

OBSERVATIONS 6

CHOPPY SEAS AND FEROCIOUS OCEANS: A CHALLENGE FOR NAVIGATION

The future looks ominous. Age may weary you but at the going down of the sun life must continue. Anniversaries bring experience and hopefully sound judgements. The refinement of the skills to cope with constant accelerating change is never ending and temperament is almost everything.

Some of us crave for and would be happy with a tranquil life, others wish to participate in change but likewise find themselves unable to deal with its innumerable processes and outcomes. Few have the character and good fortune to be emotionally unaffected by the ordeal.

Leadership is about leading, and leading when you have a very small percentage of the facts upon which to base decisions that may impact on millions of lives around the world. Who is trained for such tasks? In October 2012 there will be a new President and Premier of China and up to 9 new members of the CCP Politburo. In November 2012 President Barack Obama may or may not be re-elected and there will be a new US Congress. What confidence can we citizens of the world have that one or more of the myriad of political flashpoints around the world will not by misjudgement end in military confrontation and that a world war one situation might eventuate?

Impossible, unlikely, not probable, absurd? Maybe !!

In January 2012 it is two and a half years until the 100th anniversary of the August 1914 outbreak of the First World War. On the 28th July Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Germany on Russia on 1st August and then France on 3rd, and subsequently Britain on Germany from 4th August 1914. It lasted until the Armistice of 11th November 1918 and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28th June 1919.

On the other hand we have just passed the anniversary of the 10th October 1911 Wuhan military uprising against the Qing Dynasty in China and from 1st January 1912 the election of Dr Sun Yat-sen as the Provisional President of the Republic of China based in Nanjing. Many Australians including George Morrison and Bill Donald played significant roles in the Kuomintang Governments and their struggles against war lords, communist enclaves and Japanese invasion until the late 1930s and finally the conclusion of the 50 years Sino-Japanese War 1894-1945.

Except for the imperial ambitions of Japan, encouraged by the Anglo-Japanese Naval Agreement of 1902 squarely and successfully aimed at Czarist Russia, the 1914-18 War in the Pacific would have been a relatively mild affair with the Australians taking New Guinea including New Britain and New Ireland in the Bismarck Sea, New Zealand German Samoa in the South West Pacific, and the Japanese the Marshall Islands and other German possessions north of the equator. But Japan wanted to extend its empire in China and hence the German colony in Shandong, the village of Qingdao which had been the *German colony* of Tsingtao, became Japanese and one of a number of staging points for adventurism and finally the 1937 full scale invasion.

Since 1895 Taiwan has been under mainland Chinese governance for less than five years and the Korean peninsula never a united independent sovereign country. In 2012 the seas remain choppy to say the least. Similarly with the contention in the South China Sea concerning strategic island sovereignty issues with Vietnam, Philippines and Malaysia. Ultimately the diplomatic resolution of these flashpoints will involve firstly the withdrawal of the US ocean fleets from these coastal shoals akin to Greek forces from Southern Italy in the 3rd century BC, and secondly either a China Monroe Doctrine or the disintegration/breakup of China. A strong and united China is far too omniscient to play second fiddle in the region to Japan or a united Korea, or even to a vigorous ASEAN, and India is too far away.

The challenge for Australian governance, diplomacy and military prowess given its growing Great Power status is how this regional space for China is to be brought about?

To contend that another World War 1 is not possible is to shout at the gods. The present Iranian situation has all the seeds of a global alliance entanglement where Israel launches airstrikes on Iran nuclear installations, Iran closes the Strait of Hormuz, the US Fifth Fleet reopens it with heavy casualties on all sides at which time China, India, Russia and all intervene to break the EU oil embargo and US financial sanctions against "foreign entities buying Iranian oil".

An interesting and significant dimension to the outbreak of the First World War involved an aspect of Civil Society namely the Working Class Movement developed in various forms over 50/70 years in the advanced industrial countries of Germany, France and Britain. Put simply nationalism and manufactured patriotism triumphed over transnational social solidarity. Fast forward to our own era when in February 2003 the world arguably experienced its biggest demonstrations against the US invasion of Iraq - certainly it was the largest ever in Sydney since at least the Second World War and far bigger than those experienced in the 1960s against the Vietnam Civil War intervention. Would a US war with China really bring Australia to a stop? Is the power of trade, and those businessmen, politicians, academics and others with vested interests in its continuation, such that Australia would not honour its US Alliance in the Arabian Sea or the Taiwan Strait?

Again the idea of a potential breakup of China is not as remote a possibility as some learned academics and commentators might disparage. The Chinese government has legitimate reasons for its understandably obsessive emphasis on the sole leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, PRC State Sovereignty, national unity including Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR, Tibet and other autonomous ethnic minority regions, opening up of economic relations to the outside world through the socialist market, and global harmonious relations between countries in a multipolar world, which are amongst the main central planks of their current governance, diplomacy and military thinking. In not too distant history Mao is alleged to have said China could lose 300 million dead in a war with the USA or indeed the USSR.

Alternatively the focus of rivalries/warfare may remain global economic relations wherein the major and emerging powers manoeuvre for trade, investment and financial advantage through regions of influence. China as a continent and civilization in East Asia with CER (Closer Economic Relations) in both East and Central Asia. India using its domestic Muslim citizenry to strengthen economic

relations from Afghanistan to Bangladesh irrespective of what happens in Pakistan. The extension and strengthening of the EU into Eastern Europe and CERs with both the new member of the WTO - Russia - as well as the Mediterranean countries. A confederation of North America under US leadership at least economically, and new arrangements with Central and South America to undermine non regional influences. The deepening and strengthening of the ASEAN relationship - politically, economically, legally and culturally in the face of both Chinese and Indian pressures.

In these circumstances both Japan and Australia face similar but different challenges. Similar in that neither country feels comfortable for historical and other reasons in being a minor player in a regional grouping, and different in our respective geo-political thinking - China is Japan's next door neighbour with no escape but Australia is distant with an ASEAN strategic shield akin to Britain with the Dutch in 17th and 18th century Europe.

With respect to the question of leadership in Australia. One hopes that the Office of National Assessment (ONA) and other Australian security organisations have factored into their scenarios firstly international mishap in US political-military postures resulting from domestic hysteria, and secondly philosophical disagreements in the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party. One could bring on a global war and the other the disintegration of mainland China. From the point of view of participatory democracy it will be interesting to read both the submissions and report(s) of the current Federal Government 'Australia-Asia Inquiry' to ascertain the depth and quality of thinking amongst Australia's foreign affairs intellectual elites. How indigenous and independent are thinking and policies in this country?

My argument is that Peoples Diplomacy in the form of internationalism and cosmopolitanism, within the context of the ongoing evolution of the existing and emerging structures of global institutions, are now more essential than ever as national governments become less connected and responsive with/to their citizens and generally disintegrate before the uncontrollable onslaughts of rampant technologies and disparate domestic social trends.

Australia's contribution to developing regional space for China, presuming global war through US poor judgement and the breakup of China due to splits in the CCP can be avoided, may be achieved by a combination of firstly restructuring the institutions of governance in this country, and secondly via the utilisation of the existing multicultural people's assets by encouraging direct international social movement participation. Specifically the historic Australian political party entities need to be reformed to make them more representative and sensitive to Asian cultures, and the ethnic skills of the Chinese diaspora marshaled for accelerating pluralistic politics both in China and throughout Asia. This is necessary but not sufficient to start the process of genuine detailed dialogue with China about political opening up and reform for a strong and deep human rights civil society. This very month on Saturday 14th millions of mainland Chinese took pride in the democratic election achievements of the leading province of China - Taiwan.

Australia's official diplomacy also needs to be directed to the USA and the EU, Japan and Korea, the ASEAN countries individually and collectively, as well as India to make room for China in the Western Pacific. As an aside a somewhat similar though with different characteristics Australian diplomacy is required for India in the Northern Indian Ocean. It is simply a question of leadership.

However we need to go further. The world's peoples through their NGO have to face the threatening nature of US and Chinese government policies. Analyse the power and translate the need into doing/action. Identify the hot buttons and mechanisms of the USA and PRC. If there is a Right to Interfere then it should be used, particularly during election time. Enough with the histories of Chamber since 1974 and the evolution of action programmes since 1989, and Think tank scenarios from about 2006.

In recent Comments scattered throughout the sections of this ACCCI website I have argued the essence of the US Constitution - no taxation without representation. If US laws, and indeed lack thereof, in so many forms (not just foreign policies) can be extended to the lives of the peoples of the world then they should have a say in their formulation - which means Washington.

The present Wikipedia Blackout is just one example -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:SOPA_initiative/Learn_more - of US laws being extended to the world.

The concept of Roman citizenship may be worth considering - in 212 AD all free inhabitants of the empire were finally granted citizenship. Why not global citizenship in the Pax Americana? There needs to be launched a worldwide campaign inside as well as outside the USA to address this issue.

Similarly with the PRC. If as I have also argued China in so many ways models itself on the USA and imitates its actions then the world faces an "harmonious society" based on the socialist market and socialist human rights. That means Beijing. A one-party state in China is debatable, a one-party world is not. Those forces for change in the Chinese Communist Party need to be supported inside China as well as outside.

No matter how dangerous, the struggle of ideas has to be waged domestically in both the USA and PRC by the peoples of the world.

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