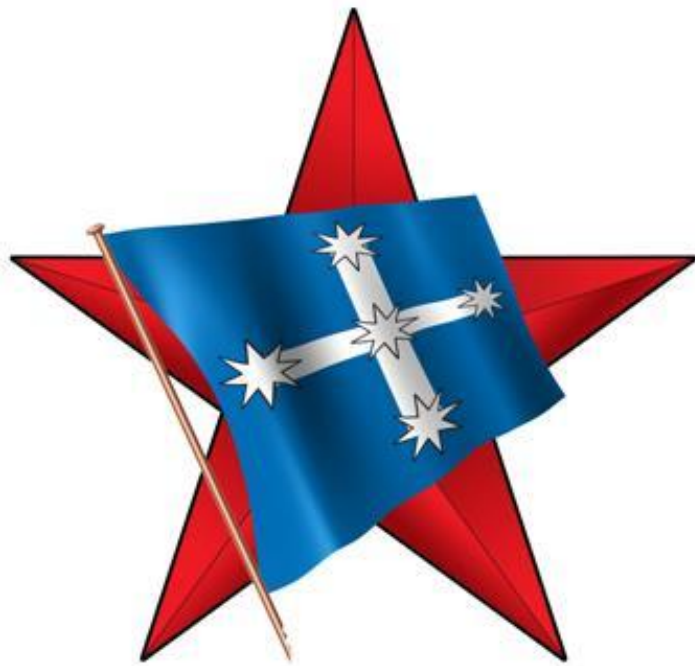




Imperialism and the Australian State

Imperialism and the Australian state

Nick G.

It is an article of faith for Marxists that the state is an instrument for the suppression of one class by another. And that in the era of imperialism, it is an instrument for the imposition of subservience by a great power on those without real independence.

In Australia, the capitalist class has always tried to use the state to control the working class, to curtail its hard-won rights and to prevent any disruption to the accumulation of capital through the appropriation of workers' surplus value.

In Australia, the imperialists have always tried to use the state to prevent the nationalisation of their assets (except on their own terms and when their overall class interests require it), to curtail the winning of genuine independence, and to prevent any disruption to their use of Australia as a political and military outpost of their empire.

To prevent workers from embracing the need to overthrow the capitalist state, the capitalists also use persons of influence within the working class to channel their demands into the quicksand of parliament.

To prevent the Australian people from embracing the need to throw the imperialists out of the country, the imperialists use persons of influence within the parliament, the military, the bureaucracy and the media to discourage challenges to their domination.

The state and the suppression of workers

The history of the use of the state by the capitalist class against workers has seen increasingly repressive measures adopted. For example. It was once accepted practice for workers on strike in one industry to be supported by the "sympathy strikes" of workers in other industries. It was once accepted practice for unions to call for strike action, and for members to vote by a show of hands, and for the action to be taken immediately, leaving the bosses unprepared and at a disadvantage. It was once accepted practice for workers to stop in support of political or social campaigns that were separate from their immediate economic concerns.

None of these practices were accepted in perpetuity by the capitalist class. They had never legislated for the right to strike and found various ways to intimidate and harass striking workers. They also supported persons of influence within the working class to urge workers to accept as an “independent umpire” a court of arbitration which could impose penalties on unions that took action in defiance of its orders.

Although there has never been a legislated right to strike, there was no general law against it either. As an island nation, ports and harbours warranted close control by the capitalist class. During the 1928-9 waterfront dispute, the Bruce-Page government legislated the Transport Workers Act (known by workers as the “dog-collar act”) under which waterside workers required a licence to be legally employed. Cancellation of a licence for a period of between six and twelve months meant exclusion from waterfront employment for that period. This was the most severe practical penalty under the legislation and its threat was used to break strikes on Australian wharves. The dog-collar act was threatened by Attorney-General Menzies against Pt Kembla workers in 1938 when they engaged in a political strike and refused to load the Dalfram with pig-iron for Japan’s war machine. The ship was eventually loaded at the conclusion of a ten-week strike, but the government was forced to ban the export of pig-iron.

Over the years, the financial penalties imposed by the “independent umpire” on unions increased and reached crippling proportions. In a 1969 campaign led by our Party and its vice-chair Clarrie O’Shea, who was Victorian Secretary of the Tramways Union, O’Shea was gaoled for his refusal to pay court-imposed fines on his union. A virtual general strike to force Clarrie’s release from gaol saw the defeat of the penal provisions of the arbitration system.

The ruling class always regroups to recover from its defeats. The answer to this defeat was to attack unions under Sections 45 (D) and (E) of the Trade Practices Act (1974) which was meant to apply to competition and fair trade between corporations. Their breakthrough came during a Meat Industry Employees Union dispute at the Mudginberri abattoir in the Northern Territory. The Country Liberal Party Government of the Northern Territory facilitated loans to abattoir owner Jay Pendarvis with the proviso that he sued the union for damages under the Trade Practices Act. This was the first time a union had

been recognised as a corporation for the purposes of the Act, and the first successful use of civil legal sanctions against a union engaging in industrial action since the gaoling of O'Shea. Pendarvis won \$1.7 million in damages against the union. Other capitalists used this precedent to use the state against their workers.

Between 1983 and 1996, the social democrats (ALP) and revisionists (CPA) joined forces to develop the Prices and Incomes Accord through which unions agreed to limit their wages (having resisted the Fraser government's open wage freeze), in return for a government pledge to introduce a "social wage" of increased welfare funding and tax cuts. Ted Gnatenko, a very well-known and leading shop steward at the Elizabeth (SA) plant of General Motors-Holden, later claimed that "... the unions' method of dealing with the Hawke Government ... resulted in alienating a large slice of the working population [and led to] considerable erosion of their living standards without concerted action to defend them." He said that Accord Mark VI (1990), which introduced enterprise bargaining, effectively killed off workplace delegates and representation. This was all achieved by the state under a Labor government.

Further state repression of workers occurred following the Liberal Party's electoral victory in 1996. ALP IR Minister Brereton in early 1990s had enabled non-union bargaining agents in enterprise bargaining negotiations. Howard then took this a step further under Work Choices. In its first term of office, the Howard government introduced the Workplace Relations Act which included the replacement of award wages with direct employer-employee enterprise bargaining leading to Australian Workplace Agreements. The final element of this reform was the WorkChoices policy introduced on 27 March 2006. The core of this policy was the attempted removal of unions from representing workers during claims over wages and conditions. It included a reduction in the number of allowable matters, which could be covered by awards; exemption of companies from unfair dismissal laws if they claimed the dismissals were for genuine operational reasons; increased restrictions on allowable industrial action; introduced the requirement for secret ballots for industrial action; abolished the No Disadvantage Test (which required an enterprise agreement not to remove or decrease conditions in the relevant Award; and outlawed pattern bargaining and industry-wide industrial action.

Workers demanded that their unions restore rights taken away under WorkChoices. The ACTU did lead a campaign, including stoppages for mass rallies, under the slogan “Your rights at work – worth fighting for”, but as the 2007 election approached, the ACTU diverted the campaign into parliament with a change of slogan to “Your rights at work – worth fighting and voting for”. Symptomatic of the change from a mass campaign to a parliamentary campaign was the election of ACTU Secretary Greg Combet to a seat in parliament.

In response to the mass campaign, the Labor Party under Kevin Rudd had promised to abolish WorkChoices and did restore unfair dismissal laws, and did eventually ban new Australian Workplace Agreements. As Rudd’s Industrial Relations Minister, Julia Gillard worked with the ACTU’s Jenny George to develop the Fair Work Act as a replacement for WorkChoices. (At the same time, she threatened striking unionists in WA with the “full force of the law” if they did not return to work, and said she would “rule nothing in or out” to defeat a proposed teacher boycott of NAPLAN testing.)

The Fair Work Act restored enterprise bargaining in place of AWAs, but gave individual workers the freedom to nominate their own non-union bargaining agents. It required Enterprise Agreements to meet a “Better Off Overall Test” in comparison to the appropriate Award.

However, it created a more restrictive legal framework for industrial action than found among other OECD countries. Under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth), industrial action is lawful only if it qualifies as protected industrial action—essentially, action taken during bargaining for a new enterprise agreement and after complying with detailed procedural requirements (such as a protected action secret ballot not conducted by the union, and notice to employer requirements). Industrial action outside those circumstances is generally unprotected (unlawful) and can expose workers, unions and officials to significant consequences.

These include up to \$19,800 per contravention for individual workers and union officials and up to \$99,000 per contravention for unions. A contravention of an order by the Fair Work Commission may include each day or separate act of the contravention.

Any unprotected industrial action still leaves unions, union officials and individual workers open to prosecution for damages by an employer who suffers financial losses resulting from the action. Australian courts have imposed substantial penalties on unions for unlawful industrial conduct. For example, the CFMEU and several officials were fined a total of more than \$247,000 over unlawful conduct at a South Australian construction site, with the court emphasising the union's history of prior contraventions. Other branches of the CFMEU were also fined in this way.

The CFMEU was further subjected to the repression of the state when the Liberals introduced the Office of the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner (ABCC), retained by Labor as the industry's "tough cop on the beat".

Under the ABCC, any worker or union official could be fined up to \$36,000 for organising or engaging in illegal industrial action (increased to \$44,000 by Scott Morrison's government in 2022). Any union organising or engaging in illegal industrial action could be fined up to \$180,000 (increased to \$222,000 in 2022). In addition, any worker who refused to be interviewed by the ABCC faced 6 months gaol, leading to the prolonged and ultimately successful struggle by CFMEU member Ark Tribe when he refused to be questioned about attendance at a health and safety stopwork meeting.

As a result of ongoing campaigns by construction industry unions and others, the Albanese government abolished the ABCC in 2023, although some of its functions were referred to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

What the foregoing shows is that the machinery of the state (police, parliament, courts, tribunals, statutory authorities, gaols) is very much at the disposal of the capitalist class to suppress workers, and that the suppression of Australian workers by the state machine is amongst the most severe in the world.

However, it also needs to be said that the very ideology of trade unionism ties unions to the state. It does so in various ways. Trade unions rely for their legal existence on acceptance that their demands do not go beyond the economic system of capitalism, and that their method of achieving those demands does not go beyond the accepted institution for change within capitalism, namely

parliament. Unions also are in many cases the owners of substantial assets including property and investment accounts, and the senior officials can become accustomed to the high life, receiving much higher wages and associated benefits than their members. Through their legal and industrial defence of their members, unions can become absorbed into the very structures of state that seek to disempower them.

Although we will always defend the right of unions to exist and to work for improved wages and conditions for their members, workers will always need a communist party to take them beyond the accepted boundaries of trade unionism.

The state and the imposition of subservience

In the same way that the state acts in relation to the class struggle, so it acts in relation to the struggle for independence from imperialism.

The state, as it existed in pre-Federation colonial Australia, imposed and abetted the force and violence by which the invasion of the lands of the First Peoples was carried out. The state form that emerged through the various Federation conferences ensured that British colonial authority remained vested in their Governor-General and the various State Governors and Territory Administrators. The British retained control of Australian foreign policy until 1942 when the Australian parliament adopted the British Statute of Westminster passed in 1931.

The British also kept control of the Australian legal system. In 1900 the British Parliament only agreed to the Australian Constitution if the Privy Council remained the final court of appeal in Australia. Hence the High Court of Australia, and the Supreme Courts in each of the States could not exercise sovereign legal decision-making. As part of the Australian state machine, they were kept in a position of imposed subservience to the British ruling class. In 1975, the Whitlam government passed an Act to end this subservience, and the States followed suit in 1986.

The Australian head of state remains the King or Queen of England.

As important as each of these formal holds by British imperialism were over Australia, the real basis for Australia's lack of genuine independence arose from

the control of the Australian economy by British capital. The British Empire in Australia was British capital in Australia.

One of the earliest comprehensive studies of British capital in Australia was Brian Fitzpatrick's *The British Empire in Australia: An Economic History, 1834–1939*, published in 1941. Although not a Marxist, Fitzpatrick's book played an important role in examining the economic basis for the continuation of British domination of Australia even after the granting of formal independence in 1901. As historian Geoffrey Blainey put it succinctly in a Foreword to a second edition in 1949, "While Australians saluted the Union Jack, Jack was busy picking their pockets."

One of two notorious examples of the state imposing subservience on Australia in the interests of its imperialist overlords concerned the Depression-era NSW Premier Jack Lang. Australia began the Depression indebted to British banks, and various state and federal governments, some Liberal and some Labor, imposed austerity measures on the already struggling Australian people in order to ensure that loan repayments to British banks would continue. Lang opposed these measures and advocated the temporary cessation of interest repayments on debts to Britain, the cancellation of interest payments to other overseas bondholders and financiers on government borrowings, and that interest on all other government borrowings be reduced to 3% to free up money for injection into the economy. The federal government passed a law to seize NSW funds in order to make the State's repayments to Britain, but Lang withdrew all of that money from the banks and held it in cash at Trades Hall. The NSW Governor, representing the British Crown, sacked Lang and appointed his United Australia Party (a forerunner of the Liberals) opponent to the position of NSW Premier. When it was thought that Lang might retaliate by ordering the NSW police to arrest the Governor, the UAP federal government instructed the Governor-General to put the army on alert.

Australian imperialism?

As part of its mobilisation of workers in struggle, the Communist Party often conducted campaigns against big Australian monopolies like Colonial Sugar Refining (CSR) and Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP). The existence of these, and other big Australian companies, and CSR's reach into the Pacific in particular,

suggested to some that Australia was imperialist in its own right, but the Australian state machine imposed an overall subservience on Australia in the interests of foreign capital, and the few big Australian companies were an anomaly. In any case, neither CSR nor BHP were able to sustain their Australian capital base in the face of competition from overseas capital. CSR's sugar interest (as Sucrogen) was bought out by Singaporean agribusiness giant Willmar in 2010, and its residual building products division was bought out by French multinational Saint-Gobain for A\$4.5 billion (US\$2.95 billion) in 2024. As for BHP, the world's largest mining company is almost completely owned by foreign investors. US institutional investors are the largest national shareholder group, with a study by Australian economic analyst Ownership Matters, identifying the ultimate beneficial owners hidden behind nominee accounts as 82% US and only 6% Australian.

The same analysts found that foreign investors owned about 80% of the top 20 companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and that US investors alone owned about 56%, almost three times the Australian share of around 20%.

Beneficial owner	Share of ASX 20 market value
United States	56%
Australia	20%
United Kingdom	8%
Europe (excluding UK)	8%
Asia	4%
Canada	2%
Other	2%

Our own study of Australian mining companies in Africa revealed that Chinese capital was in some cases a significant owner of these Australian companies¹.

The Australian state remains entirely within the orbit of US imperialism. It operates in the interests of that imperialism and its Australian hangers-on in the manner identified by Lenin who said of imperialist finance capital that "it is capable of subjecting, and actually does subject to itself even states enjoying

¹ See [Australian+Mining+Africa.pdf](#)

the fullest political independence...(and these are) dependent countries which, officially, are politically independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence.”²

It is because of this dependency of the Australian state upon US imperialism and the junior partner status of Australian capital relative to that of foreign investors that we reject the notion that the Australian state is an imperialist state in its own right. Following on from that rejection is our disagreement with those who argue that the emphasis in our struggle for socialism should be on our “own” Australian capitalist class. Such an approach would be a diversion from our main task. Our belief is that the struggle for genuine independence and socialism in Australia requires us to break the hold of the US in Australia, to seize its assets and place them under the ownership of a new form of the state led by the working class.

Thanks to the Yanks?

In 1972, Ray Aitchinson, former ABC Chief of Staff in the Canberra press gallery, published a book under the title of the sub-heading above. According to the blurb on the back cover, the book addressed the question of whether Australia “is, in fact, prancing up the path to nationhood, or stumbling along an alley to become a stultified USA satellite”. The latter option appeared during WW2.

At the start of WW2, Australian troops had been deployed to defend Britain in the Middle East, North Africa and Greece. Then, on December 7, 1941 Japanese imperialism made a surprise bombing attack on the US Naval base at Pearl Harbour and began its attempt to conquer the Pacific.

Prime Minister Curtin had never believed in the capacity of a British base in Singapore to defend Australia, and at the end of December made a radio address to the nation declaring a switch in the submission of the Australian nation, from Britain to the US. “Without inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America free of any pangs as to our traditional links of kinship to the United Kingdom,” he said.

Britain’s “impregnable fortress” at Singapore fell to the Japanese after a battle lasting from 8 to 15 February 1942. Not only had the British been unable to

² See Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage Of Capitalism*, FLP. Peking, 1965 pp 97 and 101.

“defend” Australia, their loss at Singapore resulted in the capture of 20,000 Australian troops. Frantic efforts were made on February 22 to persuade Churchill to allow the redeployment of Australian overseas troops to their own country, which Churchill reluctantly agreed to, even though he tried to sidetrack them to Sri Lanka and Burma.

The first US troops in Australia had arrived in December 1941 headed as reinforcements for the US in the Philippines. On 17 March 1942, General Douglas MacArthur, Commander of US forces in the Philippines, touched down in Australia, having fled the Philippines. He was appointed Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Pacific the next day.

In his book, Aitchison writes:

Australians were wrongly jumping to the conclusion that the Americans were coming to defend them because of feelings of warm kinship and a real interest in their welfare derived from past relationships and a common language. There was nothing altruistic about the American's new presence in Australia. The American nation had been following its policy of twenty-five years earlier by remaining neutral for as long as possible and had been making a hefty profit out of the war right up to the day that the Japanese had clobbered Pearl Harbour. The Americans were in Australia because the US army in the Philippines had been all but crushed by the enemy. (pp 57-8)

In May 1942, the Japanese sent an invasion army by sea to try and capture Port Moresby and threaten Townsville and northern Queensland. Australian and US naval vessels countered by attempting to block the Japanese navy in the Coral Sea, bounded by the northern Queensland coastline in the West, the Solomon Islands in the north, and Vanuatu and New Caledonia in the east. The battle was conducted by planes, with none of the ships firing on each other. There was no clear winner, but the US made a propaganda victory out of it, and for many years afterward there was an annual commemoration of the battle in which the US had “saved” Australia. The commemoration effectively downplayed the later role of Australian troops in New Guinea who, between July and November 1942, had inflicted the first defeat of the advancing Japanese on land. Fortunately, commemorations of the Battle of the Coral Sea

have less importance today, with that in Darwin in May 2026 attracting only 50 people, including a contingent of US marines from their base outside Darwin, but the belief that we needed the US to “save” us during WW2 lingers in many people’s minds. The ANZUS Treaty, which requires the US to do nothing other than “consult” Australia if it came under attack, was further utilised to argue to justify Australia’s dependency on its “strong and powerful” protector.

US imperialism and the Australian state

The foregoing is essential in understanding how the Australian people, under threat from Japanese militarism, could be persuaded to allow their state machine to transfer its submission from British imperialism to US imperialism without having any real voice in that transfer.

In the post-war economic and political environment, the state was used to encourage and protect foreign – largely US – investment in Australia, either in the form of borrowings from US banks by Australian companies, US investments in Australian companies, or by US firms establishing their own operations in Australian industries. By 1965, two prominent economists, Brian Fitzpatrick and Ted Wheelwright, were warning that Australia had ingested too much US capital. In 1967, Labor MP Tom Uren complained that “A growing cancer of overseas capital is eating into Australia’s national heritage”.

Concurrently with the entry of substantial US capital into Australia came its military presence. In 1966, there was an agreement to establish a “space research facility” at Pine Gap, 18 kms from Alice Springs. It became operational in 1970. In 1969, another “space research facility” was established by the US at Nurrungar, 15 kms south of Woomera. During its 30 years’ existence, it supported US bombing of Cambodia and supported Israel during the Gulf War in the early 1990s. When it was closed, its functions were transferred to Pine Gap. In 1967, the US Naval Communications base at North West Cape, near Exmouth in WA, was opened. This base enables Very Low Frequency communications with submarines, and was renamed the Harold E. Holt US Naval Communications Station the following year after Prime Minister Holt’s death by drowning. Like Pine Gap, it is officially declared a “joint facility”.

The second example of the use of the machinery of state to impose the dictate of imperialism on Australia occurred when Labor Prime Minister Whitlam was

sacked by the Governor-General representing the British Crown, but acting for the CIA in collusion with the US Ambassador.

This was at a time when the state had required 18-year-old males to engage in a lottery of death – conscription – to serve the US in its war of aggression against Vietnam. Many youths resisted conscription, but faced a series of prosecutions culminating in terms of imprisonment for two years. The police responded with well-documented brutality against those who took to the streets to call for an end to conscription and the war.

Whitlam had clashed with Nixon over the continuation of the US war against Vietnam, had threatened to disclose details of the CIA's role at Pine Gap, and had encouraged his Minerals Minister Rex Connor, in response to widespread concerns about US and other foreign investment, to "buy back the farm". Connor investigated borrowings from outside the accepted, imperialist-controlled financial markets. His preference for borrowing from the Middle East to buy out US investments in Australia was dubbed the "loans affair". On the eve of Whitlam's planned disclosure to parliament of the role of Pine Gap, he was sacked by the Governor-General and his Liberal opponent, Malcom Fraser, was appointed to head a caretaker government pending a fresh election. In the face of immediate protests against this, it is rumoured that the army was again put on alert, but the imperialists' interests were best protected from within the working class by ACTU head Bob Hawke who defused calls for strike action and continuing protests.

A base for 2500 US marines now exists outside Darwin where there is also an illegally constructed US fuel storage facility. To these must now be added US facilities under the Force Posture Agreement and the AUKUS arrangements, namely the base for US and UK submarines at HMAS Stirling near Perth, and the base for six US B-52 bombers at RAAF Base Tindal near Katherine. In June 2026, the US announced that it would spend \$30 million on a major "war ready" weapons stockpile for its marine corps in south-eastern Victoria.

In addition to the physical presence of US bases on Australian soil, there is the growing practice of embedding US personnel within state structures. In the lead-up to the AUKUS announcement, a retired US Admiral was appointed to chair Australia's Naval Shipbuilding Expert Advisory Panel, advising on naval

shipbuilding, submarine acquisition and sustainment, including nuclear-powered submarines. He was joined by another retired US Admiral and three former civilian leaders of the U.S. Navy. Former US Rear Admiral Stephen E. Johnson was on Australia's Naval Shipbuilding Advisory Board and then further elevated into a full-time position as Australian deputy secretary of Defence.

In July 2023, the Australian Labor government announced that American military analysts will be sent to work at the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO) in Canberra and will establish a "Combined Intelligence Centre — Australia" within the DIO.

The Australian state is ready to commit force and violence to the protection of US economic and military assets in Australia as protesters outside US bases here can testify. The same force and violence is used to protect arms industry conventions and displays.

The increasingly authoritarian and anti-people development of state forces can be seen in training exercises against “civil disturbance”, ie people’s protests. Two 2022 training exercises for Australian soldiers, focusing on urban warfare and civilian “protection and control”, serve as a reminder of the centrality of the armed forces to the state power exercised by the capitalist class.

It has always been the view of Marxists that the armed forces are one of the “chief instruments of state power” (Lenin). Our founding Chairperson, E.F. Hill, wrote in chapter 5 of *Revolution and the Australian State* (1974), that “The central purpose of these armed forces is to maintain internal order, i.e. in the final analysis to suppress any revolt by the people against the ownership of Australia by the monopoly capitalists” (p. 27).

Throughout May and June, 2022, soldiers of the 3rd Brigade’s 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) conducted “population protection and control” exercises at a simulated urban environment at Townsville’s Line Creek Junction.

“Population protection” sounds fine, even if “control” doesn’t. But it must be kept in mind that “population protection” originated in the Spanish–Cuban Ten Years' War (1868-1878) when Spanish forces detained Cuban civilians in camps in order to more easily combat guerrilla forces. Over the following decades the

British during the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and the Americans during the Philippine–American War (also 1899-1902) used concentration camps to “protect” civilian populations.

The concept of “population protection” had an established military meaning before the Nazis issued the Presidential Emergency Decree of 28 February 1933 which was the basis for "Schutzhaft", that is, "protective custody" -- the power of the Gestapo to imprison people without judicial proceedings.

During the so-called “Malayan Emergency”, the defeat of the Communist guerrillas was closely linked with the re-location by the British of ethnic Chinese in new villages where they were brought under Government control and “protection”.

During the US war of aggression against Vietnam, the US imperialists and the South Vietnamese authorities established “protected hamlets” to intern peasant villagers in an attempt to break their support for the National Liberation Front.

The racist Northern Territory “Intervention” in Aboriginal communities was justified as a measure to “protect” children from alleged sexual and physical abuse. It was carried out by the Army following the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act.

So, we need to remember the military definition of “protection” when we read reports of ADF personnel practicing its implementation.

“Molotov cocktails, rowdy crowds and canines chomping at the bit set the scene for population protection and control (PPC) training in Townsville”, read an army media release.

The release continues, “The infantry sections integrated closely with military police assets, which provided critical arrest teams, detainee processing capabilities and working dogs to enhance security, crowd dispersion and high-value target extraction... Keeping the crowds at bay, military working dogs provide PPC teams with an additional layer of defence.’

At the same time, soldiers from 8th/9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (8/9 RAR), had been training to prepare for operations in densely populated cities and urban centres. The training was conducted at Queensland’s Wide Bay

Training Area, an open terrain environment (and recognised for its valuable environment and biodiversity) which also includes an urban operations training facility that simulated a small township “populated by an enemy force”.

In a report on the training exercise, Warrant Officer Class 2 Phil Brown said 8/9 RAR had increased its focus on urban operations training in recent times, and it differed from other types of training.

“8/9 RAR has been increasing the priority of urban operations training as more training facilities become available, and as doctrine is being rewritten for the contemporary environment,” Warrant Officer Brown said.

The rewriting of military doctrine for the “contemporary environment”, and increased focus on urban operations including population “protection” and control, should serve as a warning against complacency for Australians seeking changes of substance to the inequalities and injustices of capitalism, and the subordination of Australia to imperialist dictate and influence.

An exercise in February 2023 was reported in the privately published *Contact* military newsletter under the heading *Soldiers train to deal with protesters*. Again, it involved the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), with the support of the 1st Military Police Battalion (1MP), at a camp outside Townsville.

According to the report, the course focused on soldiers’ individual PPC training “while ensuring the ready battle group met the qualifications required of the ADF’s contingency operational response element.” It included “soldiers with shields, unruly role players and snapping canines”. The unruly role players created “a realistic scenario of aggressive protesters designed to push the soldiers’ endurance threshold”.

“Infantry sections integrated closely with military police arrest teams, detainee processing capabilities, and military working dogs to enhance security and crowd dispersion.”

These are descriptions of the Australian “Defence” Force being trained to suppress Australian citizens engaged in the democratic right of protest in the streets.

On June 11, 2026, the City of Port Adelaide Enfield issued a notice to residents that the Australian Army would be carrying out Exercise Rhino Resolve on the weekend, then two days away, at Osborne, Edinburgh, and Woodside. “The training helps Army personnel to be prepared to respond to a domestic security situation, defend Australia’s territory, and protect citizens during a response.”

The Council notice continued: “During the exercise, you may notice more military activity than usual in the area. This could include military vehicles coming in and out of Defence sites on the peninsula, and soldiers moving around within Defence areas wearing body armour, helmets, and carrying weapons. Civilian “role players” will also be interacting with soldiers as part of the training scenario.

“Some soldiers may carry weapons using blank ammunition for training purposes. There will be no live ammunition used at any time, and no blank ammunition will be fired within the Osborne Naval Shipyard.”

The exercise set a dangerous precedent for Australia where the military apparatus overrides civilian life. We need to remember the military definition of “protection” when we read reports of ADF personnel practicing its implementation.

Such exercises are increasing in number as the state hones its anti-people weapons in the service of imperialism. An Exercise Austral Shield was held in Western Australia and North Queensland from 3 to 19 July 2026 to demonstrate the military’s “ability to protect Australians, critical infrastructure and national resources, as well as its readiness to respond to domestic security challenges”. More than 1500 personnel from the Navy, Army, Air Force, Space Command and Cyber Command participated alongside representatives from state and federal agencies. The Director-General Joint Collective Training, Commodore Phillipa Hay said training together enabled agencies to be more prepared to respond when called upon to protect the Australian community.

For the last three years, environmental activists Rising Tide, have brought ordinary Australians to Newcastle to blockade the world’s biggest coal loader. In December 2025, over six days, 8000 people stood firm against police and government threats. On-water protesters defied possible \$22,000 fines and

two years jail under Section 214 of the Crimes Act, to block three coal ships. Many ships were diverted to other ports. 155 people were arrested.

The scale of these protests and the vulnerability of coastal facilities associated with AUKUS, such as SA's Osborne naval shipyard, and WA's HMAS Stirling submarine facility, have prompted the creation of an AUKUS Command as a unit within the Federal Police in conjunction with the Department for Defence. These reports indicate that the function of this unit will be to protect AUKUS related activities and facilities, including "public order responsibilities". In addition, it has also been reported that this unit will be supplied with firearms, and what are referred to as "crowd suppression munitions" including rubber bullets, tear gas and capsicum spray.

Australians are increasingly asserting the need for genuine anti-imperialist independence in the form of a break from the hold of the US and an end to the US-Australia Alliance.

This is the correct path forward for the Australian people.

They can expect every advance in this direction to be resisted by the Australian state – by politicians, police, the courts and gaols, the armed forces, the opinion makers in pro-US media and think tanks. We have seen actions by environmentalists, First Peoples, supporters of Palestine, and a broad range of other causes subjected to laws which are taking away our rights at an increasing rate. As this booklet has shown, the ALP's use of the state machine to suppress workers has always paved the way for the Liberal Party in office to introduce even more severe measures against workers.

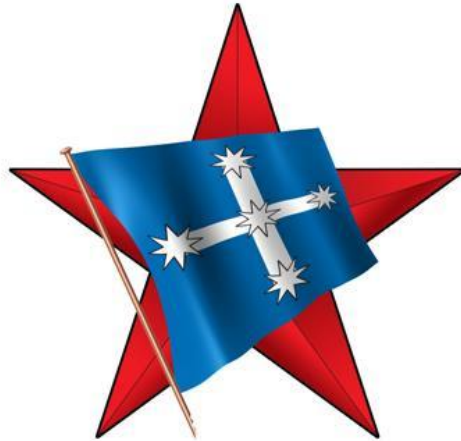
But people should not be dispirited by this. The apparent strength of the various arms of the state is a sign of its essential weakness – its separation from the people.

Our united strength will always overcome the force sent against us, no matter how long it takes. Summarising his long experience of revolutionary struggle in China, Mao Zedong wrote:

Make trouble, fail, make trouble again, fail again . . . until their doom- that is the logic of the imperialists and all reactionaries the world over in dealing with the people's cause and they will never go against this logic.

This is a Marxist law. When we say "imperialism is ferocious", we mean that its nature will never change, that the imperialists will never lay down their butcher knives, that they will never become Buddhas, till their doom. Fight, fail, fight again, fail again, fight again . . . until their victory; that is the logic of the people, and they too will never go against this logic. This is another Marxist law. The Russian people's revolution followed this law, and so has the Chinese people's revolution. ("*Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle*" August 14, 1949)

We are organising for victory in the overthrow of the state, and our struggle will also conform to this Marxist law.



Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)

www.cpaml.org

ozml@protonmail.com

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