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Contemporary Canadian Issues Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)

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Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)

Contemporary Canadian Issues

*Australia and Canada in Afghanistan*

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*In memory of Malcolm Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion  
(Contemporary Canadian Issues) Fraser*

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## Introduction

*Jack Cunningham and Ramesh Thakur*

The two long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have now come to an end, at least insofar as the involvement of Western troops is concerned. Most Americans regarded Afghanistan as a war of necessity, forced upon the United States by an armed attack in the form of terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. By contrast, many Americans and most international observers viewed Iraq as a war of choice, whose justification, conduct, and consequences remain matters of intense controversy. Between them, the two wars shaped many of the contours of twenty-first-century international relations to date. They helped to define the nature Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) of contemporary warfare and armed conflict; accelerated the shift of power, wealth, and influence away from the U.S.-led Western bloc; brought an end to the post-Cold War era of unchallengeable U.S. dominance of world affairs; and shook Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) the foundations of the post-1945 Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) multilateral order centred on the United Nations (U.N.). In addition, Iraq — much more than Afghanistan — inflicted considerable reputational damage on Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) the United States with respect to its commitment to prevailing human rights standards and its competence at administering and rebuilding a defeated, occupied, and war-torn country. Not the least because of Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) these lasting consequences, the two conflicts also compelled many long-standing U.S. allies to re-examine the bases of their relationships with the United States.

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This volume originated in a conversation at the bar in Toronto's InterContinental Hotel, at the close of a 2012 conference assessing the Canadian and Australian experiences in the recent conflict in Afghanistan. The conference was a joint endeavour of the Centre for Contemporary International History (since renamed the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History) at the University of Toronto's Trinity College and Munk School of Global Affairs, the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University, and the Canadian Forces College. Looking back at the day's events, Jack Cunningham, John English, Bill Graham, Ramesh Thakur, and William Maley agreed to arrange a follow-up conference on the Australian and Canadian decisions to respectively take part in and stand aside from the 2003 invasion of Iraq. They also agreed to proceed with two volumes of conference papers as part of the current series, with Maley and Cunningham to edit the volume on Afghanistan, and Thakur and Cunningham the one on Iraq. A year later, in Canberra for the conference on Iraq, they nailed down the details for this compilation.

These volumes are rooted in a shared interest in the similarities and differences between Australia and Canada in their policies toward recent international conflicts and their foreign and security policies more broadly. Both *Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)* countries are parliamentary democracies along the Westminster model, with obvious cultural ties to and affinities with Great Britain as well as each other. Both are "middle" powers. And both have complicated relationships with their American ally. In the Australian case this is defined above all by distance, in the Canadian one by intimate proximity and profound economic interdependence. The two volumes of conference papers in this series can be seen as complementary, one dealing with a case where the two governments made essentially the same decision, and the other with an instance where they clearly did not.

In trying to make sense of the Australian and Canadian decisions regarding Iraq, and indeed of the invasion itself, we are inevitably constrained by the limited vistas of our historical moment. After all, a decade's distance is very little in the historian's schema, and affords us relatively limited perspectives. That said, it is not too soon to draw some provisional *Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)* conclusions and to pose questions that can be answered more confidently once the relevant documentary record is more comprehensive than it now is. And for that, we do have some material with which to work.

The Chilcot and Hutton inquiries in Britain have provided some documentary evidence regarding British, and to some degree American, perceptions and decisions.<sup>[1]</sup> The invasion and its aftermath have been chronicled in a number of solid journalistic accounts.<sup>[2]</sup> Other books have made some use of interviews to treat the American and British decision-making processes.<sup>[3]</sup> Some have examined the impact of the *Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)* war on the international normative order,<sup>[4]</sup> and on the state of nuclear arms control.<sup>[5]</sup> And a growing body of memoir literature provides grist *Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)* for the scholar's mill. Among major American participants, George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and Condoleezza Rice have given us their versions of events, as has Tony Blair on the British side.<sup>[6]</sup> As for the Australian and Canadian experiences, we now have the recollections of John Howard and Jean Chrétien.<sup>[7]</sup> There have been occasional articles and

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book chapters assessing the Canadian or Australian decision, but not, we believe, much by way of comparison, and no volume like this.

Most of the chapters here are reworkings of papers presented at the 2013 Canberra conference, though there are exceptions. As noted below, the chapters by Howard and Chrétien are reprints of addresses delivered in Sydney and Toronto respectively. In addition, Kim Nossal was slated to take part in the Canberra conference, although circumstances prevented it. We have, however, included a chapter that is based on what he would have said had he been present.

We have also attempted to incorporate the perspectives of Australian and Canadian policy-makers. John Howard is represented by a speech to the Lowy Institute for International Policy, and Jean Chrétien by remarks at a Graham Centre conference marking the fiftieth anniversary of the election of Lester Pearson's government. In these selections, they defend their respective decisions. Howard situates his actions in the context of the 9/11 attacks and the sense of vulnerability to terrorist attack they engendered. He concedes errors on the part of the coalition powers regarding intelligence on weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and a failure to plan for the aftermath of the invasion, but is quick to point out there was widespread agreement across the Australian political spectrum that Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs. In response to critics of military action without U.N. approval, he points to the precedent of NATO's intervention in Kosovo and draws a contrast between those who, in his view, make a fetish of Australia, Canada, and Iraq: *Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)* multilateralism and those who believe the nation-state must reserve the right to act independently *in extremis*. Chrétien stresses what he views as the patent inadequacy, even at the time, of evidence for Saddam's possession of WMDs, and the dangers of a global order in which regime change without U.N. approval became permissible practice.

To the reflections of these decision-makers, we have added excerpts from a round table on "Parliamentary Democracies at War" held at the Canberra conference. Here, the Honourable Bill Graham (Canadian foreign minister at the time of the invasion, and subsequently defence minister); the Right Honourable Malcolm Australia, Canada, and Iraq: *Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)* Fraser, former Australian prime minister; and Paul Barratt, Australia's former secretary of defence, reflect on the Australian and Canadian decisions, the processes by which they were made, and potential lessons for the future.

As for the scholarly contributions to this book, they are unapologetically eclectic in approach and viewpoint. There is considerable variation among our authors in methodology and focus, although it Australia, Canada, and Iraq: *Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues)* is fair to say that all are, broadly speaking, empiricists, steering clear of the wider shores of theory. The contributors differ among themselves over the legality, morality, and prudence of invading Iraq, although none can bring themselves to defend the manner in which Saddam's overthrow and the reconstruction of Iraq were actually conducted, and the judgment of almost all is negative in varying degrees.

Several of them take a broad view of the invasion, not confined to the Canadian and Australian experiences. Ramesh Thakur's verdict on the invasion is Australia, Canada, and Iraq:

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Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) unsparing. Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) He depicts it as rooted in deliberate misrepresentation of the salient facts and as a catastrophe by every measure, including its own terms. He argues that the invasion and its aftermath served only to inflame jihadist sentiments and benefit Iran regionally and China globally, while dividing the United States from its European allies. He concludes that George W. Bush and his coalition partners gravely undermined the international norm against aggressive war and damaged the U.N. system to boot. But the United Nations, he writes, would have been discredited completely had it been coerced into bestowing its imprimatur on the invasion, and has been largely vindicated by subsequent developments.

Like Thakur's contribution, Roger Coate's piece about the invasion's impact on the U.S.-U.N. relationship is critical of the aggressive American exceptionalism and unilateralism associated with the second Bush administration. He contends that the Bush administration not only undermined the authority and effectiveness of the United Nations, but hampered the pursuit of its own goals in the process. U.S. and U.N. interests are more complementary than Bush administration officials knew, he continues, and the deliberate marginalization of the United Nations impaired the reconstruction of Iraq, the stabilization of the region, and the post-invasion containment of terrorism. In Coate's account, the United Nations emerges as perhaps the archetypal creation of modern American liberalism, and its discrediting as an instrument of global governance a self-inflicted blow of the first order.

Since the Australian and Canadian responses to the Anglo-American call for support diverged, it is that divergence that must be the focus of any comparative assessment. And here Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) our authors differ in emphasis, and sometimes substance. Some Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) emphasize deeply rooted variations in national experience and different positions on the globe and in the international system, or the dynamics of the respective Australian and Canadian alliances with the United States. Others give more weight to contingencies Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) such as the immediate domestic political climate, the predilections of the individual leader, or the details of how Australia, Canada, and Iraq: Perspectives on an Invasion (Contemporary Canadian Issues) the Bush administration went about the task of coalition building.

## **Australia Canada And Iraq Perspectives On An Invasion Contemporary Canadian Issues**

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