

Comment by Michael C H Jones

Travel to other countries by the elite, rich and educated is not a new phenomena. The Grand Tour of Europe was a right of passage for the governing classes of England from at least the 17th century. Religious pilgrimage through France and Italy to Rome even earlier. Australians had to return to or visit the mother country, UK, whether England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland throughout the 19th century and in many cases up until the end of the Second World War.

But what is new is the modern tourist and associated industries, the commercialisation of travel especially through the media, that inspires, enriches and mesmerises both the young and old to a mostly superficial understanding of different cultures and value systems. That is not a bad thing, in fact positively beneficial despite its banal outcomes, it is just that it could be a lot better for transnational understanding. I am reminded of so many young Americans traveling through Europe with "I'm from Canada" on their shirts.

In my own family my father, if you exclude New Zealand, only traveled overseas during the Second World War to a place in Papua New Guinea called Milne Bay where he found himself on a machine gun facing some of about 2000 elite Japanese marines coming across the infamous third runway - the first defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific War. My mother who came from New Zealand also only visited Papua New Guinea, specifically Kavieng in New Ireland where she jumped aboard possibly the last plane to get out prior to the Japanese onslaught. That was during 1942.

How different for my son. On graduation from High School at the end of 1997 he visited diplomat relatives in Beijing, China. On graduation from university during 2002 he spent 4/5 months traveling Europe. In 2004 he accompanied me in a 5 week visitation to East/West/South cities throughout the USA. In 2006 he was back in China from East to West and South over many weeks. His travel was not tourism but educational in the old sense and his family had the money to pay for it.

That again is the difference today - with the rise of the Middle Classes, the ones Obama wants to protect, over the last 60 years in Western countries and perhaps 40 years in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore, and subsequently over the last 20 years in China and India as well as parts of West Asia, South America and Southern Africa mass travel especially by young people - the under 30s - has simply exploded and together with the eruption of social media potentialities over the last decade have fundamentally changed their thinking and perceptions of the world they live in - it is now about life styles first and careers second, and careers only in the sense of mechanisms or conduits to instant rewards and gratifications.

In this sense traditional politics, political parties and allegiances, have a major challenge for survival in the face of growing internationalism in a global society and a cosmopolitanism that has also evolved where so many view themselves as transnational whether European rather than Italian or Hungarian, Anglo-whatever rather than Australian, Indian or South African and so on. The Arab Spring, the Russian demonstrations, the Occupy Movement in the USA are just examples. The big questions currently are Europe and China - what will be their reaction to the belt tightening to financial constraints in Spain where up to 40% are unemployed, and similar situations developing in other fraternal countries of the EU.

More explosive will be the end result in China beginning in 2012 - certainly if reports of property values slumping up to 40% are accurate - during arguably the first "democratic" election in Chinese history but within the Chinese Communist Party - democracy by invitation - when there is new leadership for the Party, the State and the Military. With over 80 million members and the Three

Represents policy of inclusion of peasants, workers and businessmen, there is inevitably going to be factions, and deep factions representing parties within the Party - the ALP of China or perhaps the ANC of China?

With tens of millions of Chinese tourists traveling throughout the world the processes of change generated by new ideas, good and bad, arising from over 20 years of massive student and business travel since 1989, can not be controlled or even guided by Chinese authorities - the social explosion is only a matter of time.

In this context the USA needs to return to fundamentals in its global policies - and that means the Constitution and specifically the ideas of the men who wrote it. Global leadership is by example and upholding the values and attitudes of your Founding Fathers with appropriate updates to the modern era. In many ways President Barack Obama's election in 2008 represented this calling of America - the democratic beacon to the world. It is what my parents fought for, why I sent my son overseas, why I stuck with China in June 1989. 2012 is a very important year and the USA must not be allowed to drop the ball.