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978-1-107-04365-7 - The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard

John C. Blaxland

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## THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY FROM WHITLAM TO HOWARD

*The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard* is the first critical examination of Australia's post-Vietnam military operations. Spanning the 35 years between the election of Gough Whitlam and the defeat of John Howard, it shows how the Australian Army recovered and developed after the Vietnam War.

John Blaxland explores the 'casualty cringe' felt by political leaders following the war and how this influenced subsequent operations. He contends that the Australian Army's rehabilitation involved common individual and collective training; reaffirmation of the Army's regimental and corps identities; and the Army's ties with allies, regional partners and Australian society. He shows how the Army regained its confidence to play leading roles in East Timor, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, and to contribute to combat operations further afield.

At a time when the Australian Army's future strategic role and capabilities are the subject of much debate, and as the 'Asian Century' gathers pace and the commitment in Afghanistan draws to an end, this work is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the modern context of Australia's military land force.

**John Blaxland** is a Senior Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, School of International, Political and Strategic Studies, in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. His other publications include: *Organising an Army* (1989), *Signals, Swift and Sure* (1999), *Information-era Manoeuvre* (2002), *Strategic Cousins* (2006) and *Revisiting Counterinsurgency* (2006).

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## FOREWORD

This book about the development and operations of the Australian Army in the period from the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 to the defeat of the Howard Government in 2007 constitutes a significant contribution to Australian military history. Australia's military history began with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 and now stretches over a period of more than two and a quarter centuries. This book deals with more than 35 years of that history.

Australia's more recent military operations are perhaps the least understood in the nation's military history, which has always focused heavily on the two world wars. The Australian public's knowledge and appreciation of the sacrifice, suffering and achievements of its servicemen and women grew out of the experience of the First World War. This knowledge was based on memoirs, unit histories and particularly on Charles Bean's ground-breaking 15-volume official history series, published in the two decades after the First World War. Many people still believe that Australia's experience of war began with the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, completely overlooking the activities of the previous century, and Gallipoli is still the dominating episode – the iconic event – of Australia's military history. The public's appreciation of the experience of the Second World War built on and matched that of the First World War, with more memoirs, unit histories and Gavin Long's 22-volume official history.

In the 1970s, however, the public began to take a broader view. The involvement of Australians (from colonies rather than the

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yet-to-be-formed Commonwealth) in nineteenth-century conflicts – New Zealand, Sudan, China and South Africa – came to be seen as the prelude to the First World War. The post-Second World War conflicts – Korea, the Malayan Emergency, Confrontation and Vietnam – became the postlude. The world wars still remained the central focus. There was, however, little appreciation of the fact that as the twentieth century concluded and the twenty-first century began Australia's military history was moving into a new phase.

The task of integrating the new military operations into the broader narrative of Australia's military history was made difficult because they did not fit the mould of earlier operations. The peacekeeping missions, which increased in number and frequency in the late 1980s, received little publicity. They were conducted by Regular soldiers rather than conscripts or civilians who had volunteered for the war; there were no major battles and few casualties. Gradually some of the missions became more 'warlike', with a greater likelihood of casualties, such as during the peace enforcement operations in Somalia in 1993 against bandits, and in East Timor in 1999, where there were minor engagements against anti-independence militia. When Australian special forces soldiers were deployed to Afghanistan in 2001 they became involved in the Army's most intensive combat since the Vietnam War.

Disappointingly, the public remained largely ignorant of what the Army achieved in many of these more recent operations. Journalists were often denied access to the operational areas, while books about the Australian Army in the world wars still dominated the market. When, in 2004, the Howard Government finally approved an official history series covering peacekeeping and post-Cold War operations it specifically excluded East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. Further, it provided no direct financial support for recording the history.

As John Blaxland has shown, between 1972 and 2007 the Australian Army conducted more than 150 operations. Admittedly most of these were small and took place within Australia; but others, such as in Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor, Bougainville, Iraq and Afghanistan, were substantial. Their stories demand to be told.

This book brings together the first comprehensive account of what the Australian Army has been doing since 1972. Without access to government records, which are closed to public researchers, Dr Blaxland has pieced the stories together from the few books that are available, from press reports, media releases and, most importantly, interviews and correspondence with participants. He was also able to draw on his experience

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of almost 30 years service in the Australian Army. He has therefore been able to tell the remarkable story of how, after the lean years that followed the withdrawal from Vietnam, the Army developed into a modern, flexible fighting force that the government could deploy at short notice to a multitude of tasks. Until the official histories appear Dr Blaxland's book is likely to remain the most thorough, all-embracing account of the Army's recent activities. It is a story of professionalism, achievement and sacrifice of which all Australians should be proud.

David Horner  
Professor of Australian Defence History  
Australian National University  
February 2013

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John Blaxland

ABBREVIATIONS

4 RAR (Cdo)	4th Battalion RAR (Commando; later 2 Commando Regiment [2 Cdo])
51 FNQR	51st Far North Queensland Regiment
AACAP	Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program
AATTI	Australian Army Training Team – Iraq
ABCA	America Britain Canada Australia Armies Standardisation Program
ACG	Advance Company Group
ACM	Anti-Coalition Militia
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy
ADFWC	Australian Defence Force Warfare Centre
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AFS	Australian Force Somalia
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AMTG	Al-Muthanna Task Group
ANARE	Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions
ANR	Australian National Representative
ANZAC	Australia New Zealand Army Corps
ANZAC SOF	Anzac Special Operations Force
ANZUK	Australia New Zealand United Kingdom
AO	Area of Operations
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APIN	Army Presence in the North
APS	Australian Public Service
ASLAV	Australian Light Armoured Vehicle
AS MSF	Australian Medical Support Force
ASP90	<i>Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s</i>
ASP97	<i>Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997</i>
ATSN	<i>Army: The Soldier’s Newspaper</i>

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AUSBATT	Australian Battalion
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BAOR	British Army on the Rhine
BASB	Brigade Administrative Support Battalion
BPC	Border Protection Command
CABW	Combined Arms Battle Wing
CAL	Centre for Army Lessons
CATA	Combined Arms Training Activity
CATDC	Combined Arms Training and Development Centre
CDF	Chief of Defence Force
CER	Combat Engineer Regiment
CFC-A	Coalition Forces Command – Afghanistan
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings
CJIATF	Combined Joint Inter-Agency Task Force
CJSOTF	Coalition Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CJTF-7	Coalition Joint Task Force – 7
CMAC	Cambodian Mine Action Centre
CMF	1. Citizen Military Forces (Army Reserve antecedent) 2. Commonwealth Monitoring Force (Zimbabwe-Rhodesia)
CO	Commanding Officer
CSSB	Combat Services Support Battalion
CTC	Combat Training Centre
CTEX	Counter-Terrorism Exercise
CTF	Combined Task Force
DCP	Defence Cooperation Program
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DGFLW	Director General of Future Land Warfare
DIGO	Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation
DJFHQ	Deployable Joint Force Headquarters
DP	Displaced Persons
DSTO	Defence Science and Technology Organisation
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ELF	Enhanced Land Force
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FALINTIL	National Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor



FANC	Forces Armées de la Nouvelle-Calédonie
F-FDTL	East Timor Defence Force
FORCOMD	Forces Command
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangements
HMAS	Her Majesty’s Australian Ship
HNA	Hardened and Networked Army
HQ JOC	Headquarters Joint Operations Command
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IMV/PMV	Infantry Mobility Vehicle/Protected Mobility Vehicle
INTERFET	International Force in East Timor
IRR	Incident Response Regiment
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISF	International Security Forces
ISTAR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
JIRSG	Japanese Iraqi Reconstruction Support Group
JOPC	Joint Offshore Protection Command
JTF	Joint Task Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
LIS	Live Instrumentation System
LWDC	Land Warfare Development Centre
LWSC	Land Warfare Studies Centre
MEAO	Middle East Area of Operations
MFO	Multinational Force and Observers
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MOLE	Manoeuvre Operations in the Littoral Environment
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRE	Mission Rehearsal Exercise
MUAV	Miniature Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCE	National Command Element
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NORCOM	Northern Command
Norforce	North-West Mobile Force
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
OBG(W)	Overwatch Battle Group (West)

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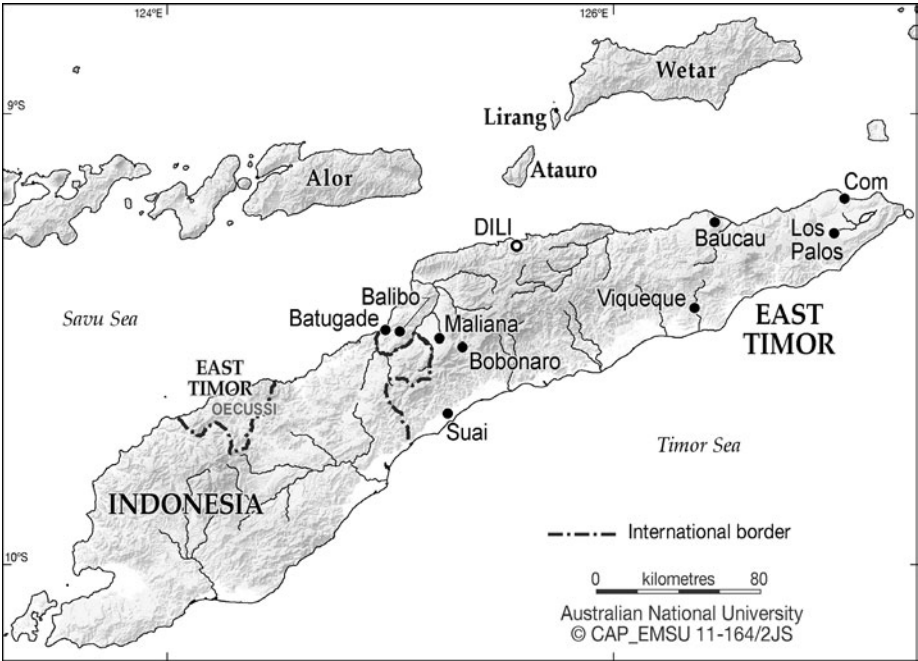
OC	Officer Commanding
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP	Observation Post
OSS	Operational Support Squadron
PMG	Peace Monitoring Group
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
RAA	Royal Australian Artillery
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAEME	Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RCG	Ready Company Group
RFMF	Royal/Republic of Fiji Military Forces
RFSU	Regional Force Surveillance Unit
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
RNZIR	Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RQR	Royal Queensland Regiment
RTA	Restructuring the Army
SASR	Special Air Service Regiment
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organisation
SECDET	Security Detachment
SDSC	Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
SF	Special Forces
SFOR	Stabilisation Force
SFTC	Special Forces Training Centre
SIEV	suspected illegal or irregular entry vessel
SOCCE	Special Operations Command and Control Element
SOLS	Special Operations Logistics Squadron
SOTG	Special Operations Task Group
SPPKF	South Pacific Peace Keeping Force
STA	Surveillance and Target Acquisition
TAAIP	The Australian Army In Profile
TCL	Tactical Coordination Line
TFU	Task Force Uruzgan (Oruzgan)

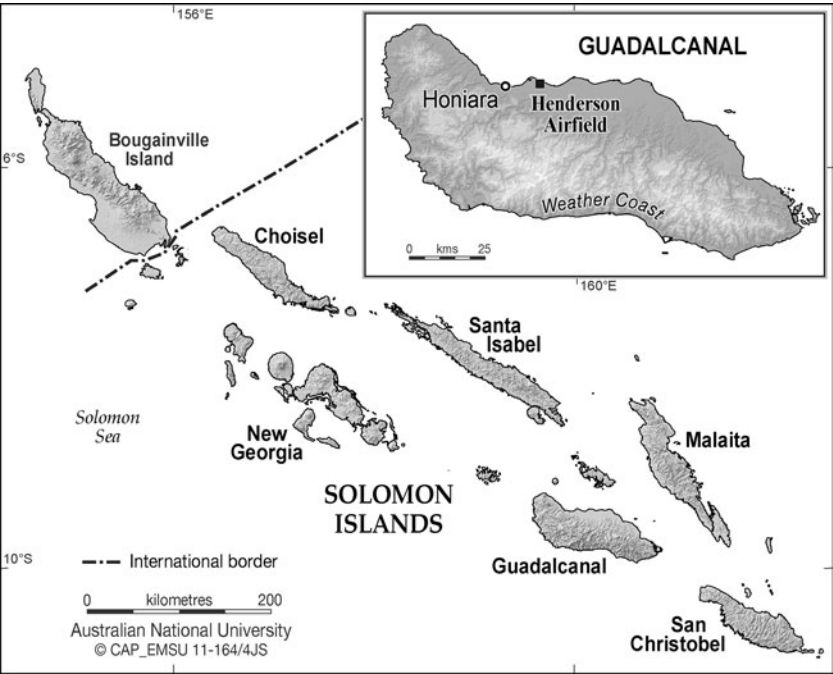
TMG	Truce Monitoring Group
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia
TTP	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
UAV	Unmanned/Unattended Aerial Vehicle
UNAMET	United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor
UNAMIC	United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGOC	United Nations Good Offices Commission in Indonesia
UNIIMOG	United Nations Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group
UNITAF	Unified Task Force
UNMCTT	United Nations Mine Clearance Training Team
UNMISSET	United Nations Mission in Support of East Timor
UNMO	United Nations Military Observer
UNMOGIP	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid
UNOSOM	United Nations Office in Somalia
UNPOL	United Nations Police
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority Cambodia
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
WHAM	Winning Hearts and Minds

MAPS

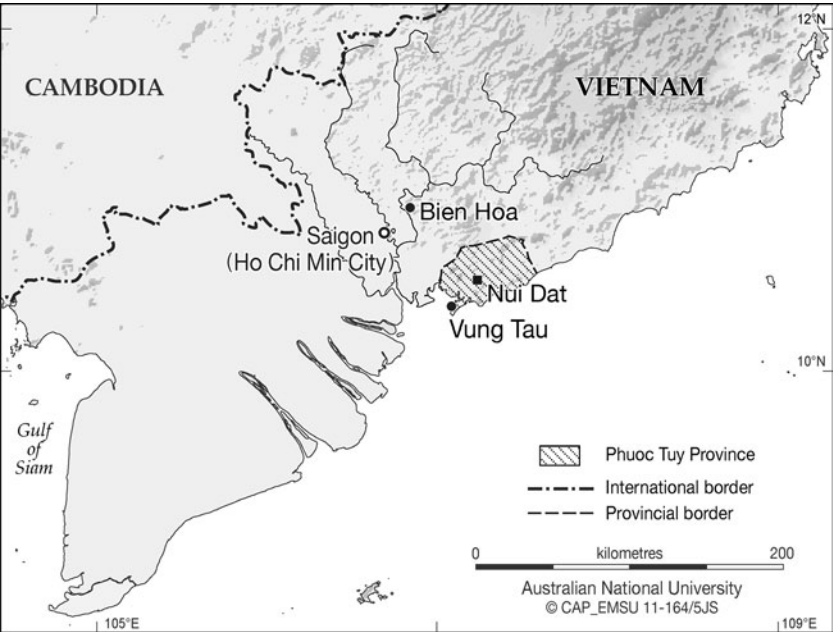


Map I South-East Asia





Map 4 Solomon Islands

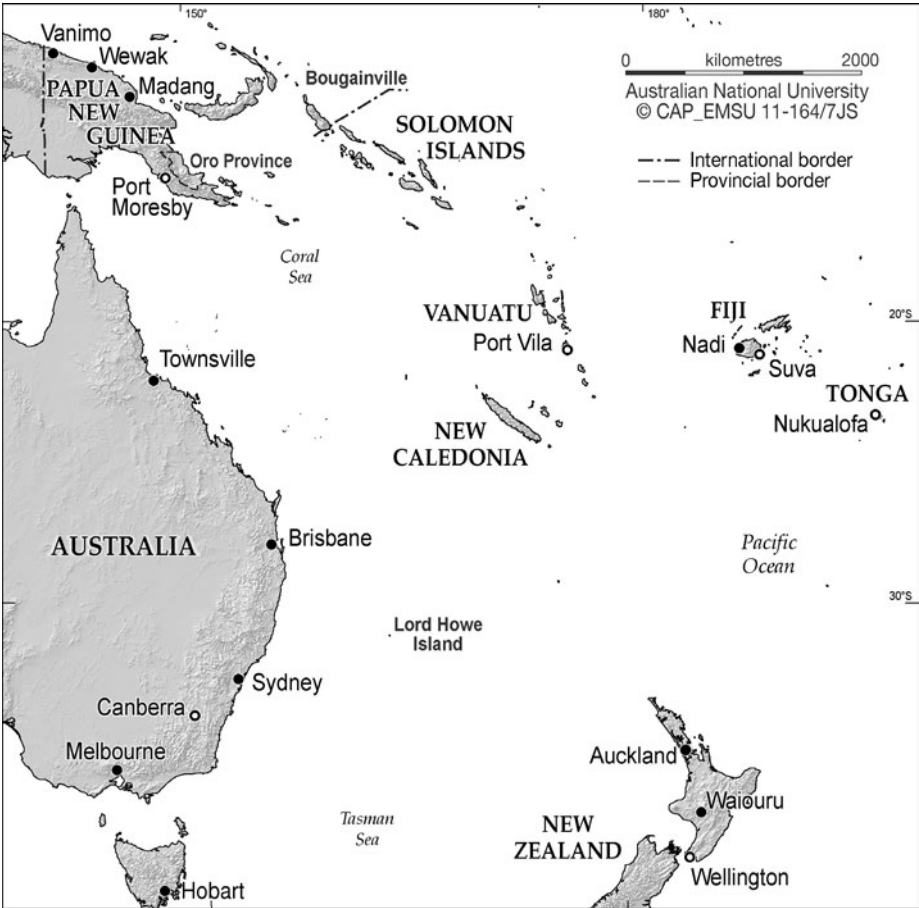


Map 5 Vietnam



Map 6 Africa





Map 7 Pacific Islands

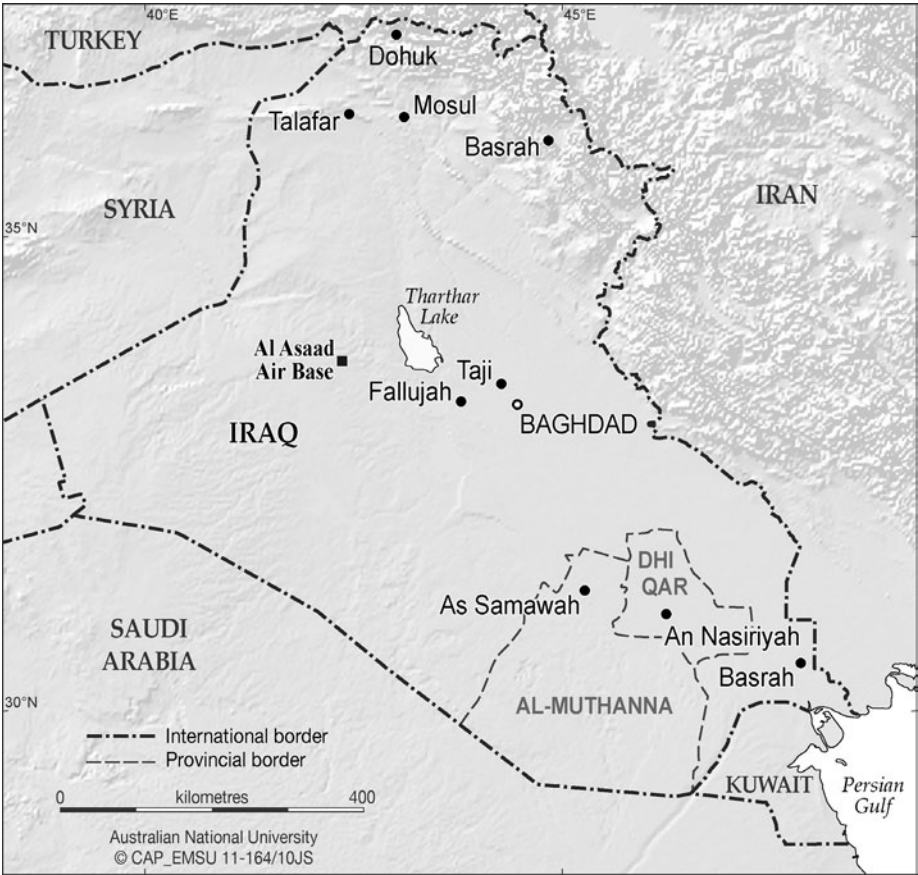




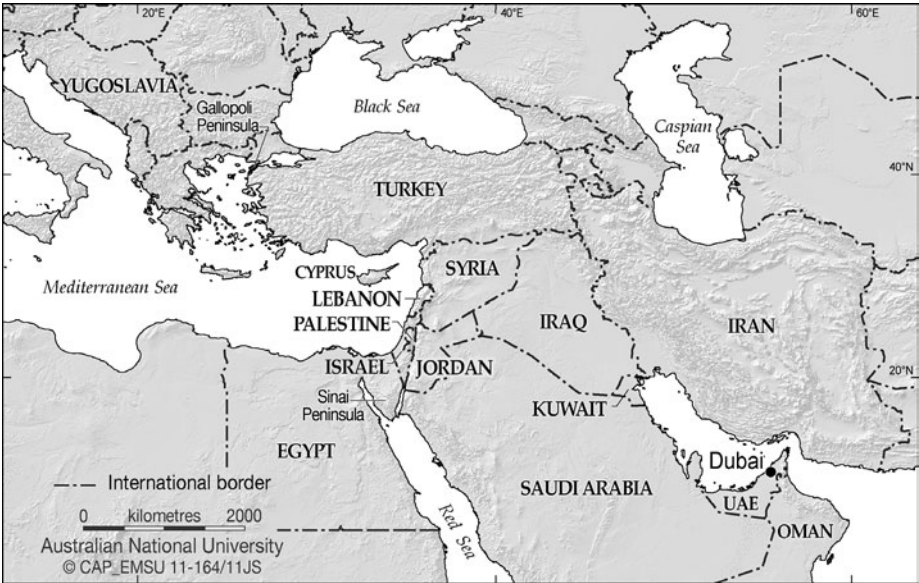
Map 8 Australia



Map 9 Pakistan and Afghanistan



Map 10 Iraq



Map 11 Middle East