

WAR IN THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE, AND AN AUSTRALIAN GEO/POLITICS OF WHITE POSSESSION

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Abstract

This paper examines how war and peace as a bio/necropolitical regime informs Australian sovereignty. How do war and peace contribute to the Australian government's attempts to reconfigure the demand for Indigenous rights and redefine Australia's strategic military and peace-keeping role in a transnational context. Australia's peacekeeping mission in East Timor, for instance, has become a way of securing Australia's national interests in terms of 'keeping peace' in the Asia Pacific region. What are the implications of such internal and external consolidations of white Australian sovereignty? How may we think through and engage with this sovereignty through the concept of bio/necropolitics of white possession?

Introduction

This paper explores how whiteness is performed in bipartisan politics in Australia through the exercise of sovereignty in relation to internal Indigenous and non-Indigenous others as well as geopolitically in relation to other nation-states. I argue that this performance of whiteness may be read through the conceptual framework of a biopolitics of white possession. A biopolitics of white possession, as I argue and demonstrate in this paper, entails an active shaping of worlds, subjectivities, bodies and knowledges which benefit the maximisation of life and wealth for a white Australian sovereign nation at the expense of

Indigenous and non-Indigenous, non white sovereignties in the Asia-Pacific. This biopolitics of white possession operates through a number of political undertakings. In this context of this paper, I analyse a specific set of political operations: the recent apology to the stolen generations Australia's Indigenous peoples, the Federal intervention purportedly to check child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities as well as Australia's historical and contemporary interventions in East Timor.

Apologies and Interventions

On February 13, 2008, the apology to the stolen generations of Indigenous children in Australia was nationally heartening in its effect. It appeared to have generated goodwill from the seat of power in Canberra for many Indigenous Australians. Many non-Indigenous Australians like myself finally felt a sense that a bridge had been crossed in acknowledging the terrible trauma of the histories and the effects of stealing generations of Indigenous Australians from their families. Not only was this trauma acknowledged, but that very seat of power—the government, the parliament, and its laws were acknowledged as enacting violence in relation to Indigenous Australians. Reading this event in the context of speaking about war and peace then, it would appear that the apology was and is a gesture toward peace, between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians.

Yet, some questions nag the event. Even as Kevin Rudd apologized for the stealing of generations of Indigenous children, the Howard government's Federal Intervention in the Northern Territory in response to the *Little Children are Sacred Report* (2007) remains in effect. The Federal Intervention is a parliamentary Act, which enables targeting Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory through the justification of the protection of children. And while the Labour government is reviewing the terms of the intervention, and it has promised to consult Indigenous leaders and communities on the issue (a recommendation of the *Little Children are Sacred Report* which was not followed by the Howard government), it appears unlikely that the intervention will be scrapped. My point in making the connection between the apology and the intervention is not to suggest that the racist policies of stealing children in the attempt to 'breed out the black' and the 2007 Intervention were made on exactly the same grounds. There are historical differences in the context of these events. The stolen generations were justified by the policy to 'breed out the black' and the attempt to solve the racially defined 'half-caste' problem.¹ The 2007 Federal Intervention was enacted ostensibly in relation to 'protect' little children, not by removing them, but by forced medical checks, quarantining welfare payments for member of Indigenous families, scrapping the permit system gained through the Land Rights Act (1976) and other extreme measures by framing the issue as an 'emergency'. Yet the discourse of protection and problem-solving is racially framed, directed and applied. And, like the stolen generations policy, the Intervention appears to be causing harm and disempowerment in many communities rather than addressing any problems of abuse.²

I read the apology in the context of the still-in-effect Federal intervention in order to point out other consequences of these discourses. Some of these consequences were identified by Irene Watson in her Keynote address at the 2007 Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Conference, 'Humanitarian Intervention: What is Saved?' Analyzing the intervention, Watson suggested that there was a need to identify how Acts like the Federal Intervention were productive of power. What new powers were being consolidated in relation to Indigenous subjects? What kinds of Indigenous subjects did these forms of power aim to produce? These are necessary questions to continue to ask. And it is these questions that I would like to keep in mind as a reference point in thinking about how power is productive in relation to the exercise of white sovereignty in Australia.

Reading white Australian sovereignty through the language of war and peace is one manner of highlighting its productive powers. This language has informed and continues to inform the direction of Australia's policies in national terms as well as internationally, and it is characterised by a biopolitics of white possession and interests. Sketching out a new research agenda for sociologists through a rereading of Foucault's biopower in relation to Critical Whiteness Studies, Aileen Moreton-Robinson suggests a number of challenges that need to be met. One of these challenges is 'to extend an understanding of the terrain of sovereignty in Australia as relations of force in a war of races normalised through biopower, contributing to an understanding of how Indigenous sovereignty and its disavowal have shaped Australian nationalism' (2006: 389). If we take this challenge to be a key one in thinking through the formation of Australian nationalism, it is

also necessary to take into account the geopolitical formation of Australian nationalism precisely through the logic of 'relations of force in a war of races' (Moreton-Robinson 2006: 389). The question of race may not necessarily be identified as racial in this context, but is often coded racially yet named through the language of nationalism and national interests. This slippage between race and nation, since it was advocated in the 19th century through the writings of John Stuart Mill on nationalism, continues to pervade contemporary nationalisms. Suvendrini Perera has outlined the importance of reading the exercise of white Australian sovereignty simultaneously within and without Australia in her edited collection of essays, *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty 2001* (2007). In the introduction to this edited collection, Perera argues that the 'seemingly disparate initiatives' which target racialised others within and without Australia reveal a 'renewed insistence on territorial sovereignty, the protection of national borders and the promotion of a racially coded model of citizenship' (2007a). Whiteness, therefore, informs the notion of Australian sovereignty in relation to its internal and external others. In the Australian context, whiteness has been defined as 'governmental belonging' or a 'belief that one has a right over the nation' (Hage 1998). Building on this definition, Moreton-Robinson suggests that the 'right to possess is inextricably tied to perceiving the nation as a white possession', a definition of whiteness which directly informs this essay (2005). The nation as white possession is, as Perera suggests, a 'multiple formation.' She suggests that whiteness as a 'multiple formation' may be read as,

'a palpable material and quantifiable category against which those to be excluded were measured The state and the

bodies of its citizens were explicitly constructed in and through their relation to whiteness establishing a hierarchy of belonging and entitlement. It is important to note that a definition and measure of Australian whiteness was, from the outset, derived and asserted to its multiple racial others, rather than to a single reference point. Spatial as well as racial hierarchies came into play in positioning the subjects of the nation, against its asymmetrical non-white others, indigenes and aliens' (Perera 2005).

In her insistence on whiteness as a 'multiple formation', Perera highlights the exercise of white sovereignty as 'a set of movements radiating both outward into the surrounding region as well as inward to the denied Indigenous sovereignty that founds the Australian state' (2007a). This essay is concerned with tracing this double movement in the continual palimpsest that white sovereignty appears to write and rewrite over Indigenous sovereignties as well as a non-white sovereignty in East Timor.

Acts of Peace as War: Bio/Necropolitical Regimes

So what does a biopolitics of white possession and interests which structure a white Australian sovereignty entail in the national and international arena? How does this biopolitics generate a language of war and peace? And perhaps most importantly, what does peace, which may serve the interests of a white Australian sovereignty, look like? In order to examine how a biopolitics of white possession structures a white Australian sovereignty, it is necessary to trace the concept of 'war as a biopolitical regime' as Hardt and Negri phrase it.

Drawing on the theoretical itinerary of Hobbes, Clausewitz, and Foucault, Hardt

and Negri differentiate their theorisation of contemporary war from a modernist one, as a 'limited state of exception' (2006: 6). They draw on Foucault's notion of biopower as playing a regulative role where 'the socially pacifying function of political power involves constantly re-inscribing this fundamental relationship of force in a sort of silent war and re-inscribing it too in the social institutions, systems of economic inequality, and even the spheres of personal and sexual relations' (2006: 13). Extrapolating on Foucault's theory of biopower, therefore, Hardt and Negri suggest that 'War . . . becomes the general matrix for all relations of power and techniques of domination, whether or not bloodshed is involved' (2006: 13). Furthermore, as a regime of biopower, 'a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life', 'war brings death, but also, paradoxically must produce life' (2006: 13). As Hardt and Negri explain it, 'this does not mean that war has been domesticated or its violence attenuated, but rather that daily life and the normal functioning of power has been permeated with the threat and violence of warfare' (2006: 13).

While Hardt and Negri do not mention race as a regulative code in war as a regime of biopower, Moreton-Robinson draws on Foucault's reading of racial and religious differentiation as providing a caesura, a break within populations, to determine how technologies of killing and letting die can function. Or as Katia Genel puts it, '[t]he analysis of racism is the response to the question of knowing how to exercise the function of killing within biopower' (2006: 49). Foucault discusses this function of killing in the context of the Nazi regime in Germany, but Moreton-Robinson suggests that biopower may be understood specifically in relation to Indigenous

sovereignty in a number of other ways. As discussed earlier in this essay, whiteness as a multiple formation provided that racial caesura in the Australian context. But to take this racial logic further, for Aileen-Moreton-Robinson, the link between biopower and Indigenous sovereignty produces some key questions: 'If sovereignty is predicated on fiction that arises through war, how does biopower enable sovereignty to deny war through a legal fiction of Terra Nullius? Is the refusal to declare war itself a tactic of war?' (2006: 388). Arguing for a biopolitical direction in Critical Whiteness Studies, she suggests that 'what would be useful is to consider the representation of power within the law, rights, sovereignty paradigm by approaching Indigenous sovereignty and state sovereignty as relations of force located within a matrix of biopower' (2006: 388).

Moreton-Robinson appears to have raised some very crucial questions. In the Australian context, 'the refusal to declare war' through discourses of peaceful settlement appears to have continually reproduced the very basis of white subjectivities who resist or cannot acknowledge the notion of Australia's colonization. So, even as events like the apology from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acknowledge the 'mistreatment' of Indigenous peoples in Australia, the key question of the basis of Australian sovereignty, the ability of the Australian parliament to enact laws and conduct its business, cannot be brought to the fore. Simultaneously, ironies like an apology for the stolen generations, yet the exercise and performance of sovereignty over Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory in what appears to be an act of war in the name of humanitarian intervention do not appear to be ironies. The Prime Minister's attempt to institute a bipartisan 'war cabinet' in relation to

Indigenous issues appears to be, therefore, not so much a Freudian slip, but an outcome of this irony. What appears to remain intact is the sovereignty of the white Australian nation which consolidates its exercise of biopower in a racially coded manner.

Australia's Bio/Necropolitical Regimes

It is this relation between white sovereignty and Indigenous sovereignty that urgently brings to the fore the issue of a biopolitics of white possession. White possession as Cheryl Harris (1993), Moreton-Robinson (2004), Irene Watson (2005) have theorised it, illuminates the historical alignments between property rights and race, and in Australia, white possession played a 'definitive role in constructing and affirming white domination and economic success at the cost of Indigenous racial and economic oppression' (Moreton-Robinson 2005). White possession and ownership is pervasive in Australia from cultural representations of landscapes to monuments, territorial definitions and property rights, and is crucial to the question of the sovereignty. Linguistically, this ownership is expressed through terms such as 'settler' or 'British migrants'. As Giannacopoulos points out, the distinctions in these terms are generated by a law that obfuscates its status as immigrant, diasporic, and racially violent' (2007). And it enables the generation of the 'non'-migrant, 'non'-diasporic, white sovereign' subject which can position itself as 'mystically un-ethnic and transcendental by asserting its jurisdiction over the bodies it looks out toward' (Giannacopoulos 2007).

In Australia, many of us are perhaps used to the manner in which this white sovereign subject is represented through

Howard speak. However, during Kevin Rudd's election victory speech, I was struck by how this white possession was displayed structurally precisely in Rudd's positioning of himself as a 'mystically un-ethnic and transcendental' body who asserted his jurisdiction over Indigenous and 'all' Australians. Rudd displayed this possessive benevolence by claiming first of all to be 'a Prime Minister for Indigenous Australians' (Rudd 2007a). While this particular statement may have been referencing John Howard's 1996 election speech which suggested that he would govern 'for all of us', i.e., those white Australians supposedly marginalized by the supposedly sectarian interests of the leftist multiculturalist, Indigenous rights alliances, this linguistic white possession and governance for Indigenous Australians makes visible that meeting point of the white patriarchal sovereignties displayed by Howard and the benevolent Rudd. Here the exercise of white power and possession over Indigenous lives and bodies, the exercise of biopower, is entrenched regardless of which side of politics one can vote for.

This entrenchment of white power points us in the direction of Achille Mbembe's theorisation of necropolitics because it introduces into the heart of sovereignty, the rule of colonial difference. Hobbes theorised war through the concept of conquest of another sovereign state, whereas colonial sovereignty constructs non-European sovereignties as available for appropriation. These parts of the globe, Mbembe suggests are 'locations par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of "civilization" (2003: 24). This violence of the state of exception takes the form of necropower—where the sovereign right to kill or disallow life is not 'subject to

legal and institutional rules' (2003: 25). Mbembe's thesis, that necropower works through the suspension of the controls and guarantees of judicial order, needs to be reformulated in the context of the operation of colonial law. Thus the question is not whether or not necropower functions in conditions where colonial sovereignty suspends law, rather, as Watson (2005), Moreton-Robinson (2006), and Giannacopoulos (2007) have theorised it, colonial sovereignty operates through legal fictions which disavow their colonising status.

This necropolitical relationship has historically informed a white Australian national identity. Here the massacres of Indigenous nations, policies of breeding out the black by stealing generations of Indigenous children, setting up of reserves and camps for Indigenous peoples illustrate a colonial sovereign violence where the 'peace' of settlement took on the face of a war without end. And the violence of the state of exception, as Mbembe would put it, was deemed to 'operate in the service of civilisation' (2003, p. 24). This racial violence against Indigenous peoples as well as an attempted racial exclusion of 'Pacific Islanders' and 'Asians' informed the first two acts of parliament in Australia manifesting itself in the white Australia policy. As Suvendrini Perera points out, the Immigration Restriction Act 'targeted non-white migration' and the Pacific Islander Laborers Act was 'designed to end the presence of Melanesian labour in the cane fields' (2005). These acts proclaimed the simultaneous bio and necropolitical exercise of power where white possession of land and nation was fostered at the expense of Indigenous and non-Indigenous non-white lives and bodies. Furthermore, the situation of Australia as white in an Indigenous/Asia/Pacific region

simultaneously attempted to erase what Perera calls 'well-established histories of prior contact between Indigenous peoples and their neighbours in Asian and Pacific societies' (Perera 2005). The construction of whiteness in Australia and its attempted erasure of this pre-existing geography of international relations generates war as a biopolitical regime—thereby fostering the alignment of white Australia's territorial and racial integrity in a geopolitical context. Peace and the notion of peaceful settlement, in this context, has masked horrific racial violence in the necropolitical relation of massacres, camps, as well as its exclusionary violence towards non-white non-Indigenous others. Australian national identity emerged from these racial wars, and this national and transnational attempt to regulate Australia's population is a manifestation of both bio and necropower as these wars were fundamental to a bio/necropolitics of white possession. In other words, the maximisation of life and the security of a white colonial Australia was dependant on the attempted genocide of its Indigenous inhabitants as well as the racial exclusion of non-Anglo peoples. Thus, I would argue, that war has been a bio/necropolitical regime in the management and regulation of social and national life in the Australian context.

In contemporary terms, this bio/necropolitics of white possession occurs through discourses of protection and humanitarian intervention. Drawing on Spivak's analysis of 'white men saving brown women' as a colonial trope, Irene Watson states that this protectionist discourse utilises the 'image of the black woman in need of 'rescue' and 'works to contradict the call to freedom and self-determination of women, children and men (the entire community) (2005: 26). Inderpal Grewal argues that 'though 'modes of humanitarianism'

may often be seen as oppositional to necropolitics or the right to 'expose to death', they may not be in opposition to 'forms of power that produce inequalities' (Grewal 2003: 537). Rather, 'it is the interrelation between the sovereign right to kill and the humanitarian right to rescue that constitutes modes of modern power' (Grewal 2003, p. 537). This interrelation between the right to kill and the right to rescue can be historically traced through the massacres of Indigenous peoples and the subsequent decision to 'protect' Indigenous peoples in reserves and camps—the protection itself was a punitive process which spoke more to a Mbembian necropolitical exposure to death rather than a protection as such. In tracing this history through the identification of the Agambenian camp as a biopolitical paradigm, Wadiwel (2007), for instance, outlines the devastation and despair that this protectionism generated for Indigenous inhabitants, especially in the case of Palm Island. In effect, therefore, the discourse of protection has historically functioned as a racial war, one in which the interests of colonial sovereignty, such as the extraction of Indigenous labour or the possession of Indigenous land, lie barely concealed.

Such a right to rescue has most recently been exercised through the late Federal government's Intervention in the Northern Territory. In response to *The Little Children are Sacred* report on child sexual abuse among Aboriginal communities, the Howard government responded by enacting legislation enabling the Federal government to make interventions in the lives and over the bodies of Indigenous communities. The quarantining of welfare payments and related disciplinary measures, the removal of Indigenous permits, and the management of Indigenous land by managers (Northern Territory National

Emergency Response Bill, 2007) speak of a war against any exercise of Indigenous sovereignty in the name of protection. And, rather than addressing the problem of domestic violence or child sexual abuse by installing programs or building on existing programs which would provide support for the victims of sexual or domestic violence, the Howard government's real interests appear to have been a take-over of Indigenous land and its management—thus re-enacting what Mbembe would name as the exercise of colonial sovereignty which for some communities has been resulting in greater poverty and inequity—thus an exercise in letting die.

In the language of biopolitics, therefore, a necropolitical engagement is established through the right to save. The Federal government's Intervention in the Northern Territory especially through the involvement of the police and the military was a declaration of war against Indigenous sovereignty. Hardt and Negri argue that the language of war has become 'the foundation of politics itself' (2006: 21). This foundation as Hardt and Negri suggest involves the 'constant and coordinated application of violence' which 'becomes the necessary condition for the functioning of discipline and control' (2006: 21). War, in this context, becomes a 'regulative activity that creates and maintains social hierarchies' (2006: 21). The Federal Intervention in the Northern Territory enabled the Howard government to apply this 'constant and coordinated application of violence' in its disciplinary measures creating fear for many in the Northern Territory Indigenous communities—thus maintaining racial hierarchies, and taking over Indigenous land, rather than fostering the health and well-being of Indigenous communities. So, while the rescue of Indigenous children from sexual abuse in Indigenous communities may be seen as

bio rather than necropolitical, it is the exercise of a white colonial sovereignty through a humanitarianism conducted in the language of war that produces and maintains the current unequal regulative order between the Australian government and Indigenous communities.

The current labour government has now reinstated the Indigenous permit system with some modifications (Karvelas 2008). Organisations like Women for Wik and the Combined Aboriginal Organisations have requested a review from the Labour government, and the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has promised to review the Intervention by the end of 2008 (Wilson 2007). However, it remains to be seen how much of the intervention will be retained by the Labour government in the biopolitical matrix of power relations between colonial and Indigenous sovereignties. Thus the fostering of life through the right to save may still generate a continuous war between colonial sovereignty embodied through the discourse of 'good' economic management and an attempted erasure of Indigenous sovereignties. So unless the bio/necropolitics of white possession is addressed; in other words, unless the question of Indigenous sovereignty is addressed, engagement with fostering Indigenous lives, as Irene Watson suggests, will be a 'conjuring act' (2005: 15).

Geo/necropolitics, Australia and East Timor

If war is a regime of biopower that reproduces all aspects of social life within nation-states, then it is important to remember how this form of biopolitics is also waged in the sphere of geopolitics or international relations. Or as Hardt and Negri point out, 'international relations and domestic

politics become increasingly similar and intermingled. As discourses of war shift from the emphasis on 'defense' to 'security' globally, 'security requires rather actively and constantly reshaping the environment through military and/or police activity. Only an actively shaped world is a secure world. This notion of security is a form of biopower, in the sense that it is charged with the task of producing and transforming social life at its most general and global level' (Hardt and Negri 2005: 20). As with social and political actors within the nation-state, an analysis of biopolitics waged in the sphere of geopolitics requires us to identify whose security is being consolidated, which governments or nation-states require an actively shaped world and why.

In the geopolitical arena, this necropolitics has been exercised in historical and contemporary terms in the Asia-Pacific region. I would like to discuss these necropolitics specifically in relation to East Timor. In fact, Mbembe's notion that colonial violence operates in suspension of law is applicable in this context. Katsumi Ishizuka (2004), Simon Philpott (2006) and David Mercer (2004) have outlined the continuing asymmetrical relationship between Australia and East Timor before, during and after the invasion of East Timor by Indonesia. Katsumi Ishizuka, in particular, has traced the manner in which Australia recognized the sovereignty of Indonesia over East Timor in 1978 despite the UN General Assembly's resolution rejecting Indonesia's claim, and despite opposition from the Australian Labour Party and the Australian public. Much of the attempt to retain ties with Indonesia despite the illegality of Indonesia's sovereignty over East Timor appears to have been related to Australia's interest in exploiting the gas rich resources of the Timor Gap. Or as Ishizuka suggests, 'The Timor Sea between East Timor and

northern Australia is estimated to contain the world's 23rd largest oil field, with reserves of five billion barrels of oil and 50 trillion feet of liquid natural gas. Therefore, Australia understandably made use of the economic benefit of this 'Gap' in its diplomacy on the annexation of East Timor' (2004: 277). Yet these negotiations were illegal as Ishizuka points out, 'Indonesia of course had no legal right to negotiate East Timor's resources in the first place, given that its occupation of the territory was illegal according to international law' (2004: 277). It is necessary to extend this point to the illegality not only of Indonesia's occupation of East Timor, but to the illegality of the Timor Gap treaty between Indonesia and Australia. In fact, the Australian government's tacit support of Indonesia and its recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor suggests the waging of a necropolitics of possession—where East Timor's annexation by Indonesia was seen as an opportunity for Australia's appropriation and exploitation of resources which belong to the East Timorese people. Furthermore, if necropolitics is an exercise of the sovereign right to let die, Australia may be said to be responsible for the letting die of those East Timorese killed by the Indonesian military. While the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke responded to the Santa Cruz massacre by 'calling on the Indonesian government to abandon the use of military force and to begin negotiations with the people of East Timor' in 1991, Australia was simultaneously signing contracts with international oil companies and Indonesia to begin explorations under the Timor sea (Ishizuka 2004: 279). Thus, the expense of Australia's exploitation of Timorese resources was paid by those who were allowed to die.

Post-independence, the United Nations Transitional Administration simply

replaced Indonesia with East Timor in the content of the Timor Gap treaty. Although the East Timorese government headed by Mari Alkatiri hoped to renegotiate the maritime boundaries of the treaty which favour Australia, the Australian government refused to discuss these boundaries (Ishizuka 2004: 280). In current terms, 80% of the petroleum royalties are due to go to Australia, while Australia will enjoy the benefit of an increase in employment opportunities, increased investment, and business and technological innovations (Ishizuka 2004: 281) through exploitation of the gas and petroleum resources. Meanwhile, Ishizuka suggests, 'East Timor itself will reap only a few of the benefits through employment opportunities as a result of the processing in East Timor from the Timor Sea project' (2004: 281).

One of the ways in which Australia has been able to get away with its dominance in relation to the exploitation of East Timor's sea-based resources has been through its donor aid to East Timor and its peace-keeping mission there. As Ishizuka outlines it, 'Australia has consistently contributed the largest number of troops to a nation-building process and the maintenance of security in East Timor' (2004: 282). Peacekeeping suggests a biopolitical act—i.e., contributing to the fostering of East Timorese lives. However, this dependence on Australia especially in relation to peacekeeping forces, and 'the training and management of the country's new police force' has enabled Australia to maintain its exploitative economic and political relationship with East Timor. As Ishizuka states, 'the continuing dependence of East Timor on Australia in economic and security terms, and the balance of power politics involved in regional hegemony in the area, encourage the status quo' (2004: 283).

Such a use of peacekeeping missions as a bargaining tool in exploitative trade relations necessitates a re-theorisation of peace. Peacekeeping in this context has less to do with peace as such and more to do with the economic and political interests of those governments sending peacekeeping missions. In Australia's relationship with East Timor, peacekeeping consolidates Australia's international identity and image as a donor country interested in maintaining peace in East Timor. However, this identity and image masks the exploitative economic and political relationship between a vulnerable and poor nation-state such as East Timor and Australia which, it appears, has been directly responsible for thwarting East Timor's self-determination struggles pre and post-independence. Furthermore, Laura Zanotti comments on the fact that international peacekeeping missions have become 'an aspect of an international disciplinary security regime that took shape in response to the unpredictability of threats. In the face of the impossibility of devising strategy and controlling all variables, international risk is managed by domesticating and normalizing states that are perceived as potential sources of threat and instability' (2006: 151). In this sense, Australia's peacekeeping interest in East Timor has more to do with disciplining the East Timorese state into a nation that will function in accordance with Australia's security and trade interests. In other words, the exercise of biopower in this context may have more to do with fostering white Australian sovereignty. Or as Ishizuka puts it, 'it is obvious that East Timor will have to put itself within the framework of the security policy of the regional power of Australia' (2004: 282). This interest in regional 'security' was apparently one of the primary reasons why Australia decided to recognise Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor in the first place in accordance with U.S.

anti-communist support of the Suharto regime and in fear of radical left-wing resistance from East Timorese freedom fighters.

Before the 2007 elections, the Labour government suggested that it would commit more funding for education and health in East Timor (Rudd 2007b). However, the Rudd Labour government's emphasis on security as part of the biopolitical engagement remained similar to the Howard government's policies in East Timor (Rudd 2007b). But the recent and as yet unsolved political crisis in East Timor which has seen the death of Major Alfredo Reinado (the military leader who became a rebel) and the wounding of Prime Minister Jose Ramos Horta has appeared to offer an opportunity for Australia to play a strong role in shaping East Timorese politics. In an opinion piece in *The Canberra Times*, Nicholas Stuart suggests that 'Kevin Rudd has shown, decisively, that he intends to take a far more active role in shaping our region than any government since Gough Whitlam's back in the 1970s' (2008). He argues that the 'additional deployment (of 340 personnel) is a direct intervention in the internal affairs of another country. It's a high-risk strategy, and it demonstrates that, under Rudd, Australia will seriously try to shape the region' (2008). Stuart suggests that this sending of troops is unlikely to produce desired results; he states, 'instead of assisting the Government, the obvious deployment of more Australian soldiers may simply have the effect of further alienating the people. Security is necessary to enable peace, but continuing to send soldiers is no answer when other skills are urgently required in this vulnerable country' (2008). But the presence of Australian soldiers, Australian intervention in East Timorese politics, its exploitations of crises in East Timor, enables the Australian

government to actively shape and discipline East Timor for its own strategic interests. Thus Australia's "geobiopolitics", if you will, through the protectionist discourse of peacekeeping, maintains the power of white sovereignty through its disciplining effects on East Timorese sovereignty.

Identifying Peace as War: A Question of Sovereignties

In her discussion of the consolidation of white Australian sovereignty within Australia and in the Asia-Pacific region, specifically the Solomon Islands, Suvendrini Perera discusses the manner in which the Australian state embraces 'crisis as an opportunity for asserting itself on multiple fronts, and for renewing and expanding a sense of racial mission at home and abroad' (2007b). Perera reads the exercise of white Australian sovereignty in different terms to what Razack suggests in relation to Canadian peacekeeping missions. Perera argues that while Canadian peacekeeping missions, as read by Razack (2004), are enabled by the 'forgetting or erasure of its internal acts of colonisation', in Australia, 'state projects of maintaining security, peacekeeping, nation building and aid in the region in turn reflect back on and reinforce an ongoing internal project of enacting or reasserting colonial sovereignty over Indigenous bodies and lands' (2007b). Thus, it is necessary to trace the implications and consequences for the war/peacekeeping bio/necropolitical regime that governs Australia's internal and external policies and identity. It is important, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2006) suggests, to identify the biopolitical matrix of power relations which govern white Australian relationships and arrangements both internally and externally. This identification does provide a way of analyzing what a biopolitics of white

possession entails. It entails an active shaping of worlds, subjectivities, disciplined and assimilated bodies and knowledges which benefit the maximisation of life and wealth for a white Australian sovereign nation at the expense of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, non white sovereignties in the Asia-Pacific. This waging of the war of bio/necropolitics in the language of peace consolidates a colonial sovereignty in the Australian context which benefits from stolen land and resources on the continent of Australia as well as illegal exploitation of resources in the Asia-Pacific.

The task of transforming white sovereignty and its war-like relationship to other bodies, nations, and knowledges is still an uphill one. As Irene Watson (2005) suggests, we still need worker-gatherers—those who will continue to wage this war against the bipartisan system of Australian politics which may lead to a world of co-existence rather than inequalities, a biopolitics of fostering white sovereignty and necropolitical colonial engagements. But the links between Australia's internal and international policies are necessary to identify as they may provide us new ways about thinking about the question of sovereignty itself—perhaps one might name these intersubjective co-existent sovereignties which may foster lives and bodies rather than a sovereignty which fosters a bio/necropolitical regime of war.

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state governments legal guardianship over Indigenous children from as early as 1911 on. In 1937, governmental legislation overtly enabled the taking away of Indigenous children from their parents. As the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families report states, 'Government officials theorized that by forcibly removing Indigenous children from their families, and by sending them away from their communities to work for non-Indigenous people, this mixed-descent population would over time, "merge" with the non-Indigenous population' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report 1997).

² The Women for Wik website has been tracking many of these stories of disempowerment. The website is available at www.womenforwik.org

Endnotes

¹ The stealing of Aboriginal children in Australia was enabled by protectionist legislation which gave white Australian