

NEW YORK ON KUTA

A View from Australia

This time it happened to us. We were stunned again with shock, as on 9/11, but the images seared deeper into our brains on 10/12, because the dead were ours.

The nature of the images saturating us was painfully familiar. Huge hole in the ground above which young people had lived happily moments before, joys of reunion alternating with covered dead bodies, relatives with photos looking for information about their loved ones, they were all there again. As in New York, we heard stories of heroism and mateship. Strangers, communities and the nation bonded together. Contemplating the rows of photos of young smiling faces now dead, the nation said its prayers, wept, and laid their wreaths.

We are bound together not only by shared human responses to our tragedies, intended by a common enemy, but also in our search for the meaning of such events, and what to do about them.

Like in America, we started by asking who was to blame. Was it mad or evil people imbued with irrational hatred? Or was the fault with some of us, such as incompetent leaders making us targets, or inefficient intelligence services failing to warn us, or something deeper in our way of life offensive to others? The same impulses emerged as in America - on the one hand, to withdraw from a conflicted world, and 'look after our own patch', on the other hand, to reach out as far as necessary with as many allies as possible, and to destroy the perpetrators.

Inevitably, some divergent views also developed from our different standpoints. As the focus of interest in America was on Americans, in the wake of 9/11, so self-concern directed our focus. This included the question whether our national interest was served by fighting America's wars, becoming targets in the process, and stretching our defence capabilities.

Importantly, the march of events in the year since 9/11, including the demise of the Taliban and lessons about our enemies, has led to a very different impulse here to the 'war on terrorism' in America a year ago.

The impulse is more akin to a desire to catch a criminal gang. Because they have international cells, the effort has to be international, akin to a complex Interpol operation.

My own opinion is that the criminals are like the mafia, who have adopted an Islamofascist ideology. When they control a country, they look like the Taliban did in Afghanistan. When they do not control a country, they look like Nazi gangs did before they reached power. Their killings try to intimidate and polarize ethnic and religious groups, and hijack those they claim as their own on their personal mission of world dominion. They hijack religion. Their religion has as much similarity to Islam, as the National Socialist ideology had with socialism.

The ideology and methodology of the criminals must be exposed. They should not be graced with words like war, implying combat between equal nations, nor terrorism, with the potential implication of freedom fighters. They should be labelled and treated like criminal killer cults with megalomaniac ideas.

Australians would like to unite with free Western and Muslim societies to eradicate the criminals in a major international police operation.

The question remains as to what soil breeds such criminals. Tyrannical wealthy Arab (especially Saudi) regimes that export terrorism as a diversion from

internal opposition have been seen as one such source. Western domination and greed have been blamed as another. Conspicuous consumption and guzzling of wealth may appear in both.

After eliminating the criminals and making it unappetising for states to abet them, it will be incumbent on nations like ours to look beyond the *realpolitik* of the moment.

We should move from age-old concepts that security and wealth are the preserve of powerful nations or the powerful within nations, who have successfully scrambled for them. Rather, we should do what we can to enhance justice for all, across nations. Globalization of justice may be the best policy to ensure future security. Acting on this precept may be a sign of true modernity.

If in the long term our killed ones may contribute to increased justice and security in the world, their deaths will not have been in vain.