

Reflections -Trends

When Chamber launched this website in September 2001 it was both our 25th anniversary since foundation in 1976 and a celebration of the anticipated admittance of the PRC to the WTO which occurred in December. I made a speech entitled "And the Dead are Many", a pinch from Frank Hardy, recognising all those founding board and executive members who had established ACCCI in the years 1973/75 following the Whitlam Government's recognition of the PRC and Trade Ministers Jim Cairns and Frank Crean trade missions to China. This was up to five years prior to Deng's famous world shattering Open Door policy of late 1978.

Chamber has always avoided publicity, we just get on with the job as an independent, voluntary, non-profit group of companies and retired business persons welcoming China's return to global relations - like the USA we neither support nor oppose PRC China, just support its just role as a global power in all aspects economic, political, social and cultural which means pre-eminence in its sphere of influence similar to ASEAN and India as well as the US and EU. That means my Comment on this website made by way of international interview in 2005 that China should increasingly be judged by the same standards as the US has now come to pass. Global Economic Relations requires a genuine adherence to international standards including intellectual property rights. China is fast approaching enormous global power such that reciprocity is possible - what China can do in the USA should be open to America in the PRC, and similarly with all other countries. This also applies to many other areas upon which we will comment in future Reflections.

I have now been in the China business re study, business, policy and leadership since 1962 re over 55 years of privately funded activism, unlike many Liberal and Labor politicians I have received very few cents from the Communist Party and/or PRC government. This has meant I regularly made comment without fear or favour, hence could document the growth of the younger generation Chinese arrogance built on very little knowledge of the real/accurate history of their country - as a famous English thinker, whose name was Lord Acton, wrote in 1887 to Bishop Creighton in a series of letters concerning the moral problem of writing history about the Inquisition: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Beware President Xi Jinping.

Obviously the difficulty in writing on global affairs are "events", today's views are obsolete if not totally wrong tomorrow re Trump, Xi, Putin and May - forget Turnbull/Shorten. Also trends/developments relevant to on-going Chamber projects which require my attention such as at the lower levels of governance re NSC Mayor Jilly Gibson's "urgency" Hayberry precinct motion on alleged corruption as a last item at a late night council meeting, distract from supposed macro events.

But in these Reflections I will try to identify trends/future issues of real consequence, not just media fish and chips.

1) Global Governance - chamber's Global Economic Relations concept discussed since the establishment of the ACCCI website in 2001, which is currently becoming a full scale Trump/Xi trade war impacting the world not only on trade but foreign investment and the global financial system - will this bring a revitalisation/reform of global institutions such as the WTO, IMF, World Bank/Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank?

2) Regional Governance - the implications of the US renegotiation of NAFTA, Brexit and the EU, CPTPP and ASEAN, SCO and OBOR, Mercosur/Pacific Alliance, African Union etc. I think Muslim cooperation despite Sunni-Shia antagonism has potential but the Russian Eurasia group is economically dead.

3) National Governance - Australian Republicanism in the broader sense of a new cultural identity/associated issues like the flag, anthem etc which also relates to our claimed sphere of influence in South West Pacific, East Timor/Wallis Line and 42% of Antarctica?

4) Provincial Governance (note the language re not State - China Mission message) - Constitutional change recognising Local Government means a reorganisation of COAG - also note the potential observer status for the South West Pacific countries. So many structural reforms require the states to agree.

5) Municipal Governance in the Chinese sense re not Cities - bigger than Brisbane and Perth reform and more akin to that in Auckland NZ thus bringing Greater Sydney into line/more competitive with genuine global cities. Are three Sydney CBDs organisationally/governance viable ?

6) Council Governance re Local Government given the very large amalgamated councils still under the control of up to seven ministers responsible for property decisions in the NSW state government. Future rates will be dramatically increased to cover dramatically escalating costs.

7) Precincts Governance - the vehicles for ratepayers both residents and business to participate/protest government/governance decisions at all other levels not only council, state and federal - note PRC President Xi's "win" to change the UN Human Rights Committee's definition of Human Rights re emphasis on national sovereignty/group social and cultural rights over Western individual alleged universal political and civil rights. These decisions/trends flow downwards step by step - is it Democratic Centralism at work?

Michael C H Jones
ACCCI Board Chairman
3rd April 2018