

Comment by Michael C H Jones

Hugh White has built a post diplomatic service and academic popular reputation in the media, almost as an entertainer like so many other ABC Q & A panelists, on the question of Australia having to choose between the political friend USA and economic partner China.

<http://www.themonthly.com.au/hugh-white-s-china-choice-power-shift-malcolm-turnbull-5847>

Strategic protection remains with America according to the Australian Defence White Paper but current and future economic prosperity is with China says the 'Australia in Asia' Inquiry Report. Little is said of where and when this decision might have to be made. It is unlikely that China will invade Taiwan anytime soon. North Korea will not have China's backing if it indulges in 'brinkmanship' on the peninsula. South China Sea disputation with ASEAN member countries Vietnam and Philippines have been folded into the East Asia Summit with the USA, Russia, India and Australia participating and therefore acting as a deterrent to China's unilateral action.

But Japan is another question. Long the 'sick' economy of Asia Japan's global economic relations remains a threat to China's Monroe Doctrine - perhaps the only challenge? Russia does not have the Asian economy or fire-power. India is too far away in another ocean. ASEAN too dispersed, not yet even a confederation of states, and Indonesia by itself not sufficiently strong in any category. Only the USA could conceivably be the balance between China and Japan. However it is doubtful that the PRC would care. The animosities between the two countries are historical over centuries, however in recent times the 50 year war 1895 - 1945, following the occupation of Taiwan, remains very sensitive for the Chinese people and a vehicle for PRC propaganda/distractions. A limited shooting war over allegedly strategic islands might be a means to put pressure on a economically and militarily weakened USA and force Australia to make some hard choices.

Perhaps Hugh White should be stomping the media proclaiming the China-Japan choice for Australia?

Personally I think the PRC has bigger fish to fry. Apart from the BRICS in the G20, the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai\\_Cooperation\\_Organisation#Membership](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation#Membership) is the principal Global Economic Relations vehicle for China. The overtures for membership are strenuous from Turkey in the West to Japan and South Korea in the East - obviously North Korea would be included. Could ASEAN stay out, and where would that leave Australia and its 'Australia in Asia' Report? From the US perspective the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) is a very insipid response.