

Lieutenant-Colonel Bill Bentley. Professional Ideology and the Profession of Arms in Canada. Toronto, ON: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2005.

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Lt. Col. Bentley served in the Canadian infantry for over thirty years. In doing so, he gained years of valuable operational experience along with a keen mind for understanding the professional relationship between nation states, peoples, and military forces. Since retirement, Bentley has devoted his knowledge, expertise, and intellectual strength to the study, understanding, and evolution of the “profession of arms” in Canada. He is currently a Senior Researcher with the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute (Kingston, Ontario) and one of the main creators of the Canadian Defence Academy’s premier publication, Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada. Bentley explains in its forward that one of the purposes of Duty with Honour is to encourage ongoing research and discussion so as to assist members of the Canadian Forces in overcoming the diverse security challenges of the 21st Century. With Professional Ideology and the Profession of Arms in Canada, Bentley himself answers such a lofty challenge by successfully advancing the understanding of Canadian military professionalism with a creative scholarly work rooted in theoretical ideology and supported by strong analytical reasoning. In his introduction, Bentley states that the major theme advanced in this work is that a continuing threat to the Canadian “profession of arms” exists because of an overall lack of understanding within the profession regarding the concept of professional ideology and the role it plays in sustaining the concept of professionalism itself. He further posits that only through the creation and understanding of a sovereign (Canadian) professional ideology will the Canadian “profession of arms” be able to fully protect the public it is sworn to serve. The reader is left to wonder that if such an understanding does not currently exist then what does such an omission mean for the security of Canadians at present.

Professional Ideology asks and broadly attempts to answer four key questions in a broad Canadian context. These questions include: What is the “profession of arms?”; What are the elements of military professionalism that help to account for Canada’s military performance over the decades?; How does the “profession of arms” relate to other professions?; and What distinguishes the “profession of arms” from governmental and business employment?. In answering such questions, this work takes the reader through five chapters, commencing with a comprehensive review of the historical, conceptual, and contemporary meanings of the terms “professions” and “professionalism.” In the second chapter, Bentley further develops the concept of “profession” by specifically focusing his analysis on the historical, sociological, and theoretical development of the “military profession.” This study of military professions contains a vast array of information as Bentley seemingly covers the entire gamut of scholarly literature on the topic. More importantly, as the chapter nears its end, Bentley begins to link the theoretical aspects to contemporary issues within the Canadian Forces by positing a figurative professional construct. His subsequent analysis provides the factual base from which his professional ideology theme finds root. Readers with little or no previous knowledge on the topic of “military professions” may find this chapter’s analysis daunting. However, readers requiring a starting and, perhaps, finishing point for understanding what the military profession is and why it is fundamentally important for all Canadians should find this chapter invaluable as it condenses the most important elements of military professions into a complete “nutshell.”

Chapter three furthers Bentley’s analysis of professional ideology beginning with a comparative analysis of the competing ideologies of market and managerialism. Building on this analysis, this reviewer welcomed his articulation of Carl von Clausewitz’s Model of International Conflict as a point of reference for understanding the subsequent system-theory

construct on the General System of War and Conflict. This reviewer, schooled in strategic theory and philosophy, found such constructs both stimulating and thought provoking, though others may not.

Bentley focuses his ideological examination by specifically addressing the components of the Canadian “profession of arms” in the next chapter. Drawing directly on chapter two’s theoretical model of professions, Bentley discusses why a comprehensive body of knowledge and a valued-based ethos must exist to ensure the ongoing existence of the “profession of arms” in Canada. He concludes with his earlier warning that if Canadian members of the “profession of arms” do not begin to understand the convoluted theory of professional military ideology and do not create their own sovereign professional ideology with which to stabilize and strengthen that profession, then their profession may be lost. This reviewer posits that such a proclamation should trigger a thoughtful response from the “profession” itself. We shall see.

With chapter five, Bentley provides a professional developmental model and methodology for how a truly Canadian military professional ideology can be created and nurtured. As such, the focus of this concluding chapter deals directly with professional development in the Canadian Forces (CF) by calling on the leadership of the CF to embrace professional ideology as the foundation for any such professional development. In wrapping up his final argument, Bentley brings the reader back to where his scholarly work began, asking again what the Profession of Arms in Canada actually is and how it should function in modern Canadian society - good questions and their answers are mired, questionably, in ideological theory either to its detriment or benefit. The answer is left up to the reader.

There are two main drawbacks in this work. The first drawback is its presentation. All of the work’s differing diagrams, models, figures, and pictorial constructs are sized smaller than

average with this reviewer finding the solely black and white graphics somewhat visually unclear. However, this reviewer also acknowledges that while the decision to not use colour diminishes the professional appearance of the book, it only marginally detracts from the book's content and most likely keeps the selling price to a minimum, thus encouraging a wide readership. A subordinate concern may not be a concern at all. Several readers may find the book's complex language rather demanding. However, such a text should push a reader to once again rediscover the dictionary so as to search for that all elusive correct meaning. This reviewer often searches for a "word of the week" but in reading this work over several hours, numerous "words of the day" were found, enough for every day of the month; a literary enjoyment.

The second major drawback is also its main strength, the theoretical content of the work itself. During the first read through, while this reviewer found herself wishing for more defined terminology for concepts such as "meta-competencies," "paradigm shift" and "construct," she also desired even more detailed explanations regarding the copious theoretical ideas expressed throughout the book arising from almost every sociological, economic, and military analysis of the last two centuries. However on the second pass, the reviewer decided that this work is not meant to be a definitive textbook on strategic studies nor a complete philosophical work on military professionalism. It should not be read as such. Ultimately, the reader should not find it necessary to understand every philosophy or argument presented in the first three chapters as the true wisdom of the overall work is expressed in the last two chapters. The analyses and arguments presented in the first part of the book are only for reference, intellectual consideration and insight, reflection and future understanding. Such points nicely set up Bentley's final supposition.

With Professional Ideology, Lt. Col. Bentley has done a great service to the members of the Canadian Forces and Canadians alike. In accumulating, organizing and synthesizing an enormous amount of information, he has created a mainly accessible and intellectually stimulating 115-page synopsis of the complex nature of the “profession of arms” in Canada. He has also called upon such “professionals” to open their minds to the idea that a purely Canadian professional ideology is instrumental to the very existence and longevity of the “profession of arms” in Canada. This inaugural volume of the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute’s Strategic Leadership Writing Project sets a very high standard for subsequent volumes and this reviewer looks forward to reading and learning from them all.

Pamela Stewart is a Master’s candidate of Strategic Studies, Center for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary. Her Master’s thesis addresses leadership development and strategic management in the Canadian Forces. Her academic interests include military leadership theory, strategic development and implementation, Canadian Force transformation, and the military justice system. Past experiences include practicing as a litigation lawyer and giving service to Canada as a junior Naval Reserve MARS officer.