



Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

April 2021

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President's Report

As we come out of a difficult period in terms of health, I hope you are well and surviving unscathed! However, it has not been easy for anyone, COVID-19 aside.

There is still a lot of anti-Chinese/China bias and of course the ongoing battle between the US and their allies, and China. This means life is tough for trade with China, especially exports, while the Prime Minister and his colleagues follow their bosses down whichever ideological rabbit-hole they are told. It is important we as members of the ACFS keep our eyes on facts, not enter into arguments of politics and partisanship. While we are not spokespeople for the Chinese government, as friends of China we must always call out lies and disinformation when we see it.

It is not easy as well for those of us who have suffered abuse at the hands of racists and obvious alt-right, white supremacists. As the virus abates, the abuse has lessened, but it's still there and we still must be vigilant.

On a far happier note, this year is our 70th Anniversary and we are planning celebrations to mark this important milestone. While our 60th Anniversary boasted Malcolm Fraser and then-Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews, we are looking to see who will grace the platform as we celebrate our Platinum year. We have a few ideas in mind, but if you have any, get in touch with the Secretary or me.

We also hope to have a big fundraiser late this year, so stay tuned for details about that too. Again, with any recommendations, please let us know.

Hopefully we will see you at our April yum cha on **Saturday 24th April, from 12.30pm at the North East China Family Restaurant 302 Flinders Lane, Melbourne**. The guest speaker will be Bridget Barker, who studied for 12 months in China.

The long-term global balance of power is favouring China

By COLIN MACKERRAS | On 29 December 2020

The twenty-first is likely to be China's century. Over the period since I first started visiting and living in China in the mid-1960s, the global balance of power has shifted enormously in China's favour. The US and the West have not declined, but China has grown more quickly, in economic, technological, infrastructure and political terms. This trend is likely to continue.

One turning point was 1971 when US President Richard Nixon's National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger visited Beijing and arranged for Nixon himself to visit before May the next year. Nixon himself called the days he spent in China (21 to 28 February 1972) "the week that changed the world". He was right in the sense that what in effect eventuated from this week was that the US would help China's modernization in return for its willingness not to disturb the American-led liberal international order.

However, a more important turning point was Deng Xiaoping's introduction of reform policies at the end of 1978. These allowed for the modernization and acceleration of China's economy and world standing, such as in the United Nations and other international agencies. The main credit for China's rise should go to the Chinese people and Deng's leadership. American and other international cooperation certainly helped but was not the crucial factor.

Another turning point was 2001 when the September 11 Incidents in New York and Washington highlighted the destructiveness of Islamist terrorism. They led on to fruitless and counterproductive attempts by the US and its allies to turn back this evil through wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Meanwhile, China joined the World Trade Organization at the end of the year (2001), enabling it to strengthen its economic ties with the rest of the world more than before.

Xi Jinping became Party Secretary-General in 2012 and President in 2013, and his leadership has introduced a new dynamism and even assertiveness into the expansion of China's economy and infrastructure, and its foreign relations. The Belt and Road Initiative he initiated has greatly increased China's influence across the great Eurasian continent and into Africa.

Meanwhile, what of technology? In 2015, China's leaders introduced a plan called "Made in China 2025", aspiring to upgrade China's labour-intensive manufacturing industries to technology-intensive. The US and Western Europe are used to their status as the world's technological front-runners and

have resisted the challenge from China. In 2018, the American think-tank the Council on Foreign Relations declared China's plan as "a threat to US technological leadership".

The best example of China's technological advance is the telecommunications company Huawei Technologies, founded in 1987 and centred in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. This has done extraordinarily well and in 2012 overtook Ericsson as the world's largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer.

The West has recently gone out of its way to block Huawei's technological advantages. Most of the main Western telecommunications systems have banned or resisted Huawei in their fifth-generation (5G) telecommunications networks, claiming it as a threat to national security, while African and Central Asia have adopted it. China has responded by trying to manufacture all essential technology inside China. At the end of 2020 overall success is far from clear, but Huawei is extremely unlikely to succumb to American blandishments.

And in various other respects, China has advanced technologically beyond what would have been conceivable not so long ago. Examples include artificial intelligence technology, space research and medical advance, with China being one of the front-runners in developing and manufacturing vaccines against the COVID-19 pandemic. China's high-speed railway system is now the best in the world.

The year 2020 has seen massive changes in the world order. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted heavily on already existing trends. Many of these are crucial for the world, such as climate change and the environment, world population and health and global economic trends. However, here the focus is on the global balance of power, especially Sino-American relations.

The most important factor is the attempts by the Trump Administration, especially since 2018, to decouple from China, launch a trade war against it and damage its economy. This has completely reversed the Nixon understanding of 1972. In 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been actively travelling around the world trying to persuade the leaders of every country to cooperate in opposing China and even in overthrowing the Chinese Communist Party. The US has gone out of its way to exacerbate the ideological divide, and to thwart China's rise.

As far as the Anglophone world is concerned, it has been broadly successful.

To a greater or lesser extent, China has become “the enemy”, even though such a position is clearly against the interests of those countries. Continental Europe is also moving away from China, though the situation there is much more complex and fragmented.

The ability to deal with COVID-19 has varied greatly throughout the world. After an initial period of great difficulty, China has been able to manage the pandemic very well. By the end of 2020, life is more or less back to normal in most places.

Meanwhile, in the United States and Europe, life is anything but normal. Trump directly blamed China for the pandemic, calling COVID-19 “the China virus” and “the Wuhan virus”, many of his supporters believing him with a consequent devastating impact on China’s image. Lockdowns remain common at the end of 2020, with many countries actually banning travel from Britain due to the emergence of a new COVID-19 strain there.

China’s economy remains the only major one to register growth in 2020. On the other hand, the world economy and those of the Western countries have fallen into recession, with the strong possibility of worse to come.

In political terms, the divergence is also widening. China has certainly experienced tensions, especially in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, but it has remained stable, and the CCP shows no signs of succumbing to attempts to overthrow it. At the same time, the United States is more divided than ever. Not only have racial tensions worsened, but Trump has really shown himself as little better than an overgrown spoilt boy in his reaction to his loss in the 2020 presidential elections. His narrative that the election was stolen has not withstood any testing by the courts. Yet not only has Trump refused to concede defeat, but reports suggest he has widespread support for his stand. What this says is that the American political institutions are under serious question in much of society. That will not be fatal to American democracy, but cannot help but be very damaging.

The overall conclusion is that the global balance of power has again shifted in China’s favour by the end of 2020.

So will the situation change with Joe Biden as US President? In domestic politics he will try to reduce divisions and show some graciousness to political enemies. In foreign relations, his will be a less abrasive Administration, less willing to offend allies, less generally bullying and demanding. He will be more

willing to offer leadership on matters like climate change and trade. But on China, any change will be marginal, not essential. He is not going to bring the US back to the position of leadership it occupied in the years following World War II.

This does not mean that the US is on its last legs. But with the pandemic still rampant, its institutions under suspicion and its race relations worse than ever, there would be no surprise if Chinese people thought its much-vaunted freedom and democracy vastly overrated.

So what of the medium-term future, meaning the next few decades? World tensions could well worsen, though apocalyptic change is unlikely. The trends that have brought about the rise of China are likely to continue, while those that are pointing towards the decline of the US and the West will persist, or even intensify.

For Australia, we need to accommodate this situation. Unlike some others, I don't take an alarmist view of this. China does not constitute a threat to Australian security. It does not want to colonize Australia or undermine its current political system. It will certainly want greater influence vis-à-vis the United States. Unfortunately, Australia seems keener to fawn on the US and allow the relationship with China to slide. This is flatly contrary to our interests.

We are moving into a different world, which will see China more influential and the US less so, especially in our region. That is not necessarily worse than our present situation. Given China's demonstrated unwillingness to go to war, in stark contrast to the American tendency to drag us into wars that don't concern us, it could even be an improvement.

Colin Mackerras

COLIN MACKERRAS, AO, FAHA is Professor Emeritus at Griffith University, Queensland. He has visited and worked in China many times, during the first working as a teacher of English from 1964 to 1966 at the Beijing Foreign Studies University.

He is a specialist on Chinese history, theatre, minority nationalities, Western images of China and Australia-China relations and has written widely on all topics. His many books include Western Perspectives on the People's Republic of China, Politics, Economy and Society, World Scientific Publishing, Singapore, 2015.

China this quarter: March 2021

A brief summary of China events

Courtesy Chinese Consulate in Melbourne

Rural Poverty Alleviation:

For the first time ever, poverty for 98.99m rural people has been alleviated, with the average wage now exceeding 10,740 yuan (AU\$2148.44). This contrasts with a World Bank estimate of poverty being at 4,000 yuan by 2025! In addition, China promises to provide 5 important elements to life: adequate food, adequate clothing, compulsory education, basic medical/health services and safe housing.

COVID-19 rollout:

China has exported the Chinese vaccine to over 50 countries including Peru, Cambodia, Laos and Pakistan. This is in line with the policy of aiding emerging and developing nations who are too poor to purchase vaccines from rich manufacturing nations. China has also donated 10m doses to international organisation COVAX, a distribution body led by UNICEF and WHO amongst others.

Yellow River Pollution control project:

China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment has initiated an investigation of all polluted outfalls along the Yellow River and major tributaries. This control project involves 9 regions going from source to outflow into the sea. The Ministry will find the amount and sites of outfalls and monitor pollutant inflows, then trace the source of polluted water and tailor solutions for significant pollution problems.

China's 14th 5-Year Plan:

For the period 2021-25, China plans to advance the internationalisation of the RMB to rival the US\$, with freer use of the currency. China also will grow its economy at a projected 6%, higher than the rest of the world, plus more pilot free trade/economic zones to build trade. Whilst building a more robust industrial economy, China will also accelerate the development of a modernised service industry, and further boost BRI construction with participating partners.

China/US Alaska Talks:

Meeting head to head, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken discussed matters of mutual interest and concern.

While the talks were labelled ‘constructive’, Minister Wang Yi noted that on several issues, the US was wrong or using propaganda rather than truth, including the issues of Taiwan, governance in Hong Kong and the Uighur issue and the falsehoods around forced labour and ‘concentration camps’. However, both sides agreed to further talks on issues of disagreement and cooperation.

Book Review:

“China’s Grand Strategy and Australia’s Future in the New Global Order”

by Geoff Raby, published by Melbourne University Press, 2020.

This timely book, written by a former ambassador to China and known critic of the way the relationship between the two countries has been allowed to deteriorate in recent times, addresses some of the main reasons why this has happened and suggests ways that Australia as a country can manage this important relationship in the future.

Most of the book concentrates on how the rise of a new and assertive China has come about thus heralding a new global order and how Australia has tried to manage this situation by joining with various of its allies and like minded countries (specifically US, India and Japan), through various pacts, to try and contain China.

This has not worked and in fact has backfired, resulting in Australia being associated too closely with the rivalry between US and China, a fact which has worked against our interests and resulted in diplomatic distancing- something Australia can not afford because of our economic dependency on a growing China.

Whilst not suggesting that we should turn away from our old allies, Raby proposes a 10 point strategy for managing this important relationship in the future(see pages 160-164 for details of this strategy).

In summary, Raby suggests ways in which Australia can manage its relationship with both global powers by enhancing its role as a middle power and engaging with smaller but like minded Asian neighbours instead of going it alone. Above all , Australia needs to stand more on its own feet for defence and use nuanced diplomatic skills to get itself out of the situation it finds itself in with its major economic partner.

Trackless trams may be the best alternative to light rail

Combining the best of high-speed trains and autonomous-vehicle tech developed in China, they are emerging as a less expensive, more sustainable option.



An alternative to traditional light rail, known as autonomous rail transit (ART) has been under development for 5 years by the Chinese high-speed-rail authority and already operating in 3 cities.

Trackless-tram projects are in the planning phase in Qatar for the 2022 FIFA World

Cup and several places in Australia, including Melbourne, Western Sydney, Townsville and Perth. It's also being studied in Pottstown, just outside of Philadelphia in the US.

The ART combines the best of high-speed rail and autonomous-vehicle (AV) technology with on-street mass transit to achieve a flexible, carbon-neutral and cost-effective urban connector.

How it functions

Professor Peter Newman, Professor of Sustainability at Curtin University, Perth, is a staunch advocate for trackless trams. "Buses can't compete with rail," Newman says. "So I started looking around for alternatives to light rail and came upon this new streetcar being developed in China." He went to Zhuzhou in August of 2018 when the tram was still being tested. "I was convinced with one



ride,” he says. “Doing 70 kph, it rode like a train. The ride quality convinced me this is the future of transit. All of the problems with buses are gone: the jerkiness, the slowness, the vibration.”

In Sydney, laying 20km of track took five years and cost about \$130m/km. By contrast, trackless streetcars can be installed for as little as \$10m/km. Rather than running on tracks embedded in the street, ARTs have rubber tyres that follow painted lines with centimetre accuracy by using laser technology and GPS positioning. While trackless trams are more expensive than Bus Rapid Transport, proponents point out that they move more people and have a much smoother ride. What’s more, most BRT projects are not electrified.

The adaptation of high-speed-rail stabilising technology isn’t just about comfort but to control the sway and swerve, enabling the skinny streetcars to make tight turns and travel along narrow corridors. The use of advanced batteries mounted on the roof eliminates the need for ungainly overhead wires. Trams recharge at the station within 30 seconds as passengers load and unload (with longer charges at the end of the line and overnight). And while the streetcars utilise AV technology, there is a driver on board with the ability to modify the route or stop the tram in an emergency.

© Lisa Chamberlain, from: *City Monitor (New Statesman Grp)* - 19 Jan 2021
Article courtesy Dr P Rutherford, *China Environment News*.

Yum Cha

Members, family and friends are invited to our first Yum Cha luncheon for 2021.

Our guest speaker will be Bridget Barker who will talk about her experiences while studying at the Tsinghua University in Beijing as a Schwarzman Scholar.

Saturday 24th April 2021, 12.00 PM commencement.

North East China Family Restaurant, 302 Flinders Lane Melbourne (near corner of Elizabeth Street)

Fixed menu. \$ 25.00 per person.

RSVP: secretary@acfs-vic.org or call 0411 285 488

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's Chinese New Year Concert 13th of March 2021



Melblourne Symphony Orchestra 8th of Chinese New Year Concert



Angela Li: Piano - Grande Polonaise Brillante

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Promoting Friendship and Understanding Between the
Australian and Chinese People

THE AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY'S AIMS

Cultivate friendly relations with the people of China by fostering the study of China's history, language, culture, social and political structure.

Promote mutual understanding through friendly exchanges between the people of China and Australia. Strengthening ties with travel, the exchange of ideas, information and trade between the two countries.

To seek to clarify misunderstandings between the peoples of China and Australia, which may arise from the misrepresentation of information.

The ACFS Victorian Branch

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We are always looking for interesting stories and articles to share with our members. Any members who have great stories to tell please contact ACFS office or e-mail to acfs.vic@gmail.com