



A National Force: The Evolution of Canada's Army, 1950-2000 (Studies in Canadian Military History)

By Peter Kasurak

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This landmark book dispels the idea that the period between the Second World War and the unification of the armed services in 1968 constituted the Canadian Army's "golden age." Drawing on recently declassified documents, Peter Kasurak depicts an era clouded by the military leadership's failure to loosen the grasp of British army culture, produce its own doctrine, and advise political leaders effectively. The discrepancy between the army's goals and the Canadian state's aspirations as a peacemaker in the postwar world resulted in a series of civilian-military crises that ended only when the scandal of the Somalia Affair in 1993 forced reform.

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Editorial Review

Review

This book is probably the most exhaustive study of Canadian Army doctrine and development in print. Readers should understand that Kasurak set out to produce a history of the doctrine of the Canadian Army and the development of the force as an institution representative of the nation that it serves. Anyone looking to understand the Canadian Army, its history, institutional culture, and relationship to the Canadian nation will not be disappointed in this book. (Blake Whitaker *Army History* 2016-10-01)

Canadians consider the period between the Second World War and the unification of the armed services in 1968 as a “golden age,” an era when their army overcame its imperial past and emerged as a truly national peacekeeping force.

In this landmark book, Peter Kasurak draws on recently declassified documents to show that this era was in fact clouded by the military leadership’s failure to loosen the grasp of British army culture. As a colonial force, the Canadian Army had never developed mechanisms to produce its own doctrine or to advise political leaders effectively. During the Cold War, its pursuit of a “big army” policy in the absence of adequate funds and equipment placed the army at odds with citizens and the state. The discrepancy between the army’s goals and the state’s aspirations as a peacemaker in the postwar world resulted in a series of civilian-military crises that ended only when the scandal of the Somalia Affair in 1993 forced reform.

This groundbreaking account of regimentalism, reaction, and reform reveals that the Canadian Army had not achieved full professional independence prior to unification. It took years of effort and organizational pain to develop into an army that reflected the aspirations of both its country and its military leadership.

Review

A National Force is a revisionist examination of civil-military relations and military effectiveness based on extensive documentary research in army files, many of which have never been used before. As a study of the fundamental responsibilities and working relationship of the national government and its professional military advisers, Peter Kasurak’s book is new and entirely original. It will be debated not only by Canadian military historians but also by a much broader readership. (Stephen Harris, chief historian, Directorate of History and Heritage, National Defence Headquarters)

In *A National Force*, Peter Kasurak refutes the received version of army history since 1945 – that the Canadian Army was a highly professional force from the 1950s through to unification and confused thereafter. Instead, he suggests that confusion was the norm after the Second World War as the army groped for a doctrine and tried to figure out what it could be in a world in which Canada was a small player. This very important book is based on excellent use of the army’s records, and it will force debate and reinterpretation. (J.L. Granatstein, co-editor of *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Military History*)

About the Author

Peter Kasurak retired in 2007 after leading the defence and national security sections of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. He holds a PhD in military and diplomatic history from Duke University and teaches part-time at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto.

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