

Comment by Michael C H Jones

For 12 months since June 2012 I have been trying to write Observations 8 - A Manifesto for Change. Believe it or not some 92 drafts and saved links relevant to what I want but cannot seem to say. Part of the problem is that we in the Chamber have to earn a living elsewhere - no government funding and little corporate support for an irreverent organisation such as ACCCI.

More importantly, and politically vital, has been the gargantuan three year struggle between Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard not only for the role as Prime Minister of Australia but for the 'heart and soul' of the oldest Party in Australia - the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Neither our Chinese nor American friends, with all their experience of internal party factionalism, could comprehend the historical and personal vitriol that fueled this philosophical struggle.

In my view most of the news media commentary in this country has been trite and of no help to an understanding of the fundamental social, economic and cultural changes that are surfacing politically in the victory of Kevin Rudd and the contest with Tony Abbott that is about to take place in our 2013 Federal Election.

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam opened the door to a new Australia in 1972. The Conservative and often reactionary forces

of Established Power quickly shut the door to the world in 1975 and kept it shut even though the new Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, despite his squattocracy background, began to realise he was more a captive of the Liberal National Party than its leader. The libertarian ideals of the the 1960s kept seeping through the body-politic.

The Hawke/Keating ALP government years 1983-96 blew the locked door to the world well and truly off its hinges. Australia was opened-up to use a Chinese saying. The John Howard 'shop-keepers' failed over the next decade to put the libertarians back in the box - too many scandals like the AWB travesty, the David Hicks disgrace, the Pacific Solution insularity. Old style Labor leaders such as Kim Beasley, Simon Crean and Mark Latham failed to generate enthusiasm among the more globally conscious and affluent tribes on issues of Freedom of Information, Climate Change and Sexual Freedoms. Then along came Kevin Rudd, the man without any "Labor Values" and a Trade Union Card.

The Global Financial Crisis derailed Prime Minister Rudd, and allowed the external media "forces of darkness" to recover through their well known minions in the Labor party structures and hence the "coup" which dumped him in June 2010. The fightback has taken three long years but we won last Wednesday evening 26th June 2013. During those three years the world has speed-up. The cultural pressures of the Return of China, and in future years the Rise of India, the Arab Spring with its impacts on Turkey, Iran and Indonesia - the Muslim Powers of the next decade. Brazil has come from no-where and as a member of BRICS with South Africa is changing the southern hemisphere - South America and Southern Africa.

The United States of America, the 'exceptional' nation and world hegemon, has always lauded in my view quietly its Civil Society and commitment to its version of Freedom and Democracy. It celebrates Free Enterprise and promotes these values globally without much regard for other cultures and histories. But in this generation its leaders face the fiercest competition in the country's

short history - China has 'Returned' to global leadership after about two centuries of decline, chaos and rise. Do the ordinary Americans, the punters, really understand, do their leaders understand, and can they individually and collectively cope psychologically with what is essentially a cultural rather than military/political challenge - 'free enterprise' is great when you are winning?

And so we have all these high-powered, expensive and brilliantly manned US Think Tanks - literally hundreds of them representing all hues on the American political rainbow. Apart from one's intellectual capacities, and plastic to cover subscriptions, the time in reading and digesting their learned thoughts is prohibitive/overwhelming. If Democracy, and in whatever Form re Participatory, Representative, Invitational, Monitory etc, is based on the Will of the People, how do the people make their decisions when Freedom of Information is restricted by all State Sovereignty institutions? Its the Bradley Manning, Edward Snowden and Julian Assange phenomenon. As I keep saying its the deposed 1989 'Tiananmen Square' ex PRC Premier Zhou Ziyang's 'Right to Know' challenge.

Moreover if in a democracy with 'rule of law' there is a Right to Know, and if as an extension of this Right under the United Nations and through its Security Council of which Australia is now a member country, there is a "Responsibility to Protect" when governments commit domestic 'Crimes Against Humanity' then surely this means the right to interfere in the internal affairs of whatever country is declared "at fault"? And this principal must be all-embracing including the USA and PRC and Russia and the UK, and not just Libya and Syria?

So I welcome the initiative of the 'Carnegie Endowment for International Peace' in announcing a major expansion of the Democracy and Rule of Law Program with the addition of American 'top-guns' Rachel Kleinfeld, Richard Youngs, and Sarah Chayes. They will most likely be better funded than our Australian 'top-guns' at the Lowy Institute in Sydney. But will they be any more dispassionate in their pronouncements on global issues such as the Jewish State of Israel and the Rights of the Palestinian people?, the Iranian Right to a Nuclear Industry if not nuclear weapons - after all Israel has about 200 of them?, the Chinese Right to secure its energy sea lanes through Indauspac including to Australia, South Africa and South America as well as West Asia?, other national Rights to use armed drones across/into and kill foreign citizens?. These are just some of the many issues I would like the newly recruited Carnegie experts to address before there is another change-over post Obama in US Presidential Administrations and they can return to their first loves namely helping to rule the world with American Democracy and Rule of Law.

At the end of the day I will make an Australian bet with Carnegie and most of the other US Think Tanks that the ACCCI views, as poorly stated as they are because of absence of funding, will ultimately carry more weight throughout the institutions of Indauspac including Europe than will yours. Cultural blinkers impede thinking - especially American. Perhaps in the future it will be the same with China?

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