Title:

Colonialism in Australia and New Zealand Compared.

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Since the late fifteenth century through to the end of the twentieth century, Britain commanded one of the greatest geographical and economic empires the world has known. Extending from Africa to Asia, India, the America's, and more specifically to this paper; Australia and New Zealand. Religion, trade, labour, and commerce were the outcomes of colonisation; the tools of deliverance were to be violence.[1]

Australia with its nomadic indigenous population, and New Zealand with its warrior people, travelled similar, yet in many ways divergent paths during colonisation. Specifically, when considering the European-Indigenous encounter of both colonies, this paper will argue that despite these differences, one place where common ground can be found is the wars fought between the colonisers and indigenous populations. Wars fought on very different fronts, different tactics, weapons, and motivations, nevertheless warfare. Scholarly argument on Australia has shifted from terra nullius to invasion with Keith Windschuttle one of the most prolific commentators opposing the widely held modern views of invasion. Windschuttle argues in part, that because the Aborigine had no

[1] James Belich, "Imperial myth and colonial actuality: Findings from a New Zealand laboratory," Melbourne Historical Journal, no. 20 (2002): p. 7.

concept of property there was nothing to take, and hence no invasion.[2] Comparatively, New Zealand's indigenous people, the Maori, were considerably more advanced not only in agriculture, trade, but also in modern warfare.[3] Their concept of property could be explained as much closer to the European model and hence through European eyes more consumable.

To support this argument, this paper will discuss the impact the European economic framework had on populations, the path of political and legal representation, and lastly, the recognition of indigenous land title. All three are implicitly connected to each other's experience of warfare, and yet, the Aborigine and Maori experienced all differently. Dispossession of traditional lands was a function of not only warfare, but also colonisation.[4] Lastly, although outside the scope of this paper, it is acknowledged that disease also had a huge impact on both the Aborigine and Maori population post-

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[2] Robert Manne, "Terra Nullius Reborn," in Whitewash On Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History, ed. Henry Reynolds (Collingwood: Black Inc, 2003), p. 112.

[3] M. K. Sorrenson, "Maori and Pakeha," in The Oxford History of New Zealand, ed. Geoffrey W. Rice (Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 169.

[4] Jeffrey Grey, "The Military and the Frontier 1788-1901," in A Military History of Australia (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 5.

colonisation, with much data supporting the assertion that more died from disease compared to conflict.[5]

The British colony of New South Wales initially received a body of around one thousand people in the First Fleet. From the outset, the young colony turned to the land to support its own existence and the future growth as more convicts, and free settlers embarked on the long voyage from Europe. As suitable lands were found and converted for agriculture, this not only increased the net worth of such lands but also disenfranchised the Aborigine from their traditional lands and food sources. The colony grew, and before long started to export product back into the Empire much the same as other colonies around the planet. For the Aborigine, their nomadic existence had left them behind when understanding any type of farming, be it of cattle, grains, fruit or vegetables. It was simply not part of their experience to gather more than what was required.[6] This in turn places no economic value on these commodities simply because there was no economy. There was trade, but without any

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[5] James Belich, "Fatal Impact?," in Making Peoples A History of the New Zealanders From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century (Auckland, NZ: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 173.
; Beverley Blaskett, "The Level of Violence: Europeans and Aborigines in Port Phillip 1835-1850" in Through White Eyes, ed. Susan Janson and Stuart Macintyre (Sydney, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1990), pp. 77-78.
[6] Grey, "The Military and the Frontier 1788-1901", p. 27.

type of central governance it was more tribal centric than anything else. The impact of losing lands and waterways where traditional food sources were once found, to build food stores greater then ever conceived before, left the Aborigine isolated and when starvation approached, left with no option but to steal.[7] This in turn led to violence, in all permutation's including, black on white, white on black and black on black. Inter racial violence was common pre-colonisation, however with the economic drivers behind the expansion of white settlement, this violence continued to increase. Once traditional tribal grounds were being squeezed, this blurred the lines of tribal boundaries. Complicating this was the engaging of indigenous peoples to track, hunt, and work alongside the colonisers at many times to the detriment of their own people![8] Unable to leverage any initial numerically superior force onto the new colony, the Aborigine was slowly losing ground to an economic war-machine that had structure, organisation, and technology on their side.[9]

The Maori of North Island were to experience the same economic pressure, and indeed the same inter racial violence, although their

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[7] Henry Reynolds, "Frontier conflict – extract," in Aborigines and Settlers: The Australian Experience 1788-1939, ed. Henry Reynolds (North Melbourne, VIC: Cassell Australia, 1972), p. 2.
[8] J. Connor, "The Hawkesbury-Nepean River, 1795-1816", in Australia's Frontier Wars, 1788-1838 (Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 36.
[9] Grey, "The Military and the Frontier 1788-1901", p. 27.

economic drivers were even more profound than that of the Aborigine.[10] The Maori had presented a political, economic, and cultural landscape much more recognisable to the British and hence took up the 'money-making' practices quite efficiently.[11] Competition between Maori tribes for the acceptance of settlers was fierce, and without the restriction of nomadic life, the Maori understood modern agriculture, housing, and the value of certain goods including people! The Maori showed keen interest in building economic ties with the Empire with several envoys to England where the trade in Muskets enabled further conflict in the near future.[12] M. K. P. Sorrenson further supports this argument with commentary on the Maori's willingness to take up language, and religion, as a way of forming economic partnerships with the new arrivals.[13] At no stage during the frontier expansion of Australia did the Aborigine take such entrepreneurial steps to make-a-dollar from their European neighbours. The Maori with their long-standing warlike existence, and ability to take on social and cultural features of the new colony, were able to leverage economic power not experienced by the Aborigine.

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[10] Belich, "Fatal Impact?", p. 162.
[11] Belich, "Imperial myth and colonial actuality: Findings from a New Zealand laboratory," p. 8.
[12] Ibid., p. 9.
[13] Sorrenson, "Maori and Pakeha", p. 169.

One direct comparison of the indigenous populations of Australia and New Zealand can be made in how these people were represented both legally and politically. The Aborigine was cast aside as a savage with few commentators showing any real interest in sharing the rights of citizenry afforded to other members of the Crown.[14] Where there was interest, there was little action.[15] The gap between nomadic hunter-gatherer and civilised society was simply to big a bridge to build for the Europeans. Disenfranchising a people from their traditional food sources not only affects their ability to sustain life but also compromises their political and legal standing in the community. Without food, water, political or legal rights, there is little chance of holding back the aggressors let alone forcing them to yield. Where the Aborigine did excel was in countering the tactics, and for some time, the weapons used by the British. Intelligence gathering was a key strength in their ability to counter their own political vacuum.[16] This is further supported by the advent of the Native Police Force who having impunity under the law was able to

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[14] Reynolds, "Frontier conflict – extract", p. 3.
[15] J. Connor, "The Liverpool Plains and Port Phillip Districts", in Australia's Frontier Wars, 1788-1838 (Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 113.

[16] Henry Reynolds, "Defending Ourselves," in Fate of a free People (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 37-38.

act as mercenary style aggressors in a political war of land, food, and supposed European moral and cultural superiority.[17] For the people of Queensland, the introduction of formal government in 1859, 'removed many of the political constraints that had previously held back the full force of white violence'.[18] As compared to the Maori who took up the musket and, 'used it with great effect', the Aborigine for the most part, maintained traditional forms of killing via the spear.[19] This 'ritualization' of killing with traditional weapons is a stark contrast from the Maori who adapted their method of warfare to include the new weaponry.[20] With the advent and dissemination of the mass-produced breach-loading rifle in the mid nineteenth century, the dis/advantage fell inversely proportional for the Aborigine and Maori, with Maori being able to leverage its gains more effectively.[21]

From the early nineteenth century, the Maori tribes of New Zealand were able to organise themselves politically in order to not only manage land rights but also their legal standing amongst the British colonisers. From the Declaration of Independence in 1835 to the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the Maori were politically and legally

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[17] Grey, "The Military and the Frontier 1788-1901", p. 36.
[18] Reynolds The Other Side of the Frontier, p. 126.
[19] Grey, "The Military and the Frontier 1788-1901", p. 30.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p. 26.

forthright in attempting to maintain some sort of independence from complete British control.[22] Despite what was eventually the breakdown of co-existence resulting in the New Zealand Wars, the Maori were better equipped, as compared to the Aborigine to take-on the British in the political field.[23]

The Maori went onto achieve political and legal standings that the Aborigine did not achieve until several centuries later, and in some cases still yet to be realised in the current day.

Indigenous land title for the Aborigine is still to this day a political football that big business and government use as a pacifier when the outcome suits political and/or financial outcomes. In the context of the new colony, there was simply no recognition of any traditional ownership of the lands now occupied by the colony. There are some sporadic examples of large land owners building relationships with traditional owners, but these are quite insignificant when considered in the bigger picture of the group of colonies that eventually Australia.

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[22] Claudia Orange, "The Treaty at Waitangi", in The Treaty of Waitangi (Allen & Unwin, 1987), p 32.

[23] Sorrenson, "Maori and Pakeha", pp. 178-179.

It should be noted, that the experience of conflict over land was experienced differently across the different colonies. When comparing the settlement in Sydney Harbour to the Hawkesbury, there is a stark contrast in how the Aborigine and settler lived and shared the land. For the Darug tribe of what is now North-West Sydney they offered a more comprehensive form of contact than the Eora from greater Sydney Harbour. The focus here is the land, the body of Sydney harbour providing ample access to food sources and relative distance for the conflict to be less often and violent as compared to that on the Hawkesbury.[24]

When it came to aggressive non-compliance on the part of the Aborigine the British met them with force. Be it, shooting, torture, kidnapping, child labour, or public hanging, the colony did not risk their newly acquired fertile lands being challenged by the savage.[25] The result was to see the provisioning of a garrison of New South Wales Corps, second only to the one in Sydney.[26]

Aboriginal raiding parties focused on opportunistic warfare in order to unsettle the invaders. Attacking when the men were away from the homestead, taking corn, flour, and alcohol.[27] This war for land,

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[24] Connor, "The Hawkesbury-Nepean River, 1795-1816", p. 35.
[25] Ibid., p. 38.
[26] Ibid., p. 39.
[27] Ibid., p.40.

and its resources was directly linked to the proportion of violence on the Frontier.[28] Not only was it white on black violence, but also interracial conflict that enabled land to form part of the overarching theme of frontier war. As settler land acquisition slowly took traditional lands, the tribal boundaries were also compromised forcing adjacent tribes to fight for access to food sources. First hand accounts labelling the conflict for land as, 'open warfare'.[29]

The Maori had their own experience of conflict when it came to the recognition of traditional lands and their right to ownership. The Musket Wars of the early nineteenth century saw interracial warfare play out for tribal lands across the North Island. Killing more Maori than World War One, the Musket Wars, 'changed the political map of Aotearoa' and made way for the first European settlements.[30] As time did show, this gave the Maori key war fighting skills not only in using the Musket but also in how to defend against its attack. In the New Zealand land wars during the 1860's the Maori offered stiff resistance to British troops, finally falling only when mass numbers

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[28] Reynolds, "Defending Ourselves", p. 31.
; Grey, "The Military and the Frontier 1788-1901", p. 32.
[29] Connor, "The Hawkesbury-Nepean River, 1795-1816", p. 35.
[30] Belich, "Fatal Impact?", p. 156.

and counter-tactics were employed.[31] Maori pre-disposition to violence and warfare gave them a distinct advantage over the Aborigine in their setting. Despite the good will offered in the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori did eventually realise the restrictions outweighed the benefits and took to arms displaying their anger.[32] Further evidence of the difference in how Aborigine and Maori were to experience land warfare is the way in which Maori innovated their strategy, tactics and objectives. Taking from the British and their own experience in both interracial and colonial conflict, the Maori adopted flanking, and embattlement measures to dilute the numerical superiority of the British.[33]

Buttressing the conflict over land, was the economic, and political costs, which resulted in, more land moving to the Crown and less political power afforded to the Maori. In the end, the Maori did lose, 'but they were out-bred and fed, not out-fought or out-thought'.[34]

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[31] James Belich, "The Maori Achievement", in The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict (Auckland, NZ: Auckland University Press, 1998), p. 291.
[32] Orange, "The Treaty at Waitangi", p 33.
[33] James Belich, "The Maori Achievement", in The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict (Auckland, NZ: Auckland University Press, 1998), p. 293.
[34] Belich, "Imperial myth and colonial actuality: Findings from a New Zealand laboratory," p. 9.

For the Aboriginal, it was not until 1992 and the landmark MABO case before real change regarding land title was realised.[35]

Much debate has taken place since the colonies of modern Australia and New Zealand were first registered as to whether it was a peaceful process of bringing the savage to civilisation, or if war was declared and through this violence, colonisation was forced upon these people. In conclusion, this paper has shown through examples of economic pressure, political and legal isolation, and a continual struggle to have their traditional lands acknowledged, that there was in fact active warfare undertaken onto both populations. The Aboriginal people faced the blunt force of British colonialism, where their own innocence through geographical isolation became their biggest liability. The Maori, a warrior people, engaged with the British on more equal terms, however in time, failed to resolve their cultural, economic, and territorial secondment to the Empire, thus resulting in war. Two very different types of indigenous peoples, yet common experience of the British Empire even if via there own discreet parallel path. War was inevitable, as it is a function of colonialism.

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[35] "Documenting a Democracy," Museum of Australian Democracy, available from http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item-did-33.html

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