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A few weeks ago I participated in the Melbourne Art Fair in Australia and on my way back to Hong Kong I made a short stopover in Bali. I arrived on Thursday afternoon – and as we landed the adjacent Kuta Beach and its famous surf beckons you. From the airport I headed directly for Ubud, about 40 kms inland from Kuta – Ubud sits amongst rice terraces and is home to many artists, therapeutic massage places and good (and, as I was soon to discover, not so good!) restaurants. My plan was to spend a few nights in Ubud and then have a few nights on the beach in Kuta before catching a plane to Singapore on the Monday. Friday's dinner was fish and on Saturday morning I had stomach pains; yes, the fish was the cause – because of this, I then decided to spend the rest of my time in Bali ensconced in Ubud.

Early on Sunday morning I heard about the bomb in Kuta. I sent text messages saying I was 'OK' to all who knew I was in Bali. Later that morning I was walking through the market and saw TV coverage of the destruction, burned bodies and the overwhelmed hospital medical staff trying to cope with a battlefield-like massacre. All who saw these first grotesque images were completely shocked. The Balinese market stall-holders apologized. The TV played subdued funeral music without commentary as it depicted the destruction. Indonesian flags were at half-mast.

When I arrived in Singapore I heard that the Australian media initially reporting the bombing headlined their reports "Australia Under Attack" – I suppose in replication of American newspapers' "America Under Attack" headlines of a year earlier. The Singapore *Straits Times* quoted an Australian woman saying that Bali "was where our children played". A few days after the bombing the Australian Government (as well as the US and British) issued extreme warnings of further attacks and advised its nationals to leave Indonesia.

The Australian media and Government had decided that the Bali bombing was a deliberate and intentional attack targeting Australia.

This seems far-fetched. There are many theories for the bombing. I, for example, have just read the new book on crime and politics in Asia by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* correspondent Bertil Lintner and was reminded to ask: who was the owner of the Kuta Sari Club – has a recent business deal gone wrong or has someone been slighted? I was asked a few days ago: did the Sari Club have a door entry policy of excluding local Indonesians - this is again another legitimate question. An Indonesian friend suspected that Suharto family supporters could be behind the bombing as Megawati Sukarnoputri was actually born in Bali and anything to destabilize her administration would give these people heart. The bomb itself is a US manufactured substance called C-4: it is difficult to obtain and only the military of US allies have access to it. So where was the Bali bomb obtained from?

In Singapore I read many rational newspaper articles asking legitimate questions. The well-known Indonesian academic and political aide Wimar Witeolar, for example, said "October 12 is a black day for Indonesia because Bali is the part of Indonesia that is friendliest to outsiders....Previous incidents brought more casualties, but did not dominate the world's news papers because the victims were locals. Terrorism has been an unpleasant reality in Indonesia for decades." And those who live in Asia know that this also applies to the Philippines, Myanmar, India, Pakistan and even China.

People directly affected by tragedy, of course, have very personal and emotional reactions. The rugby and football players and officials who were attending a 10's tournament or end of season celebrations in Bali were one group of high profile victims: at subsequent memorial services the clubs, for example Sydney's Coogee Rugby Club and the Hong Kong Football Club, made a point of remembering **all** the victims of the Bali bombing.

Motives, however must be questioned when a State, its politicians and that country's media announce that a bombing is an attack on a nation.

It is this sort of gross manipulation of sentiment – you and I know the sort of advertising campaign - that may in the future allow advertisers and the media to get away with the promotion of a new designer drink: the Bali Bomb.

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