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Sommario/riassunto	In explaining why the British North American provinces united in 1867, historians have tended to see Confederation as a logical response to the internal and external challenges of the 1860s. With some ambiguity, they have also attributed a major role to the British imperial factor in forcing the Maritime provinces to accept their predestined place in the Canadian nation. In Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation, 1837-1867, Ged Martin offers a sceptical review of claims that Confederation answered all the problems facing the

provinces, and examines in detail British perceptions of Canada and ideas about its future. The major British contribution to the coming of Confederation is to be found not in the aftermath of the Quebec conference, where the imperial role was mainly one of bluff and exhortation, but prior to 1864, in a vague consensus among opinion-formers that the provinces would one day unite. Faced with an inescapable need to secure legislation at Westminster for a new political structure, British North American politicians found they could work within the context of a metropolitan preference for intercolonial union.
