

Comment by Michael C H Jones
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It has been said many times "when elephants fight, the grass suffers" and the two elephants of the Asian grass are the Returning China and India. Both have their pretensions to spheres of influence, China in the China Seas from Japan to ASEAN and India across the Northern Indian Ocean from Malaysia to the Persian Gulf if not beyond.

Western media devote pages to their alleged and real rivalries, yet little to the consequences of their growing and deep cooperation in all fields, perhaps only with the economic development aspects re mainly BRICS and less so SCO, APEC and G20. Naval tensions in the Indo-Pacific are highlighted with the US portrayed as the neutral nation bringing peace and stability to the broader oceans region reaching down to Australasia.

Yet through the centuries cooperation across their cultural plates has been more the rule than warfare, the spread of Buddhism throughout China is a standout example. Internationally Indo-China is exactly that: a mixture of Indian and Chinese social forces throughout ASEAN. The Moslems of Indonesia and Malaysia and Christians in the Philippines are the more recent interlopers.

Clearly China has an agenda in calling for closer and deeper security cooperation between the two countries, it is not just the current terrorism threat out of West Asia re the Syrian conflagration and the murderous IS provocations around the world. Internally both China and India have large Moslem minorities with varying degrees of social difference from the mainstream - they share this challenge with Russia in North Asia. This poses an existential threat of national disunity and undermining of State Sovereignty. But also there is the Afghanistan scenario re the harbouring of fundamentalist Moslem groups off-shore in neighbouring countries - Indonesia and Malaysia, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Nevertheless China looks longer term at least to their 100th anniversary of the PRC in 2049.

China wants the US out of the Western Pacific. The US has befriended India in its suspicions of Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. A 21st Century China-India "accommodation" makes the US presence questionable and reasserts the historical cultural influences throughout most of ASEAN including Australasia given the latter's relative small population and need for massive infrastructure investment.

From India's perspective this "accommodation", in whatever tortuous form over future decades, maybe a better proposition than China-balancing alliances with Japan, Vietnam and Australia. However Indonesia remains the key to economic and security developments as it contains most if not all of the trip wires for tension and rivalries and population-wise remains too big to ignore. Neither of the elephants can allow Indonesia to be other than effectively neutral, unless both agree to a mutual "carve-up" economically - and then we are back to the fundamentalist IS style reaction.

Perhaps an early "special project" might be collaboration in confronting the educational establishments of Saudi Arabia, a fellow G20 member, and their "influence" re propagation

of Moslem fundamentalism throughout the Indauspac Region. That would be a very significant contribution to the anniversary of globalism in 2022.

This of course is all speculative. Even Australia's best forecaster, the Reserve Bank of Australia, was continuously/monotonously wrong in predicting both the up-curve and down-curve of Australia's commodity boom re sales to China. The only real attempt to evaluate the 21st century was PM Gillard's Australia in the Asian Century Report which was quickly discarded by the Abbott Government. Would a future 40 years of Japanese submarines for Australia change the impact of a China-India rapprochement? Certainly a Chinese orchestrated re-unification of Korea would change Japan.

All that can be said definitely is that Indauspac will be a different region in 2101, Australia's 200th anniversary of nationhood.