

Australia: America's Puppet State

Marching for Anzac in the 51st State

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The street where I grew up in Sydney was a war street. There were long silences, then the smashing of glass and screams. Pete and I played Aussies-and-Japs. Pete's father was an object of awe. He weighed barely 100 pounds and shook with malaria and was frequently demented. He would sit in a cane chair, drunk, scything the air with the sword of a Japanese soldier he said he had killed. There was a woman who flitted from room to room, always red-eyed and fearful, it seemed. She was like many mothers in the street. Wally, another mate, lived in a house that was always dark because the black-out blinds had not been taken down. His father had been "killed by the Japs". Once, when Wally's mother came home, she found he had got a gun, put it in his mouth and blown his head off. It was a war street.

The insidious, merciless, life-long damage of war taught many of us to recognise the difference between the empty symbolism of war and the actual meaning. "Does it matter?" mocked the poet Siegfried Sassoon at the end of an earlier slaughter, in 1918, as he grieved his younger brother's death at Gallipoli. I grew up with that name, Gallipoli. The British assault on the Turkish Dardanelles was one of the essential crimes of imperial war, causing the death and wounding of 392,000 on all sides. The Australian and New Zealander losses were among the highest, proportionally; and 25 April, 1915 was declared not just a day of remembrance but the "birth of the Australian nation". This was based on the belief of Edwardian militarists that true men were made in war, an absurdity about to be celebrated yet again.

Anzac Day has been appropriated by those who manipulate the cult of state violence – militarism – in order to satisfy a psychopathic deference to foreign power and to pursue its aims. And the "legend" has no room for the only war fought on Australian soil: that of the Aboriginal people against the European invaders. In a land of cenotaphs, not one stands for them.

The modern war-lovers have known no street of screams and despair. Their abuse of our memory of the fallen, and why they fell, may be common among all servitors of rapacious power, but Australia is a special case. No country is more secure in its strategic remoteness and the wealth of its resources, yet no western elite is more eager to talk war and seek imperial "protection".

Australia's military budget is A\$32 bn a year, one of the highest in the world. Less than two months' worth of this war-bingeing would pay for the reconstruction of the state of Queensland after the catastrophic floods, but not a cent is forthcoming. In July, the same fragile flood plains will be invaded by a joint US-Australian military force, firing laser-guided missiles, dropping bombs and blasting the environment and marine life. This is rarely

reported. Rupert Murdoch controls 70 per cent of the capital city press and his world-view is widely shared in the Australian media.

In a 2009 US cable released by WikiLeaks, the then Labor prime minister, Kevin Rudd, who is now foreign affairs minister, implores the Americans to “deploy force” against China if Beijing does not do as it is told. Another Labor leader, Kim Beazley, secretly offered Australian troops for an attack on China over Taiwan. In the 1960s, prime minister Robert Menzies lied that he had received a request from the American-created regime in Saigon requesting Australian troops. Oblivious, Australians waved farewell to a largely conscripted army, of whom almost 3000 were killed or wounded. The first Australian troops were run by the CIA in “black teams” – assassination squads. When the government in Canberra made a rare complaint to Washington that the British knew more than they about America’s war aims in Vietnam, the US national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, replied, “We have to inform the British to keep them on side. You in Australia are with us come what may.” As an Australian soldier once said to me: “We are to the Yanks what the Gurkas are to the British. We’re mercenaries in all but name.”

WikiLeaks has disclosed the American role in the Canberra “coup” in 2010 against Rudd by Julia Gillard. Lauded in US cables as a “rising star”, Gillard’s Labor Party plotters have turned out to be assets of the US embassy in Canberra. Once installed as prime minister, Gillard committed Australia to America’s war in Afghanistan war for the next 10 years – twice as long as Britain. Gillard likes to appear on TV flanked by flags. With her robotic delivery and stare, it is an unsettling tableau. On 6 April, she intoned, “We live in a free country... only because the Australian people answered the call when the decision came.” She was referring to the dispatch of Australian troops to avenge the death of a minor imperial figure, General Charles Gordon, during a popular uprising in Sudan in 1885. She omitted to say that a dozen horses of the Sydney Tramway Company also “answered the call” but expired during the long voyage.

Australia’s reputed role as America’s “deputy sheriff” (promoted to “sheriff” by George W Bush) is to police great power designs now being challenged by most of the world. Leading Australian politicians and journalists report on the Middle East having first had their flights and expenses paid by the Israeli government or its promoters. Two Green Party candidates who dared to criticise Israel’s lawlessness and the silence of its local supporters, are currently being set upon. One Murdoch retainer has accused the two Greens of advocating a “modern rendering of Kristallnacht”. Both have since received multiple death threats. Put out more flags, boys.

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