

FIGHTING TERRORISM



FOREIGN AFFAIRS
BUILDING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY
AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ISSUE SHEET

The Australian Democrats believe that international peace and security can only be achieved by strengthening international institutions and building respect for human rights and the rule of law. These elements are equally vital to Australia's national security.



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Terrorism

There is little doubt that one of the most serious security threats facing the international community at this time is the threat of terrorism. Yet the random and indiscriminate nature of this threat means that it cannot be effectively addressed using traditional military strategies.

If we want to effectively combat the threat of terrorism, we need to look at its causes, not just its devastating effects.

Terrorism involves the indiscriminate killing of innocent people and usually targets civilians, rather than military personnel. No political or religious cause can ever justify such atrocities. However, evidence suggests that terrorism is more likely to emerge where poverty and injustice abound and there is little respect for human rights or different religious beliefs. Many anti-terrorism initiatives

are founded on the fallacy that human rights are inconsistent with safety from terrorism and that we must be prepared to sacrifice certain rights if we want to be safe.

The truth is that human rights and civil liberties are not a liability in the fight against terrorism. On the contrary, they are a powerful weapon. Any truly effective response to terrorism requires us to adopt a broad definition of security, one that encompasses poverty-reduction, investment in human rights and religious tolerance, as well as more immediate preventative measures.

Multilateralism

The Democrats have a strong commitment to the principle of multilateralism. We believe that threats to security are most effectively addressed when the international community works together.

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Like the rule of law, multilateralism provides a foundation for democracy. It diffuses power and promotes accountability. Its underlying premise is that no individual, no organisation and no government – no matter how wealthy or how powerful – is above the law.

On the other hand, the doctrine of pre-emption represents an attempt to circumvent the rule of law, when compliance is inconvenient. The danger associated with this doctrine is that if we only resort to multilateral forums or comply with international law when it is convenient for us, we will gradually eliminate any norms or ground-rules.

The United Nations

The United Nations represents the world's most significant multilateral institution, but it is far from perfect. It is in desperate need of reform and revitalisation.

The Democrats believe that the Security Council needs to be reformed to broaden its membership and make it more democratic. Some have argued that the veto powers should also be removed – this is another issue which requires consideration.

The Democrats also believe the international community needs to consider when, and in what circumstances, it is appropriate

to initiate military or peacekeeping operations to address gross human rights violations within nation states. Unfortunately, at this crucial time for the UN, many

member states are abandoning its processes instead of embracing the opportunity for change. Australia is fast becoming one of those members. The Democrats believe Australia needs to spend more energy strengthening the United Nations and less energy on devising ways to bypass it. The future viability of the United Nations depends on the goodwill and commitment of its member states. It is in Australia's best interests to help build a strong United Nations, so that the international community can work together to strengthen international peace and security.

The Democrats will continue to work hard to ensure that Australia meets its international obligations, and to restore confidence in the international institutions upon which our prosperity and security depends.



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