

Comment by Michael C H Jones

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2016 will be the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The admission of both India and Pakistan as full members establishes the SCO as the potential "NATO of the East". Whilst the organisation remains primarily economic, it's political possibilities for harmonising policy across Eurasia as well as the northern Indo-Pacific is awesome. East, West and North Central Asia - China, India and Russia will be meeting regularly and security issues will definitely be on the agendas.

Should over the next decade the Chinese ambition to include as full members Japan and the Koreas to the East with Iran and Turkey to the West be achieved, the strength of the current Obama/US negotiations for both Trans-Pacific and Trans-Atlantic Economic Partnerships will be tested. It is history repeating itself, a Continental economic alliance opposed to an Oceans maritime security "cooperation" with a heavy Anglo flavour. Or perhaps the difference between an emphasis on Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights on the one hand and Political and Civil Human Rights on the other?

ASEAN in this rivalry context becomes even more important economically, politically, socially and culturally. Would this disparate group of countries swing more to China/India and the SCO or alternatively to the US/EU axis? And where does Australia position itself?

The Chamber has recently made a Public Policy Submission to a NSW Government Survey on Multiculturalism which had an emphasis on the Australian Muslim communities. How this country resolves the issues will impact our relations with arguably the two most important countries for Australia within ASEAN, namely the Muslim countries of Indonesia and Malaysia. The politics of the Great Game of Global Economic Relations increasingly confronts Australian Governance structures at all levels. At present leadership barely exists anywhere - and the clock is ticking, perhaps only a decade of grace?