

Comment by Michael C H Jones
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The United States is the largest Economy in the world, still considerably larger than the Peoples Republic of China, and overwhelmingly the predominant military power in all aspects on land and sea and in space. Yet its political and cultural power has deminished considerably in recent decades.

This in part is due to the gridlock in the US political system with Congress and the President regularly at loggerhead. The fact that President Obama after 7 years still can not realise his 2008 election promise to close Guantanamo Bay military prison, where of November 2015 over 100 detainees remain, is one of the most notorious examples.

Yet these structural problems in the US system of governance are not unlike similar bottlenecks to policy formulation and implementation in other national jurisdictions - again the Prime Minister Abbott years in Australia is an example. The essence of the challenge to democratic decision making lies primarily in leadership as linked to voter sophistication, or lack thereof in terms of knowledge and participation in the process.

Chamber is increasingly addressing the contrasts between a Parliamentary system in Australia, a Congressional system in the USA and a Party system in the PRC. As the US Economy spasmodically cranks up, the Chinese Economy splutters and the Australian Economy is dependent on both, the international warfare of global economic relations rages with the establishment almost monthly of new rival alliances of trade and investment bodies where the powers of national governments are undermined exponentially.

Arguably the US can no longer stand alone, certainly politically and sooner rather than later economically despite perhaps its last gasp of unilateral dominance in the coming decades. China, like India, is destined to return to its historical economic centrality in Indauspac, yet both have fundamentally different systems of governance. In the 21st century the US represents globalism in all its aspects, cultural and social as well as political and economic, despite the country's isolationist mindset a century ago.

China is a powder keg, with a structural system of governance that appears to facilitate rapid and decisive policy decision making at almost all levels, and may well do so for several decades out, but will the CPC still be either in the same form or indeed existing on the 100th anniversary of its formation in 2049? Factional politics disguised as anti-corruption campaigns will inevitable generate blow-back, indeed the common assertion in China today is that President Xi can never retire, as if/when he completes his 10 years as General Secretary, Chairman and President in early 2023, he will very soon after face trial. That of course presupposes that the social movements of Civil Society, so readily identified by Prime Minister Howard's two reports on Australia China Reations in 2005/06, do not simply explode in mass civil disobedience, hopefully non-violent, by the Chinese people perhaps generated from Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan Province. The alternative may be a coup by the PLA if the CPC loses control of the gun?

Whatever, as global institutions, historic from 1945 and more recent in the 21st century, bump and grind to more democratic formats, so too will the domestic governance structures of the Great Powers whether US, PRC, Russia, India, and Japan or the collectives such as the European Union, ASEAN, Mercusour, SCO and even the May 2001 African Union with its objective for a African Economic Community by 2023. China can never return to All under Heaven as the Central Kingdom, isolated in its splendour, as its borders are porous and its people hooked into global communications irrespective of the accuracy and value of the information sources. What were once, even 50 years

ago in elite university courses, called the American Civilization and the Chinese Civilization no longer exist as stand alone cultural entities, the overlappings and integrations of national elites at all levels of governance are unstoppable because of education, travel, trade and financial economies.

That is the new and accelerating reality, yet the very dangerous challenge is the fundamental ignorance of the masses, the ordinary people, voters, or punters as we like to call them in Australia. I suspect not in China, America or Australia, is their any more than shallow knowledge of the religious histories of West Asia re Middle East and the intercene/internecine struggles of that region over centuries that collours emotional allegiances that are manipulated for unfathomable objectives. Even in East Asia, which of the academic scholars from the great Western universities can unravel the China, two Koreas, Japan impass?

Those of us born in western Christian societies look to the US and EU for leadership in all fields of endeavour, particularly the smaller in population countries like Australia. And do we find inspiration? The answer is obvious and does not require an explanation. We were extremely lucky to win the lottery with Barack Obama but what follows? Donald Trump - even if he fails to win the Republican nomination the fact that he has such wide support is unsettling for the rest of the world. Hillary Clinton - she will be 70 years if/when taking office in January 2017 and unlikely physically/mentally to complete 8 years as President in January 2025. Thus the question, and extremely unsettling, whom will Clinton chose as her Vice Presidential running mate - possibly another Harry Truman?

Economies, domestic, require political stability. Economies which are essential parts of the Global System like the US and PRC need men as leaders with rare qualities of character, and at present the structures of governance everywhere impead their rise to the top. We hope in Australia that our fifth Prime Minister since 2007, Malcolm Turnbull, has some of those rare qualities.