

Lackenbauer, Whitney P. and Peter Kikkert, eds. *The Canadian Forces and Arctic Sovereignty: Debating Roles, Interests, and Requirements, 1968-1974*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2010.

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The Canadian Forces and Arctic Sovereignty begins with Stephen Harper's December 2005 speech in Winnipeg. "You don't defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric or advertising campaigns" proclaimed the future Prime Minister, "you need forces on the ground, ships in the sea and proper surveillance"(3). This speech set the scene for a renewed government focus on Arctic sovereignty. It also foreshadowed how the issue was to be dealt with. In the years to follow, the government announced a series of significant plans for new Arctic defence programs: a new icebreaker, new patrol craft, a deep water port and a military base – to name only the most expensive.

What Whitney Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert have sought to convey with this book is that, despite this seemingly novel focus on the Arctic, it has actually all happened before. Canada has undergone a number of Arctic sovereignty crises over the past few decades and, in many respects, the questions which past governments faced were the same as those being debated today – what Canadian sovereignty is and how we defend it being the most pressing. What the authors suggest is that the Harper government has, in fact, reacted in much the same way as Trudeau and other governments past, that is, by turning to the Canadian Forces to safeguard our Northern

heritage. This naturally raises another important point; if we are again turning to the military, what exactly are we asking them to do? The primary objective of *The Canadian Forces and Arctic Sovereignty* is to examine in detail how these questions facing the government today were answered in years past.

In doing this, the book is divided into two primary sections: a lengthy and insightful introduction and a selection of crucial primary source documents. In the introduction, the authors provide an excellent overview of Canadian Arctic sovereignty from the Second World War to the 1970s. The focus is mainly on the issue of Arctic maritime sovereignty since, of course, that is the issue facing Canada today. This account is concise and highly readable yet provides a very in-depth overview of how Canadian policy makers thought and why they acted (or didn't act) in the way that they did. This short introduction is also one of the best descriptions available of the conflict which took place within the government after the voyage of the SS *Manhattan*, concerning how exactly the Canadian Forces were supposed to contribute to Arctic sovereignty.

The authors' conclusions are clear and well supported by the documents in the section that follows. These conclusions should also be of considerable interest to Canadian governments in this century which are, and will continue to be, faced with very similar problems. Simply put, the authors have found that history does not appear to support the 'boots on the ground' approach to Arctic sovereignty. Historically, the application of a military presence has not *automatically* equated to an increase in sovereignty. The reason for this is simple; Arctic sovereignty is essentially a legal and political question which is difficult to affect with ships and planes.

The emphasis on military activities, such as surveillance and sovereignty patrols, has often been a waste of resources for services which should have been engaged in serving a functional role rather than being up North simply to see and be seen. As Erik Wang from the Canadian Forces Headquarters suggested in one of the supplied documents: "It would not be long before somebody noticed that one visit of the Governor General, accompanied by an enthusiastic press corps, can provide a sovereign presence to a remote area much more effectively and much more cheaply than 100 surveillance overflights"(31).

To provide something of a counterpoint to Lackenbauer and Kikkert's premise, the afterword has been written by Rob Huebert – an academic known for traditionally taking more of a hardline approach to the subject. For Huebert, the mistakes of the 1970s were not necessarily the focus of government policy but their attempts to do things on the cheap. Huebert also points out the curious failure of Canadian governments to develop either the force or defence agreements needed to deal with the actual security and sovereignty threats which Lackenbauer and Kikkert omit. This is the supposed presence of Soviet submarines in the Canadian Arctic archipelago. The failure to develop a coherent policy to deal with these submarine transits and the subsequent delegation of Canada's Arctic security to the US Navy is for Huebert the real sovereignty issue from this period.

The second major section of this book, and really its *raison d'être*, is a selection of most of the (available) major government documents on the subject. This collection complements the introduction well and would be a useful tool to any student looking to study the development of Canadian Arctic policy. The files which the authors have compiled are a collection of Defence, External Affairs and House of Commons documents, many of which were only very recently declassified. They are well organized thematically and provide a fantastic insight into how the government came to understand maritime sovereignty in the 1960s and 1970s and how it ultimately sought to defend its interests.

While the average reader and indeed even the odd expert on the subject will not revel in the prospect of reading so many primary documents, this collection certainly serves a valuable purpose. With so much vital material still classified and with so little publicly available, the authors have essentially provided students, and even established academics, with an invaluable source of material. For anyone working on an academic paper on Arctic sovereignty, and who would prefer to avoid a month-long trip to the National Archives in Ottawa, Lackenbauer and Kikkert have provided a viable and very valuable alternative.

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