They Have Always Been Military: On So-Called Militarized Policing in Canada*

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Over the last few years there has been growing attention to and discussion of the so-called militarization of policing. Unfortunately, much of this discussion poses the militarization of policing as a recent phenomenon. This paper examines policing in Canada within the context of an ongoing military practice. It shows that policing was founded on a military basis and continues to be carried out on a military basis as exemplified in the more recent developments that have raised alarm about militarization. It raises the need for a re-theorization of policing within the context of capitalist social struggles and highlights some instructive recent theoretical developments toward that end. Properly understanding the police in Canada can help to contextualize and challenge current responses that are limited to reforms for police (de-militarization, de-escalation, improved training, non-lethal weaponry, etc.) or which even allow for the expansion of policing (community policing, drones, etc.).

KEYWORDS: Canada, Colonialism, Militarization, Policing, Protest, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Settler States, War.


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