



AFGHANISTAN: A STRATEGIC WATERSHED?

BY TONY ABBOTT

Tony Abbott is a former Prime Minister of Australia.

I fear that the fall of Kabul and the return of the Taliban is not just a catastrophe but a strategic watershed as well.

As Singapore was falling during World War II, then-Australian Prime Minister John Curtin made his famous call: “Australia looks to America.” But even though Singapore had been surrendered, at least Britain was continuing to fight.

How much fight is left in Biden’s America? More than currently seems, I suspect and hope; but that’s the question that all US allies must now ponder and adjust accordingly.

My fear is that a COVID-obsessed West might sleep-walk past this new reality: the likelihood of bigger and more sophisticated terror attacks, now that Afghanistan is once more open as a terrorist base; and the near certainty that Russia and China will be even more adventurist now that this American president has declared that a country that had cost so much is no longer worth a single additional American life.

This is not a perception that can be allowed to stand if alliances are to last.

Australia must maintain the US alliance and do more to show our appreciation for it; and to help put even more spine into it—because the freedom and prosperity of the modern world has rested squarely on America’s readiness to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend [and] oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”

It’s been a golden moment in world history that we mustn’t let slip away.

Australia must step up, to help avoid an American retreat with calamitous consequences.

Large though our current military build-up is, it’s now too small and too slow.

As well, we can’t keep weakening our country by agonising over issues that never trouble our strategic competitors.

At the very least, this should be a massive wake-up call rather than an inconvenient interruption to politics-as-usual.

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