

Comment by Michael C H Jones

John Garnaut has been writing some very interesting articles recently for the Sydney Morning Herald on China. One wonders if his period of assignment in Beijing is nearly over?

By interesting I mean that he manages to work in subject matter normally too deep for sub-editors and all to understand and thus "re-arrange".

The PRC Government policy towards Australia has fundamentally changed over the last 5/10 years - their new thinking could be detected in the first half of the last decade but did not become fully articulated until the arrival of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, a man whose personality quirks often got the publicity rather than the policies he was promoting. The Chinese leaders operate in a totally different space.

Hence the relevance of today's two articles by Garnaut for Gillard's forthcoming visit to China on 25th April.

Firstly China understands the geo-strategic value of Australia - the great aircraft carrier and resources pit of Induspac. In today's world of global economic relations access to and security over resources is crucial - China has never accepted US naval/military "overlordship" and now prepares to directly challenge it within the next decade. Naval/military outposts/facilities in places such as East Timor, Fiji and even New Zealand is their intention. That is why the concentration on Australia with a visit by a CPC Politburo member each year - from 5th April it will be number 4 in the Standing Committee of 9, Jia Qinglin.

Whilst the to be expected and obvious statements are made "Communist Party's toughest crackdown on civil society in more than a decade" and "in the past six weeks more than 30 lawyers, writers and activists have been detained in China, including several charged with offences related to subversion, while another dozen have simply vanished and remain unaccounted for", it is the dalliance into communist theory of organisation that is really important for Australia and Gillard namely Jia's "real power derives from overseeing the Communist Party's "united front" operations." and that the functions of his United Front Department covers "fields, including academia, private enterprise, religion and ethnic affairs" both domestic and international.

The tactics described regarding the Tibetan community worldwide and in Australia are equally applicable to the broader Chinese community, as well as the business community and academia in Australia.

Secondly with regard to Gillard's visit the obvious is again stated "the Chinese leadership will waste no time in making up its mind about Gillard. Arriving as a high-profile novice is no easy assignment" and "Watching the Chinese use flattery on Australians can be excruciating", but again it is the reference to "national interests" both Chinese and Australian that is the gold in the article in the context of two-way trade excluding education and tourism being about \$100 billion or more than 25% of Australia's merchandise trade - there is already a powerful manipulated China Lobby in Canberra and throughout the country which may some day rival their Americans counterparts, note the "presence of 160,000 Chinese students in Australia and the fact that China last year has accounted for the largest flows of foreign direct investment".

"Clarity" as to what Australia's national interests "are" must be viewed not bilaterally but globally with respect to China which is now "central" not only to Climate Change talks, World Trade Organisation

talks, Nuclear Non-proliferation and Security talks but to all issues globally including Israel - China is the new America using all the precedents set by the USA and its "dominions" since the Second World War. Chinese economic and political and therefore naval/military power will expand in various degrees to its different spheres of interests. From my discussions in China Australia is at the top of PRC priorities to be detached from the American Alliance.

Hence never has anything truer been said "Gillard needs to think hard enough and long enough to instinctively know at what point legitimate Chinese interests intrude on the legitimate interests of our own" country - however instinct and certainly hers will not be sufficient. Australia is a potential battleground and therefore in real trouble in the medium term.