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## Canada: The Strategic and Military Pawn

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War I made by the authors of our textbooks and leaders of the atomic age. Bohr, Summerfeld, Haldane, J. J. Thompson, Weizmann, Lindeman, Lanchester, and dozens of others march through these pages.

Those of us who have worked in the international defense research and development arena may also find interesting these portrayals of World War I activities of the National Research Council in the United States and several of the British laboratories and "stone frigates" such as H.M.S. *Vernon*.

In his concluding statements, Hartcup states that "by 1918 there were few weapons or instruments of war, including remedies for wounds and disease that had not been the concern of civilian scientists or technologists in or out of uniform. The value of civilian collaboration lay far less in *inventions* than in the extension of the boundaries of science for specific applications." He goes on to quote an American, J. S. Ames: "The knowledge required . . . is that of the scientific investigator, the man who by his own laboratory investigations has added to our store of knowledge." This is as true in 1989 as it was in 1918.

Another point that I hope we do not lose sight of in peacetime budget battles is the necessity for operational ties and mutual respect between scientists and the military. In World War I, it was said that much scientific work was rendered futile by the lack of interest of the naval authorities. There is also the observation that "the process of

appointing someone who *knows nothing* to supervise the work of someone who *does* seems to have been at the bottom of a great many of our misfortunes. . . ." Where have we heard that before?

*The War of Invention* is a useful adjunct to the library of one concerned with mobilization in an industrial and economic sense. The examples from World War I have altogether too many analogues in 1989 to be disregarded as dated. In all honesty, the author does not give equal treatment to the French, American, Russian, or German industrial scientific efforts. Comparing and contrasting the German and Austrian industrial organizations and processes would have been useful. However, I think there is enough data for us to conclude that the spirit of scientific and intellectual freedom that is the hallmark of American, British, and French science and engineering is the prerequisite to successfully apply science, industry, and technology to meet wartime needs in a timely way and in sufficient quantities.

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Vano, Gerard S. *Canada: The Strategic and Military Pawn*. New York: Praeger, 1988. 163pp. \$35.95

The dominion of the north, according to Gerard Vano, was not so much part of a North Atlantic triangle as a British-Canadian axis, and it did not so much evolve from

colony to nation as from a tool of British to a tool of American imperialism. Do not be deceived by appearances: this is no Marxist tract. The author writes in the tradition of what the intellectual historian Carl C. Berger, in *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971), identified as central Canadian imperialists.

Vano surveys Canadian history from the French regime to the present day. The nub of his argument is that Canada has always been deferential to extraterritorial direction (I use his favorite words), that Canadian political institutions have become truncated and fragmented because French Canada's accommodation with English Canada has not worked, while global confrontation between the superpowers—like previous confrontations between France and Britain, or Britain and the United States—“virtually obviates” purely Canadian concerns “by its sheer totality.” He pursues this line of thought logically enough, but his premises rest on some questionable assumptions, his scholarly references are idiosyncratic—he simply ignores most of the latest studies in Canadian military history, and shows no awareness of new work in intellectual, social, and diplomatic history—and the evidence does not support many of his conclusions.

There is no arguing that geography makes Canada unique. Does this mean that the country, “despite the opinions of historians to the con-

trary, developed outside of the Western historical experience?”

The author maintains that the geographic similarities to Eurasia, the “interaction between capital and space” which made Canada more like Europe than like America or Russia, and the political dependence on a dominant foreign power for technology, had a fundamental influence on Canada's development. Unlike European countries, Vano argues, Canada never established a church with political primacy (the first estate), military institutions which exercised political and social leadership (the second estate), or a political culture dependent on the interplay of the first and second estates (the third estate). Canada is therefore an incomplete society. An American “time bias” (as opposed to the “space bias” governing Canadian affairs) has impregnated Canadians “who mostly live within 200 miles of the American border” with “the American sense of emancipatory promise, destiny and futurity.” “The collision between durable spatiality and temporal mutability resolves itself directly into a north-south continuum,” and consequently the American time bias has eroded the power of the central government in Ottawa.

“Confederation” writes Vano “was an unsuccessful experiment in protouniversality and political monolithism.” I find it interesting that he does not once refer in this book to D.G. Creighton or Harold Innis, whose Laurentian interpretation of Canadian history provides the

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basis for such a remark. Indeed, Vano's understanding of Canadian history is not unlike Donald Creighton's deterministic view of the Empire of the St. Lawrence and the role of commerce in developing Canada, and the subsequent gloomy conclusion that Canada has taken the American fork in the road, one that will lead to a dead end. Vano simply sees the beginning of the slide—what he terms “Canada Fade”—at a much earlier stage in the country's history.

That pre-Confederation and pre-Loyalist Canada established the particularisms that are to be found in the country, particularisms which Vano attributes to political and constitutional developments of the 19th century, has been argued successfully by a number of leading intellectual and social historians. S. F. Wise, in his 1974 presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association, “Liberal Consensus or Ideological Battleground: Some Reflections on the Hartz Thesis,” effectively destroyed a number of the arguments on which Vano rests his case. Indeed, the innovative approach Vano takes to discussing the problem of Canada's military and diplomatic role in the world rests on a curiously old-fashioned concept of the country. Canada's maritime provinces appear hardly to exist, while its military role in the 19th century is portrayed rather like the notional scenario that might have been imagined by Canadian military planners in the absence of a definable military threat in the 1920s: “. . . a deferential—and possibly sacrifici-

cial—projection of Europe (or, by extension, of Japan between 1902 and 1922), directed against the United States. . . .” British designs on Canada, by this account, were Machiavellian. Whitehall never wanted the country to develop true autonomy or war-making capability; Canada was simply to be a source of cannon fodder, as she is, Vano suggests, under American domination.

Canadian military doctrine, in Vano's view, has never evolved as such, nor has Canadian capacity to evolve technology been suitable to the country's own requirements. This is a tenable argument. There have been few military innovators in Canada. The political scientist James Eayrs (whose five volume series *In Defence of Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1964-1986) is not noted anywhere in this book), made the same point; he ascribes the paucity of independent Canadian military thought before the Second World War to the relatively short history and small size of the Canadian Armed Forces and the limited education of their officers. Vano ascribes it to the absence of a “military culture.” Perhaps there is not much difference in these two interpretations. Yet there have been military innovators in Canada, and there is evidence for arguing that there is, in fact, a distinct Canadian military culture.

C. P. Stacey's extensive writings on Canadian military history, the work of Desmond Morton, R.A. Preston's detailed studies of pre-

commissioning education in Canada's armed forces, and the recent study of military professionalism in Canada by Stephen Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1988) are cases in point. In addition, recent scholarship has traced the origins of the Canadian Navy to Canadian 19th century imperatives rather than imperial requirements of the 20th century. There was a vacuum left by the Royal Navy in the last decades of the 19th century, one that had to be filled. In other words, the Naval Service Act of 1910 was not just a response to the German naval menace. True, that menace forced Wilfrid Laurier and Robert Borden to change the remarkably similar views each of them held on the kind of navy Canada needed, but the circumstances of two World Wars resulted in a naval establishment very much along the lines first conceived.

Without denying many of the weaknesses in Canadian defense policy described by Vano, it must be said he tailors events to his theory without adequately considering the growing and distinguished literature on the history of Canadian military institutions, or comparing Canadian military situations to those of other countries. The armed forces suffered from retrenchment—much as American military institutions have done (something that Vano does not dwell on) at various points in U.S. history—after both World Wars and in periods when détente or the

absence of a clear military threat have influenced the holders of the purse strings. In the 20th century, Canada has responded generously when a need for military contributions has been perceived, has consciously related military contributions in alliance warfare to the influence the country will have in international councils (the so-called functional principal adopted by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1943), and has been at pains to prevent others from invading Canadian sovereignty for their own strategic purposes. It is remarkable, in view of the thesis Vano is advancing, that he makes no mention of Roger Swanson's seminal article, "The United States as a Security Threat to Canada," published in *Behind the Headlines* in 1970, nor of the intelligent discussion of that thesis in Colin S. Gray's *Canadian Defence Priorities: A Question of Relevance* (Vancouver, 1972). Vano has also overlooked C. P. Stacey's *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-45* (Ottawa, 1970), which opened up this whole question and demands consideration by anyone writing in the field.

Generally speaking it must be admitted that Canadian uniformed services do not receive the kind of adulation that the military gets in many other countries. But Canada has always been jealous of her military prerogatives. Political control of forces in combat zones has, in fact, been the principal hallmark of Canadian military policy in time of war, as British and U.S.

strategic planners and theater commanders have found to their cost. There is some similarity here to the Australian situation, both in relation to British and American military cooperation. A comparison with Australia is noticeably absent in this book.

Vano points to Canada's unsuccessful attempt to develop its own fighter, the AVRO Arrow interceptor, as the prime technological example of failure to be militarily independent. He might with equal force have mentioned similar failures, the Bobcat personnel carrier and the Hydrofoil. It is interesting to note, however, that in spite of the cutbacks of the Trudeau years, Canada continued to develop its own naval technology in the form of Tribal-class frigates, ships integrated processing and data systems (SHINPADS), helicopter hold down systems, and variable depth sonar. Destabilizing influences like reorganization of the armed forces (unification), civilianization in the headquarters, and bilingualism, have been weathered with remarkable success: the ability to adapt to change is usually a sign of strength.

I have to admit that I am one of those people condescendingly described in this book as "raised in the tradition of Canadian history that perceives Britain as a benevolent motherland. . . ." Acquaintance with the documents has modified those views, but nothing Gerard

Vano has written persuades me that Canada has been the victim of Machiavellian manipulation by either British or American policy-makers. What is missing from this book is the "friction" in human affairs—in war and peace—that governs events. Arrogance and superciliousness, and from time to time stupidity (British, American and Canadian alike), undoubtedly had a lot to do with the decisions that resulted in unacceptable use of Canadian military forces. There is ample evidence to counter Vano's assertions of a successful exploitation of Canada for strategic and military ends. What Canada has done in the world of diplomacy and strategy has indeed been very much in its own self-interest—as demonstrated by mainstream Canadian historians and political scientists like C. P. Stacey and John Holmes (see especially his *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1979 and 1982). Sir Wilfrid Laurier may not have been exactly right when he forecast that the 20th century would belong to Canada, but in its first 125 years, as many British and American diplomats and military professionals would have to agree, the country has more often been a thorn in the side of its allies than a pawn in their hands.

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