbentrop's message that "there could be no end to war except for a complete victory for Germany."⁶³⁷ Welles also met with several business leaders, all of whom echoed in a "parrot-like fashion" the same story that Hitler and Ribbentrop had given.

News of Welles' visit was met with mixed reviews internationally. In Latin America it was used for the purposes of anti-American propaganda by pro-Nazi organisations. In Uruguay, for example, a pro-Nazi newspaper named *La Línea Sigfrido* published an article on the visit entitled "Welles the Ruffian." The article, which began "Sumner Welles, the ruffian, was sent by Roosevelt, the Jew, to interview the chiefs of state of the nations involved directly, or indirectly, in this great conflict," outlined numerous failings of democratic governments and how "the two farseeing geniuses, those two supermen named Hitler and Mussolini" would "give life" to the twenty-eight million bayonets, long-distance cannons, and Goering's aerial fleet.⁶³⁸ Although Roosevelt accepted that this was a minority opinion in Uruguay and elsewhere in Latin America, the article, and others like it, were an indication of Nazi Germany's efforts to sway public opinion in South America.

Roosevelt told King that he had the impression that Hitler would mount a terrible attack on Britain imminently if he found his sources of iron and oil were being threatened. Over the course of the conversation, Roosevelt repeated on several occasions that he did not feel Britain and France were sending enough men to Norway and that they were not acting quickly enough in response to Hitler's aggression. The president told the prime minister in

⁶³⁷King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 6.

⁶³⁸Translation, *La Línea Sigfrido*, 18 April 1940, "Welles the Ruffian," PSF 76 Welles Jan. - May 1940, 1-3.

the same manner that he spoke to the press that King could make his own choice as to which conclusion he wished "to reach with regard to many of the situations raised."⁶³⁹

Greenland

It was against the backdrop of an increasingly complicated situation in Asia, an expanding war in Europe, and uncertain relationships with Latin American states that King and Roosevelt discussed the best way for their two countries to manage the Greenland situation.

The issue of Greenland was of central importance to both men. Roosevelt showed King the preparatory memorandum Hull had drafted for him regarding the Greenland situation, which was similar to what Christie had already reported to him.⁶⁴⁰ King noted, "It was clear that the Americans were anxious that Canada should not undertake anything in particular." King informed the president that the Canadian government had received a request from the mine owners to protect the cryolite mine and that the Canadian government had been in touch with Britain to ensure that men would be supplied who could "be of service about the mine in protective ways."⁶⁴¹ He also told Roosevelt that every year the Canadian government sent supplies to Greenland, and they "would be taking more in the way of supplies this year than previously."⁶⁴²

⁶³⁹King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 6.

⁶⁴⁰Cordell Hull to Franklin Roosevelt, Letter, 22 April 1940, PSF Canada 25, File 4, 1-5.

⁶⁴¹Although King told Roosevelt that the request came from the mine owners, he was mistaken as the request came from Alcan. King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 3.

⁶⁴²King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 3.

Roosevelt agreed in principle with King's plan and offered to help provide additional supplies and aid to the Greenlanders through the Red Cross. The president said he would also send an American cutter to Greenland and provide radio equipment to aid in coastal communications.⁶⁴³ Roosevelt, however, also wanted to make it very clear to King that he did not want either the United States or Canada to engage in any military defence or formal occupation of the island. American public and congressional opposition to the European war meant that it would be very difficult for the United States to take any official military action to protect the island, as it would most likely be seen by isolationists as a covert way for the president to enter the war.⁶⁴⁴

In addition, both the president and the Secretary of State were concerned about the impact of having any belligerent country, including Great Britain or Canada, occupy Greenland. Not only would it raise the aforementioned difficult questions regarding the Monroe Doctrine and potentially place American corporate interests in the island at a disadvantage, but it could also give the Japanese a precedent to seize the oil-rich Dutch East Indies.⁶⁴⁵ Although he did not explicitly articulate all of his concerns to the prime minister, Roosevelt did tell King that if a real danger arose he would have to leave it to the British to deal with submarines at sea. He thought no effort should be made either by the United States or Canada to take possession of Greenland—that whatever was done should be

⁶⁴³King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 6.

⁶⁴⁴"Should the U.S. Allow Control of Greenland to Pass from Denmark to Another Nation?" *United States News* 26 April 1940, 24-25.

⁶⁴⁵The parallel between belligerent policies relating to Greenland arose during a meeting between Cordell Hull and the Japanese ambassador to the United States. Cordell Hull, "Memorandum by Secretary of State," *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan: 1931-1941 (In Two Volumes) Volume II* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 284.

subject to Greenland managing its own affairs.⁶⁴⁶ During the conversation, it was clear to King that the issues involved in the defence of Greenland were larger than Greenland itself. King noted that the president also had "a real concern about the inadequacy of the protection to our Canadian coasts both on the Atlantic and the Pacific." The President said that he also wanted to help King with improvements to Canada's coastal defences and communication.⁶⁴⁷

Following his time with Roosevelt, King met with several other friends and government officials. His next visit was with John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his wife in Williamsburg, Virginia. King had been hired by Rockefeller early in his career to consult on labour issues after King had completed his doctoral studies and the two had been close ever since. Rockefeller gave King additional insights into Roosevelt's actions and the state of American public opinion with respect to the war. He informed King that there were two opposing views in the United States at the time: one was for complete isolation which he said was held by former President Hoover and the other, which he said he himself shared, that the U.S. should go into the war." He also thought that:

the US could not declare a policy of intervention in the war pending the presidential election. The real difficulty was the degree to which the President wished to keep the power in his own hands. Power to go into the war if re-elected president; power to declare a policy of isolation meanwhile if that would help him get a third term.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 3.

⁶⁴⁷King, "Memorandum Re-conversation with the President," 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 3.

⁶⁴⁸King, 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 417.

Rockefeller told King that he felt strongly that Roosevelt wanted a third term, and that if he was successful there would be a "danger of a real dictatorship on his part."⁶⁴⁹

Throughout King's time away, the cabinet continued to meet, and the situation in Norway continued to deteriorate. In a letter from the Clerk of the Privy Council he underlined the words "Scandinavia" and "not a very encouraging prospect, I fear."⁶⁵⁰ King spent the final weekend of his vacation in Washington. The Canadian legation issued a press release about the prime minister's visit. It stated that King's visit was strictly personal and that he would be seeing his old friend Cordell Hull "and another old friend, Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador."⁶⁵¹ Both Hull and the Canadian minister in Washington, Loring Christie, came to meet King at the station. They spoke of the European situation "hanging on a thread" in Norway. Hull's sentiments were repeated in that evening's memo from Ottawa, which underlined the importance to both countries, particularly given the deteriorating events in Europe. "The situation in Norway appears to be quite disturbing and international friendships will count for a lot."⁶⁵²

On Sunday morning King met with Christie and was given an update on the Greenland matter. Although King was satisfied with the arrangements he had made with Roosevelt

⁶⁴⁹King, 23 to 24 April 1940, *Diaries*, 417.

⁶⁵⁰"Letter from the Office of the Privy Council to Mackenzie King," 26 April 1940, *Diaries*, 1.

⁶⁵¹"Canadian Legation Confidential Press Release Friday April 26, 1940," *Diaries*, 420 (iii).

⁶⁵²"Memorandum for the Prime Minister: Envelope 14," 27 April 1940, *Diaries*, 424 (ii).

for the defence of Greenland, he soon discovered that while he had been in the United States, preparations were being made to send a Canadian defence force to the island. He expressed his disbelief in his diary:

I had objected to this to S[kelton]. over the phone before leaving . . . Apparently Ralston being concerned about aluminum and S. zealous to have Canada rather than England handle Greenland matters on North American bases, had between them gone farther than I think was wise . . . Clearly our people had been overzealous in preparing for a little war on Canada's own account.⁶⁵³

King met with Norman Davis, the President of the American Red Cross, the next day and once again Greenland was a central issue of conversation. King told Davis about the surprise he had felt when he discovered the Canadian Defence Department had prepared an advance force. Davis was of the opinion that Canada should do something along the lines of what the United States was doing; namely, appoint a consul to the island and "keep a watchful eye on things."⁶⁵⁴ King wondered to Davis what the purpose of that watchfulness would be if German submarines and surface raiders appeared off the coast. Davis felt certain that if that happened, the United States would immediately send the navy and "blow them out of existence."⁶⁵⁵ King, who had given the matter of Greenland a considerable amount of thought, then explained to Davis his view on the situation:

I thought action on the part of both countries—the US and Canada—should be on parallel lines; that it was not a matter of occupying territory, but seeking to safeguard the deposit which is necessary to aluminum companies in both countries.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³“S” refers to O.D. Skelton, Canadian Under-Secretary of State and External Affairs. King, 28 April 1940, *Diaries*, 425.

⁶⁵⁴King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 430.

⁶⁵⁵King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 430.

⁶⁵⁶King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 430.

King met with Cordell Hull later that day, and once again Greenland was the main topic of conversation. Hull expressed his concern about the Japanese and the Dutch East Indies and appeared to King to be quite satisfied "with an arrangement that applied fifty-fifty in whatever was done by the US and ourselves" regarding Greenland⁶⁵⁷ King asked Hull "point blank [what] would be done if Greenland was invaded."⁶⁵⁸ Hull said although he doubted the Germans would invade Greenland, it would raise the policy of the Monroe Doctrine. "He didn't say that it would apply, but certainly it would raise that question for consideration."⁶⁵⁹ Following the meeting the press met the pair and asked whether they had discussed Greenland. The prime minister said he had promised the Canadian press that he would not make any statements while he was away or give any interviews, but he was "very pleased to see them all."⁶⁶⁰

One of King's final scheduled meetings in Washington was a lunch with the British ambassador to the United States, Lord Lothian. Lothian, who had recently angered Canadian government officials with his remarks, attempted to clarify his thoughts on Canada's position with respect to Greenland and the Monroe Doctrine. Lothian thought that as a result of the Statute of Westminster, which gave Canada autonomy over its foreign policy, although the doctrine might apply "vis-à-vis Great Britain" it would not apply "vis-à-vis Canada."⁶⁶¹ In the midst of his lunch with Lothian, King received an

⁶⁵⁷King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 431.

⁶⁵⁸King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 431.

⁶⁵⁹King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 431.

⁶⁶⁰King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 431.

⁶⁶¹It was difficult for the Canadians to get a clear answer on the issue from either the British government or the Americans. From the beginning of the German occupation of Denmark, Canada pressed the British government for direction on the issue. Several

urgent message from the president that he wanted to see him again before he left for the station.

When King left Warm Springs he advised Roosevelt to stay and relax as long as possible in order to fortify his strength before returning to Washington. Roosevelt agreed and asked King to call on him again in Washington before returning to Ottawa, but King had decided had against another visit with the president because he didn't want to bother him. He changed his mind upon receiving the president's message. When King reached the White House he was joined by Christie and directed immediately to the president's office.

Roosevelt told King that he wanted to see him and then turned to him and said, "I did not carry out your advice Mackenzie, to stay another day or two, which I would have liked to have done. From the reports received about what was happening, I began to get rather jittery . . . As you know, matters have been moving pretty rapidly in the last couple of days. I really do not know what to do."⁶⁶² Roosevelt then proceeded to discuss the news that, in addition to the probable British defeat in Norway, he had received intelligence that Italy was about to join the war on the side of Germany. He told King that he had sent Italy a verbal message that Germany would not win the war, and if Italy went to war then it would probably mean "war in Africa, Asia, as well as Europe."⁶⁶³ Roosevelt said this was his way of letting Mussolini know that the United States would ensure that "Germany and Italy do not conquer."⁶⁶⁴ The truth was, given the political situation in the United States,

telegrams went unanswered while the Canadian negotiations with the United States continued. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. For the Lothian comment see: Mackenzie King, *Diaries*, [Microfilm] April 29, 1940, 436.

⁶⁶²King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 437.

⁶⁶³King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 437.

⁶⁶⁴Roosevelt quoted in King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 437.

there was little the president could do with respect to the European war that would not have difficult political consequences for him domestically. Roosevelt then asked King to do something for him. He said, "You have Canada. You get Australia and New Zealand, and all of you put a burr on the tail of the British. They are so slow in everything." He said that if the Allies lost the war it would mean that the United States would "not be able to deal in world affairs, except with these dictators—an impossible position."⁶⁶⁵ Roosevelt concluded the meeting saying, "Well, Mackenzie, if there is more trouble you will not mind if I ring you up," then he turned to Christie and said, "You will not mind if I go over your head and talk straight across the phone to Mr. King?" Christie said no, that it would be a great relief to him. King then told the president that he would be happy to hear from him at any time and that he could count on him for any help he could be in any way.⁶⁶⁶

When they left the meeting Christie remarked several times how helpful and opportune King's visit to Washington had been, and how well-timed it was given the circumstances.⁶⁶⁷ On the train from Washington to New York, King had time to reflect on his time in the United States. He remembered that during his conversation with Roosevelt earlier in the day, the president had mentioned that Chamberlain and Churchill were the only two in the British government who were aware of the magnitude of the problems Europe was facing and that "Churchill was right most of the time."⁶⁶⁸ King thought it shameful that Churchill was in the state he was in when Sumner Welles came to visit him and noted:

⁶⁶⁵King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 438.

⁶⁶⁶King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 438.

⁶⁶⁷King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 438.

⁶⁶⁸King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 439.

It is that arrogance and assumed superiority of some Englishmen have that have made so many nations their enemy today. It is really terrible that a great country like England should have as enemies all of the great countries of the world, excepting the US and France, and her friendship with the former mostly because both are democracies.⁶⁶⁹

King concluded that to have discussed the European war directly with both Roosevelt and Hull "in co-operation with the straightening out of the Greenland situation . . . has been worth the present visit a thousand times."⁶⁷⁰

The prime minister was in a prophetic mood on his way back to Ottawa. He recorded that the next phase of the war was unfolding "as it was foretold while at Washington," and he was struck by how few people seemed to understand the difficulties that would be coming imminently.⁶⁷¹ He was surprised by Mussolini's decision to attack Gibraltar and Malta, but what he found most appalling was that the "Nazis seem to have won a real victory in Norway and to have forces vastly superior on land and in the air to Allied and Norwegian forces."⁶⁷² King also decided on his journey home that he would skip the Empire conference in London. He "felt that with war spreading in Europe, we may have terrible situations to face in Canada itself and my first duty is to Canada . . . I may be greatly needed as an intermediary between England and the US."⁶⁷³ King thought that there was no use in him going to London in order to "just be used to register the views of British

⁶⁶⁹King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 439.

⁶⁷⁰King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 439.

⁶⁷¹King, 30 April 1940, *Diaries*, 444.

⁶⁷²King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 444.

⁶⁷³King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 445.

Ministers," and he stressed that "I think Canada will be behind me in staying with our own country and not for the sake of a picture of Empire."⁶⁷⁴

King Returns to Ottawa

King returned to Ottawa with a clearer understanding of the global war his country was facing. He was, however, amazed to discover that many, including Ralston, and C.G. Power, "had already a military expedition fitted out to go to Greenland which included guns for mounting, soldiers, some naval defence etc."⁶⁷⁵ When Power asked the prime minister if the force that had been readied should be demobilised, King said "certainly and at once."⁶⁷⁶ King noted that Ralston seemed a bit "tenacious about our having been asked by England to look after the property and what it might mean to have bombs destroy the cryolite mines."⁶⁷⁷ King had a difficult time explaining that the United States was attempting to avoid setting a precedent for Japan in the Pacific and thus risking a confrontation with Japan there. With or Without the British fleet's being able to defend Canada, King attempted to stress the "unwisdom in the consequence of giving an excuse to the Japanese for adopting toward the Dutch East Indies the kind of protection that Canada

⁶⁷⁴King, 29 April 1940, *Diaries*, 439.

⁶⁷⁵King, *Diaries*, 2 May 1940, 448. Grant provides an excellent account of the Canadian preparations for an occupation of Greenland in "Why the St. Roch? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions," *Arctic* 48 no. 1 (1993): 82-87.

⁶⁷⁶King, 2 May 1940, *Diaries*, 448.

⁶⁷⁷King, 2 May 1940, *Diaries*, 448.

would be exercising over Greenland."⁶⁷⁸ King thought this exchange emphasised the importance of not going abroad again if it could be avoided.⁶⁷⁹

Over the next week as the situation in Europe worsened and Chamberlain began to lose his hold on power, a group of King's ministers continued to press him for more direct action in Greenland. King, between dispatches on Greenland, read sections of the debate in the British House regarding Norway.⁶⁸⁰ He wrote that it was a "very dark moment for the British people and terribly hard on Chamberlain in particular."⁶⁸¹ King thought Chamberlain had done everything possible to prepare Britain for war with Germany. The Munich Agreement saved Britain from war at a time when it would have been "disastrous for both France and Britain."⁶⁸² King blamed the Norwegians for the failure from not allowing Britain to help earlier and said that the real mistake on the part of the United Kingdom was the role of the press in "stressing British successes at the outset."⁶⁸³

Ralston and Power, who had both long been in direct communication with Alcan officials, remained concerned of what the loss of cryolite would mean for Canadian industry. Following the conversation with Fraser Bruce, Norman Robertson sent a telegram to Antony Eden, the Dominions' Secretary in London, regarding the vital importance of

⁶⁷⁸King, 2 May 1940, *Diaries*, 448.

⁶⁷⁹King, 2 May 1940, *Diaries*, 448.

⁶⁸⁰See United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 5th Series, Volume 360 (23 April-13 May 1940) (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1940).

⁶⁸¹King, 7 May 1940, *Diaries*, 459.

⁶⁸²King, 7 May 1940, *Diaries*, 459.

⁶⁸³King, 7 May 1940, *Diaries*, 459.

Greenlandic cryolite.⁶⁸⁴ Despite the ongoing diplomatic negotiations surrounding the defence of Greenland, Alcan still needed to retrieve its major shipment of cryolite for the year. Ralston and Power knew that something would yet need to be done to protect the cryolite supply, and they attempted to do so within the parameters set by the prime minister. King wanted Canada's actions to be coordinated with the United States. Roosevelt wanted to ensure that there was no indication of a military presence by either country on the island. King ordered that all arrangements be handled through the Department of Mines and Resources.⁶⁸⁵ Rather than use the ice-breaker *McLean* as originally suggested, it was decided instead to use the *Nascopie* from the Hudson's Bay Company's merchant fleet. The aged vessel had gained considerable fame in 1916 for allegedly sinking a German submarine.⁶⁸⁶ As the Hudson's Bay Company's official Arctic mail ship, the *Nascopie* made yearly supply trips to Greenland, and the Canadian Department of Mines and Resources offered to pay the company \$25,000 annually to carry cryolite for Canada's war-time industries.⁶⁸⁷ The use of the commercial vessel *Nascopie* would avoid criticism of having an overt belligerent military presence in Greenland something that both the American government and the prime minister were trying to avoid.

The High Commission in London, which had been slow to respond to previous messages, also began to weigh in on the situation. On May 2 Vincent Massey, the Canadian High

⁶⁸⁴N.A. Robertson to A. Eden, Telegram, 9 April 1940, *DCER*, 1105. Telegram, Government of Canada to the Foreign Office, 9 April 1940, National Archives, FO 371/24783, 250.

⁶⁸⁵Mackenzie King, 15 May 1940, Letter, W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950, [Microfilm] H-1555, C277375.

⁶⁸⁶Mack, "Nascopie downs Submarine," *The Beaver*, June 1939, 21.

⁶⁸⁷Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 4; Anderson, "The 1941 Voyage of the RMS *Nascopie*," 8.

Commissioner to the United Kingdom, sent a delayed reply to an urgent Canadian telegram from April 25. In his response Massey said that the British government was concerned about the dangerous position of the undefended cryolite mine and did not view the American concerns of the parallels with the Dutch East Indies as justified.⁶⁸⁸ Massey continued that in view of the circumstances the "United Kingdom Government will be glad if the Canadian Government would consider the immediate dispatch of an expedition to Greenland with the purpose of taking over the mines."⁶⁸⁹ Massey also noted that in order to assuage American concerns, the expedition could be described as a "relief expedition."⁶⁹⁰

The High Commissioner also made another controversial recommendation:

In the opinion of the United Kingdom authorities, it would not be necessary to make a formal communication to [the] United States Government before the expedition is dispatched, although they suggest that the Canadian government would, no doubt advise the United States Government as soon as the expedition arrived, and that it might be useful at this stage to offer to concert with the United States Government further measures which might be desirable on humanitarian grounds for assistance to the population of Greenland and for disposal of cryolite obtained so far as United States government are concerned.⁶⁹¹

That week, the Canadian government received several other messages regarding developments in the Greenland situation from both London and Washington. In a memorandum for the prime minister, Skelton noted the obvious disconnect between London and Washington. He wrote, "Some of the people in London evidently have not a

⁶⁸⁸The High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to the Secretary for External Affairs Canada, Telegram, 2 May 1940, H-1555, C277347.

⁶⁸⁹The High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to the Secretary for External Affairs Canada, Telegram, 2 May 1940, H-1555, C277347.

⁶⁹⁰The High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to the Secretary for External Affairs Canada, Telegram, 2 May 1940, H-1555, C277347.

⁶⁹¹The High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to the Secretary for External Affairs Canada, Telegram, 2 May 1940, H-1555, C277347.

very adequate grasp of the United States point of view or of the importance of keeping the United States interested in both the Western Pacific and in the Greenland situation."⁶⁹²

Skelton and Keenleyside prepared a substantial secret memorandum for the prime minister on the Greenland situation, and suggestions for possible solutions to the present problem.⁶⁹³ Their memo noted that Canada's concern in Greenland was "urgent and serious," and as a result of the "divergent views of the United Kingdom and the United States, Canada is in danger of being burdened with a responsibility which cannot be discharged except by disregarding the wishes of the United States."⁶⁹⁴ The memorandum, which sought to find a solution to Canada's dilemma, cited four factors that were at play in the present situation. These included defence, the cryolite, supply, and humanitarian considerations, and it detailed the developments of the situation with regard to both the United States and the United Kingdom over the past month.

Over the next few days King closely reviewed and annotated the memorandum and on May 9th the issue of Greenland was discussed again in cabinet. King noted that some of his ministers thought that "Canada should go ahead with an expedition to Greenland whether viewed in favour with the United States or not."⁶⁹⁵ King, however, highlighting his aforementioned concerns, pointed out that a Canadian occupation of Greenland was a lose-lose situation. King said that an expedition,

⁶⁹²O.D. Skelton, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister: Greenland," 6 May 1940, H-1555, C2777352.

⁶⁹³O.D. Skelton, "Proposals For A Canadian Policy Relating to Greenland—Secret," 6 May 1940, H-1555, C2777353-9.

⁶⁹⁴O.D. Skelton, "Proposals For A Canadian Policy Relating to Greenland—Secret," 6 May 1940, H-1555, C2777353-9.

⁶⁹⁵King, 2 May 1940, *Diaries*, 465.

if there were a German attack, would only receive the fate that the British had in Norway, in which we would be blamed for sending inadequate forces (though not able to send anything else). On the other hand if an expedition were sent, whether a German raid occurred or not, the United States would be terribly offended and relations between the United States, England and Canada strained, at a moment where there is the utmost need for keeping them as cordial as possible.⁶⁹⁶

King read out a dispatch that was being sent to Christie about the danger of leaving the cryolite mines unguarded. King, hoping for further clarification on the situation, then asked Ernest Lapointe, Mackenzie King's Minister of Justice, to prepare another message for the British.⁶⁹⁷

That evening when King returned home from the long council meeting, he thought of Chamberlain. He remembered that he was one of the first in Britain to advocate for rearmament and thought that he was unfairly treated by both his party and the press. King was sure that Chamberlain would tender his resignation imminently. He also noted that the German government had taken over several railways in Northern Europe, something King thought was being done in connection with bringing supplies to the front. He read it as a sign that Germany was preparing for an early attack on France and the Low Countries.

By the end of the next day Chamberlain had indeed submitted his resignation to King George VI, Winston Churchill assumed the leadership of the United Kingdom, and the Germans had launched the long-anticipated invasion of the Low Countries. Now more than ever, King understood the importance of maintaining Canada's relationship with the United States, but soon some of his ministers would put it to the test through their actions with respect to Greenland where the situation remained unresolved.

⁶⁹⁶King, 9 May 1940, *Diaries*, 465.

⁶⁹⁷Lapointe was also King's barometer of public opinion in Quebec, which, it is thought helped keep king in power. Roger Sarty, *War in the St. Lawrence: The Forgotten U-Boat Battles on Canada's Shores* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013), 12.

Chapter VI: Occupation

"We desire in this grave hour to convey to the President of the United States the deep felt thanks for the sympathy with our cause and the respect for our freedom which the great American nation has proved so amply in these dark days."

The United Greenland Councils⁶⁹⁸

"The Proposed Agreement, arrived at after an open and friendly exchange of views, is, under the singularly unusual circumstances, the best measure to assure Greenland's present safety and the future of the island under Danish sovereignty."

Henrik De Kauffmann⁶⁹⁹

"The reaction of the neutrals to the German action [in Scandinavia] was as follows: Sweden kept quiet; Mussolini was carried away . . . Russia through the mouth of Molotov, wished the Germans 'complete success in their defensive measures.' The United States used the occasion to do a political deal with the Danish envoy, von Kauffmann, who broke away from his Government at home and disposed of Greenland."

Ernst von Weizsäcker⁷⁰⁰

On May 3, 1940 the United Greenland Councils took an unprecedented step and adopted a resolution that would drastically change the island's future. The resolution stated that, as a result of the recent German occupation of Denmark, Greenland would be suspending its more than two-century long relationship with the Danish government and named the United States as their preferred new route to connect with the world.⁷⁰¹

Shortly following the German invasions, Greenland's two Governors Eske Brun, of North Greenland, and Aksel Svane, of South Greenland, made contact with Washington and sought to negotiate for American assistance and protection for the island. Arguably,

⁶⁹⁸Resolution, Adopted by the United Greenland Councils to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 3 May 1940, Official File (OF) 3673, Papers as President, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York, 1.

⁶⁹⁹Letter, Henrik Kauffmann to Cordell Hull, 9 April 1941, Berle Papers, Box 212 - January to April 1941, 1.

⁷⁰⁰Ernst von Weizsäcker, *Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951), 229.

⁷⁰¹Resolution, Adopted by the United Greenland Councils to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 3 May 1940, OF 3673, 1.

however, the Greenlandic governors had few alternatives than to request American assistance. Prior to the invasions all of Greenland's supplies were purchased, managed, and shipped solely through the Danish government.⁷⁰² The approximately seventeen thousand Greenlanders, including five hundred Danes, had only very limited contact with those outside the island. Greenland's dependant relationship with Denmark meant that, without outside assistance, the German invasion could have a devastating effect on the island and its inhabitants.

In addition to the need to secure basic necessities for the island the Governors were also concerned with external threats to the island's safety. There was a strong possibility that Germans would establish themselves on the island now that they had a potential legal claim to Greenland through their occupation of Denmark. The Governors had similar concerns about British interest in the island. The United Kingdom had already occupied the Faroe Islands and were moving to occupy Iceland. The British had called for the seizure of all Danish ships for the Allies, and there were signals that either the British or the Canadians would attempt to seize control of Greenland's cryolite industry. Unlike Canada or Britain, the United States was not a belligerent participant in the European war. There was a sense on the part of the governors that the neutral Americans, who unlike the British were seen to be anti-imperialist by nature, would be more likely to respect Denmark's sovereignty over Greenland after the war.

To further complicate the picture, the Greenland governors were not alone in their desire to negotiate with the United States on behalf of Greenland. The Danish ambassador in

⁷⁰²Herman R. Friis, "Greenland: A Productive Arctic Colony," *Economic Geography* 13, no. 1 (January 1937): 92.

Washington, Henrik Kauffmann, had advised the governors to request American assistance but warned them not to seek a formal extension of American protection to the island as it had the potential to threaten Greenland's Danish future. Kauffmann, however, was attempting to use Greenland as leverage to maintain his own position in the United States and did not always give the governors a full picture of Washington's view on the situation.⁷⁰³ Kauffmann had the advantage of being well-known and well liked in Washington political circles. He considered himself to be a personal friend of Roosevelt and some of his advisors including the Undersecretary of State, Adolf Berle.⁷⁰⁴ Although Kauffmann initially cooperated effectively with Greenland's governors, over time Kauffmann's negotiating position in Washington weakened especially since he no longer represented an independent government. Kauffmann, who had never been to Greenland, was more willing than the governors to cede Denmark's rights to the island to Washington. Eventually Kauffmann, without the Governors knowledge, signed a defence agreement for Greenland that had significant long-term consequences for the island and its inhabitants.

Despite the willingness of both the Greenlandic governors and the Danish ambassador for the United States to intervene on the island, the American government still had to consider both domestic and diplomatic factors before any action could be taken with respect to Greenland. Greenland was just one of several issues raised when Germany invaded Denmark. Other issues included the status of Danish ships and the management of Danish financial assets in the United States. The continued success of Germany meant that, from the American perspective, it was increasingly likely that European powers might sue for a negotiated peace leaving the United States to deal

⁷⁰³Bo Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn: Henrik Kauffmann i dansk diplomati 1919–1958* (København: Samleren, 1997), 645.

⁷⁰⁴Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn*, 645.

with a much stronger Germany. In the short term Roosevelt seemed more preoccupied with the Japanese, and Domestic public opinion as a result of the upcoming election, but in the longer term did not feel that a Europe run by dictators would be manageable for the United States. The uncertain position of Greenland following the German occupation forced the American government to think about the island's future. Given the island's location in the Western Hemisphere, the United States would be unwilling to see the control of the island transferred to another European power. It was necessary to consider who between the Greenlandic governors and the Danish minister would provide the most legitimate negotiating partner, and who would provide the American government the best long-term arrangement for the security of the island.

As discussed, in spite of these concerns it was impossible for the government to act openly to secure the island. Japan was still watching the situation closely for any precedent to justify their seizure of the resource rich Dutch East Indies. The American government was also trying to maintain cordial relations with the Latin American states in the lead up to the Havana Conference, which would formalise a Western Hemispheric security policy. Finally, Canada and Great Britain had strong interests in the island, and although Roosevelt had come to an agreement with Mackenzie King, the situation was made more urgent because of the pressures being exerted on the Canadian military by the Canadian aluminium industry and the British government to secure the cryolite mine as soon as possible.

The complicated problem necessitated an innovative solution from the American president. Roosevelt and his administration needed to find ways to prevent a foreign occupation of Greenland and provide aid to its population without upsetting international or domestic opinion. Iceland provided part of the model through which Roosevelt could achieve this

end. The king of Denmark, King Christian X, was the head of state in Denmark and its colonies. Iceland, however, was also home to one of the oldest parliaments in the world. There was a provision in Iceland's constitution that, although it shared a king with Denmark, the country would be entirely self-governing in the event of an emergency. Following the Danish occupation, Iceland declared itself independent from Denmark. In order to reinforce this new-found sovereignty internationally, it established both an autonomous diplomatic ligation in Washington and appointed a consular representative to New York. Concurrently, the United States established a consular office in Reykjavik, thereby affirming an American recognition of the new Icelandic government.⁷⁰⁵

Greenland's subservient colonial relationship to Denmark and its majority Inuit population, which were seen as quasi wards of the Danish State, meant that unlike Iceland, Greenland had no provision for self-governance in the event of an emergency. Even without a prior arrangement, however, the encouragement of measures that reinforced Greenlandic independence from Denmark had the potential to provide solutions to a number of the aforementioned issues facing the United States with respect to the island. Whereas direct American military involvement on the island would be seen negatively both within the United States and abroad, sending diplomatic representatives, providing humanitarian aid, and supporting the nationalization of Danish-controlled industry would allow the American government to exert influence on the island with minimal criticism.

It soon became apparent, however, that these measures were insufficient and that more direct American involvement in Greenland was necessary. The *Nascopie* incident off the coast of Ivigtut involving both the British and the Canadians prompted the creation

⁷⁰⁵“Iceland,” *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1940: Volume II Europe and General* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1957), 675-684.

of a Greenlandic National Police Force comprised of coast guard officers to police Greenland's vital cryolite mine. Reports of German flyovers and the detection of German weather stations on the island proved the continued inadequacy of existing American policies. The consolidation of Western Hemispheric security arrangements gave the United States more leeway to involve itself more directly in Greenland's affairs. In the spring of 1941, on the anniversary of the German invasion of Denmark, the American government signed a controversial agreement for the defence of Greenland with Kauffmann, rather than the Greenlandic governors, that enabled the Americans to establish permanent military bases and airstrips on the island.

Existing literature on the American occupation of Greenland tends to focus on the period after the agreement for the defence of Greenland had been signed. Although numerous scholarly works discuss the justification for the American occupation, there are no studies in English that explore the actual process through which the United States came to occupy Greenland.⁷⁰⁶ In addition, what is extant does not deal directly with American political policies relating to the island and focuses on other aspects of the occupation, like

⁷⁰⁶There are a number of excellent Danish language sources which examine bilateral relations between Denmark and the United States during the war. Major Danish works on the period are Finn Løkkegaard, *Det danske Gesantskab i Washington 1940-1942: Henrik Kauffmann som uafhae ngig dansk gesandt i USA 1940—1942 og hans politik vedrørende Grønland og de oplagte danske skibe i America* (Copenhagen: Glydendal, 1968); Bo Lidegaard, *Overleveren—Dansk Udrigspolitiks Historie, Bind 4, 1914-1945* [*The Survivor—Danish Foreign Policy History, Volume 4, 1914–1945*] (København: Gyldendaal, 2006) and *I Kongens Navn: Henrik Kauffmann i dansk diplomati 1919-1958* [*In the Name of the King: Heinrik Kauffmann and in the Danish Diplomatic Service 1919–1958*] (København: Samleren, 1997); and Poul Villaume and Thorsten Borring Olesen, *I blokopdelingens tegn: Dansk Udenrigspolitiks Historie, bind 5, 1945-1972* (København: Glydendal Leksikon, 2005).

Greenland's potential as an air base or the diplomatic negotiations undertaken between Canada and United States to resolve the issue.⁷⁰⁷

Drawing from a wide variety of unpublished diplomatic, military, and corporate archival sources from the United States, Canada, and Britain, this chapter seeks to illustrate the gradual process through which the United States came to occupy Greenland between the invasion of Denmark on April 9, 1940, and the signing of the Agreement relating to the Defence of Greenland on April 9, 1941. It will demonstrate how the initially American government attempted to have a "hands off" policy with respect to the island, which employed diplomatic means and humanitarian aid, to encourage Greenlandic independence while Denmark was occupied, but as external pressures on Greenland mounted American intervention on the island necessarily increased. It argues that the consolidation of the security arrangements in the Western Hemisphere, in combination with Kauffmann's willingness to negotiate with the State Department, led to the signing of the Agreement relating to the Defence of Greenland and permitted greater direct American involvement on the island.

⁷⁰⁷See, for example, Max Dunbar, "Greenland During and Since the Second World War," *International Journal* 121 (1950): 121-140; David G. Haglund, "Plain Grand Imperialism on a Miniature Scale: Canadian-American Rivalry over Greenland in 1940," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 11 (1981): 15-36, and "Greenland (1940) as an Instance of Pickwickian 'Cooperation' Between Mackenzie King's Ottawa and Roosevelt's Washington," *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 24 (2008/2009): 28-41; Michael F. Scheuer, "On the Possibility that There May Be More to It Than That: Professor Haglund, the Documents of American External Relations Series and the Canadian-American Controversy over Greenland in 1940," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 12 (1982): 72-83; Graeme S. Mount, "Canadian-American Relations and Greenland, 1940-1941," Conference Paper Delivered May 31, 1985, Unpublished article, File: Greenland, Aluminum Company of Canada Archives, 1-21; and Shelagh D. Grant's "Why the St. Roch? Why the Northwest Passage? Why 1940? New Answers to Old Questions," *Arctic* 48 no. 1 (1993): 82-87.

Diplomatic Consequences of the German Occupation of Denmark

Before dawn on April 9th 1940, Nazi ground troops and fighter planes crossed Germany's northern border and entered neutral Denmark. King Christian X, anxious to avoid a protracted battle and the deaths of his subjects, quickly acquiesced to the invading forces. In a few short hours Denmark became a ward of Nazi Germany. Diplomatically, the situation in Denmark was complicated. Unlike the Norwegian king, who established a government in exile in London, King Christian remained in Copenhagen and attempted to work with the Germans in order to demonstrate solidarity with his people and to maintain a tenuous claim to political autonomy. However honourable the King's intentions, his government was not seen as independent from the occupying forces. His capitulation had repercussions for Danish diplomats and colonial governments far beyond Denmark's borders.

When Germany invaded Scandinavia, Norway immediately informed both the United States and Great Britain that they were at war with Germany, but the Danish remained silent. These reactions were consistent with the divergent foreign policies of the two countries in the 1930s. In the years leading up to the war, Norway and Denmark took different approaches to diplomatic relations with Germany. Norway's government had refused an offer of a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. It also attempted to strengthen its defences and cultivate its diplomatic ties to Great Britain, France, and the United States. Denmark, in contrast, adopted "a low-key policy of neutrality and adaptation" in relation to Germany in the interwar period.⁷⁰⁸

On the evening of April 9th the State Department eventually received word that an agreement had been made between Denmark and Germany. American Undersecretary of

⁷⁰⁸Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn*, 644.

State Adolf Berle said it was "an agreement reached at the point of a pistol. From now on, the Danish government can no longer be regarded as a free agent."⁷⁰⁹ Many Danish officials abroad, including those in North America, refused to recognise the administration in German-occupied Copenhagen. The Danish Consul General to Canada, Dr. Georg B. Holler, cut ties to Copenhagen.⁷¹⁰ Similarly Greenland's two governors, Aksel Svane and Eske Brun, declared independence from occupied Denmark and sought to negotiate directly with foreign governments.⁷¹¹

The Danish ambassador to the United States, Henrik Louis Hans de Kauffmann, was unsure how to proceed in light of the German invasions. Kauffmann was a career diplomat who had been in the Foreign Service of Denmark since 1911. He was the Secretary to the Legation in Berlin during the First World War. He also held positions in Beijing (Peking), Tokyo, and Rome, and was posted to Norway during the East-Greenland negotiations between Norway and Denmark.⁷¹² On the day of the German invasions, he dropped into Adolf Berle's office. Berle, "who had come to like and respect" Kauffmann during his time

⁷⁰⁹Adolf Berle, "Adolf A. Berle Diary: September, 1939 - May, 1940," Adolf A. Berle Papers, Box 211, 8.

⁷¹⁰"Danish Consul Acts on Own in Canada," *Ottawa Citizen*, 15 April 1941, 13.

⁷¹¹When Denmark was invaded, Kauffmann declared himself independent from the Danish government. Similarly the Greenlandic governors issued a proclamation declaring Greenland independent from German-controlled Denmark and asking for American assistance to defend itself. See Kauffmann's Declaration, 10 April 1940, and "Message to His Majesty King Christian X of Denmark from the United Greenland Councils," 3 May 1940 in Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Papers as President: President's Secretary's File (PSF) 28 1. Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

⁷¹²Cordell Hull to Franklin Roosevelt, Letter, 9 June 1939, Official File (OF) 488 Denmark 1933-1945, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Papers as President: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

in Washington, was asked for his advice.⁷¹³ Kauffmann explained to Berle that Denmark did not need him to represent "any puppet government run by Germans."⁷¹⁴ Berle encouraged him to continue to represent a free Denmark "even if it was, for the time being, nothing more than an idea in the breasts of a few courageous Danes."⁷¹⁵ According to Berle, Kauffmann clutched his hand and left his office in tears.⁷¹⁶

While the British government was managing the confusion of the Norwegian situation, and the Canadian government was attempting to assess the danger to Canada's cryolite supply, multiple assessments were being made in the United States. Berle was dealing with the Danish minister, President Roosevelt was managing the press on the train to Washington, and Cordell Hull, was meeting with State Department officials to discuss Greenland's place in the Western Hemisphere.⁷¹⁷ As discussed, in the days following the invasions Hull met with the British and the Canadian governments and informed them that Greenland was considered to be covered by the Monroe Doctrine and so to forestall any Allied actions on the part of Canada or the United Kingdom in Greenland.⁷¹⁸ He reminded Lord Lothian, the British ambassador to the United States, that his country had agreed that

⁷¹³Berle, 9 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 9.

⁷¹⁴Berle, 9 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 9.

⁷¹⁵Berle, 9 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 9.

⁷¹⁶Berle, 9 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 9.

⁷¹⁷Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume I* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 753.

⁷¹⁸Cordell Hull, "Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Hull and the British Ambassador, Lord Lothian," 12 April 1940, Reel 29 [microfiche], Papers of Cordell Hull, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 1-2; and Hull, "Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Hull and the Canadian Minister Loring C. Christie," 13 April 1940, Reel 29, 1-2.

no non-American power had the right to involve itself in Greenland as a result of the Monroe Doctrine.⁷¹⁹ He told the Canadian minister, Loring Christie, that the United States was going to see if "Greenland needs any cooperation, so that when Denmark is returned to her own independence, her sovereignty over Greenland would be automatically reinstated."⁷²⁰ He also notified the Canadian minister that the American government was investigating the possibility of sending humanitarian aid to the island through the Red Cross. Following his meetings with Lothian and Christie, Hull also met with Green Hackworth, State Department legal adviser, who informed him that Iceland had the right to act independently if the Danish king was unable to govern in the event of an emergency.⁷²¹ It was clear to Hull that a Nazi-occupied Denmark constituted an emergency.

The next day the Danish ambassador returned to Berle's office for further advice. The Undersecretary of State advised him to meet with President Roosevelt, which Kauffmann did that afternoon.⁷²² Later that day Berle heard from the president himself the outcome of the meeting. Roosevelt informed Berle and Henry Morgenthau, the Secretary of the Treasury that he had just seen the Danish ambassador. Kauffmann had asked him how the government would respond if he was recalled by German-occupied Copenhagen. The president said the government would undoubtedly take the matter of duress into consideration. Berle saw this response on the part of the president as "a plain indication that we would not recognise any appointee of the now captive government of Denmark."⁷²³

⁷¹⁹Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 755.

⁷²⁰Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 755

⁷²¹Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 753.

⁷²²Berle, 10 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 1.

⁷²³Berle, 10 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 2.

Following his meeting with the President, Kauffmann began to establish himself publically as the leader of "free Denmark." He issued a statement to this effect and copies were forwarded to both the State Department and the president.

I came to this country to represent my King and a free and independent people. That is what I am still here for. Democratic and peaceful Denmark has had to bow to overwhelming force. My country is going through dark days. It has done so before. We did not lose courage then and we will not lose courage now. I will work for one thing alone. The reestablishment of a free and independent Denmark. Many will work with me and I know we shall succeed.⁷²⁴

Kauffmann also sent messages to Danish embassies stating that the American government was recognizing him as the "free representative for Danish interests" while Denmark was occupied, and asked them to cable their status.⁷²⁵ The message to Count Reventlow, the Danish ambassador to London, was intercepted by British intelligence.⁷²⁶ As the United Kingdom was a belligerent in the European war, it took a different approach than the Americans with regard to their Danish diplomats. The British had allowed the cable to go through, but they stopped all other messages to and from the Danish legation. Reventlow was allowed to remain in his position in a "semi-official capacity" as an "act of grace," but was not "recognised as an accredited diplomatic representative."⁷²⁷

In addition to his communications with other Danish diplomats, Kauffmann also began acting as a mediator between the United States and Iceland. On the afternoon he issued his public statement, Kauffmann informed Hull that the Icelandic Parliament would be taking

⁷²⁴Statement by Heinrik Kauffmann, 10 April 1940, PSF 28 Denmark, 1.

⁷²⁵Telegram from the Marquess of Lothian, 17 April 1940, The British National Archives (Kew) Foreign Office (FO) 371/24783/N 4714/162.

⁷²⁶Note Sir J. Dashwood, 25 April 1940, FO 371/24783/N 4714/163.

⁷²⁷"Foreign Office Minutes (Sir J. Dashwood): Position of Danish Nationals and the Danish Legation Resulting from German occupation of Denmark," 19 April 1940, FO 371/24783/N4680/132.

charge of all of its foreign affairs. Within days Hull received a cable from the Prime Minister of Iceland, Hermann Jónasson, regarding the establishment of direct consular relations between Iceland and the United States.⁷²⁸ At the time it was unclear to the Secretary of State as to whether the Danish minister could speak on behalf of his country, but it was decided that given the “circumstances he could do so, whatever the government at Copenhagen, under the domination of the Germans, might say to the contrary. We felt that there was nothing to lose if he did not, and everything to gain if he could.”⁷²⁹

In the meantime the Danish minister had begun to establish committees to manage Danish affairs in the United States and Greenland. In a State Department meeting regarding the Greenland situation, Berle argued that the government in Greenland, "although it is rudimentary to a degree, is still a remnant of the sovereign government of Denmark," and "any authority the Danish Minister can get from the Greenland Councils and the Greenland Governors is therefore a full authority to act, and he can act on it if we recognize it."⁷³⁰ At Berle's suggestion, the next day Kauffmann was in touch with the Greenlandic governors, requesting authority to act on behalf of Greenland in negotiations with the United States. The next planned step in the management of the situation was for the Greenland Council to present a request for American protection and assistance.⁷³¹

While the arrangements were being made with the Greenlandic council, Henry Morgenthau investigated the possibility of having a ship fitted to be sent to Greenland to

⁷²⁸Hull, *Memoirs*, 753.

⁷²⁹Hull, *Memoirs*, 753.

⁷³⁰Berle, 19 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 2.

⁷³¹Berle, 19 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 4.

assist with the immediate security concerns relating to the cryolite mine.⁷³² Concurrently, Kauffmann met again with the Secretary of State Hull about the Greenland situation. The ambassador made a comment about the possibility of Greenland becoming an American protectorate, to which Hull swiftly replied:

That this government has been opposing protectorates generally, principally because of the fact that nations involved in military conquest are seizing smaller nations under the pretext that they are merely protecting them, but in fact such action is taken with the definite purpose of the permanent domination of the seized territory. Naturally, nations bent on conquest are looking for precedents established by those nations which criticise and condemn their course, and by precedent is not meant a bona fide precedent for seizure and occupation by force, but any kind of precedent that could be distorted into use for this latter purpose.⁷³³

The Secretary of State's response to Kauffmann was a thinly veiled reference to the issue of the Japanese and the Dutch East Indies which Hull had also been managing. Kauffmann told Hull that he understood perfectly, and then brought up the committee he was organising that would be comprised of both Danes and Americans that would attend to the welfare of the people of Greenland. Hull, on his guard, said that he "assumed that he was not asking the government for an opinion on that question," to which Kauffmann said that he was simply letting him know what he had in mind.⁷³⁴ Whilst Kauffmann was negotiating on behalf of Greenland, he also attempted to re-create, with his limited authority, representation for independent Danish shipping and business interests in the United States. Berle noted that although he was having issues getting control over the

⁷³²Cordell Hull to Franklin Roosevelt, Memorandum, 22 April 1940, PSF Diplomatic Canada, Box 25, 1.

⁷³³Cordell Hull, "Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Hull and Danish Minister, Mr. Heinrik De Kauffmann," 19 April 1940 Reel 29 [microfiche], Papers of Cordell Hull, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 1-2. Hull also mentioned this meeting in his memoirs, see Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 750.

⁷³⁴Hull, "Memorandum of Conversation," 2.

management of Danish assets, he would soon "have some real authority from Greenland" once he received permission to act on behalf of the Governors.⁷³⁵

The Office of the Legal Advisor, however, was less certain about Kauffmann's and the United States' ability to involve themselves in Greenland or, in the case of the latter, to send consular representation to the island. The United States had signed the Convention of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation with Denmark in 1826, which regulated the way in which their consular officers were sent and received.⁷³⁶ Article VI of the convention "expressly provides that the Convention shall not apply to the northern possessions of Denmark, including, among others, Greenland, and reserves the right to regulate the direct intercourse with these possessions and places."⁷³⁷ The memorandum from the legal adviser also stressed that it had been clearly noted in exchanges just before the outbreak of war in 1939 that the jurisdiction of the American consul in Copenhagen did not extend over Greenland, that trade with Greenland was a Danish government monopoly, and that "it is the sentiment of the Ministry that it is incompatible with the special situation of Greenland resulting from this fact and from the rules of force for travelling to and in Greenland to extend consular functions over Greenland."⁷³⁸ He concluded that legally it might be possible to send someone to the island informally, but the United States could not send

⁷³⁵Berle, 19 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 5.

⁷³⁶Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, Vol. III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 329.

⁷³⁷"Memorandum by Mr. Ralph W.S. Hill of the Office of the Legal Adviser, 24 April 1940," *FRUS 1940*, 343-345.

⁷³⁸"Memorandum by Mr. Ralph W.S. Hill," 343-344.

formal consular representation to Greenland without consent from the Danish government.⁷³⁹

Hugh S. Cummings Jr., from the division of European Affairs, however, had a different opinion on the subject. He noted that although exchanges had been made regarding the diplomatic status of Greenland in 1939 there was "no record of any application having been made of the Danish Government by a foreign government for permission to establish a consulate in Greenland."⁷⁴⁰ He argued that if a formal application were made to Denmark at the present moment it would likely be refused, however, in the view of the United States government Denmark was "unable in present circumstances to exercise its possessions beyond the seas, there would seem to be no necessity, either from the standpoint of policy or as a practical matter, to approach the Danish government itself with regard to recognition of an American consular officer having jurisdiction in Greenland."⁷⁴¹

He continued that although there was no clear authority in Greenland in the present circumstances it would seem that the "de facto authority in Greenland is now vested jointly in the Resident Commissioners for the Provinces of North Greenland and South Greenland."⁷⁴²

The United States, for all its reservations, was cautiously moving towards a policy of protecting Greenland. In spite of the legal disagreements, two days later Cordell Hull sent a message to Kauffmann asking permission for the provisional recognition of an American

⁷³⁹"Memorandum by Mr. Ralph W.S. Hill," 344-345.

⁷⁴⁰"Memorandum by Mr. Hugh S. Cumming Jr., of the Department of European Affairs, 24 April 1940, *FRUS 1940*, 345-347.

⁷⁴¹"Memorandum by Mr. Hugh S. Cumming Jr.," 345-347.

⁷⁴²"Memorandum by Mr. Hugh S. Cumming Jr.," 347.

consul to Greenland "whose jurisdiction would extend over all of Greenland."⁷⁴³

Kauffmann subsequently notified Hull that following consultation with the Greenland governors, "that the Greenland government will feel honoured to receive a United States consular representative in Greenland and will be pleased to grant him provisional recognition in his capacity."⁷⁴⁴ Kauffmann also said that the governors wished to express their thanks to the government of the United States for establishing the consular office and their general understanding "towards Greenland's problems in the present emergency."⁷⁴⁵

As in Iceland the decision to establish the consular office in Greenland reinforced the sentiment that the US did not recognize the new order in Denmark. It was beginning to treat Greenland as an independent nation rather than as a Danish possession. This implicitly allowed the United States more leeway with which to deal with Greenland.

The following week the United Greenland Councils followed through with the State Department's plan and issued the resolution requesting American assistance while Denmark was occupied. They expressed their thanks for the establishment of the American Consulate in Greenland and the commitment to dispatch US Coast Guard cutters to the island. They also expressed their "hope that, for as long as we remain cut off from our mother country, the United States government will continue to hold in mind the exposed position of the Danish flag in Greenland, of the native Greenland and Danish population, and of established public order."⁷⁴⁶ The council also asked the American government to

⁷⁴³"The Secretary of State to the Danish Minister," 26 April 1940, *FRUS 1940*, 348.

⁷⁴⁴"The Danish Minister to the Secretary of State," 28 April 1940, *FRUS 1940*, 347-348.

⁷⁴⁵"The Danish Minister to the Secretary of State," 28 April 1940, *FRUS 1940*, 347-348.

⁷⁴⁶Resolution, Adopted by the United Greenland Councils, 3 May 1940, OF 3673, 1.

consider the island's "isolated geographical position" and "facilitate the import of necessities and the export of our products."⁷⁴⁷ The direct request from the Greenlandic governors reinforced the notion that the United States was dealing with an autonomous political entity with its own agency, rather than a Danish colonial dependency.

Both Kauffmann's message and the Greenland council's resolution were technicalities. The State Department had already selected a consul for Greenland prior to Kauffmann's reply to Hull's request.⁷⁴⁸ The initial consular selection, however, was replaced. Berle noted that:

We had selected a boy for the job; but he had been too long in London and gone soft; and when he got to the stage of wondering whether his wine would keep and a seven room knock-down house could be shipped up there, we called that one off and looked over some other candidates. We found a boy who had been at Ynnun-fu [sic] and had gone over the Burma road alone, and he looks like a better Greenland bet than our other chap. By the end of the day we had things fairly well lined up. The Consulate, of course, will be a gesture suggesting that other people ought to keep out.⁷⁴⁹

The consular representation was intended to establish an American presence on the island while minimizing the possibility of it being viewed negatively abroad. At this stage the American administration still hoped to avoid a direct conflict with Germany or at least buy time and the very presence of an American consulate in Greenland was intended to subtly prevent any new non-Western Hemispheric presence on the island. Similarly, following the invasions the government asked the Red Cross, an independent humanitarian organization, to investigate the possible needs of the Greenlanders whilst they were cut off from Denmark. The President of the American Red Cross, Norman Davis, made a survey of the requirements of Greenland's inhabitants and "would, of course, be in a position to

⁷⁴⁷Resolution, Adopted by the United Greenland Councils, 3 May 1940, OF 3673, 1.

⁷⁴⁸Berle, 26 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 2.

⁷⁴⁹Berle, 29 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 9-10.

look into any and all aspects of the situation there."⁷⁵⁰ Hull told the Canadian minister that given the sensitive nature of the current global situation "for the present, it was perfectly possible that there would be no publically announced plan of action by this government with regard to Greenland other than the attention which would be given to the needs of the inhabitants by the Red Cross."⁷⁵¹ Norman Davis later said privately that, with respect to Greenland, he did not "think there was much of a relief problem; that the matter was rather to keep open the trade and commercial trade relations with both Canada and the United States and to keep a watchful eye on things."⁷⁵²

While the State Department was attempting to sort out the legal details of appointing an American consul to Greenland and Norman Davis was attempting to assess the needs of the population in Greenland, the Office of Naval Intelligence intercepted messages from Copenhagen to Kauffmann.⁷⁵³ According to the intelligence, the Danish minister was advised that aid from the Red Cross to Greenland was not justified. The island was adequately supplied, and rationing and the country's production for home supply was sufficient for the needs of the population. Kauffmann was also informed that if assistance was required by the island, the Danish government "would like to inquire beforehand as to the extent and the plan of relief." Kauffmann was also told to notify Copenhagen if he received any communications from Greenland's governors.⁷⁵⁴ Naval intelligence also

⁷⁵⁰Cordell Hull to Franklin Roosevelt, Memorandum, 22 April 1940, PSF Diplomatic Canada, Box 25, 3.

⁷⁵¹Cordell Hull to Franklin Roosevelt, Memorandum, 22 April 1940, PSF Diplomatic Canada, Box 25, 1.

⁷⁵²William Lyon Mackenzie King, 29 April 1940, *The Mackenzie King Diaries, 1893-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), [microfiche], 430.

⁷⁵³"Memorandum for the Chief of Naval Operations: Danish Government orders to Danish Minister at Washington," 27 April 1940, PSF 58 Departmental Navy, 1.

intercepted Kauffmann's message to the Greenland governors. It outlined that President Roosevelt had extended the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland. This meant that although a Danish government was tolerated, a German-controlled government would not be. Kauffmann also noted that the American government considered all orders coming from Copenhagen to be German in origin and stressed that it was essential that Danish representatives rule Greenland without assistance from occupied Denmark, and this included soliciting advice from Denmark about the question of accepting the appointment of an American consul to the island. Kauffmann also highlighted that the extension of the Monroe Doctrine to the island, the appointment of an American consul, the dispatch of a Coast Guard vessel, and the offer of American Red Cross assistance all amounted "to the extension of American protection to Greenland. Formal extension of American protection should not be sought, as this would bring the Danish representatives under American control and threaten Greenland's Danish future." (The request for formal protection by the Greenland governors would also erode Kauffmann's negotiating power with the State Department, as they would be able to bypass him and deal directly with the Greenlandic governors.) He also told the governors that he had informed the Danish Foreign Office of his attitude, but this had not yet resulted in him being recalled and he still considered himself the Danish minister in Washington.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵⁴"Memorandum for the Chief of Naval Operations: Danish Government orders to Danish Minister at Washington," 27 April 1940, PSF 58 Departmental Navy, 1.

⁷⁵⁵"Memorandum for the Chief of Naval Operations: Danish Minister at Washington Instructions to Danish Representative, Greenland," 29 April 1940, PSF 58 Departmental Navy, 1.

A Misunderstanding in the North Atlantic Triangle: The Nascopie Incident

While preparations were being made to dispatch the American consul to Greenland along with humanitarian aid (and potentially a Coast Guard patrol vessel) Roosevelt met with Mackenzie King regarding the Canadian position with respect to Greenland. Although King was in full agreement with the measures the Americans were taking in Greenland, much of his government was not. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, while King was in the United States his government had been in close communication with both the Aluminum Company of Canada and the British government regarding Greenland. Several measures had already been taken that concerned the United States government. Minister Christie had raised the question of sending a Canadian defence force to Greenland in order to prevent an American occupation of the island and to defend the cryolite mine. In the meeting, however, Christie told Hull that he was seeking the American government's advice before any action would be taken.⁷⁵⁶ Although the Canadian prime minister attempted to assuage American concerns and convince his ministers to abandon their plans for the island, some in the State Department, particularly Adolf Berle, were not convinced that the Canadians were really giving up their plans to occupy the island.

To further complicate the Greenland situation, the British, the Americans, and the Danish minister were having disagreements over the status of Danish merchant vessels. As soon as Denmark was invaded, the British announced that they would treat all Danish ships as belligerent enemies. Many Danish vessels subsequently went into neutral ports and stayed there to avoid being seized by the British. The State Department proposed that the Danish ships should be transferred to the American flag. There was a fear that if they were not transferred, then the approximately ninety-seven ships would be commandeered by the

⁷⁵⁶Cordell Hull to Franklin Roosevelt, Memorandum, 22 April 1940, PSF Diplomatic Canada, Box 25, 1.

British, or fall into German hands. The president, preferring to keep the United States for all intents and purposes neutral, and believing the ships would be more useful if they were able to trade freely, wrote in longhand on the proposal "Not Approved—FDR."⁷⁵⁷ With the status of Danish shipping in the United States still in question, a Danish shipping committee, comprised of Danish shipowners, attempted to negotiate with Ashley Sparks, a British Shipping representative in New York, who "coolly asked them to turn over their ships to the British and they would be condemned as prizes."⁷⁵⁸ Berle said this action was "a bit of low-grade English piracy," because Sparks was the head of a competing British company. Berle asserted that the British action was "not up to the Nazi piracy, at its best, but it is one of these things that makes you very leery about getting too deeply in with any British interest."⁷⁵⁹ For the Undersecretary of State who had been involved in many of the initial discussions around the Greenland situation, this action on the part of the British and the aforementioned inquiries made by the Canadian Mounted Police, fuelled his suspicions that the British and Canadians had imperial designs for Greenland.

As time passed, the need to secure Greenland became more urgent. In Europe the situation for the Allies was going from bad to worse. In addition, the day after Mackenzie King met with Roosevelt in Warm Springs, it was discovered that coded messages emanating from Greenland were being transmitted to the German Embassy, indicating to the State Department might not be working "in vacuo" on issues relating to Greenland.⁷⁶⁰ This news prompted both Hull and Berle to push forward with Hull's plan of sending a consul and

⁷⁵⁷"Memorandum of Conversation between Sumner Welles and Max Truitt," 12 April 1940, PSF 28 Diplomatic Denmark, 1.

⁷⁵⁸Berle, 23 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 6.

⁷⁵⁹Berle, 23 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 6.

⁷⁶⁰Berle, 25 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 2-3.

humanitarian aid to the island.⁷⁶¹ The Secretary of State was preoccupied because issues relating to Denmark and Greenland were being handled by multiple officials at once, and it was leading to communication breakdowns in the State Department. King and Roosevelt, for example, had agreed that the Canadian minister in Washington, Loring Christie, would be kept informed of events relating to Greenland, but no one had told Adolf Berle to do this. When he did meet with Christie, Berle displayed his characteristic suspicion of Canadian intentions. Christie inquired about the Greenland committee that Kauffmann was setting up. Berle, who had discussed the creation of the committee at length with the Danish minister, untruthfully told Christie that "he had not found it necessary to give any advice" on the matter.⁷⁶² He then recorded that the Canadians

of course, are afraid that we are going to grab the territory—sublimely ignoring the fact that their own people have made several tentative attempts to grab it. Thus we have already blocked out the British bland assumption that they had inherited Greenland; likewise the expedition of the Royal Mounted Police from Canada; and a few other fits and starts of that kind. It is pretty mild imperialism, though, for Greenland is happily a chunk of ice which will be frozen up until about May 15.⁷⁶³

In addition to the agreement that the State Department would keep the Canadian minister informed of developments relating to Greenland, King and Roosevelt had also agreed that they would both send ships to Greenland. On May 9th, the day that Chamberlain's government fell, the Canadian government notified the United States that a Hudson's Bay Ship, the *Nascopie* would be dispatched to Greenland."⁷⁶⁴ At King's request, exchanges

⁷⁶¹Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 750.

⁷⁶²Berle, 27 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 2-3.

⁷⁶³Berle, 27 April 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 3-4.

⁷⁶⁴Mackenzie King, *Diaries*, 9 May 1940, 465. The *Nascopie* was a part of the Hudson's Bay Company's merchant fleet. The aged vessel had gained considerable fame in 1916 for sinking a German submarine. As the Hudson's Bay Company's official mail ship, the *Nascopie* made yearly supply trips to Greenland. During the war the Canadian Department of Mines and Resources paid the Hudson's Bay Company \$25,000 annually

between the United States and Canada increased dramatically in preparation for the ship's voyage and the beginning of the island's shipping season. On May 9th the Canadian government also asked the Canadian minister in Washington to gauge the reaction of the American government and the Danish minister to the suggestion that the local authorities should "mount a man and a gun for defensive purposes at the entrance to the Ivigtut harbour" which would be "purchased" from the United States or Canada.⁷⁶⁵ That same day the Canadian government sent another lengthy telegram to Christie regarding the situation. In the message Christie was asked to also discuss the possibility of sending a Canadian consul to Greenland who might go north on the *Nascopie* with Kauffmann.⁷⁶⁶ The Canadian government stressed the time-sensitive nature of the Greenland situation and asked him to respond as quickly as possible.⁷⁶⁷ The following day, May 10, Christie met with Berle and Jay Pierrepont Moffat, Chief of Staff in the State Department's Western European division (and soon to be the ambassador to Canada) and Kauffmann. The suggestion of the Canadian consul was welcomed by both the State Department and the Danish minister. Kauffmann thought that it would be best to limit consuls in Greenland to only the United States and Canada and that the appointment could be taken up with the Greenland authorities through him. The earlier suggestion of the gun was also received favourably, and it was thought that the type of armament required could be gleaned by

for its role in "carrying cryolite for Canada's war time industries," Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 369; Mack, "Nascopie downs Submarine," 21; Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?* 4; and J.W. Anderson, "The 1941 Voyage of the RMS *Nascopie*," *The Beaver* (December 1941), 8.

⁷⁶⁵The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa to the Canadian Minister to the United States, Washington, D.C., Telegram 67, 9 May 1940, H-1555, C 277363.

⁷⁶⁶The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa to the Canadian Minister to the United States, Washington, D.C., Telegram 68, 9 May 1940, H-1555, C 277364.

⁷⁶⁷The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa to the Canadian Minister to the United States, Washington, D.C., Telegram 68, 9 May 1940, H-1555, C 277365.

asking the Greenland authorities through Kauffmann.⁷⁶⁸ Throughout the week, King and his government, working closely with the State Department and the Danish minister, made preparations for the *Nascopie's* journey to Greenland, the appointment of a Canadian consul, and details regarding the management of the finances of the cryolite mine.⁷⁶⁹ During these important discussions, however, the Canadian government grew increasingly frustrated with the slow response on the part of the British. The High Commissioner in London, Vincent Massey, neglected to respond to urgent telegrams from the Canadian Legation in Washington or the government in Ottawa. O.D. Skelton noted on May 14 that "there had been no reply yet from the United Kingdom to our telegrams of May 10th or May 11th."⁷⁷⁰

This lack of communication brought Canada closer to the United States. For example, in addition to the suggestion of mounting a gun in Ivigtut's harbour the Canadians had also planned to mount a gun on board the *Nascopie*. When the Hudson's Bay Company informed the Canadian government that they would be unable to mount a gun on the *Nascopie* without significant time-consuming structural alterations to the vessel, Skelton suggested sending "up the *Nascopie* without the 4" gun, relying on the fact that there will be a United States cutter in the vicinity for the next month."⁷⁷¹ The Canadian government also began acting without British approval. The following day Skelton issued another

⁷⁶⁸The Canadian Minister to the United States to the Secretary of State For External Affairs, Canada, Telegram 82, May 10 1940, H-1555, C 277366-7.

⁷⁶⁹See "Greenland File," H-1555.

⁷⁷⁰O.D. Skelton, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister: Greenland," 14 May 1940, H-1555, C 277367.

⁷⁷¹O.D. Skelton, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister: Greenland," 14 May 1940, H-1555, C 277368.

memorandum for the prime minister. He noted that a telegram for the Greenland authorities regarding the appointment of a Canadian consul to the island had been translated into Danish. Skelton asked if it should be sent right away or held until a reply was received from London. King wrote in the margin of the memo, "Send right away!" and then acted quickly in response. He wrote to the Minister of Mines and Resources, who would be overseeing the journey, and to the Department of National Defence, who would be advising with preparations. He told them to begin loading the *Nascopie* for its journey to Greenland, and after five days with no response from London, also said "to go ahead telegraphing Greenland authorities without waiting for reply from London."⁷⁷² When the British did eventually respond to the telegrams, they once again angered the Canadian ministers. The British noted that they welcomed the actions taken by the Canadians in concert with the Americans and their willingness to "undertake the responsibility for Greenland." It was also stressed that the security of the mine was of primary importance and the Canadian government should consider sending artillery officers to the island on the *Nascopie*.⁷⁷³ The Canadian government made it very clear to the British that neither they nor the Americans had agreed "to take responsibility for the security of Greenland."⁷⁷⁴ The High Commission did not respond to the Canadian government about the provisional Canadian consuls in Greenland until May 27. They suggested contacting the Greenland

⁷⁷²Mackenzie King, "Memorandum for File Re: Greenland," 15 May 1940, H-1555, C 277369.

⁷⁷³The High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 606, 15 May 1940, H-1555, 277370.

⁷⁷⁴The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada to High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain, Telegram no. 562, May 18 1940, C277386.

authorities while they waited for King George to sign off on the appointment. King noted in the margins, “Already Done!”⁷⁷⁵

In order to keep bilateral relations as cordial as possible between the United States and Canada, several meetings were held before the Canadian vessel *Nascopie* was dispatched to Greenland. These did not however succeed in removing all tensions between the two countries. On Monday, May 20, diplomatic representatives from both Canada and the United States met in Berle's office regarding plans for the defence of Greenland's cryolite mine. During the meeting, Hugh Keenleyside, a counsellor to O.D. Skelton in the Department of External Affairs, pushed for a concrete American commitment to defend the island in the event of a German attack. He also briefed Berle on the details of the Canadian plans to man the *Nascopie* with an Alcan official and an artillery officer. Berle, who continued to be anti-British and to mistrust the intentions of the Canadians, wrote that he was not very impressed with the Canadian representatives at the meeting and that “the atmosphere was that of a little third-rate commercial imperialism—and this at a time when Canada’s own fate hangs by a thread.” He went on to say that the Americans were arranging a shipment of munitions and arms “to defend the cryolite mine there—not that I think the cryoline [*sic*] mine amounts to much, but it will keep the British quiet.”⁷⁷⁶

The meeting with Berle in Washington was followed by another in New York with Mr. H.C. Sonne, the head of the newly created American-Danish Greenland Commission, which was formed to manage the affairs of Greenland during the German occupation of Denmark. Sonne was joined by L.T. Beale, the president of the Pennsylvania Salt

⁷⁷⁵The High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 63, 27 May 1940, H-1555, 277398.

⁷⁷⁶Berle, 20 May 1940, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 211, 10-11.

Company, and R.E. Powell of the Aluminum Company of Canada, in addition to Keenleyside, Cummings, and Reid from the Canadian government. The main focus of the meeting was a discussion over the ownership and control of the cryolite mine in Ivigtut and the status of the existing contracts for cryolite entered into before the German occupation of Denmark. Keenleyside provided a list of supplies that the *Nascopie* would be bringing to the island, and Sonne suggested that additional supplies might be sent from the Greenland Commission. The group also discussed the possibility of a full nationalisation of the cryolite mine in the name of the Greenlandic governors so that no income from the mine could be transferred to German-controlled Denmark. There was, however, also considerable debate over who would take over the portion of the European shipments formerly managed by the Danish Crown corporation.⁷⁷⁷ The group was unable to come to a consensus, and negotiations continued as the *Nascopie* set out on its journey to Ivigtut.

The *Nascopie* left for Ivigtut from Louisburg, Nova Scotia, at 9:00 p.m. on May 24th. Although the *Nascopie*'s usual captain, T.F. Smellie, was present, the ship was under the command of Major D.L. McKeand, the Canadian government's Superintendent of the Eastern Arctic, for the journey to Greenland. The *Nascopie* had no fewer than fifteen other passengers aboard, including eight members of the RCMP, Major L.M. MacDonald from the Royal Canadian Artillery, and H.J. Hendra and D.W. Millar from the Aluminum Company of Canada.⁷⁷⁸ Major McKeand explained that the purpose of the journey "was a relief expedition to Greenland of the Canadian government and for the purpose of opening

⁷⁷⁷Keenleyside, Memorandum by Second Secretary, 22 May 1940, *DCER*, 1008-1015.

⁷⁷⁸Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 5.

trade negotiations between the two countries."⁷⁷⁹ It took the *Nascopie* six days to reach the island.

In accordance with Roosevelt's discussion with King in Warm Springs a month earlier, the United States also sent a ship to Greenland. Undersecretary of State Adolf Berle met with Rear Admiral R.E. Schirmann, head of Central Division of the Navy to discuss the *Nascopie* and Greenland. It was decided that the United States would arrange the sale of the aforementioned "gun" and "man" to the Greenland government.⁷⁸⁰ The gun and the man were in effect several guns to fortify the workings of the cryolite mine along with Ivigtut's harbour, and fifteen men, former American Coast Guardsmen, who would act as paid members of the newly created National Mine Guard/Police Force. Although the guns and men were originally proposed by the Canadians, the Americans did not share all of the details of its plans with the Canadian government.

The new American Consul to Greenland, James K. Penfield, was sent to the island as soon as conditions permitted and he preceded the other supplies discussed by Berle to Greenland. He met with the governor of South Greenland, Aksel Svane, on May 24. Svane raised the question of security of the cryolite mine. He stressed the vulnerability of the mine and expressed his fear that the mine would be sabotaged by Nazi sympathisers at Ivigtut. He asked Penfield about the possibility of sending an American military detachment to the mine as soon as possible or stationing an armed Coast Guard vessel at the mine. Penfield informed Svane that it was unlikely that the American government would station a military detachment in Greenland, but it might consider other means to

⁷⁷⁹Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 6.

⁷⁸⁰Adolf Berle and R.E. Schirmann, Memorandum of Meeting, 16 May 1940, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 1.

defend the mine. Penfield noted in his report to the Secretary of State that although others thought Svane's fears were somewhat exaggerated, Svane himself "did not appear to be an alarmist."⁷⁸¹ Svane had discussed the issue fully with Governor Eske Brun of North Greenland, who agreed with his assessment of the situation. Penfield said that in view of Svane's obvious concern and "other factors of which the department is aware, it is respectfully suggested that as favourable consideration as possible is given to Svane's request."⁷⁸² It is evident from the arrangements between Berle and Schirmann, however, that the government was already planning to send defensive support to the island. A vaguely worded memorandum to the president confirmed that Svane's request was being met:

In accordance with the President's instructions concerning equipment for the country mentioned in the attached dispatch [Greenland], I have to inform the President that the material went forward via Coast Guard vessel CAMPBELL on Thursday May 30, 1940.⁷⁸³

The coast guard cutter *Comanche* had also been previously dispatched to Greenland to safeguard American commercial and diplomatic interests in Greenland and beat the *Nascopie* there. Although the Canadians and Americans were cooperating with respect to the handling of the Greenland situation there were still latent concerns and suspicions particularly with respect to Canadian intentions. The Danish cryolite mine manager, Oscar Corp, was especially worried about the impact a belligerent country with a strong commercial interest in the cryolite mine, like Canada, would have in Greenland. One American account stated that when Corp greeted the American crew of the *Comanche* after it had anchored and raised the Danish flag, "he did not have to explain he was crying

⁷⁸¹Telegram Penfield to Cordell Hull, 24 May 1940, PSF 3 Greenland, Safe, 1-4.

⁷⁸²Telegram Penfield to Cordell Hull, 24 May 1940, PSF 3 Greenland, Safe, 1-4.

⁷⁸³Memorandum for the President, D.J. Callaghan to Franklin Roosevelt, 1 June 1940, PSF 3 Greenland, Safe, 1-4.

because he was happy.”⁷⁸⁴ Two days later, the *Nascopie* arrived on the south west coast of Greenland. The same account stated that “it was rumoured that the craft carried a small landing force of Canadian troops, so the *Comanche* hastened back to watch over the mine. However, the Canadians merely proffered some supplies and docilely departed.”⁷⁸⁵ In reality, the *Nascopie* languished in the Ivigtut harbour for several weeks while a series of multi-lateral negotiations took place between the Greenlandic governors, the mine officials, the Americans, the Canadians, and the British.

Although the Canadian government had notified the relevant American, British, and Greenlandic officials prior to the departure of the *Nascopie*, unbeknownst to those aboard the vessel an exaggerated account of its capacities and the extent of its mission was relayed from the Greenland authorities to Washington where there were some always prepared to believe the worst of the Canadians and the British.⁷⁸⁶ When the *Nascopie* arrived in Ivigtut, the ship was visited by Mr. A. Fisher, the government controller for Ivigtut, and Mr. Hasselback, the assistant manager of the cryolite mine. Before leaving the ship, Fisher invited Mr. H.J. Hendra, a representative of the Aluminum Company of Canada, to go on a tour of the mine with Hasselback. Major McKeand, however, suggested everyone remain on board until Kenneth Kirkwood, the newly appointed Canadian Consul to Greenland, arrived on the *Julius Thompson* from Kirkwaid, Scotland.⁷⁸⁷ The arrival of the *Julius Thompson*, however, would present its own set of issues.

⁷⁸⁴Abbazia, *Mr. Roosevelt's Navy*, 87.

⁷⁸⁵Abbazia, *Mr. Roosevelt's Navy*, 87.

⁷⁸⁶Stacey, *Arms Men and Government*, 369.

⁷⁸⁷Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 5.

The events in Ivigtut's harbour reached Washington. On the morning of June 3, Christie was called into Berle's office at the State Department. He was accompanied by Reid and Cumming, who had been working with him on the Greenland file. Berle told Christie that the American government had felt they were working in harmony with the Canadians over the Greenland situation. At the suggestion of the Canadian government, the Americans had drawn up a defence project for the island, the armaments for which were currently on their way to Greenland. Berle told Christie that two developments were complicating the problem. One of these concerned the British. The State Department had been informed that the *Julius Thompson*, which had just passed Iceland and would be in Greenland shortly, had aboard not only the future Canadian consul to the island, but also three British Naval officers.⁷⁸⁸ The State Department had also been told that the *Nascopie*, which had arrived in Greenland, had several RCMP officers, an artillery officer, two mining engineers from the Aluminum Company of Canada, and some soldiers. Berle said that although the Canadian government had told the State Department that they would have an artillery officer in mufti and mining engineers, they had not mentioned the soldiers or the RCMP officers. Berle said that the State Department was "disturbed by this information" and "felt that the presence of these people in Greenland, as well as the presence of the three United Kingdom naval officers, might be interpreted as meaning that the Canadian Government intended to assume control of Greenland."⁷⁸⁹ Berle then turned to Christie and said:

I am going to be very blunt about this, and I could put our feelings in a more diplomatic language, but I feel that I should report to you that I have discussed the matter with the president and that he had said he would be 'very angry' if the

⁷⁸⁸The Canadian Minister to the United States to the Secretary of State For External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 1089, 3 June 1940, H-1555, C 277399.

⁷⁸⁹The Canadian Minister to the United States to the Secretary of State For External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 1089, 3 June 1940, H-1555, C 277340.

Canadian Government attempted to occupy Greenland . . . this was not the time for this type of 1890s imperialism and the days of Cecil Rhodes had passed.⁷⁹⁰

Berle also stressed that "there were very few white people in Greenland, and that a few armed men from another country could quite easily assume control."⁷⁹¹ He continued that this had the potential to have a very negative effect on the ability for the American government to work with Canada on other large problems that could arise in the future, particularly "should the position of Great Britain and France weaken."⁷⁹² Berle had long been critical of the Aluminium Company of Canada, believing it was manipulating the situation in order to gain a monopoly over the cryolite trade. Christie noted in his memorandum to Ottawa on the meeting that "Mr. Berle's dislike of the Aluminum Company of Canada is well known. This dislike probably explains in part the annoyance which he very clearly showed this morning."⁷⁹³

The *Julius Thompson*, which Berle was also concerned about, was one of the Danish ships that had been taken in prize by the British following the German invasions (an example of the "low grade English piracy" previously mentioned by Berle). As a result of the rumours and suspicions circulating about the British and Canadian intentions in Greenland, when the *Julius Thompson* arrived those aboard the *Nascopie* were ordered to remain on board until Aksel Svane arrived from Nuuk with the newly appointed U.S. Consul for Greenland aboard the USCGC *Campbell*. While they waited, the Greenlandic Governors, who

⁷⁹⁰The Canadian Minister to the United States to the Secretary of State For External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 1089, 3 June 1940, H-1555, C 277341.

⁷⁹¹The Canadian Minister to the United States to the Secretary of State For External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 1089, 3 June 1940, H-1555, C 277342.

⁷⁹²The Canadian Minister to the United States to the Secretary of State For External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 1089, 3 June 1940, H-1555, C 277342.

⁷⁹³The Canadian Minister to the United States to the Secretary of State For External Affairs, Canada, Telegram no. 1089, 3 June 1940, H-1555, C 277343.

previously had had no jurisdiction over Ivigtut, issued a proclamation nationalizing the cryolite mine and assuming authority over the entire plant and its workings. This proclamation, agreed upon with the Americans, was followed by another declaring themselves able to negotiate new contracts for the sale of cryolite.⁷⁹⁴

Those aboard the *Nascopie* looked forward to an end to their period of “forced confinement aboard the ship” and were elated to hear of the *Campbell’s* arrival in Ivigtut on June 12th.⁷⁹⁵ Governor Svane sent word that the Canadian party would only be allowed ashore after he had “completed several domestic problems” at the Ivigtut mine.⁷⁹⁶ These domestic problems included transferring cases of machine guns and ammunition to the Ivigtut dock and building emplacements for several anti-aircraft guns provided by the American government.⁷⁹⁷

On the morning of June 14, Kirkwood boarded the *Nascopie* to discuss transferring her cargo to the *Julius Thompson* (which was unloading at Ivigtut's wharf); however, as soon as it was unloaded it began to be reloaded with cryolite destined for the United States.

Major McKeand was not informed by the mine manager of this change in plans. Kirkwood informed Major McKeand that the Greenland Governor Aksel Svane required the transfer of the British crew of the *Julius Thompson* to the *Nascopie* because he was planning on seizing the vessel for the Greenland government without the consent of Kauffmann or the American government. Counter to Kirkwood's instructions, Major McKeand advised the commander of the *Julius Thompson* to keep control of the vessel until advised otherwise

⁷⁹⁴Svane and Brun, Translation of Proclamation, 3 June 1940, and Svane and Brun, Untitled Document, 26 June 1940, both in Hendra, Report on Ivigtut.

⁷⁹⁵Sparks, Minutes of Meeting held aboard ship, in Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 42.

⁷⁹⁶Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 7.

⁷⁹⁷Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 9.

by the British government.⁷⁹⁸ Canadian officials in Ottawa sent urgent messages to London regarding the *Julius Thompson*. Governor Svane had not vetted his decision through Kauffmann and according to Canadian records both he and the Chairman of the American-Danish Greenland Committee "wholly disapproved of this action."⁷⁹⁹ The Canadian government telegraphed the Canadian consul in Greenland:

Please inform Governor Svane that neither the United Kingdom Government nor ourselves are prepared to accept his unilateral action in taking possession of the "Julius Thompson." Consideration was being given to an orderly transfer to [the] Greenland registry, and actions of this nature will not facilitate such transfer.⁸⁰⁰

The telegram also reiterated that neither Kauffmann nor the Chairman of the Greenland Committee approved of Svane's action.⁸⁰¹ The British government stated that they would generally be opposed to the transfer of flag for a vessel that had been taken in prize, but given the unusual circumstances they were willing to transfer the title as long as the United Kingdom would be absolved of any liability for the vessel, that the Greenland government would return the vessel to Denmark after the war, and that no financial benefit would accrue by the Danish owners during the war. The British Ministry of Shipping also stressed that one of the primary reasons for the transfer of the *Julius Thompson* to the British flag "was to ensure complete control of the vessel. THE GREENLAND GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO UNDERTAKE TO TRADE HER SOLELY IN THE ALLIED INTEREST."⁸⁰² Following internal discussions in London, these points

⁷⁹⁸Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 8.

⁷⁹⁹Hume Wong to O.W. Dixon, Letter, 20 June 1940, The British National Archives, Dominions Office (DO) 35/1001/28/24. 3.

⁸⁰⁰Copy of telegram in Wong to Dixon, Letter, 20 June 1940, DO 35/1001/28/24. 3.

⁸⁰¹Copy of telegram in Wong to Dixon, Letter, 20 June 1940, DO 35/1001/28/24. 3.

⁸⁰²C.C. Oman to C.W. Dixon, 21 June 1940, The British National Archives, Dominions Office (DO) 35/1001/28/24. 3.

were transmitted to the United Kingdom's High Commissioner in Canada and subsequently passed on to Washington.⁸⁰³

Eventually the British government did transfer the title of the *Julius Thompson* to the government of Greenland, but it would be more than three weeks between the *Nascopie's* arrival in Ivigtut's harbour and when they were permitted to disembark. The two Alcan officials were invited to meet with mine manager Oscar Corp. They were surprised to learn that while they waited in the harbour, Pennsalt had formalised a distribution agreement for 1940 with the mine. Although Corp thought it might have been more profitable for the mine to deal with its customers directly rather than through the Pennsalt distribution agreement, he did not want to leave himself open to any criticism by the Danish government after the war, and presumably he did not want to antagonize the US.⁸⁰⁴

On the evening of June 22nd eleven members of the *Nascopie's* party were invited ashore for a dinner and social evening. Alcan provided a “well received” liquor consignment for the gathering.⁸⁰⁵ Hendra was seated next to Corp, and although he attempted to discuss issues of cryolite mining in Ivigtut with him on several occasions, he met with little success. Hendra wrote that “it was very evident that all questions regarding the mine at Ivigtut . . . would not be discussed in a satisfactory matter by Mr. Corp.”⁸⁰⁶

Following the dinner, Corp invited several members of the *Nascopie*, including Hendra, on a short tour of the mine. Corp confirmed Alcan's earlier intelligence that the quantity of

⁸⁰³Cypher Telegram Dominions Office, London to the United Kingdom High Commissioner London, 23 June 1940. (DO) 35/1001/28/24. 8.

⁸⁰⁴Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 10-11.

⁸⁰⁵Campbell, *Global Mission*, 332.

⁸⁰⁶Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 13.

high-grade cryolite available in Ivigtut was extremely limited. The *Nascopie* was subsequently loaded with cryolite and sailed for Port Alfred, Quebec, on the 29th of June.⁸⁰⁷ Despite Corp's original reluctance to disturb the existing arrangements, within a month of the *Nascopie*'s departure from Ivigtut, the Greenlandic governors, with the approval of PennSalt, had negotiated independent contracts with Alcan through the American-Greenland Committee for up to 10,000 metric tons of cryolite in 1940 and between three thousand and twenty thousand tonnes until 1943.⁸⁰⁸

Whether Oscar Corp cried tears of joy upon the arrival of the *Comanche* in Greenland is debatable; however, its presence in Ivigtut and the subsequent appearance of the *Campbell* and the US Coast Guard cutters *Northland*, *Duane*, and *Cayuga* off of the coast of Greenland in the summer of 1940 effectively ended the debate as to who was in control of the security of the island and whether or not the Canadian government should have any involvement in the defence of the Ivigtut cryolite mine. Now that the Americans had secured Greenland, their attention was turned to the security of Canada. While the *Nascopie* incident was being addressed, France fell to the invading Germans. With Britain alone in Europe, the need to defend the Western Hemisphere was more important than ever. Through its actions in Greenland the United States had taken a decisive step towards a coherent policy for the whole of the hemisphere. The United Kingdom—beleaguered as it was—had acquiesced in what was a fundamental shift of power in the North Atlantic and that the Canadians had adapted themselves to the emerging reality.

⁸⁰⁷Hendra, Report on Ivigtut, 13,15.

⁸⁰⁸Campbell, *Global Mission*, 333.

The Consolidation of Western Hemispheric Security in the Summer of 1940

In July of 1940, just weeks after the resolution of the *Nascopie* incident, the government of the United States formalised Roosevelt's hemispheric interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine and the security of the Western Hemisphere. By the time of the meeting of American foreign ministers on July 21, 1940 in Havana much of Europe had come under German domination. The French government had been the most recent casualty of Germany's expansion across Europe. The leaders of American states, particularly the United States, had growing concerns over the fate of the colonies in the Western Hemisphere of German-occupied European states. The meeting in Havana led to the adoption of two agreements to address the situation. The first, The Act of Havana, provided for the ability to provide military support in emergency situations, and the other, The Convention of Havana provided for temporary administration "if a non-American State shall directly or indirectly attempt to replace another non-American State in the sovereignty or control which it exercised over any territory located in the Americas."⁸⁰⁹ The convention had a provision for the creation of an emergency committee which would be assembled, comprised of representatives and which would become valid when at least two-thirds of the American states had appointed members. It also stated that if the need to act was so urgent that there was insufficient time to assemble a committee prior to taking action then "any of the American republics, either individually or jointly, should have the right to act, placing the matter at once before the committee."⁸¹⁰ The result of the Havana meeting for the United States was that the government now had the ability to act unilaterally in emergency situations with the consent of the other American states.

⁸⁰⁹James J. Lenior, "The Monroe Doctrine and International Law 1933-1941," *The Journal of Politics* 4 no. 1 (Feb. 1942): 59.

⁸¹⁰Lenior, "The Monroe Doctrine and International Law," 59.

Following the meeting in Havana, Roosevelt turned his attention back to Canada. The situation in Europe was continuing to deteriorate and the Canadian prime minister, along with his government, worried about Canada's ability to defend itself. Although he ushered in a "new and more active defence policy" with his 1935 mandate that nearly doubled the spending of his predecessor, the provisions for the defence of Canada's coasts were still inadequate.⁸¹¹ Earlier in the spring King recorded in his diary that it was "the U.S. who stood to suffer if our shores were wholly neglected. It was due to our own people to get from the U.S. all the help we possibly could."⁸¹² In August of 1940, King was assured help from the United States over dinner in the president's dining car near Ogdensburg, New York. King and Roosevelt, without consulting Churchill, signed what would become known as the Ogdensburg Agreement, which created a permanent joint board of defence between Canada and the United States and committed the two nations to a common defence strategy.⁸¹³ Upon hearing news of the agreement, Churchill, who was himself attempting to arrange the Destroyers-for-Bases Agreement with Roosevelt "grumbled bitterly about Canada scuttling to save its self."⁸¹⁴ Ogdensburg, among much else, eventually led to the establishment of American-controlled military bases across the Arctic, including Fort Chemo, Frobisher Bay, and Coral Harbor.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹C.P. Stacey "Canadian Defence Policy," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Sciences/Revue canadienne d'Economique et de Science politique*, 4 no. 4 (Nov. 1938): 493-494.

⁸¹²Mackenzie King, *Diaries*, 23 May 1940, 510.

⁸¹³See PSF 8—Confidential File Permanent Joint Board of Defence.

⁸¹⁴J.L. Granatstein, "The Man Who Wasn't There: Mackenzie King, Canada, and the Atlantic Charter," in *The Atlantic Charter*, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 115-127.

⁸¹⁵Assistant American Secretary of State Adolf Berle noted that the establishment of the bases was "a distinct new step in the American position. For the first time the Monroe

In addition to the Havana Agreements and the creation of the Permanent Joint Board of Defence with Canada, Roosevelt finalised another arrangement that consolidated the security arrangements of the hemisphere. In September of 1940 the United States and United Kingdom signed the Destroyers-for-Bases Agreement. The lengthy negotiations leading up to the agreement were difficult for Churchill and he felt the United Kingdom was giving much more than it was receiving in the deal. He decided to look at the transaction as two separate gifts between the United States and the United Kingdom.⁸¹⁶ The agreement gave Britain destroyers from the First World War in Exchange for ninety-nine year leases on British bases in Newfoundland and the Caribbean.⁸¹⁷ The bases allowed for a physical American military presence on British colonies and represented another concrete step in the extension of American influence in the Western Hemisphere.

These agreements had the potential to facilitate greater cooperation within the North Atlantic Triangle in Greenland but did not initially have that effect on the ground. The United Kingdom was barred from any direct presence on the island, and the situation between the United States and Canada was complicated. Both countries had consuls in Greenland, and both countries were sending supplies to the island. There was a sense amongst the population in Greenland that both nations had long-term interests in the island. The continual deterioration of events in Europe along with the Act of Havana, the Ogdensburg Agreement, and the successful unprecedented third term election of Franklin

Doctrine has been implemented militarily on a frontier," Adolf Berle, *Navigating the Rapids 1918-1971* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1973), 356.

⁸¹⁶"Doc. 23: Churchill to Roosevelt," 25 August 1940, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975), 112-113.

⁸¹⁷Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and America* (London: Pocket Books, 2005), 202.

Roosevelt in November of 1940 gave the United States more leeway with which to act in Greenland, and Canada had little choice but to give in.

The American and Canadian Presence in Greenland

In December of 1940 the British government compiled a secret report on the conditions in Greenland based on letters intercepted at Bermuda. It was thought "that in view of the changing conditions in the Danish Colony, due to growing American and Canadian influences, it has been thought that a short report would be of interest."⁸¹⁸ The Americans and Canadians were generally positively received. The North American presence "banished fear of food shortages, while the visits of American and Canadian ships have added interest and excitement to their lives."⁸¹⁹ Some of the report highlighted positive things, like a letter from the southern town of Julianehaab (now Qaqortoq) that read, "We have never had so much good fresh fruit as we get with the American ships." Another letter from a girl in Julianehaab said, "Many American ships call in here and when they are in we have a gay time."⁸²⁰ None of the letters mentioned Germany, nor did they mention a desire for Greenland to be united with Denmark given its present situation. Other letters, however, did speak to the concerns of some of the Danish residents to the foreign presence on Greenland. A letter from Egedesminde, modern day Aasiaat, said:

It is a dangerous time for Greenland now. We do not think we shall belong to Denmark again. We do not know who is taking us, but it will be either U.S.A. or

⁸¹⁸"Situation in Greenland, Report No. 89," 10 December 1940, British National Archives, N 7489/6408/15/222.

⁸¹⁹"Situation in Greenland, Report No. 89," 10 December 1940, British National Archives, N 7489/6408/15/222-224.

⁸²⁰Intercepted Letter Julianehaab to Aarhus, 16 October 1940, British National Archives, N 7489/6408/15/222-224.

Canada . . . You will realise that we are not happy about the future. We know well what is happening.⁸²¹

There were also indications that others would be happy to see the continuation of the relationship with the United States or Canada (although there was also a feeling that the two countries would find it difficult to figure out which was in charge). The popularity of the consular representatives was thought to be a factor in the positive public opinion. A letter from Ivigtut said that "the best thing that could happen would be for America to take over Greenland for Good. I believe we all want that to happen. The country's position make it unsuitable under Denmark."⁸²² Another said that "It was becoming more and more evident that Canada and the USA are preparing to annex the country (the two countries cannot agree as to who is to do it) and so it is important that the Greenlanders should be fully prepared to start a life anew with the strangers without going under, as other people of esquimaux [sic] lineage have done."⁸²³

The future of the island was also discussed in what the British report described as an "educated letter" written to a Copenhagen professor:

The Greenland you know is undergoing a complete transformation. The old characteristic of comfortable safety is beginning to disappear and will soon be gone altogether. It would be like participating in murder if one refused to assist in its development, yes if we did not try to encourage it. The people of Greenland are now in the melting pot and we hope that a serious, purposeful, clear-thinking nation will emerge after the process.⁸²⁴

⁸²¹Intercepted Letter Egedesminde to Copenhagen, 12 October 1940, British National Archives, N 7489/6408/15/222-224.

⁸²²Intercepted Letter Ivigtut to Roskilde, 22 October 1940, British National Archives, N 7489/6408/15/222-224.

⁸²³Intercepted Letter Greenland to Copenhagen, 10 December 1940, British National Archives, N 7489/6408/15/222-224.

⁸²⁴Intercepted Letter Greenland to Copenhagen, 10 December 1940, British National Archives, N 7489/6408/15/222-224.

The American government was also concerned about its role in the affairs of the island and its future. There had been an American presence on Greenland since the *Nascopie* incident. A confidential report on the United States' involvement in Greenland to date featured a special section dedicated to Denmark's former policy of isolation on the island:

BREAKING ISOLATION: Governor Svane and other residents of Greenland seem to be of the opinion that the breaking of Greenland's isolation as a result of the German invasion of Denmark represents a desirable process, and if and when conditions permit a resumption of the Normal relationship between Greenland and Denmark, Greenland should not be returned to its old status.⁸²⁵

Presumably breaking isolation referred only to Greenland's political isolation and dependence on Denmark prior to the war and not to its policies relating to its majority Inuit population. Governor Svane, the Grandson of Danish diplomats, referred to the economic isolation of the island in his communications with the Americans, not the physical isolation of the island's population from the western world. It was made explicitly clear that the Department of State did not have the same view on "breaking isolation" for all Greenlanders. In a strictly confidential letter from Cordell Hull to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, Hull explained that Greenlanders are not immunised against European diseases, and "are relatively helpless in the face of ordinary trading operations to which he is not accustomed. The smooth functioning of the Agreement may very well be determined by the decorum and restraint shown by our personnel in their relations with the Greenlanders." Hull pointed out that German propaganda was already asserting that contact between Greenlanders and Americans will result in the enslavement, miscegenation and ultimate extinction of the native population." Hull continued that "it appears important that to avoid the possibility of unfortunate incidents, and to safeguard the native population, full provision be made for the welfare and recreation of the

⁸²⁵Confidential Report Greenland, Undated (estimated late 1940/early 1941), RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 18.

American personnel sent to Greenland so that the policy of maintaining isolation of the Native Greenland population, so far as possible, may continue.”⁸²⁶

While the Secretary of State expressed his concerns regarding the security of the Inuit population of Greenland numerous questions also persisted with respect to the physical security of the island itself. The American Coast Guard maintained a presence at the Ivigtut mine throughout 1940, which included personnel at the mine and coastal patrols. Although there was no longer a question as to whether Canada should defend the cryolite mine, the defence of Greenland continued to preoccupy both the British and the Canadian governments. . The appearance of the Norwegian vessels *Veslekari*, *Ringsel*, and *Fuernak*, which were suspected to be under some measure of German control, and reports of German U-boat sightings and German aerial fly-pasts led the Canadian and British governments to request additional American defense of the island, or to consider taking their own measures.⁸²⁷

The Air Ministry in London sent an urgent telegram to the British High Commissioner in Canada asking him to confer with the Canadians regarding the establishment of airbases on the island.⁸²⁸ Following the initial turmoil in Europe in the spring of 1940 the British belatedly began to recognise the potential strategic significance of the island for the transport of planes from North America to Europe. While they were awaiting a response to their inquiry, the State Department issued a press release denying any involvement in Greenland, stating that they had not sent any troops to the island nor established any air or

⁸²⁶Cordell Hull to Frank Knox, Letter, 28 April 1941, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 1-3.

⁸²⁷Cordell Hull to Frank Knox, Letter, 1 February 1941, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 1-3.

⁸²⁸Dominions Office to the British High Commissioner in Canada, Telegram, 16 December 1940, Dominions Office N115/115/15.

naval bases in Greenland. Still trying to stress its neutrality, the American government said that it had established a consulate, sent Red Cross representation to the island, and sold "a quantity of arms for the use of a small number of policemen employed by the Greenland authorities to patrol the cryolite mine at Ivigtut, which is Greenland's major economic asset."⁸²⁹ The British Embassy in Washington informed Anthony Eden that the reason for the denial was that there had been reports in the Swedish press suggesting American forces were in Greenland, but that the primary reason was (a) "to strengthen the arm of M. Stauning, the Danish Prime Minister," because pro-Nazi newspapers had been attacking Stauning's policies "in leaving Denmark militarily so weak that the German invasion could not be resisted and (b) in handing over Greenland to the greedy imperialistic United States."⁸³⁰ The British government continued to press for information regarding the progress of proposals for aerodromes and a wireless station on behalf of the Air Ministry. It was noted that "preparations must soon made if [the] route is to be used during summer of 1941."⁸³¹ Given the British government's increasing interest in Greenland, the appearance of a *Daily Mail* article on "Cross Atlantic Air Halts" caused great alarm in London.⁸³² Although it took some weeks to come to the government's attention the note on

⁸²⁹Department of State Press Release, 9 January 1941, FO 371/29304/N438/115/15/21.

⁸³⁰The British Embassy to the Right Honourable Anthony Eden, Telegram no. 61, 15 January 1941, FO 371/29304/N438/115/15/20.

⁸³¹Northern Denmark 1941: Survey of Greenland, 1 March 1941, FO 371/29304/N772/115/15/30.

⁸³²Walter Farr, "Mid-Ocean 'Halts' for U.S. Planes," *Daily Mail*, 27 February 1941.

the file said the article was "a gross breach of security . . . Various transit schemes require urgent security protection."⁸³³

The requests in combination with suspected covert German military activity on the island caused the Department of State to review its policy relating to Greenland, which they determined to be "to some extent incomplete and inadequate."⁸³⁴ The measures taken thus far by the government to secure the island, outlined in a confidential memo entitled "Maintenance of Neutrality of Greenland," included the establishment of a consul, the Coast Guard patrols, the arrangement for the defence of Ivigtut, and reminding the British, Canadian, and Norwegian governments of "the American government's attitude toward Greenland."⁸³⁵ The State Department and the American military also began to explore the possibility of aerodromes and permanent bases in Greenland in late 1940. In revising the government's policy, the State Department paid particular attention to the cryolite mine. It was to be given full protection not only because of the "strategic importance of maintaining the mine in production," but also because "the destruction of the mine, which is the primary source of Greenland's revenues, would under present conditions, throw a financial burden on the United States which might be called upon to make provision for the support of the population of Greenland."⁸³⁶ The memo also suggested a number of other practical measures to increase the security of the island. These measures fell into two categories: "(1) measures to be undertaken by the Greenland authorities with our advice

⁸³³GOC Iceland to the War Office, Telegram 0.674 25/3, 1 April 1941, FO 371/29304/N772/115/15/58.

⁸³⁴Department of State Division of European Affairs, Memorandum, 14 November 1940, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 2-4.

⁸³⁵Department of State Division of European Affairs, Memorandum, 14 November 1940, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 2-4.

⁸³⁶Department of State Division of European Affairs, Memorandum, 14 November 1940, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 2-4.

and assistance and (2) measures to be undertaken directly by the American government with the cooperation of the Greenland authorities.” They included generally the expansion of both coastal patrols and the nationalization of the mine guard at Ivigtut. It suggested an expansion of the National Police Force, comprised of decommissioned American Coast Guard officers of Scandinavian descent, which could be used both for the protection of the mine and for manning patrol boats, and policing other Greenland ports.⁸³⁷ Little more could be done on the island, however, until a more formal agreement had been made with either the Greenland governors or the Danish minister.

Agreement for the Defence of Greenland

Eventually the combination of increased German activities on and around Greenland and the growing British and Canadian interest in establishing airstrips on the island caused the American government to seek greater legitimacy for its own involvement in Greenland. The United States had guaranteed the acceptance of American involvement in the island by Latin American states through the Act and Convention of Havana from the previous July. They had also strengthened relations with Canada through the creation of the Permanent Joint Board of Defence and through cooperation (most of the time) with respect to Greenland. In addition, President Roosevelt had been successful in his re-election campaign and was no longer as constrained by domestic electoral politics. Roosevelt had also managed to convince a significant portion of his government and the American public to support his plans for hemispheric security. That year close to 80 percent of *Fortune* poll respondents favoured the defence of Greenland by American forces.⁸³⁸ Roosevelt and the

⁸³⁷Quotes in original. Department of State Division of European Affairs, Memorandum, 14 November 1940, RG 80, Box 192, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, 5.

⁸³⁸*Fortune* Poll August 1941, Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, *Public Opinion 1935-1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 782.

State Department had managed the Greenland situation without significant international repercussions and, with the help of the Danish ambassador in Washington, had established diplomatic relations with the island. On April 4 the president received a message that the Danish minister wanted to see him. It read, "He, the minister, is prepared to sign at his own risk for Denmark and Greenland."⁸³⁹ On April 9, 1941, exactly one year after the German invasion, the Agreement relating to the Defence of Greenland was signed between the Danish Ambassador Henrik de Kauffmann and the Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

The agreement had been negotiated behind closed doors in Washington, and its signing came as a surprise to many in Washington, Ottawa, and Europe. The agreement, however, was a product of the American government's multi-lateral diplomatic efforts over the past year. It first cited the resolution, orchestrated by the State Department and the Danish ambassador, and adopted by the Greenland council on May 3, 1940, which asked the United States to keep in mind the exposed position of Greenland since it had had been cut off from Denmark. Then, in reference to the new agreements with Latin America, the agreement noted the concern expressed by the governments of all American nations of the dangers presented by the Western Hemispheric colonies of occupied European countries. It reinforced Roosevelt's policy of Western Hemispheric security and stated that the "Defence of Greenland against any attack by a non-European power is essential to the preservation of the peace and security of the American continent and is the subject of vital concern to the United States of America and to the Kingdom of Denmark," and argued that although the American government recognised the sovereignty of Denmark over Greenland, the German occupation prevented Denmark from exercising its powers on the island.

⁸³⁹Note to the President, 4 April 1941, Official File (OF) 488, 1.

The agreement, which directly cited American obligations to protect the hemisphere under the Act of Havana, enabled the United States to assume responsibility for the security of the island and to develop and operate military and airbases on the island. The most controversial aspect of the agreement, aside from the legality of Kauffmann's action, was article X, which stated that the agreement would remain "in force until it is agreed that the present dangers to the peace and security of the American Continent have passed."⁸⁴⁰ The deliberately ambiguous article left the door open for the continuation of American military presence on the island after the war, something which was to become significant as the Cold War developed.

In the United Kingdom the British government was initially concerned about what the agreement regarding the defence of Greenland would mean for Canadian involvement on the island, but Kauffmann assured Viscount Halifax, the new British ambassador to Washington, that "American nations" mentioned in the agreement included Canada. He also told Halifax that "local authorities in Greenland have concurred in the agreement which he described as a contribution to a common cause."⁸⁴¹ Halifax also told the Dominions Office that the Canadian Legation said "they were aware that something of the kind was in the air but were taken by surprise by actual signature [sic]."⁸⁴²

Kauffmann's interpretation of the situation, however, was not shared on the ground in Greenland. Kenneth Kirkwood, the Canadian Consul in Greenland, reported that the

⁸⁴⁰"Arctic Regions: Greenland, Agreement relating to the Defence of Greenland," *Polar Record* 3 no. 23 (Dec. 1941): 476-479.

⁸⁴¹United States of America, from Washington Foreign Office, Telegram 11 April 1941, FO 371/29304/N1570/115/15/93.

⁸⁴²United States of America, from Washington Foreign Office, Telegram 11 April 1941, FO 371/29304/N1570/115/15/93.

reaction on the island was "general astonishment of the defensive agreement signed in Washington . . . providing the right of the United States to lease areas or establish air bases in Greenland." He had first heard of the arrangement on a London broadcast, but the Assistant of the Government Sheep Station, an Icelander, had heard the news in the afternoon and brought it to the senior official of the town and the local paper, who then transmitted it to Governor Svane. As far as Kirkwood could tell, "Governor Svane himself was not aware of the conclusion of this agreement or its terms until now. The United States Consul and Vice Consul were not aware until they heard it by radio news broadcast."⁸⁴³ Since Governor Svane had not made a local announcement there were concerns on the island about the nature of the "secret diplomacy" by which the agreement was drafted. There were also questions about the nature of the agreement itself because it was yet to be circulated. There were other questions about the Danish minister's authority to make arrangements for an island "which he had never visited."⁸⁴⁴

Kirkwood sent an update three days later. The full text of the agreement had still not been received by the Canadian consul or Governor Svane, but notes on the situation and a summary of the agreement had been sent from Washington to the American Consul Penfield. Penfield immediately communicated the information to the governor and the Canadian consul. Kirkwood also learned that Kauffmann had been previously authorised by the Greenland governors to represent the island in Washington. It was understood that Governor Svane and Governor Brun had some knowledge of the impending agreement, but he did not know if they were aware of the details of the final agreement. Kirkwood noted

⁸⁴³Canadian Consulate, Godthaab, Greenland to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Report No. 14, C-4864, 25940.

⁸⁴⁴Canadian Consulate, Godthaab, Greenland to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Report No. 14, C-4864, 25941.

that "the Governors had yielded rights in Greenland without apprising any other Greenland official."⁸⁴⁵ Kirkwood explained that while the general feeling amongst the Danes living in Greenland

seems to be one of regret over any foreign—even United States—intervention, or protective measures in Greenland . . . the possibility of such action sooner or later in the minds of many, and its necessity at the present time is not misunderstood. While unpopular, it is reluctantly accepted with resignation but not enthusiasm.⁸⁴⁶

The Canadian consul had called on Governor and Mrs. Svane socially the previous evening, but characteristically Governor Svane did not make any mention of the agreement with Kirkwood. The American Consul Penfield, however, told the Canadian minister that Governor Svane was "not too happy about the agreement."⁸⁴⁷

Adolf Berle, who had been directly involved in the drafting of the agreement, did not keep his diary during the period of the negotiations with Kauffmann. Berle, by the direction of the president, had been occupied with the negotiations that resulted in the Agreement for the defence of Greenland. On April 15, nearly a week after the agreement had been signed, Berle detailed the complicated logic by which he had justified it and Kauffmann's legitimacy. Kauffmann believed he would be recalled if he signed the agreement, but he believed it was the only way to safeguard the island, and shortly after news of it was released the notes of recall were sent to Washington. The State Department, however, refused to recognise them. Berle wrote

⁸⁴⁵Canadian Consulate, Godthaab, Greenland to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Report No. 16, C-4864, 25943.

⁸⁴⁶Canadian Consulate, Godthaab, Greenland to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Report No. 16, C-4864, 25943.

⁸⁴⁷Canadian Consulate, Godthaab, Greenland to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Report No. 16, C-4864, 25943.

This raises some interesting questions in international law; but I think the outlines are plain. Denmark can no longer exercise sovereignty over her unoccupied territories, namely Greenland. Greenland is thus a de-facto government, which carries Danish sovereignty with it. Kauffmann is the representative of unoccupied Denmark—namely Greenland; and Copenhagen being occupied by Germans has no power to force his recall. In a sense Greenland is a de-facto government, which we recognise, and Kauffmann is the minister.

But I am worried about the situation. I would have been glad to delay the agreement.⁸⁴⁸

Berle had cause for concern. The validity of the agreement was questioned almost immediately by the international community.⁸⁴⁹ The American government, however, went ahead with plans to create several bases and airstrips on the island. Roosevelt seems to have been pleased with the outcome of the negotiations with Kauffmann but also took pains over his message to the Danish king about the agreement. In a letter to King Christian after the agreement was signed, Roosevelt sympathised with the king's situation and assured him that the United States would hold Greenland "in trust for Denmark with the objective that full control will be restored to Denmark just as soon as the government of Denmark ceases to labor under any form of duress on the part of any other nation."⁸⁵⁰ What constituted duress, however, would become both a point of contention and the justification for the military bases on Greenland that continue to operate on the island today.

In addition to his work on the Agreement for the Defence of Greenland, Berle had also been working on drafts of what was to become the Lend-Lease Agreement with the British. Berle hoped that by eradicating British policies of imperial preference through the

⁸⁴⁸Berle, 15 April 1941, Adolf A. Berle Diary, Box 212, 2.

⁸⁴⁹Herbert W. Briggs, "The Validity of the Greenland Agreement," *The American Journal of International Law* 35, no. 3 (July 1941): 506-513.

⁸⁵⁰Franklin D. Roosevelt to King Christian X, telegram, 19 April 1941, (PSF) 28, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President.

agreement it would result in greater economic cooperation between the two nations after the war, rather than simply one of repayment as some of his colleagues had advocated. This policy had the potential to give the Americans greater power in future negotiations with the British. Berle had been working on the arrangements with both the British and the Danish for months and they were not entirely unrelated.

In Europe Britain was in an increasingly desperate situation. Its gold reserves were being rapidly depleted through the conflict with Germany. After Roosevelt won his unprecedented third term election it was proposed that the United States extend their Naval control on their side of the Atlantic in order to ease the pressure on the British in the Battle of the Atlantic. On December 17, 1940 Roosevelt clearly articulated his (not unselfish) desire to help the British and one of his press conferences. He said "quite aside from our historic and current interest in the survival of democracy in the world as a whole, it is equally important from a selfish point of view and of American defence that we should do everything possible to help the British Empire to defend itself."⁸⁵¹ Although Churchill was "rather chilled by the attitude of the United States since the election," they worked out an arrangement through which the United States would build ships and rent them to the British [Lend-Lease].⁸⁵² In addition, the details of the Destroyers-for-Bases deal were finally arranged between the two countries. These arrangements, along with other measures that had been arranged over the past year including the Act of Havana with Latin American States, the creation of the Permanent Joint Board of Defence with Canada, and the signing Agreement for the Defence of Greenland with Kauffmann, together gave the United States complete control of the security of the Western Hemisphere.

⁸⁵¹Roosevelt, 17 December 1940, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 82.

⁸⁵²Gilbert, *Churchill in America*, 207.

On April 11, 1941 Roosevelt wrote to Churchill that the United States would soon be taking unilateral action in the Western Hemisphere that would favourably affect Churchill's current shipping problem. He told Churchill that his government would be extending their security zone to include all of the North Atlantic waters west of longitude 25 degrees. He proposed to "use aircraft and naval vessels working from Greenland, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Bermuda, and the West Indies, with a possible extension to Brazil" to protect the hemisphere from aggressor nations.⁸⁵³ Roosevelt's declaration and subsequent actions substantially extended the Western Hemisphere and enlarged the American sphere of influence to encompass nearly half of the globe. Within months the United States had taken over the security of Iceland from the British, and American bases were being built across the hemisphere. It also meant that by the time the United States officially entered the Second World War in December 1941 that its dominance in the Western Hemisphere was indisputable, a situation that would persist, almost without question, for the remainder of the twentieth century. Greenland had been one of the key factors in bringing the United States to this point and the Canadians and British had little choice but to acquiesce.

⁸⁵³"Doc. 51: Roosevelt to Churchill," 11 April 1940, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 137.

Chapter VII: Conclusions

In Ottawa the central point hanging on the maps hanging on the walls was the North Pole and that both the Canadians and the Americans have a real bee in their bonnets about a Russian attack from the north.

*Gerald Templar, Director of British Military Intelligence*⁸⁵⁴

In late June 1946 the British Joint Intelligence Committee met in London. Gerald Templar, the Director of British Military Intelligence, had just returned from a meeting in Washington with the Americans and Canadians. He told the committee he was struck by the Arctic focus of his Washington meetings. The Americans were concerned about the lack of defences in Canada's far north. They were pressing the Canadians to allow them to establish meteorological stations and radar apparatuses in the area to guard against potential Russian encroachments on Canadian territory. The idea had been actively discussed previously in the American-Canadian defence committee, which Mackenzie King and Roosevelt had established in 1940. The Americans argued that they had both the manpower and resources to complete the defensive measures quickly. Templar reported, however, that the Canadians were stalling both because they did not want the American action to be misinterpreted by the Russians as "a preparatory act of aggression" and because if stations were to be established, they wanted to do it themselves but did not yet have the resources to do so.⁸⁵⁵ Templar explained to the British Joint Intelligence Committee that while in Washington he was told that the existence of the Canadian-American Joint Defence Committee did not "imply that the Canadians in any way wished to secede from the British Commonwealth. It is purely a natural defensive measure in

⁸⁵⁴Gerald Templar quoted in Guy Liddell, *The Guy Liddell Diary*, 26 June 1946, The British National Archives KV 4/467, 236.

⁸⁵⁵Guy Liddell, *The Guy Liddell Diary*, 26 June 1946, 236.

which Canada and America are intimately concerned," and naturally there would be things that the British could not know about."⁸⁵⁶

In the years following the Second World War the Arctic had come into increased focus because of further technological advances and the Cold War. During the Second World War impressive advancements had been made in aviation technologies. The American bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, delivered by fighter aircraft, magnified earlier concerns about the dangers of airpower.⁸⁵⁷ In the nuclear age the Arctic became the front line in the developing tensions between the United States and Russia. The negotiations between King and Roosevelt over the security of Greenland, and later Canada through the Permanent Joint Board of Defence, took on increasing significance in the post-war period. Although Canada remained in the Commonwealth and George VI remained symbolically the Canadian Head of State, the US was now the great power Canada had to take account of and rely on for the security of its borders against the new threat.

The United Kingdom

The Washington meeting in June 1946 illustrates just how far the relationships in the North Atlantic Triangle had shifted since the *Nascopie* incident in the spring of 1940. If it was not evident before, it was clear by the meeting in Washington that the British no longer in a strong position to negotiate Canadian foreign policies, and that the United States, had surpassed Britain as the predominant global power. It was perhaps symbolic that many defenders of the old order of politicians were also out of government. By 1946 many of the architects of British military strategy during the Second World War were no

⁸⁵⁶Guy Liddell, *The Guy Liddell Diary*, 26 June 1946, 236.

⁸⁵⁷M.J. Armitage and R.A. Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

longer in power in Westminster. Neville Chamberlain, a fatality of the Norwegian Campaign and his inability to unify his party, had died in the autumn of 1940. Lord Lothian, who had been instrumental in much of the communications between London and Washington in the early stages of the war, had also died suddenly in December 1940. Winston Churchill, who had led his country to victory in Europe and is now seen as one of its greatest heroes, was ousted from government in July 1945 in favour of Britain's first Labour majority government. Following the war the United Kingdom was no longer the power it once was. When Churchill eventually returned to power in 1951 he presided over a Britain that was seriously indebted to both the United States and Canada. It was still on rationing and in the process of rebuilding from the damage of the war. Britain's relations with its dominions like Canada were changing. In the age of air, Britain's former dominance of the seas was no longer enough to maintain its global power position or to protect its distant colonial Empire.

Churchill's writings and speeches helped shape American perceptions of the place of Britain in the post-war world. Churchill remained the leader of the opposition, but in his time out of government he had time to reflect on the war years and to write his version of its history. His writings, including his bestselling history of the Second World War, were serialised in newspapers in both the United States and the United Kingdom, and in *Life*, the *New York Times*, and the *Daily Telegraph* helped to shape popular perceptions of the war and its meaning in the English-speaking world.⁸⁵⁸ In the initial stages after the war many American policymakers viewed the British Empire as an impediment to global democracy building and as an obstacle to winning over the non-committed in the Cold

⁸⁵⁸Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and America* (London: Pocket Books, 2005), 583; Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Volumes I-VI* (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1948-1954).

War. It was thought that "the lion's tail needed to be twisted in order to dislodge her far-flung territories."⁸⁵⁹ In the immediate post-war period, however, a new threat was emerging that the former prime minister would capitalise upon in order to retain Britain's position as a global power. Churchill's vision of a united English-speaking peoples was a compelling notion in light of the communist threat. In 1946 Churchill delivered his now famous "Iron Curtain" speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri.⁸⁶⁰ In the speech, Churchill cautioned that "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended."⁸⁶¹ The rise of Russian power called for a new association between the English-speaking peoples of the world. Knowing that Canada and the United States had a defence agreement, Churchill argued this should be extended to all of the British Commonwealth countries and advocated a "special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States of America."⁸⁶² Although there was initially backlash to his proposal from both the American press and, unsurprisingly, Russia's national newspaper *Pravda*, when he returned to power in 1951 his narrative of the Second World War and the Special Relationship had been constructed.⁸⁶³ The Soviet threat increased the significance of allies like Britain for the United States, while for Canada it also placed greater emphasis on its relationship with the United States.

⁸⁵⁹Andrew Roberts, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples since 1900* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 386.

⁸⁶⁰Gilbert, "Fulton and its Aftermath," *Churchill and America*, 364-377.

⁸⁶¹Speech No. 28, *The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, David Cannadine, ed. (London: Penguin, 1990).

⁸⁶²Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World That He Made* (London: MacMillan, 2010), 266.

⁸⁶³Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (London: MacMillan, 2001), 811.

It has been well-established that the Second World War was a major contributing factor in the decline of the British Empire.⁸⁶⁴ This thesis has shown that, in relation to Canada, that process began earlier than most scholars contend. The outcome of Churchill's decision to mine the Norwegian Leads, the unsuccessful Norwegian Campaign, the resulting collapse of the Chamberlain government, and Germany's invasion of the Low Countries disrupted communications at a critical period in the history of the British Empire. It provided space for Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Roosevelt to come to mutual agreements with respect to Greenland and laid the groundwork for the Ogdensburg Agreement between the two later that summer. In addition, the British government's insensitivity to concerns of Canadian nationalism and inability to adapt their way of working to consider Canada's independent foreign policy presented numerous diplomatic issues. Lothian's public attempt to speak for Canada over the Greenland situation, the lack of understanding displayed regarding the importance of maintaining cordial relations with the United States in relation to the security of Greenland, the slow responses to inquiries from the Canadian government regarding the appointment of consular representatives to the island, and the stationing of four Royal Navy officers on the *Julius Thompson* without first notifying the Canadian or American governments pushed Canada closer to the United States. When the British eventually realised the significance of Greenland to Allied war planning, Greenland was firmly in the domain of the United States and Canada, an indication of the direction Western Hemispheric security would head for the remainder of the Second World War, and into the Cold War.

⁸⁶⁴See, for example, Toye, "Once Magnificent and Still Considerable," *Churchill's Empire*, 262-302.

The United States

Franklin Roosevelt died three days after the fifth anniversary of the German invasions of Denmark and Norway, on April 12, 1945. Although he did not live to see the war's conclusion, the Western Hemispheric security policies he promoted at the beginning of the war helped to make the United States the global superpower it was to become in the post-war period. Roosevelt tapped into the domestic popular support and international confusion regarding the Monroe Doctrine to eventually justify a neutral United States' occupation of Greenland. The application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland enabled the president to establish patrols, a diplomatic consul, and military and air bases, and to ultimately sign a long-standing agreement relating to the defence of the island, all without violating American neutrality. Once Greenland was officially within the Western Hemisphere, the United States had a duty to protect it. The Doctrine gave Roosevelt a backdoor and justification to act in Greenland that was palatable to most of the American public and Congress. Through the Monroe Doctrine he was able to act to prevent German activity on the island, forestall attacks on American soil, and to some extent aid the allies, without officially entering the war.

The initial lack of clarity concerning the application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland caused confusion within the governments of the United Kingdom and Canada. That confusion ultimately resulted in the *Nascopie* incident in the summer of 1940 that spurred concrete American intervention to secure Greenland. That incident and most of Roosevelt's actions relating to Greenland were done in relative secrecy in the spring and summer of 1940. Before officially acting, the president felt it essential to ratify a new hemispheric security agreement with Latin America and to formalise the boundaries of the new Pan American interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. This was achieved through the Act of Havana in July 1940 and later through the creation of the Permanent Joint Board of

Defence with Prime Minister Mackenzie King in a rail car near Ogdensburg, New York, in August 1940. The Agreement for the defence of Greenland was being negotiated at the same time as the Lend-Lease Act. The two agreements allowed the United States to officially move the American security zone to twenty five degrees longitude. The extension of the security zone would involve aircraft and naval patrols operating from bases that would be created in Greenland, Bermuda, Newfoundland and the West Indies, among others.⁸⁶⁵

The American occupation of Greenland is an important moment in the history of American foreign policy, notably in relation to the Monroe Doctrine. The occupation was the first time the doctrine was practically extended into the North Atlantic. Roosevelt's decision to include Greenland within the Doctrine was crucial to Western Hemispheric security during the war. It comprised part of his much broader strategy of American hemispheric protection that included Canada, Latin America, and Antarctica, and it has had long-term military, diplomatic, and economic consequences including the establishment of American bases on the island that are still in operation today. The president's use of the Monroe Doctrine not only eventually justified the protection of the island, but his refusal to articulate the application of the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland in the initial weeks following the German invasion of Denmark allowed both time for the American public to catch up with Roosevelt's ideas of Hemispheric Defence and prevented any action relating to the island on the part of the international community, particularly the United Kingdom and Canada.

⁸⁶⁵"Doc. 51 Roosevelt to Churchill," 11 April 1940, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas, eds. (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975), 137-139.

The Agreement for the defence of Greenland purposely employed ambiguous language which fortuitously allowed the American presence on the island could be extended by the Americans after the war to ensure the continued security of the Western Hemisphere from any potential threats. During the early stages of the Cold War, Greenland's location made it particularly important for defences against Russian attacks, and in addition to the three bases that were created on the island during the war, another American military base was created at Thule on the North northwest coast of the island.

Canada

Mackenzie King, unlike the other war-time leaders of the North Atlantic Triangle, was still leading his country in 1946. It was clear, however, that while Mackenzie King's unilateral decision with respect to Greenland did affect Canadian international relations by aligning its security policies closer to the United States, but it did not necessarily have the effect that King desired. King's actions drove Canada further away from the British sphere of influence, but it did not foster a fully autonomous Canada. Despite his efforts to forge an equal partnership between Canada and the United States, the subsequent American response to the Greenland situation demonstrates not only a deep mistrust on the part of some in the American government, but also the fact that the Americans had their own plans for Western Hemispheric security that did not include Canada as an equal decision-making partner. Both Greenland and Canada were just part of Roosevelt's larger strategy of hemispheric defence, which also included Latin America and other European colonies in the New World.

By the end of the war Canada had become firmly entrenched in the American sphere of influence. Concerns over the inability on the part of the British to protect Canada during the early stages of the Second World War contributed to King unilaterally re-calibrating

Canadian security policies in favour of the United States. The arrangements made between King and Roosevelt, starting with the handling of the Greenland situation and quickly leading to the Ogdensburg Agreement, meant that the security of Canada would henceforth be viewed in terms of the United States rather than the United Kingdom.

The period was also significant for the Aluminium Company of Canada. Alcan played an important role in Canadian involvement on the island. By 1943, however, Alcan's reliance on natural Greenlandic cryolite was greatly reduced through a combination of an excess from previous years and the production of a more effective synthetic.⁸⁶⁶ Although Alcan did not place additional orders in 1943, it helped to provide cryolite to a number of other countries including the United Kingdom and India for the remainder of the war.⁸⁶⁷ In addition, during the war Alcan not only benefited from the Greenlandic cryolite industry, but also provided aid to the people of Greenland. In spite of the American occupation, the people of Greenland made numerous requests directly to Alcan to purchase and ship their necessities, with the result that Alcan became the official purchasing agent for Ivigtut for the duration of the war.⁸⁶⁸ In one letter in November 1940, R.E. Powell noted that "the Greenlanders apparently find it advantageous to lean more and more on their friends in Montreal instead of friends in the United States—an expected trend which naturally pleases me."⁸⁶⁹ Following the war Powell and two other Alcan employees were awarded a

⁸⁶⁶M.P. Weigel to R.E. Powell, Letter, 17 May 1943, AGMA, 1-4.

⁸⁶⁷H.R. Cockfield to Alcan, Letter, 30 June 1941, AGMA, 1; Paul S. White to M.P. Weigel, Letter, 14 February 1942, AGMA, 1.

⁸⁶⁸Campbell, *Global Mission*, 333.

⁸⁶⁹Campbell, *Global Mission*, 333.

special medal from the Danish government in recognition for their assistance to the people of Greenland during the war.⁸⁷⁰

As mentioned, Greenland's location made it particularly important during the early stages of the Cold War. A strategic American military base was created at Thule on the northwest coast of the island. But as the island's location increased in strategic significance, cryolite, its once vital material, all but vanished from the island. Over the course of the war Alcan developed a cost-effective synthetic alternative to cryolite. By 1963 Alcan received word that the cryolite supplies in Greenland had been completely depleted. Although stockpiles continued to be shipped for several years, the June issue of *World Mining* declared that it was the "first major ore mineral to be completely depleted."⁸⁷¹ The exhaustion of the cryolite supply had a profound impact. Cryolite had been the backbone of the Greenlandic economy for more than a century. By the mid-1980s the town of Ivigtut was abandoned. Today it is a ghost town, and the cryolite industry's derelict infrastructure is succumbing to the elements.

Greenland

"Greenland should have her own government, with plenty of assistance given to them at their request."

W.L.M. King, 29 April 1940⁸⁷²

"In Greenland we call the Second World War the beginning of the liberation."⁸⁷³

⁸⁷⁰Campbell, *Global Mission*, 333.

⁸⁷¹M.P. Weigel to D.D. Mackay, Letter, 15 July 1963, AGMA, 1.

⁸⁷²William Lyon Mackenzie King, 29 April 1940, *The Mackenzie King Diaries, 1893-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), [microfiche], 430.

⁸⁷³Interview, head of mining school in Greenland, 9 April 2013, Sisimiut, Greenland.

Arguably Greenlanders had the least to do with the decisions that led to the American occupation, yet the occupation had the largest impact on their lives. Strangely, however, the events that led to the occupation, and the occupation itself, are virtually unknown to the island's inhabitants. There is little knowledge of the details of the American occupation amongst Greenlanders. The island's low population, limited infrastructure, and mountainous terrain meant that during the war most bases were constructed in areas that were removed from the people living on the island. Many Greenlanders do not consider themselves to have been occupied by the United States; if any occupation is discussed it is the ongoing Danish occupation of the island. Greenland's national museum in its capital city, Nuuk, does not mention either the Second World War or the American occupation. In the museum's displays the island's history begins around 2400 BC. Timelines of Denmark's involvement on the island commence with Hans Egede's arrival in 1721 and show an uninterrupted presence until Greenlandic Home Rule in 1979 to the present day. A large plaque in the museum's main room provides visitors with the details of the Danish colonial period:

With the advent of Christianity in 1721 and state colonisation of the west coast of Greenland from 1774 came crucial ruptures in lifestyle and thinking of the Inuit . . . Christianity with the Dano-Norwegian missionary Hans Egede at its head gradually marginalised the Inuit's perception of life and the customs belonging to their spiritual life. Greenland was closed off and kept isolated from the surrounding world as a colony until 1953.⁸⁷⁴

The museum's curators do not offer the motivation for the Danish change in policy in 1953, but the American occupation played a major role in the process. In spite of the omission of the American occupation in the museum's displays, evidence of American influence is apparent throughout its exhibitions. Signs in the museum, for example, are in English and Greenlandic, not Danish.

⁸⁷⁴Quote from explanatory sign on "The Colonial Period: Lifestyle and Class Distinctions," in Nunatta Katersugaasivia, Nuuk.

On the streets of Greenland's capital city, Greenland's war-time governor, Eske Brun, is regarded as a national hero. Svane is less known, as he was based in the United States for much of the war. A biography of Brun has recently been published in Greenlandic and Danish. Consensus in Nuuk's bookshop and stationary store was that without Brun's efforts to garner American assistance during the war "Greenlanders would have starved."⁸⁷⁵ On the island, Brun is credited for the maintenance of the island's population and for ushering a new period of openness in Greenland. An examination of American, British, and archival records of the later war period reveal a different reality. The Canadian consul noted in October 1944 that tensions had developed between Brun and the American consul because, "Brun does not publicise the help and services that the administration receives from base command and considers that this omission gives a false impression of the value of the Army and US Navy to Greenland."⁸⁷⁶

This thesis has shown how little agency Inuit Greenlanders had in the genesis of the American occupation of the island during the war. In spite of this lack of agency in the development of American policies relating to the island, or the occupation itself, the encouragement of Greenlandic nationalism on the part of the United States, and to some extent Canada, effectively opened Greenland to the world and sowed the seeds for home rule on the island. This thesis has dealt primarily with the actions of the United States, British, Canadian, Danish, and Greenlandic governments and the direct and indirect implications of American actions within, and relating to, Greenland during the Second World War. As a result the sources used have been primarily European and North American. The Greenlandic government during the time of the American occupation was

⁸⁷⁵ Interview Employee, 6 April 2013, Nuuk Center, Nuuk, Greenland.

⁸⁷⁶ Max Dunbar, "Dispatch no. 37: Situation in Greenland," 3 October 1944, The British National Archives, FO 371/43115/N7614/1148/15/21.

almost exclusively Danish, and Inuit Greenlanders had little to no role in the governance of the colony. Sources dealing with Inuit Greenlanders' history during the period are extremely rare. There is significant scope for future research on the impact in Greenland of American policies relating to the island during the war. I hope in future work to address this dearth of information by conducting oral histories from remaining survivors of the period.

For Greenlanders, the Second World War and the American military presence on the island greatly increased the interaction between Greenland and the outside world. When Denmark resumed the management of the island after the war, it could not return the island to its former policy of isolation. The Danish government took steps to integrate it more meaningfully into Danish political life and culture. In the years following the war Greenland experienced greater centralization of administration, with creation of one governing body (National Council) for the entire island and thirteen local Municipal Councils. At the same time, Greenland formally became a county of Denmark and was represented in the Danish parliament by two local members.⁸⁷⁷ Ambitious building programs increased the inhabitants of the island's access to sanitation, electricity, and heating. Education and public health care programs were also expanded in the post-war period. Not all of these changes, however, were positive. The Danish government instituted social housing programs that relocated large numbers of Greenlanders into cities in order to facilitate the aforementioned programs. The types of housing, which had been imported directly from Denmark, separated Greenlanders from the land and made it difficult for them to engage in traditional hunting and fishing practices. There was, for

⁸⁷⁷Hughes, "Under Four Flags: Recent Culture Change among the Eskimos," 5.

example, "nowhere for Greenlanders to skin a seal in a Danish-style apartment."⁸⁷⁸ The modernization also brought the problems associated with modern Western lifestyles that the Danish government had attempted to prevent for the first two hundred years of their involvement on the island, including drugs, alcohol, and other social issues.

These changes, however, were not all driven by the Danish government; some were instituted as a result of the increasing American interest in the island in the post-war period. Despite the controversy over the Agreement for the defence of Greenland during the war both houses of the Danish Parliament unanimously voted to accept the agreement on May 16, 1945.⁸⁷⁹ At the end of the Second World War, the concerns that were felt at its start regarding potential air strikes on the continental United States were technologically possible as a result of war-time advances in aviation. In a meeting of the Senate Military Affairs Committee in November 1945, General Spaatz argued that "The next war will be predominantly an air war . . . attacks can now come across the Arctic and the oceans and strike . . . deep into the heart of the country."⁸⁸⁰

Greenland, like Canada, was the first line of defence for the United States against Russia in the Cold War. While the governance of the colony was returned to Denmark after the war, the security of the island was not. The Americans maintained several bases on the island and developed plans the Thule Airbase, which was established after another agreement for the defence of the island was signed in 1951. The Thule base and related Century City, a top-secret underground military complex, both had nuclear capabilities. Neither the people

⁸⁷⁸Interview Employee World of Greenland, 14 April 2013, Ilulissat, Greenland.

⁸⁷⁹Mr. Gallop, Minister to Denmark to the Foreign Office, Telegram, The British National Archives, FO 37147271, N5670/1658/15/12.

⁸⁸⁰M.J. Armitage and R.A. Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 16.

of Greenland nor the citizens of Denmark had any knowledge of the extent of the American armaments in Greenland's north. The crash landings of two nuclear-armed U.S. Air Force planes in 1962 finally made the American measures to secure the island public. In the latter stages and the years directly following the Cold War, Greenland's strategic value to the United States also declined as a result of new weapons technologies—intercontinental ballistic missiles, for example—and the American military presence on the island was greatly reduced.⁸⁸¹

Today changes in global weather patterns are being demonstrated dramatically in Greenland where an increase in temperature of one degree centigrade in the island's far north is the difference between the island's ice remaining frozen or melting. In the same way that the island has been seen as a barometer for global warming, it can also be seen as a barometer for geopolitical change. This thesis has shown that Greenland has achieved prominence in times of geopolitical and economic crisis such as World War Two.

Greenland, after a period of relative obscurity following the Cold War, is once again the centre of global attention.

Today the attention of the international community is also returning to Greenland because of increasing competition for resources. Multinational mining corporations are gearing up for a modern day gold rush in Greenland as the polar ice cap melts to reveal a wealth of mineral resources. The scope and scale of these projects are far larger than those employed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Ivigtut and have the potential to greatly improve the finances of the island, but they may also exact a great environmental cost. There are serious questions too around the ownership of land and resources on the island. Denmark

⁸⁸¹See Nikolaj Petersen, "SAC at Thule: Greenland in the U.S. Polar Strategy." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 12 (Spring 2011): 90-115 for a detailed overview of Greenland's role in American cold war defence strategy.

has granted Greenland's home rule government full control over its natural resources, but there is no concept of private ownership of land on the island. Currently all land is communally owned by the island's inhabitants. This will potentially pose problems for foreign corporations wishing to invest in the island. In addition, Greenland continues to have significant infrastructure issues, and its low population means that there are insufficient numbers of Greenlanders to work in the proposed mining projects. Despite these issues, the income that is expected to be derived from natural resources in Greenland may enable Greenlanders to obtain their much-discussed independence from Denmark.

In another era of economic crisis and global change it is not currently known what form that independence will take and how Greenland will position itself, or be positioned in future. The island's security remains largely in the hands of the American government, but if Greenland becomes fully autonomous from Denmark these security arrangements may need to be re-negotiated. Today the United States may be in the twilight of its global power, as Britain was seventy years ago, and several emerging powers, including both China and India, have expressed interest in Greenland and its resources. As history has shown, these moments of transition can have unexpected results.

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