

Comment by Michael C H Jones

Can an individual declare war on a foreign country? If so how would this be done? Or is the hypothetical so absurd as to be just a many beers discussion one boozy evening at the local pub? Further could that individual and others individually or collectively declare war on two countries simultaneously? Would these people be committing treason or at least breaking the most important laws of their own countries? These questions are not really hypotheticals because they challenge the essence of modern International Relations which is between States and the traditional ideas of State Sovereignty namely that Governments can basically do what they like within their own territories.

Or can they? Gareth Evans the former Australian Foreign Minister played a leading role in the formulation and development through international institutions such as the UN of the new Obligation to Protect global norm which has found its feet in Libya and may again be invoked in Syria. In both cases the human rights of a particular country's citizens subject to their own governments' crimes against humanity are judged more important than the concept of State Sovereignty. The issue centers on what States, or rather their governments, think individually and collectively about specific domestic circumstances in one of their fellow states and the actions of it's government.

The bottom line question remains whether or not this is really an imperialist reinvention where the military strong over-rule the technology weak? The US and EU determine what constitutes fundamental human rights according to their own cultures and historical political systems. Hence in the era of the so-called Asia Pacific what role for the emerging Powers - China, India, Brazil, Iran, Russia, South Africa or dare I say it again Australia. A study of Mediterranean maritime history or Chinese continental history might help.

Is the issue really about governance? Are the accepted levels/lines of Municipal/Local, Provincial/State and Central/National now so blurred by international treaties and global institutions that ideas of democracy of whatever description are no longer valid in the sense of operable at the domestic levels. When the decisions and actions of the governments of the major powers particularly the USA and PRC are such that their effects or ramifications impact the peoples of the world surely human rights demands intervention in their internal affairs. Feral capitalism and the absence of US government regulation brought about the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/09 which still resonates around the world with little understanding being shown by the current candidates for the Republican Party nomination, if not President Obama himself. Similarly the continuation of the Communist Party monopoly of power in all aspects of Chinese society whether State, Military, Business and other, especially with the present and future impact on all aspects of global society, raises very interesting questions not only for other governments but more importantly for the peoples of the world.

If the USA and/or the EU governments do not maintain their commitments to historic democratic mechanisms, procedures and processes in the sense of recognised human rights standards then their citizens, and global citizens, have the right indeed the obligation to challenge their legitimacy. 1215 and Magna Carta is far too long ago for me. But I did study the Nuremberg Judgements of the late 1940s and participate in the debates during the Vietnam Years 1962-72/75. President Jimmy Carter may or may not have been a bumbling leader but it has become more than apparent that Ronald Reagan was an American tragedy with horrific results for the economic welfare of global society. He set in process a trend of debasement of the values and attitudes of a democratic society for more than 30 years which President Barack Obama has been unable to change - Gitmo is just one example.

My contention is that if democracy is about the right to have a say in the decisions that affect your life then we the citizens of the world have a right to interfere in the 2012 elections for the new

"communist" leadership of China and the President of "capitalist" USA. The concept is to me clear, the practicalities are another matter.

Postscript:

Lest you think I am too harsh on the American "soul" you might care to read what some Professorial US academics say about their own country and themselves - nothing I have previously written or will write can compare with this opinion.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/25122011-americas-chickens-are-coming-home-to-roost-oped/>

<http://mwcnews.net/component/comprofiler/userprofile/wcook.htm>