

Comment by Michael C H Jones
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Fundamentalism of any hue is dangerous anywhere. Exclusiveness less so, however a closed shop especially in thinking often leads to fundamentalist aspirations and potentially campaigns by the faithful to convert non-believers. This in turn detonates the over-reactions of established power structures particularly throughout the wealthy western/americanised world.

Islamism has become a recognised ideology of the fundamentalist sects of the Muslim Asian religion/region. But in essence no different to Jewish or Christian or Hindu fundamentalism. In a different time, or perhaps still existing, the ideological pronouncements and actions of many rightwing and leftwing groups included elements of what we know as fundamentalism - from the Tea Party and Neo-con groups in the US Republicans, exercising State power/weaponry, to the non-government peoples movements, many advocating violent/guerrilla resistance, throughout the US and EU and now updated throughout the muslim world.

Toe-holes are being established by such groups across Europe, from Israel through West Asia to currently Bangladesh, and I believe in Indonesia and Malaysia in ASEAN on China's and Australia's maritime borders. With historically independent Thailand in a political mess, ironically the major population stabilising economies of Asia could well become the communist Returning China and communist Emerging Vietnam under the new TPP umbrella.

American boots on the ground, with or without European and Australasian support, was not the long-term answer to Vietnam in the 1960/70s, nor to present day rivalries in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya or Syria - to turn a phrase by Labor PM Chifley in the 1949 Federal Election "America should not become involved in every dogfight in Asia". Put simply the days of even thinking America can garrison the world are long gone. Those new US Special Military Advisors in Syria are going to trip over a lot of other Special Advisors not only Russian. And the Chinese and Indian Special Advisors are coming to contest the militancy of the Islamists, externally as well as domestically.

All Great Powers, at least in their pretensions, demand spheres of influence whether the US in Central and South America, Russia in Eastern Europe, China in the China Seas and India with its border neighbours. India became militarily involved in the Sri Lankan civil war to its sorrow, but like the US in Vietnam the lesson has not been learnt and India is likely to misjudge the Pakistan "fundamentalism" when it commits military advisors to the Maldives and Bangladesh should and when militant Islamism threaten political and economic stability. This will have ramifications for ASEAN particularly Muslim Indonesia and Malaysia as well as Australia and New Zealand. The US, EU and PRC will be "running" the well honed diplomatic shuttle services.

However bipartisan foreign, defence, security and aid policies are unlikely to continue in Australia.