Occupying the “Other”

Occupying the “Other”: Australia and Military Occupations from Japan to Iraq

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INTRODUCTION

ROBIN GERSTER AND CHRISTINE DE MATOS

"Military occupation" suggests a transitory and transitional state rather permanent annexation or sovereign control. In practice, however, the takeover can seem to be total, obliterating the independent life of the occupied country. When the American writer Harry Roskolenko, a sometime resident of Australia, visited occupied Japan in early 1947, he observed that the hierarchy of the United States military had been superimposed over the social landscape of the country. At the top of the new pecking order was "SCAP", personified by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur. "If General MacArthur is the unconscious Emperor-Elect," Roskolenko wrote, "then every GI over the rank of 2nd lieutenant is a prince", and the common soldiery "mere barons and dukes".[1] In newly-feudal Japan, the Japanese themselves were invisible. From the usurped Emperor Hirohito down, they had become nameless serfs, at the pleasure of the conquerors.

Also missing from Roskolenko's picture are the Australians, who travelled to Japan in their thousands as a major part of the British Commonwealth component of the occupation. Given that Roskolenko was in the country to report on their activities, which were largely confined to war-ravaged Hiroshima prefecture, a distant 900 kilometers from Tokyo, this is strange. After all, his travelling companion was the Australian artist Albert Tucker who, in addition to painting and sketching the nuclear devastation in Hiroshima, was reduced to producing portraits of the wives of American officers to help pay for the trip.[2] Yet the negation of the Australian presence is an apt reflection of the nation's subsidiary operational role in Japan. Confined to an atom-bombed backwater, the Australians were out-of-sight and out-of-mind, a long way in every sense from the great nation-shaping events taking place in downtown Tokyo, where the Supreme Commander ran Japan from his suite of offices pointedly overlooking Hirohito's palace. MacArthur himself never

[1] Roskolenko, "Tokyo Letter", 64.
[2] Burke, *Australian Gothic*, 284.

deigned to pay them a single visit. Observed Donald Richie, the noted American Japanophile who joined the occupation on New Year's Day 1947: "Though the A in SCAP stood for Allied, in practice the Allies were shoved elsewhere, and the A came to stand for American. The new imperial government was the USA, with General Douglas MacArthur, just across the moat, as its uncrowned emperor."[3] Australia's role in postwar Japan is historically instructive. As an occupier, it has necessarily had to play second fiddle to the United States, to fight for recognition and to be put in the picture, and to balance national interest and policy prerogatives with those dictated by its all-powerful ally.

* * *

Military occupation has always been about empire**.** For all its purported benevolence—ancient Rome's "Pax Romana" or Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere"—occupation is a condition of aggressive imperialism. Rudyard Kipling's well-known euphemism for imperial hegemony, "the white man's burden", is one of the defining tags of the great age of British influence. Yet Kipling was not talking about the Raj in India, as is often assumed to be the case, but urging the United States to take up the challenge of empire borne by Britain and other European nations. His landmark poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899) was written to coincide with the American conquest of the Philippines and acquisition of other former Spanish colonies such as Cuba and Puerto Rico. The first military governor of newly American-occupied Manila was General Arthur MacArthur, who thought it the duty of the "magnificent Aryan races" to create progressive social evolution in Asia.[4] Half a century later, his son Douglas MacArthur set about redeeming Japan. A "feudalistic", heathen, inferior Oriental "Other" was to be recast in the image of the advanced, Christian, superior West as exemplified by the United States. The Occupation was an exercise in social and political engineering, informed by an autocratic insistence on "Democracy".

America's Raj-like control of a country it was hell-bent on giving the gift of "freedom" was a troubling paradox that did not go unnoticed. The Japanese, Donald Richie wrote in his diary in 1947 while working for the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* in Tokyo, "are treated like blacks in the American south, or like the 'natives' in Forster's *A Passage to India*".[5] The Australians in Japan exhibited rather less missionary zeal than their

[3] Richie, "The Occupied Arts", 12.
[4] See Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, 171.
[5] Richie, *The Japan Journals 1947-2004*, 27.

ally in proselytising the democratic faith, yet relished an historic opportunity to indulge in the power and the privileges of the conqueror. Like the Americans, the Australians fostered the practice of having the servicemen's families live with them in purpose-built cantonments, made up of Western-style dwellings amply serviced by home help drawn from the desperately penurious occupied population. Residential complexes such as Nijimura, located a few kilometres from the Australian base at Kure near Hiroshima, epitomised a postwar suburban nirvana still to take shape in postwar Australia. But to a visiting Australian observer, the writer Frank Clune, garrison life in occupied Japan was reminiscent of something much older: the English regiments stationed in Imperial India. Instead of providing an example of "the democratic way of life" to the benighted Japanese, Clune believed, these privileged enclaves reinforced "the feudalistic way".[6]

Whereas the United States started talking of spreading Anglo-Saxon civilisation in the early 20th century, writes Max Boot in his 2003 book *The Savage Wars of Peace* (taking as his title a phrase from Kipling's poem), "today they talk of spreading democracy and defending human rights".[7] The trend started in postwar Japan. Looking back in his *Reminiscences* (1964), Douglas MacArthur. saw the country as "the world's great laboratory for an experiment in the liberation of a people from totalitarian military rule and for the liberalization of government from within."[8] Japan was thus a kind of test case whose lessons could be applied around the world. Edwin O. Reischauer, the Japan specialist who was deeply involved in Occupation policy while working at the State Department, wrote in 1950 that "We are anxious to prove that democracy is an article for export."[9]

These sentiments have a contemporary ring to them. In a speech to the American Enterprise Institute in Washington in late February 2003, three weeks before the invasion of Iraq, President George W. Bush sought to make political capital out of the Japanese Occupation's reputation as a model of national reconstruction based on the American principle of spreading democratic values. Bush envisioned a new Iraq as "a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom" to other countries in the Middle East, reminding his audience, with a breathtakingly limited regard for fact, that in postwar Japan and Germany, the United States "did not leave behind occupying armies", but "constitutions and parliaments". Everything had

[6] Clune, *Ashes of Hiroshima*, 56, 152.
[7] Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, 340.
[8] MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 283-84.
[9] Reischauer, *The United States and Japan*, 40.

gone to plan in Japan; why not Iraq? Seven months later, still exultant at the swift downfall of Saddam Hussein, the President stressed the American commitment to "the global expansion of democracy" in addressing a formal banquet in London's Whitehall Palace. Outlining what he called an "aggressive timetable for national sovereignty" for the occupied country, Bush boasted that the American forces were making "substantial progress" in Iraq, and at a pace "faster than similar efforts in Germany and Japan after World War II". The claim was met with derision—and that was before Iraq disintegrated into a diabolical shambles.[10]

"It is a dangerous hubris," ruefully observed Anthony Lake, the national security advisor to Bush's predecessor Bill Clinton, "to believe we can build other nations".[11] Not only did the bloody occupation of Iraq result in mass murder and mayhem, it engendered festering resentment and guaranteed recruits to terrorism amongst the Iraqi population, while ruinously shifting focus and resources from the more defensible war in Afghanistan, riddled with elements of al Qaeda. Winning the peace was much more difficult than winning the war; it had been the reverse in Japan. Under-estimating the tenacity of Iraqi nationalism was a critical mistake, as David M. Edelstein argues in his detailed study of why some occupations succeed while others fail, *Occupational Hazards* (2008). When the occupying power is regarded as a threat to national sovereignty, it is doomed to failure. Washington, Edelstein notes, is faced with "an unwelcome choice between prolonging a failing occupation or withdrawing before U.S. interests in the Gulf region have been secured".[12] When in November 2008 the Iraqi parliament conditionally voted in the affirmative to accept a deal ensuring a phased withdrawal of US troops which would see them quitting the country entirely by the end of 2011, Bush was able to trumpet that the vote had affirmed "the growth of Iraq's democracy and increasing ability to secure itself". No wonder he was

[10] "Bush: Democratic Iraq could be 'Inspiring Example'", 27 February 2003, online: http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/02/26/sprj.irq.un/index.html, accessed: 1 January 2007; "President Bush Discusses Iraq Policy at Whitehall Palace in London", 19 November 2003, U.S. Department of State online: http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/26360.htm, accessed: 1 January 2007. On Iraq and Japan, see John W. Dower, "History in the Remaking", *Los Angeles Times*, 18 December 2003, and "Occupations and Empires: Why Iraq is not Japan", *Mercury News*, 9 May 2003.

[11] Lake's remarks (made in 1996) quoted in von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, 1.

[12] Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards*, 162-3.

pleased: he had been let off the hook. So, too, had his successor, Barack Obama.[13]

For all the Bush administration's elevated rhetoric about spreading democracy, the American motivation in getting into Iraq was a security one—the desire to get rid of the destabilising influence of Saddam and his "weapons of mass destruction". (Saddam was very real; the WMDs were not.) While security objectives and nation-building objectives can coexist, Edelstein remarks, the "primary goal" of occupiers is "to install regimes that do not threaten their interests regardless of ideology". Such was the case even in what Edelstein calls a "comprehensive occupation" like the one in postwar Japan, which sought to impose social, political and economic reforms on the vanquished enemy. In Japan, reconstruction served the primary security objective: the transformation of Japan from "bitter adversary" to "reliable ally".[14] The brave idealism of the Occupation's early months was gradually undermined by mounting fears of the Soviet Union, and replaced by a Cold War *realpolitik* which situated Japan as a key regional conservative client state in the global struggle against communism.

The Australian position on Iraq differed little from that of the United States. While Prime Minister John Howard also advocated the virtues of installing democracy in a totalitarian nation, it was essentially security priorities which compelled the national involvement—those, and the rock-solid American alliance. Howard talked about it being in the "national interest" to participate, but cynics could not see the difference between what were purported to be specifically Australian interests and those dictated by the United States. To many Australians, there was a certain unseemliness in their country's breathless enthusiasm to enlist in the so-called "Coalition of the Willing" in Iraq.

Australia has not always been so dutiful. In occupied Japan, as the Cold War descended and SCAP embarked on a "reverse course" of winding back and even shelving policy initiatives, especially those relating to labour reform and freedom of political expression, the gulf between Australian conceptions of what constituted genuine reform and those countenanced by the United States grew ever wider. Certainly, Australia entered the Occupation determined to neuter Japan as a future threat. The recent antagonist was still despised; the war was very fresh in the memory,

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[13] "Iraqi Parliament Backs US Pullout", 27 November 2008 report online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7752580.stm, accessed: 28 November 2008. Iraq's presidential council approved this security pact and the timeframe for withdrawal in early December 2008.

[14] Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards", 54.

and people remained bitter at Japanese military barbarity, especially toward its prisoners-of-war. Vengeance was in the air. "Preventing Japan from re-emerging as a security threat was a major preoccupation of the Australian government in the second half of the 1940s," writes Christopher Waters.[15]

But there was an ambitious and idealistic as well as punitive basis to Australian government policy in occupied Japan. In part, the Australian enthusiasm for the venture was the expression of the Chifley government's desire to engage constructively, and in a leadership role, with its Asia-Pacific region. This was an historical first. Australian policy sought to facilitate not merely Japan's demilitarisation, but to shape and expedite the process of national rejuvenation in the cause of what Sir Frederic Eggleston, head of the Australian legation in Washington, called "real democracy" by attacking the social and economic discontent that feeds nationalist aggression.[16] But this ambition was to little avail. By the end of 1949, when the Chifley government was swept from power, the reformist energy had evaporated from of the Occupation, and Robert Menzies's incoming Liberal/Country Party coalition government meekly supported SCAP's new objectives for a stabilised (and rearming) Japan. For all its feisty determination to be heard as an independent voice in postwar Japan, participation in an occupation so comprehensively dominated by the Americans heralded Australia's future enmeshment in the geopolitics of the United States. The triumphant wartime "road to Tokyo" led eventually to Baghdad.

Beyond Japan and Iraq, Australian engagements in regional and international military interventions and occupations have involved issues of moral as well as strategic importance. In the Asia-Pacific context it has had to juggle being a good neighbour with the burgeoning aspirations of a "middle power" in its region of influence. Internationally it has had to express its loyalty to the United States while meeting regional economic and political objectives. The two have not always totally coincided. The Australia-New Zealand-United States alliance (ANZUS) was invoked for the first time by the Howard government in September 2001, just days after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, to support US military operations in Afghanistan. At the time of writing, the present Australian Labor government remains staunchly committed to the cause there—but not, perhaps, at any price. In November 2008, on the occasion

[15] Waters, "War, Decolonisation and Postwar Security", 118.

[16] Eggleston quoted in de Matos, *Encouraging Democracy*, 2, in which a detailed analysis of Australian policy objectives on occupied Japan is provided. See also de Matos, *Imposing Peace and Prosperity*.

of the death of the seventh Australian killed while fighting the Taliban, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced no plans to increase its deployment, arguing instead that NATO-members could do more.[17] Rudd's predecessor, John Howard, expressed disappointment when the United States unsurprisingly did not feel obliged under ANZUS to send troops into East Timor when massive internecine violence erupted there in September 1999, after the pro-independence vote. Elsewhere, such as in support for counter-insurgency activities and programmes in the southern Philippines—the home of Muslim separatism and where groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah have a foothold—Australian regional nation-building has meant preserving the status quo, at almost any cost. And it has entailed Canberra's faithful support for neocolonial American geopolitics in the guise of the global struggle (seductively encoded as "Operation Enduring Freedom") against Islamic terrorism.

Nonetheless, Australia's leadership role in the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) revealed a willingness to assume regional responsibility and a preparedness to complicate its already fraught relationship with its close (and Islamic) neighbour Indonesia—a bold turnaround after Australia had granted bipartisan support for Indonesian rule over East Timor from 1975 to 1999. The Rudd government continues to balance the dual imperatives of security and state building in the fledgling nation. The military intervention in the Solomons in 2003, heading up the multinational Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), further highlighted the tensions between intervention and sovereignty, security and state-building, and what is involved in maintaining regional order through the presence of force. The Howard government wanted to stabilise the state, not merely for the Solomons' sake but in the broader interests of regional stability and the ever-lurking threat of transnational terrorism. Nonetheless, the Islanders wanted the Australians there. Or at least most of them—some disaffected former government members saw RAMSI as an army of occupation and believed Australia was acting like the neighbourhood bully. The Bougainville international peace missions demonstrate the possibility of Australia taking a supportive rather than leadership role, alongside other Pacific nations, in order to contribute to regional stability. While there are still challenges to be faced, the missions also suggest a possible model for intervention: one by invitation and with UN sanction and involvement, where collaboration and ongoing consultation with all local parties is

[17] "Rudd Rules out Aust Troop Boost in Afghanistan", report 28 November 2008, online: http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/28/2431959.htm, accessed: 28 November 2008.

integral, and which is sensitive to the past injustices and indignities of colonialism that remain part of collective contemporary memory and experience.

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Occupation, of course, is not merely about wielding weapons or even security strategies and political agendas for that matter. Just as warfare, as the Australian Great War novelist Frederic Manning observed, is a "peculiarly human activity", so occupation is a human and cultural event as well as a politico-military one.[18] In his study of the practices of military conquerors, *Occupation* (1992), Eric Carlton remarks that while control is the "primary objective of the conqueror", this is "rarely achieved without some measure of physical or cultural repression".[19] By their very nature occupations reflect and enact the broad structures of hegemony. "When troops occupy," Harry Roskolenko observed from Japan, "they also regulate, as exchange, the nature of an economy, of love and sex; as well as the disproportions of time, war and man."[20]

Thus it is appropriate and even imperative to locate occupation within wider ideological contexts. John W. Dower's celebrated analysis of the neocolonialism of the Occupation of Japan in *Embracing Defeat* (1999) is indebted to Edward W. Said's theory of Orientalism, which posits that European nineteenth century imperial hegemonies in "the East" were based on manifest assumptions of "the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its feminine penetrability". To construct the East as female—as sensual and wayward: ripe for penetration—was a potent justification for occupation and control, rationalised as a beneficent exercise in "reconstruction" and "redemption".[21] Amongst the Australians in occupied Japan, an acculturated and internalised view of the "feminine penetrability" of the country led to calculated and sometimes rapacious attitudes towards the its vulnerable women. Certainly, the official Australian military ban on fraternisation with the Japanese was at least in part motivated by a nexus of racial and sexual anxieties. It was a famously counter-productive policy. The soldiers, for their part, flagrantly disregarded the edict as absurdly inhuman and impractical. Many Australians revelled in the role of conquerors of a people still widely hated in the broad Australian community; some brutally abused their power. But

[18] Manning, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, xviii.
[19] Carlton, *Occupation*, 5.
[20] Roskolenko, "Tokyo Letter", 64.
[21] Said, *Orientalism*, 206.

the Occupation also occasioned intimacies (which were not only sexual) with the Japanese that marked the beginning of postwar Australian reconciliation with its former enemy.[22]

Australians have long regarded the diverse countries and cultures of the Orient, and especially its Asia-Pacific region, with deep ambivalence. The desire for contact has jostled with the reactive need to keep one's distance; attraction has fought with repulsion. The set of contraries that came to characterise the Occupation of Japan—those of hubris and humility, vindictiveness and sympathy, exploitation and engagement, reinforced parochialism and a reoriented, more internationalist outlook—constitute a case study of national geocultural responses that remain as relevant today, when Australia has again been involved in operations in the non-Western world, as in those heady postwar days when Australia set out for Northeast Asia to make its mark on the affairs of the Pacific.

Indeed now, when Australia has once more participated in another US-led military occupation of a "rogue" non-Western state humbled in war, it is timely to consider the nation's historical role as an occupier, and the nature of occupations more generally. The tumult of controversy surrounding Iraq invokes a clutch of questions about the national role in overseas peacekeeping missions and contentious foreign occupations and how they relate to larger issues of national political and moral priority. The paradox of peacekeeping is that it comes at a point of a gun. What, for example, does it really mean to "occupy" a foreign sovereign nation defeated in war? How do occupations differ? What makes the one in Japan different from that of Iraq? When, as in the Solomons for example, might "intervention" become "occupation"? Can Western conceptions of democracy be imposed onto societies with authoritarian traditions? As Ian Buruma asked in reflecting on occupied Japan, "Is Western promotion of human rights and liberal institutions a form of disguised imperialism?"[23] What part can, and should, Australia play in global military geopolitics? To what extent has Australia's ready willingness to support the United States been an expression of independent national policy-making or acquiescence in the imperatives of the global superpower? At the level of national and popular culture, to what extent are politicised attitudes to race and religion a factor in decisions to occupy, and on how these occupations are perceived at home? Importantly, how has the Australian media coverage of Iraq and, more recently, of Afghanistan influenced public attitudes to these ventures?

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[22] See Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine* for a detailed discussion of these cultural outcomes.

[23] Buruma, "MacArthur's Children", 33.

Arising from a symposium hosted by the University of Wollongong's Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS) in November 2007, this collection of essays seeks to tackle these questions, and to place Australia's long overlooked role as an occupier on the critical map. As the country seeks to juggle national, regional and international alliances and obligations, and the often competing claims of naked self-interest with humanitarian action in a security environment that can only become more complex, this conversation is as compelling as it is belated.

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PART I:

OCCUPATIONS:
AIMS, OUTCOMES AND COMPARISONS

CHAPTER ONE

DIGGERS FOR DEMOCRACY? THE AUSTRALIANS IN OCCUPIED AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

DREW COTTLE

The circumstances and context of Australia's contemporary military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq make a significant historical parallel with its role in occupied Japan. Each was linked by the political alliance with the United States that has shaped Australian geopolitics in the postwar period. From the Second World War, when the United States re-established its military command and Pacific operations in Australia, Australian foreign policy has tended to accord with the interests of the United States. Although remaining part of the British Commonwealth, Australia's political realignment, which had been discernible from the mid-1940s, became overt with the establishment of a security treaty with the United States in 1951. ANZUS was a Cold War treaty brokered between Australia, New Zealand and the United States at the height of the Korean War. As Cold War allies of the United States in the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand agreed to the vague but compelling security assurances of Washington in return for a conclusion to the Allied Occupation of Japan.[1]

The Occupation of Japan extended from the end of the war in the Pacific in August 1945 until April 1952, with the ratification of the Treaty of Peace, signed in San Francisco in 1951. The Occupation commenced after the American atomic bombing of the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 6 and 9 August 1945, which forced the Japanese Emperor Hirohito to agree to the unconditional surrender demanded by the United

[1] McIntyre, *Background to the ANZUS Pact*, passim; Lowe, *Menzies and the "Great World Struggle"*, passim; McCormick, *America's Half Century*, 100-5; and Bell, *Dependent Ally*, passim. The most perceptive analysis of the ANZUS Pact is found in McQueen, *Japan to the Rescue*, 49-76.

States. Japan's undeclared war of neocolonial expansionism in Northeast and Southeast Asia throughout the 1930s and 1940s had precipitated the Asia-Pacific War. In the war's aftermath, a defeated Japan was left in a state of economic collapse, although much of its industrial base remained intact. In addition to the Americans, a British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), composed of British, Australian, New Zealand and Indian troops, secured military control of Japan. Fundamentally, the Occupation was organised, controlled and conducted by the United States. While not numerically insignificant—BCOF at its peak at the end of 1946 numbered nearly 40,000, including 12,000 Australians—the role of the Commonwealth forces was relatively minor, with no direct role (for instance) in the military governance of occupied Japan. It was the Americans who determined the direction of postwar Japan.

The Occupation of Japan is notable for the compliance of the Japanese people in the subjugation and reconstruction of their nation in the seven years from 1945. Japan presented little overt resistance to its occupiers. The nuclear devastation wrought by the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima undoubtedly influenced Japan's population in its acceptance of the Occupation. Yet, despite the overwhelming compliance of the occupied population, huge political strikes by Japanese workers occurred at the onset of the Cold War. Communist-led unions in key sectors of the Japanese economy, legalised by the American authorities in 1945, sought to sweep away the old imperial order which had ruled the nation in the 1930s and the war years. This industrial insurgency from below threatened not only the entrenched power of the Japanese ruling class, but the corporate re-modelling of postwar Japan devised by American planners. Many of the liberal reforms ushered in by the American Occupation, especially industrial democracy, were stymied. As events in China and the Korean peninsular worsened, the American Occupation of Japan changed course. Reaction replaced reform. It was feared in Washington that Japan would be "lost" to Communism like China, or as Korea was in danger of becoming.[2] Nonetheless, the Allied Occupation of Japan was never seriously troubled by sustained mass civil disobedience or other forms of resistance.

The vast majority of Japanese accepted the disarming of their military forces, the dismantling of the great mercantile companies known as the *zaibatsu*, the promulgation of a new constitution written under the auspices of the United States, and the enactment of land reforms and women's emancipation. Hirohito, who held a semi-divine status within

[2] Dower, *Embracing Defeat,* 225-73; Moore, *Japanese Workers*, passim.

Japanese society, was recast as the figurehead of a functioning democracy. These changes to the Japanese state, economy and society occurred at the behest of the United States as the dominant occupying power. The American Occupation (as it is commonly known) was never seriously challenged or threatened by an occupied people, who, wearied by years of war, wanted to make a fresh start. A new form of Japanese peace, order and authority was achieved because of overwhelming American military power. With the advent of the Korean War, United States' aid and investment stabilised and made buoyant the Japanese political economy. Under American tutelage, the Japanese experienced the Occupation as a model of occidental national rebuilding. In theory, at least, an Eastern "Other" was rebuilt in the image of the pre-eminent nation in the West. The US-Japan security treaty, in tandem with the peace treaty signed in the same year (1951), sanctioned the establishment of numerous military bases throughout the Japanese archipelago, consolidating Japan as a vital Asian Cold War ally of the United States.[3]

Australia's subsidiary involvement in the Occupation of Japan typified the role Australia would assume in subsequent military engagements. From the signing of the ANZUS treaty in 1951, Australia has sent troops to every major American military involvement from the Korean War to Vietnam to the Gulf War. In each of these conflicts, Australia's commitment was essentially subservient to American interests.[4] The Australian presence in these war zones never determined the outcome of what were largely American interventions. Similarly, the "achievements" of Australian military forces as America's auxiliaries in Afghanistan and Iraq are provisional, if not debatable. To understand their achievements, if that is what they are, the Australian military commitments in these broken, ruined nations must be placed in the context of the recent historical past. Moreover, there is a need to analyse what the foreign allied occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq has meant in contrast to the apparent success of the Allied or American Occupation of Japan and its peaceful conclusion.[5] Immediate differences in these occupations are obvious.

Australia's enthusiastic if marginal role in the Occupation of Japan and proactive leadership of BCOF (which was commanded and administered by Australians) came after Japan's imperialising mission in mainland and

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[3] Halliday and McCormack, *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism*, 178-99; Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 525-46.
[4] Bell, *Dependent Ally*, passim.
[5] Hinnesbusch, "The US Invasion of Iraq", 209-28; Langsford, *A Bitter Harvest*, 136-88; Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq,* 437-60; Ajami, *The Foreigner's Gift*, passim.

Southeast Asia had directly threatened Australia's national security during the Asia-Pacific War. With the bombing of Darwin and the incursion of Japanese submarines into Sydney Harbour, a Japanese invasion of Australia had appeared imminent during the war. Australian involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, however, has occurred for less tangible reasons. Australia's military commitment to the American Occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq was often seen simply as the Howard Coalition government's embrace of the American "war on terror". The Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, was on a state visit to Washington at the time the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre took place on 11 September 2001. Shaken by these assaults on the symbols of American power and authority, Howard immediately pledged Australia to President Bush's "Coalition of the Willing" to wage war against Islamic terrorism.[6] Howard's decision was criticised for not being in the national interest. Some deemed it the wrong strategic approach in combating terrorism. Others argued that Howard's decision distorted the Australia-US alliance and displayed a continuing subservience to American imperialism.[7]

The "national interests" of nation states are not inherent or immutable, but are instead pragmatically determined by the prevailing ruling regime. Since Federation in 1901, whenever conflicts have arisen, Australian governments have often committed the nation to war because they have declared it to be in "the nation's interests"—sometimes dubiously so. Australia's involvement in the waging of a "war on terror" that is characterised by rhetoric and vague objectives remains especially problematic. Terrorism (in its non-state form) is usually random and unpredictable by nature. Conducting a war against those who engage in terrorism is a virtual impossibility, demonstrated by the fact that the "war on terror" thus far has not targeted individual terrorists, but has involved an assault on the nation-states of Afghanistan and Iraq. If Australia's role in these contemporary occupations is to be understood, it must be considered in terms of the historical context of Australia's subordination to the United States in military conflicts from the Second World War to the present.

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[6]Anne Summers, "The Day that Shook Howard's World", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 February 2007, 8.

[7] Matthew Sharpe, "Terminal Beach", *Arena Magazine*, No 65, June-July, 2003; Andrew Wilkie, "Speech at 'Don't Be Bushwhacked' Peace Rally", *Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition*, Sunday 19 October, 2003, Date accessed: 3 November 2007, online: http://www.nswpeace.org/features/1066944641_6126.html; Watson, "Rabbit Syndrome", passim; Broinowski, *Howard's War*, 19-56.

In contrast to the largely though by no means wholly beneficent occupation of Japan, the essentially American Occupation of Afghanistan and, soon after, Iraq has wrought both devastation and reconstruction. The Western state-making process in both countries has generated political, economic and social chaos. The nascent democracies imposed upon Kabul and Baghdad have been contested by untamed insurgent forces. Throughout the 1980s, Afghanistan was overwhelmed by a Soviet invasion and occupation. A widespread resistance emerged. The Mujahadeen, the irregular militia of Afghani tribes, waged an ultimately successful guerrilla war against the Soviet Red Army. The Mujahadeen's jihad against the infidel invaders was armed by the CIA, recruited and trained by Pakistan's military intelligence and funded by Saudi Arabia. Stinger missiles ensured that the holy warriors destroyed the Soviet helicopter gun-ships and carriers amidst the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan.[8]

After driving the Soviet Red Army from Afghanistan, the Mujahadeen and contingents of fellow Muslim fighters began a protracted armed struggle amongst themselves for political supremacy. These internecine tribal wars left Afghanistan impoverished, neglected and isolated.[9] Orphaned by war and educated in the madrasas on the Afghani-Pakistan border regions, the Taliban arose as a political force in the secured areas of southern Afghanistan and established their theocratic state. Organised by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, the Taliban imposed a social order which intensified the oppression of women, lessened the growth of the opium poppy in the countryside, and harboured the remnants of the Islamic brotherhood of war which later formed Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda.[10] Jubilant in the victory over the Soviet superpower, the acolytes of al Qaeda planned to rid the Muslim world of the Western infidel, overthrow the Islamic client regimes of the United States and create a Wahabbist Caliphate.[11]

The establishment of a huge American military base in Saudi Arabia in preparation for Operation Desert Storm against the "rogue" state of Iraq in 1990 focused al Qaeda's struggle against the United States. Only in the

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[8] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 265-80; Roy, *Islam and the Resistance in Afghanistan*, passim; Coolley, *Unholy Wars*, 98-141.

[9] Cramer and Goodhand, "Try Again, Fail Again, Fail Better?", 885-909; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, passim.

[10] Rashid, *Militant Islam*, 67-93; Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon*, 28-51; Coolley, *Unholy Wars*, 36-54; Byman, *Deadly Connections*, 187-218.

[11] Bin Laden, *Messages to the World*, passim; Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 18-60; Greenberg, ed. *Al Qaeda Now*, 40-52; Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda,* 66-79.

final years of the Clinton Presidency during the Lewinski scandal and possible impeachment, when bombs destroyed American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, sank the USS *Cole* and partially damaged New York City's World Trade Center, did Washington respond with missile attacks on suspected al Qaeda facilities and strongholds in Afghanistan and Sudan.[12] President Reagan's freedom fighters in America's covert war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s were transformed into Islamic terrorists after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001.

Unocal, an American energy corporation, had planned to build pipelines from the petroleum-rich Caspian Basin in Central Asia through Turkmenistan, across land-locked Afghanistan, to the Pakistani coast. The Clinton administration expected that the Taliban would ensure the construction of these pipelines through the valleys of eastern Afghanistan. However, this did not occur. After the terrorist attacks on America in September 2001, the Bush administration saw the Taliban as the protectors of terrorists who would be ousted. Once Hamid Karzai was installed as president, the building of the oil pipelines recommenced.[13] Vengeance through massive retaliation was the White House response for the September 2001 attacks on America. Within weeks the American high-altitude bombing had broken and scattered the Taliban and al Qaeda throughout Afghanistan.[14] Kabul was secured by US Special Forces in combination with the Taliban's adversaries, the Northern Alliance, which was an assortment of tribal militias, drug-runners and brigands. Victory was followed by occupation and state-building.[15] The United States forces seized overall authority in the country, maintaining military operations to the east and south of the capital. Kabul was occupied by a much smaller European military unit, known as the International Security Assistance

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[12] Minik, *Losing Bin Laden*, 74-139.

[13] Caroline Lees, "Oil Barons Court Taliban in Texas", *The Telegraph*, Issue 934, 14 December 1997, online: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/htmlContent.jhtml?html=%2Farchive%2F1997%2F12%2F14%2Fwtal14.html, accessed: 9 October 2007; Tom Turnipseed, "A Creeping Collapse in the Credibility at the White House: From ENRON Entanglements to UNOCAL Bringing the Taliban to Texas and Controlling Afghanistan", *Counterpunch*, 10 January 2002, online: http://www.counterpunch.org/tomenron.html, accessed: 9 October 2007.

[14] Jones, *Kabul in Winter*, 40-83.

[15] Schroen, *First In*, 72-87; Meher, *America's Afghanistan War*, 81-104; Rogers, *A War on Terror*, passim.

Force, which was both under NATO command and the auspices of the United Nations.[16]

Although the Australian government staunchly endorsed the American "war on terror", its initial military commitment to the American invasion of Afghanistan was minor. Australian Special Air Service (SAS) personnel assisted American Special Forces in fighting the scattered remnants of the Taliban's irregular militias.[17] With the Taliban seemingly defeated, the formal occupation of Afghanistan proceeded. An Afghani exile and former Unocal executive, Hamid Karzai, was appointed viceroy by the occupying power.[18] Northern Alliance warlords were given political positions in the Afghani transitional government, which was underwritten by American power in collusion with NATO and the United Nations. At a Bonn conference in 2002, nearly $6 billion in aid was pledged to the re-building of Afghanistan by the United States and its allies. Most of this civilian and military aid has been channelled to the warlords and tribal leaders who dominated the government in Kabul, which was established in December 2004.[19]

Beyond the capital, Kabul, Afghanistan was a patchwork of pacified areas or war zones. A low intensity guerrilla struggle in the southern third of the country has been maintained by Afghani insurgents against the foreign occupiers since 2001.[20] Throughout this period, the Howard Coalition government provided a limited military presence in occupied Afghanistan as its commitment to the "war on terror". Apart from the early military exchanges between the Australian commandos and Afghani

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[16] "NATO Takes Command of Occupation Forces in Afghanistan", *Revolutionary Worker*, No 1214, 5 October 2003, online: http://rwor.org/a/1214/awtwafghan.htm, accessed: 9 October 2007.

[17] Birmingham, *A Time of War,* passim.

[18] "Harmid Karzai, Pashtun Appointed President", *Le Monde*, 13 December 2001, online: http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/context.jsp?item=a122201karzai#a122201karzai, accessed: 23 November 2007; "After the US Invasion: The Nightmare of Afghanistan", *Revolutionary Worker*, No 1214, 5 October 2003, online: http://rwor.org/a/1214/awtwafghan2.htm, accessed: 23 November 2007; Kolko, *The Age of War*, 109-15; Mills, *Karzai*, 97-9; Gary Leupp, "Karzai's Bodyguard", 143-6.

[19] "NATO Takes Command of Occupation Forces in Afghanistan", *Revolutionary Worker*, No 1214, 5 October 2003, http://rwor.org/a/1214/awtwafghan.htm, accessed: 9 October 2007.

[20] Kolko, *The Age of War*, 109-34; Kolko, *Another Century of War?*, 75-88; Conetta, *Strange Victory,* passim.

insurgents, little is known about Australia's achievements or otherwise as a component of the largely Western occupying forces.

Australian troops were largely encamped in regions nominally controlled by Kabul. They assisted Afghani villagers to build small schools, offered medical assistance and dispense food aid. Such tasks may be viewed as aspects of peace-making or state-building.[21] They should be seen as elements of a wider strategy of counter-insurgency. If there are few Australian casualties in this Afghani campaign it may reflect the nature of its uneven war against insurgents in a Third World country. There is no peace or social progress in occupied Afghanistan. Apart from the SAS, who were integrated with their American and British counterparts to fight Taliban insurgents, the remainder of the Australians are stationed in pacified areas forming part of the wider zone of occupation.[22] On the brink of social collapse, Afghanistan remains one of the most chronically underdeveloped Third World nations.[23] The United States was the second superpower to invade Afghanistan within a period of twenty years, destroying further a nation devastated by decades of occupation and war. In the "war against terror"—the "long war" as described by George W. Bush in his January 2006 State of the Union Address—the Australian military mission in Afghanistan is clear. Ostensibly, it is to quell or defeat the Taliban insurgency. It is, however, part of a neocolonial operation to secure American economic and strategic dominance throughout the regions of Central Asia and the Middle East that are rich in oil and natural gas.[24]

Within a year of its conquest of Afghanistan, the Bush presidency began to demonise the equally blighted nation of Iraq, the second largest oil producer in the Middle East.[25] The Australian government reassured President Bush of Australia's support if the United States was to initiate a war against Iraq. After its fundamental economic and social destruction in

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[21] "Australia in Afghanistan: Quick Guide", *Global Collaborative*, online: http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/afghanistan/australia-in-afghanistan-q-and-a, accessed: 6 October 2007.

[22] Richard Allan Green, "The Cost of Rebuilding Afghanistan", *BBC News*, 20 December 2001, online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1721885.stm, accessed: 3 October 2007.

[23] Brandy Bauer, "Afghanistan Guide", *OneWorld UK/In Depth/Country Guides/Afghanistan*, online: http://uk.oneworld.net/guides/afghanistan/development?gclrd=COOKoPKPX48CFRRn, accessed: 1 October 2007.

[24] Ruppert, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 150-73; Klare, *Blood and Oil*, 225-57.

[25] Ramonet, *Wars of the 21st Century,* 32-70.

the Gulf War (1990-1991), Iraq became both a failed and a pariah state.[26] Its oil was sold in exchange for civil aid as most of its economic and social infrastructure lay in ruin. A United Nations "no-fly zone" enforced by the US and Britain ensured that the Kurdish-dominated northern third of Iraq could function while the rest of the country was denied the funds and investment necessary for its reconstruction. During the period 1991-2001, nearly 900,000 Iraqi children died of curable diseases. Only the military authority of the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad gave Iraq the semblance of a functioning nation-state.[27]

Washington claimed that Iraq was preparing to unleash "Weapons of Mass Destruction" on Israel, the US and Western Europe. United Nations weapons inspectors were sent on futile expeditions to discover weapons that did not exist. Such conclusions incensed the Bush administration, which accused Iraq of attempting to import uranium from Niger for a possible nuclear attack on undisclosed targets within the region. The build-up for an American war against Iraq ignored the fallacy of its reasoning. Baghdad became part of the "axis of evil" where Saddam Hussein harboured al Qaeda. The US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, attempted to convince the United Nations of Iraq's lethal resolve as the American president prepared for a pre-emptive strike to prevent it. With certitude in its cause, a massive and sustained aerial bombing of Baghdad by the United States soon claimed its mission accomplished.[28]

Overwhelmingly, Iraqi civilians are the often unacknowledged war dead in this "shock and awe" campaign. Storming the Iraqi capital in the absence of any resistance, America became the nation's self-appointed liberator. The Ba'athists were swept from office, their armed forces and civil service dismissed as the United States expected the people of a broken, defeated nation to embrace the occupier's liberty. As the artefacts and remnants of Mesopotamian civilisation were looted and statues of Saddam Hussein destroyed, the new American administrators of Iraq secured their headquarters in the buildings of the deposed regime within a liberated Green Zone.[29]

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[26] Ali, "Re-Colonizing Iraq", online: http://newleftreview.org/A2447; Simons, *The Scourging of Iraq,* 74-109; Arnove, *Iraq Under Siege*, passim.
[27] Simons, *The Scourging of Iraq*, 81-90.
[28] Colas and Saull, eds. *The War on Terror and the American Empire*, 1-90; Perry Anderson, "Casuistries of War and Peace", *London Review of Books*, Vol 25, No 5, 6 March 2003, online: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n05/ande01_.html, accessed: 7 October 2007; Kolko, *The Age of War,* 131-9.
[29] Arnove, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*, 13-42; Pieterse, "Scenarios of Power", 180-93; Cockburn, *The Occupation*, passim.