

Comment by Michael C H Jones

The Chinese National People's Congress meets in Beijing from 5th March and will rubber stamp Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping as President of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

President Xi's first international visit will be to Moscow for diplomatic negotiations on strategic issues with Russian President Putin. Immediate policy coordination will include Syria, Iran and North Korea, wherein US and EU interests have been continually frustrated. No doubt risk assessments and relevant foreign policy decisions will be broached concerning possible Syrian regime collapse, an Israeli pre-emptive strike on alleged Iranian "nuclear" installations, and the increasing North-South Korean belligerence. But equally important will be the exchange of views on China's historical claims to "lost" territories in both the East China Sea and South China Sea. Japan, Korea, and various ASEAN countries are the protagonists. However Russia has always had an eye on China's intentions towards its sparsely populated Far East Pacific Ocean region.

Perhaps more important decisions will come from the negotiations on Global Economic Relations and the Chinese policy to "democratise" international institutions, which is code language for diminishing US "hegemony" everywhere simultaneously. Putin has no difficulty in this objective provided of course Russian interests are protected. In international economics Chinese and Russian politics appear to be in harmony. If Shanghai is to become a global financial center equal to New York and London by 2020 then the G20, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the East Asia Summit are critical.

The Moscow meeting will be highly influential in the decisions of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), scheduled to meet in Durban, South Africa on 26/27th March 2013. The BRICS make up 5 of the countries in the G20, which recently on 15th February convened in Moscow, the primary financial global political institution. Similarly there will be reviews of the SCO and its "role" extension from protecting Central Asia to encompassing all economic regions from the Eastern Mediterranean (Turkey) to Western Pacific (Japan) under the pretense of emphasising the positives of "development" cooperation. The EAS remains the strategic engagement institution for neutralising, or dividing, potential opposition to China's foreign policies directed to their Monroe Doctrine. Both Russia and to a lesser extent India are in the politics of trading for influence and therefore are unlikely to militarily confront China too seriously. Which leaves the USA, and in varying ways Japan and Australia - the major benefit for the West is at least everyone is now inside the tent!!

Only in the short term can the USA sustain a political-military "containment" of China. Inevitable the Western nations must face the gravitational forces of economic competition enlarging the PRC's footprint across the world. The arithmetic is simple - either the US and EC engineer a massive economic growth recovery over the next few decades, with continued/associated development in South America/Africa or Greater historical Asia will be the "playground" for China's economic system with commensurate political/diplomatic power.

I wonder what Deng Xiaoping would be thinking? The overthrow of CPC General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, and his successful house arrest under successor General Secretary and PRC President Jiang Zemin, post 1989 Tiananmen Square, has been undermined by the reform inaction and failed theory of subsequent CPC General Secretary/PRC President Hu Jintao, who allowed the rise of recently purged Chongqing CPC boss Bo Xilai. The "show trial" is still to come. As China's economic clout and political influence has spread across the world, helped by "feral" capitalism in the USA and EU, CPC

domestic unity has ebbed such that identifiable factions now exist at all levels Central, Provincial and Municipal if not District. Indeed an interesting addendum is the rise of the Taiwanese "business" faction in the Party - whereas the Kuomintang purged the CPC faction in the bloodbath of 1927 Shanghai, so far the CPC Politburo has been willing to look the other way, perhaps in deference to more "harmonious" Cross-Straits economic and political relations? However times are always changing.