

Security Cocktails in Australia: Mixing Anzac and Terror

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State inspired killing, which tends to be commemorated in disingenuous fashion at military parades, is a dirty thing. But it is revered, stuffed to the brim with hagiographic accounts and the justification of largesse for the war machine. Callow youths with pea-brain sensibilities who express dissatisfaction with the state they reside in – well, that is a different story. Authorities see them as the bastion of fundamentalist sentiment. They are the next anointed killers, the radicals, the trouble makers.

In the recent round of weekend arrests in Victoria, they so happen to be Islamic, though the state's premier has decided to avoid intoning about fundamentalism and Islam. Such behaviour was purely, in Daniel Andrews' own circular description "simply evil, plain and simple". Those arrested were "not people of any faith, they don't represent any culture." Cacoon them, then ignore context.

It was unfortunate that a state leader would have to resort to such vagueness. Evil is a poor alibi in the making of policy. Guilt and innocence tend to be better yardsticks, though these are becoming less relevant the longer the threat of Islamic terrorism is fed and inflated. The assumptions made by leaders these days in the realm of policy justification is that articulation is substantiation. Claiming something is dangerous makes it so, even if any event associated with that never happened.

Two men were subsequently charged after the initial use of preventive detention orders – Sevdet Besim of Hallam, an 18-year-old who is alleged to have conspired to commit a terrorist act; and another from Hampton Park, Harun Causevic, charged under the same provision. A third has also been charged and the two others were supposedly assisting police in their enquiries.

Lurking in the background were possible fantasies of revenge for the death at the hands of police of Numan Haider, who had attacked two police officers before being shot. Haider had links to the same Al-Furqan Islamic Centre, which similarly frequented by the charged men.

Rob Stary, lawyer representing Causevic, has insisted that being held in a maximum security unit at Barwon Prison's Acacia Unit has been more than a case of overkill. Famed killers tend to find their way into its less than luxurious confines. Causevic has barely come close, though such media outlets as Channel 7 have suggested that the attack was going to be "shockingly similar" to that inflicted on British soldier Lee Rigby in London two years ago.

We are told, however, that the matter of finding and locking up such supposedly dangerous teenagers "is a global issue, it is absolutely a global issue, a global challenge, a global

threat in many, many ways.”

These were Andrews’ thoughts after receiving word about the arrest of a 14-year-old British boy in Britain on April 18 on suspicion of being concerned with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism. According to Detective Chief Superintendent Tony Mole of the North West Counter Terrorism Unit, communication had apparently taken place between the British source “and a man in Australia to what we believe is a credible terrorist threat.”[1]

When, then of that most amorphous of terms? Using the term terrorism in security speak is the first bastion of the scoundrel. Victorian Police Deputy Commissioner Shane Patton’s views show how the word has been inventively enlarged. Holding crockery and using domestic appliances might well constitute acts of terrorism. The image of the slicing and dicing recruit has crept into basic ideas of police enforcement and political rhetoric. Accordingly, the charged lads were supposedly “undertaking preparations for a terrorist attack at Anzac Day activity which included targeting police officers” with the use of “edged knives”.

Then came more scattered suggestions – that after the initial execution of a police officer by knife, possibly after being driven over, the participants would use the gun to go on a sanguinary shooting spree. This is the narrative of the constructed non-event.

Evidentiary onuses are becoming so low they are hugging the ground. The burden on authorities to show their hand is small – mention the word “terrorism”, and allow them to get on with their tasks. Detention without charge is warranted over periods of time, even as the authorities scrounge around for a sufficient basis to keep the person banged up.

For the Anzackery watchers, the whole terror bonanza has been exciting, a predictable tick on the box of security concerns. Australians are finding themselves fighting for ISIS, an organisation that can hardly be surprising to anybody with the vaguest understanding of cause and effect in international relations. There is babble about radicalisation and its effects, ignoring the obvious point that all conflict radicalises its participants.

It would be cruel but fitting if an Anzac gathering would, in fact, form the basis of an attack, however foolish or inspired. The commemorative origins were that of an invasion of an Islamic state, undertaken in a drunken spirit of empire.

The blood spilled involved Western powers attempting to impose an agenda too far – attacking Turkey on home soil in the hope of knocking out a German ally. The price paid was phenomenal and telling. Teenagers went to their dictated deaths. Now, certain teenagers in Australia, at least in the eyes of the security state, have become the new marauders.

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[1] <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/anzac-day-terror-plot-hampton-park-teen-haran-causevic-charged/story-fni0fee2-1227313083436>

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