

## JIAP OBSERVATION

# MACARTHUR'S LESSON

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**Lessons From Japan About War's Aftermath,** John W. Dower (author of *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II*), Op-Ed, NYT10/27/02, A13. "While occupied Japan provides no model for a postwar Iraq, it does provide a clear warning: Even under circumstances that turned out to be favorable, demilitarization and democratization were awesome challenges. To rush to war without seriously imagining all its consequences, including its aftermath, is not realism but a terrible hubris."

**"Rebuilding Iraq: Japan Is No Model,"** Chalmers Johnson (president of the Japan Policy Research Institute and author, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*) LA Times, 10/17/02. "Our politics become more surreal every day. This plan won't work for the simple reason that Iraq is not Japan. The White House and the Rumsfeld Pentagon seem to know next to nothing about Japan."

Common wisdom has it that soldiers always refight their last war. In the case of the Bush Administration's war planners, it is difficult to discern what war that was. Their favorite justification for war and its aftermath is a reference to Hitler followed by nostalgia for the Occupation of Japan. None, however, participated in World War II or its aftermath. Nor do they appear to have, as Professors Dower and Johnson point out above, any sense of its history.

While it is difficult enough to compare oil-rich Iraq, surrounded by enemies and having a foreign military in command of its skies, to the industrial and military might of a 1930s Germany, the comparison of a postwar Iraq to Japan in 1945 is dreamy, at best. Coming into the war, Japan was a regional industrial and military power, albeit lacking natural resources. The Allies literally burnt to the ground its factories and homes. A "god-like" Emperor told his subjects to stop fighting for the moment and they did. The relative cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the Japanese people made occupation rule straightforward and reconstruction an issue of national pride.

There is maybe only one issue in which a valid comparison is possible. A potential occupation of Iraq may compare to Japan in that many of the imposed reforms did not stick, territorial boundaries remained unclear, war criminals became national leaders, and its occupiers may find like MacArthur that history will not be kind. [Ask General Wainwright.]

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