

Comment by Michael C H Jones
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PRC President Xi Jinping has a "China Dream" which implies ultimate equality with the USA amongst the international community of nations. Hence post 2016 US Presidential foreign policies will be challenged directly and indirectly; or simply because China will demand the equality of recognition and consultation on all the major, indeed even minor, contentious issues and confrontations. Economic clout brings political power, and the USA is steadily losing the ability to deny the Chinese challenge. But that is fundamentally different from the PRC becoming an "equal power" to the USA in a real sense.

In the Western Pacific step by step China challenges the US military superiority, aggressively asserting its alleged historical rights against Japan in the Northeast and ASEAN in the South China Sea. Whilst President Xi has recently taken direct control of the PLA, almost bypassing the Central Military Commission of which he is Chairman, there is debate as to whether the Chinese Communist Party remains in control of the gun. Chinese Taipei, or Taiwan Province, is likely to be the litmus test over the next decade given the recent election result on the island, and this time force may again be the preferred PLA answer. The US faces military pressure not just in the China Seas but throughout the entire Western Pacific - certainly the prospect of around 100 Chinese strike submarines by the late 2020s will concentrate the minds of the Pentagon strategists, not with respect to US power but rather the reactions of China's neighbours.

From an Australian perspective, given that our newly ordered 12 French built submarines will not be delivered until at least the early/mid 2030s, Indauspac or three oceans defence has to be diplomatic with an emphasis on Peoples Diplomacy or the forging of multilevel institutional connections in neighbouring countries based on our economic trading realities/potentials.

ASEAN is front and central for Australia's defence. Indonesia at the economic core of ASEAN and Vietnam in the ASEAN military frontline - the military downward thrust of communist China was a myth but a successful electoral ploy in 1966, however 50 years later the PRC economic expansion, simply because of the size and dynamic of China, is awesome. If Australia is to remain a truly independent nation by the mid/late Asian Century, then we need friends beyond the USA and lots of them to resist what is essentially an overwhelming cultural threat.

US global foreign policies based on a stable, if not resurgent, domestic economy and political system are paramount for Australia, and the preservation of our historical traditions and unique version of "life, liberty and security of person". China's 5000 year civilisation, admirable as it may be, brings little to the multicultural society that is Australia's creation. America's determination to maintain its best rather than worst outreach, more the Barack Obama than the George Bush, throughout the multicultural asias is crucial for Australia. Our political, economic and social policies should be directed to strengthening the best in the USA and resisting opportunist military adventures such as Vietnam and Iraq that undermine our human rights values.

India and West Asia are just as important as China and East Asia for a trading nation controlling an island continent with an insignificant population surrounded by three oceans. China's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean, and commercial investments in West Asia and East Africa, require monitoring by Australia. A balance of Powers is essential, our global strategies should be directed to mitigating the foreign policy misbehaviour of each global elephant from time to time. As Chamber approaches its 5th decade from September 2016, our role in "Australia China Relations in a Global Era" will necessarily bring ACCI policy changes to meet the new realities of China's outreach to the

world and the varying challenges it presents to both the US hegemony over the last 70 years and the independence of littoral nations in Indauspac.

One special project or policy example is the past highlighting of Corruption in Australia on the ACCCI website, now universally recognised; and the more recent shift of emphasis to the plight of Australian citizens/residents with Chinese ethnic backgrounds and their jailing for alleged economic crimes in both countries. Stern Hu, rightly or wrongly, has become a symbol of the tension these issues can generate at the highest diplomatic levels - our exchange of emails to and from Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) are in the Media section of this website for consideration.