

Comment by Michael C H Jones

I cannot stand Greg Sheridan. Over the years he has proved to be one of the most shallow and superficial of Australian paper-clips/journalists - cheaper by the thousand - writing for Murdoch, the Global version of Sydney's Alan Jones.

However ACCCI has from time to time linked his articles as his toadyism is a good indication of the rationalisations by US/Australian politicians trying to justify their policy failures all over the world. His recent clarion call for the withdrawal of Australian troops from Afghanistan was just one example.

But now he has really done it when writing about "many recent, often anonymous, attacks on Kevin Rudd" as being "completely unreasonable" and that their "very desperation reflects a dawning realisation on senior Labor figures that the only possible alternative to Gillard is Rudd". Wow what can I say - where are you Bill Shorten, Mark Arbib and Paul Howes, there is a deserter in the ranks.

So we read on into the body/mischief of Sheridan's article - the warming up of the Australian electorate for future US/Australia international policies. The rise/challenge of China cannot be quarantined to the Western Pacific and so the recently formulated Pacific Community institutions are no longer effective and relevant for the Indian Ocean Community - the Asia-Pacific language/terminology is becoming increasingly torturous and laughable. Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the social revolutionaries of West Asia and East Africa are not interested.

Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, and perhaps earlier with the Nixon Doctrine of 1969, the trends of history have been obvious. China will not be intimidated or threatened whether by the US in Korea during the early 1950s, India in the Himalayas during the early 1960s, Russia on the Amur in the late 1960s, the US again in Indo-China during the 1960s/early 70s, Vietnam in the late 1970s or Western countries' trade sanctions in the early 1990s. The PRC/CPC intends to follow the reclaiming of it's country/sovereignty in October 1949, recognition by the UN in October 1971, Opening Up in December 1978, and entrance to the WTO in December 2001, with a global role that again makes it the Middle Kingdom, or center of the world.

In other words American proselytising "exceptionalism" needs to be maintained where ever China's soft-power "exceptionalism" ventures, or as put far more elegantly by Henry Kissinger in 'On China' page 529: "Throughout it's history, the United States has often been motivated by visions of the universal relevance of its ideals and of a proclaimed duty to spread them. China has acted on the basis of its singularity; it expanded by cultural osmosis, not missionary zeal". The irresistible force and the immovable object.

Which brings us to Australia and an understanding that everything is linked to everything else. Australia as the resources pit and aircraft carrier of the Indauspac Maritime Community is linked to the 'trench' warfare now occurring within the Australian Labor Party for it's 'heart and soul', and I would suggest less visibly in the Liberal Party. Astute commentators already acknowledge that Australia has become a 'battle ground' for the USA and PRC - and no prisoners will be taken. The US champions historical political institutions whereas China relentlessly advocates economic benefits. With Asian migration from both East and West since the late 1970s social and cultural allegiances in Australia are very diverse to say the least. So the Rudd/Gillard internationalist/domestic, and respective coalitions of supporters, mind-frames as to what has to be done. Similarly in the Liberals a Turnbull/Abbott ideological stand-off based on life experience which in turn revolves around globalist perspectives.

The Australia Defence White Paper conclusions promoted by Rudd, irrespective of a range of views, identified over the next few decades many if not most of the issues not only concerning the rise of China but also with lesser powers in Australia's region, namely both the Indian and Pacific Oceans but with little mention unfortunately of the Southern Ocean. The key understanding is that we are a maritime entity. Our defence has to be based on naval capabilities which support aerial deterrents. Men on the ground are basically for UN Peace Keeping Missions.

Hence to US facilities and possible naval bases in Australia and particularly on the North West coast. Will they make this country more or less safe? China has its "string of pearls" strategy which is essentially a problem for India not Australia. I feel sure India can deal with it. The US has its great naval/military forward installations in Guam in the Pacific and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean from which all sorts of operations have been launched over many decades. The reality is that Australia is more than capable of protecting its own mining and natural gas industries by re-deployments of our Armed Forces to Darwin or elsewhere in Western Australia and the South Eastern Indian Ocean. However if US bases are designed to bring pressure/intervene in a possible ASEAN-PRC military confrontation in the South China Sea then we have a fundamentally different issue to consider - what would be the Chinese response?

Moreover what are the views of Indonesia and Malaysia, and the Philippines and Vietnam? Singapore has its annual Shangri-La Dialogues but China does not seem to get much more than a courteous hearing. I doubt that it would allow US bases in Australia threatening PRC claims/ambitions in the South China Sea to go unchallenged.

References

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