



THE ANVIL



MACG

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IRAQ & AFTERWARDS



IMPERIAL ARROGANCE. Source: History Channel

Iraq

On the 20th of March 2003, the United States, at the head of a “coalition of the willing”, in which both Britain and Australia were prominent, invaded Iraq. The main justification offered was the need to destroy Saddam Hussein’s supposed cache of weapons of mass destruction, which was to be achieved by overthrowing his regime. The invasion was carried out in defiance of international law and the biggest series of coordinated demonstrations in the history of the world.

Contrary to many peoples’ expectations, the Iraqi military quickly collapsed and the country was conquered in short order. Baghdad fell on the 9th of April, the last region of Iraq was taken on the 15th and on the 1st of May, George W. Bush made a speech on a US aircraft carrier beneath a banner which read “Mission Accomplished”. Contrary to

Bush’s expectations, his administration’s problems were only just beginning.

It wasn’t long before the US discovered that it’s one thing to conquer a country, but another thing altogether to occupy it. Having sacked all Ba’ath Party members (including tens of thousands of public servants and teachers for whom party membership was a condition of employment), the occupation authorities quickly found Iraq ungovernable. Their only collaborators were fanatics, former exiles, and corrupt chancers. To make things worse, no trace of Saddam’s much-hyped weapons of mass destruction could be found.

An insurgency against the occupation emerged over the following years, but was soon complicated by sectarian civil war. Iraq became a magnet for religious jihadis, who were only too happy to cause major civilian casualties amongst the Shi’ite section of Iraq’s population.

The insurgency was further inflamed by revelations in 2004 of the torture conducted at Abu Ghraib. Saddam was executed in 2006, having been tried for a massacre which was far from his most heinous, but was selected for having no connection to the weapons of mass destruction he had originally received from the United States and its allies.

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Following a troop surge in 2007, the US managed to stabilise the situation enough to start drawing down its troops, leading to a withdrawal in 2011. The US and its allies had lost almost 5,000 troops. 44,000 more were injured. The number of Iraq casualties will likely never be known for certain, but estimates range from between 200,000 to over a million dead. This ranks as one of the worst crimes in modern history.

US Decline

The Iraq War was the high point for US foreign policy arrogance. Neo-conservatives, drunk on their “death of communism” celebrations, had taken over the Republican Party and proclaimed a mission to re-make the world in the interests of the United States.

The non-appearance of Saddam’s alleged weapons of mass destruction (the anti-war movement knew it was a pack of lies) destroyed the main argument for the invasion; the revelations of torture at Abu Ghraib demolished the credibility of US claims to be spreading freedom and democracy; and the insurgency demonstrated the limits of the US casualties which were politically tolerable.

After Iraq, US military actions became more risk-averse. In Afghanistan, great effort was made to have the military forces of the puppet government take the lead. In Libya, a broad coalition of NATO members and a few others provided air support for local militias in conflict with the government of Muammar Gaddafi. While the military objective of overthrowing Gaddafi’s regime was achieved, Libya has remained a disaster area ever since.

In Syria’s many-sided civil war, the US passed up an opportunity to intervene

heavily against its old ally Bashar al-Assad and has kept its interventions as work with local allies. US ground forces are sparse. Meanwhile, the US introduced and then greatly expanded the most risk-averse approach of all – a campaign of drone attacks in a range of countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia. This coward’s war successfully avoids US casualties, but kills large numbers of civilians and fails to dent the Islamist insurgencies against which it is supposedly deployed.

The Next War

We are entering a new era for US and Australian imperialism. The rise of China presents an unprecedented challenge to US hegemony, and though some elements of the Australian ruling class wish to take advantage of an economically powerful China, most remain hostile to its growth.

Members of the US ruling class who keep an eye on its long term interests have known for two decades that it had to deal with a rising China, but they have been frustrated by the tendency of successive Presidents to be dragged back to problems in West Asia. The War on Terror, the Iraq War, and the fallout from the Arab Spring have generated quagmires which forced the US to deal with conflicts that distract from the developing rivalry with China.

Now, however, the “pivot to Asia” first announced under Barack Obama is being executed by Joe Biden. It required an evacuation of Afghanistan as humiliating as the liberation of Vietnam in 1975, but it has been done. Suddenly the multiple security threats in West Asia, talked up in the media for decades, have largely disappeared, and are now replaced by lurid stories of China’s nefarious agenda.

Australia's Role

Australia is a minor imperialist power and its governments have historically sought to advance its interests under the umbrella of a great power – first Britain and later the United States. This requires Australian troops to be dispatched to assist in whatever wars in which its great ally could use some assistance.

The quid pro quo is an Australian sphere of interest in the South Pacific and, in later years, Timor Leste. Here, Australian troops moved from a support role to centre stage, with the military being central to claiming Timor Leste as an Australian neo-colony in 1999 and maintaining domination over the Solomon Islands in 2003.

The Australian alliance with the US is not one of complete subservience (Australian capitalists know their wealth is tied to Australia's massive exports both to China and to other countries also reliant on the Chinese economy), but it's one that relies on a strong US military presence in East Asia and thus an aggressive posture. This is where AUKUS comes in.

AUKUS is at the pointy end of US military planning, with nuclear submarines to be deployed into straits and channels in the first island chain, a series of large and small islands that separate the South China Sea and the East China Sea from the Pacific Ocean. The Chinese navy will need US permission to enter the Pacific Ocean, which will remain an American lake. Australian governments of both political persuasions have signed on to help.

The other crucial aspect to consider in this context is the US spy base at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs. This is an essential part of the US global satellite surveillance

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system, allowing the US to observe events in a third of the world – including, crucially, China. Without this base, the US would have a surveillance blind spot over its number one rival. Uncle Sam *seriously* needs Australia as an ally.

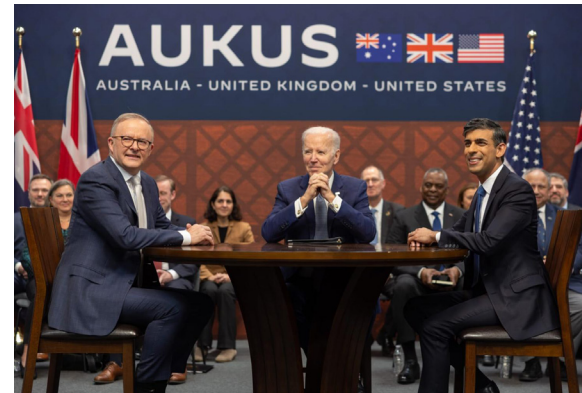
War or Peace

The US agenda to contain China and prevent its growth into a developed country is a crime against humanity. An even greater one is the danger in the next few years that the United States might launch a war on China, using Taiwan as a pretext. This must, at all costs, be prevented.

The failure of the anti-war movement to prevent the destruction of Iraq must be learnt from if we are to prevent a war with China. The movement was largely captured by bureaucratic groups committed to legal, non-disruptive protest rallies and A-to-B marches. What was needed was a mass movement capable of directly intervening in disrupting the war machine, principled opposition to Australian imperialism, and workers' struggles which could make the bosses and politicians submit to its demands.

The Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group has no illusions in the Chinese so-called "Communist" Party. The Beijing regime is run by corrupt Stalinist tyrants who have crushed civil liberties in Hong Kong and instituted extremely repressive conditions in Tibet and Xinjiang.

In addition, we have no interest in defending its actions in its territorial disputes with its neighbours. These disputes concern the interests of the CCP. They have nothing to do with the interests of the global working class.



A SEAT AT THE TABLE OF EMPIRE.
Source: Lowy Institute

The perspective of the MACG is to oppose imperialist war by building the global unity of the working class against all bosses and governments and not by supporting the military forces of any State. Living in Australia, we have a particular duty to oppose Australian imperialism and the military actions taken to advance its interests.

We call for the working class to block Australian participation in AUKUS and to force the closure of Pine Gap. This will require a political struggle against the ALP and the Laborite bureaucrats who currently run the unions in Australia. Workers must organise rank and file power. We have no choice.

STOP THE NEXT WAR

SHUT DOWN AUKUS

CLOSE PINE GAP

MACG

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a social philosophy based upon the principles of liberty, equality and solidarity. It is the political dimension of a free society.

What is Communism?

Communism is the principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need". It is the economic dimension of a free society.

What is the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group?

The MACG is an organisation of class struggle revolutionary anarchists who share political positions, articulated in theory, strategy and tactics.

We aim to encourage struggle by the working class for its own interests and, within that struggle, we aim to advance Anarchist ideas as its necessary philosophical basis.

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