

Comment by Michael C H Jones

Six weeks in Europe has confirmed in my mind Australia's new role as a second level Great Power.

Remarkable as the Chinese economic revolution has been since 1978, and subsequently more recently that of India, and the continuing historic unification of Europe following their two civil wars of the 20th century, nevertheless the United States retains its global hegemony - economic, political and strategic with arguably predominant global social and cultural impacts.

But Australia's influence internationally has dramatically increased since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 in the context of the Nixon Doctrine launched in 1969. This has finally become more visible with the implications of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/09. Economically and strategically Australia carries accelerating weight in world institutions and this may or may not lead to a higher political and military profile throughout the 21st century trouble-spots. Was Libya 2011 just a beginning or in hindsight was it way back with Cambodia in the 1980s?

It is clear that Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd understands. Just read his speeches. However he can not bring his Party - the Australian Labor Party - with him let alone his fellow parliamentarians, the media and certainly not the general public. WikiLeaks has exposed this country's lack of information which is so necessary for a robust democratic society. Profound crises will no doubt be required to validate Rudd - and hopefully not the rise of the jingoism of an indigenous Teddy Roosevelt. An Australian empire is unwelcome.

However Rudd powers on relentlessly. His self control, discipline and confidence are simply breathtaking. Personality problems have been turned into assets and he is out Chinese-ing the Chinese with his inscrutability. Contradictions and the 'struggle of opposites' bring no terrors for Kevin the Global Man. Support the CPC/PRC global economic and social onslaught but build a new wall around China through international institutions and norms - and back it with an independent Australian navy to guarantee our strategic resources and freedom. A Sovereign Wealth Fund may also help.

Above all recognise that the USA is unreliable as an international role model for human rights and freedom given its internal domestic politics as shown by the policies over eight years of President George Bush and those advocated by the current Tea Party Movement. Hence foster other mutually understood cultural relationships at different levels with Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa and through them extend Australia's influence. In other words rename the world from Australia's perspective. Indauspac.