

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Response to Col. David Hunter-Chester, “The Particular Circumstances of Time and Place Why the Occupation of Japan Succeeded and the Occupation of Iraq Failed”

(Military Review, May–June 2016)

William Thayer

I think this was a good article, but let me add a few things that I think are critically important. First, in Iraq (and throughout the Middle East), there is a Sunni-Shiite religious divide that has been hostile for 1,400 years. There was no such similar divide in Japan (e.g., Shinto vs. Buddhist).

Second, as the author points out, Japan had some time with a democracy. There has never been a democracy in Iraq, and the expectation that such a democracy could be developed within a year was totally unrealistic.

Third, when the Japanese surrendered, they all surrendered. There was no additional fighting or

killing. In contrast, after the Saddam Hussein ouster, the fighting and killing got worse.

Fourth, in Japan, the United States did not have to fight nonuniformed terrorists. In Iraq, the United States did have to fight terrorists targeting both the U.S. and Sunni/Shiite populations.

The United States has not learned to fight the nonuniformed terrorists well. It did better against the German Werewolves with the Fragebögen (questionnaires) and other techniques. There should be a similar article on Germany vs. Iraq.

William Thayer, San Diego, California



More than three thousand former Iraqi soldiers from the disbanded Iraqi army pressed to force U.S. soldiers out of the headquarters of the U.S. military administration in Baghdad, 2 June 2003. The Iraqi soldiers checked weapons and vowed to launch suicide attacks on U.S. troops unless they were given wages and compensation.

**The Particular
Circumstances of
Time and Place**
Why the Occupation of Japan
Succeeded and the Occupation of
Iraq Failed

Col. David Hunter-Chester, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired

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