



Submission No 23

**Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Dialogues with China
and Vietnam**

Name: Mr Chin Jin
International Deputy Chairman

Organisation: Federation for a Democratic China

Subject: Re: JSCFADT Human Rights Sub-Committee:
public hearing 24 February 2012

The Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade,

Dear Sirs/Madams,

The Federation For A Democratic China (FDC) aims at ending the Chinese Communist Party's one-party rule and establishing democracy in China via peaceful, rational and non-violent means. FDC thanks the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for the opportunity to express some views on the inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam.

FDC hopes that all parties who are concerned about human rights violations in China and the unprecedented rise of China will, through this hearing, have frank and open discussions.

First, we would like to express our view on the Chinese situation as a backdrop to the current debate.

Australia established formal diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China in 1972, and this year is the 40th anniversary of this event. Over the past 40 years, the development of this bilateral

relationship has been much more complicated than many initially perceived, evolving into a relationship reaching far beyond economic cooperation. Therefore, we suggest that we should discuss Australian-Chinese relationship and analyse the current social status of China by means of 'dual identity approach', or colloquially, by 'looking at both sides of the coin'.

We believe this is an appropriate method to evaluate the rise of China and its implications to the world.

If we place Australian-Chinese relations in a dynamic and global context, rather than isolating it, then it can be concluded that after 40 years of evolution, current Australian-Chinese relations have become one of the most important bilateral relationships for both nations. Its gradual development has become an essential force toward the stability of the Asia-Pacific region and thus to global security.

However, due to the differences in political systems and fundamental values between the two nations, the development of the bilateral relationship was not plain sailing nor free of disputes. The most serious issues arose after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, when Australia joined chorus of a sanctions against China, bringing the honeymoon period of the bilateral relationship to an abrupt pause. Later, a series of events in 1996, including Australia's support of US deployment of an aircraft carrier in the Taiwan Strait ahead of other nations during the Crisis of Taiwan, discussing the possibility of selling uranium to Taiwan, paying ministerial visits to Taiwan, signing the Joint Statement of the US-Australian Strategic Partnership in the 21st Century, allowing H.H. the Dalai Lama to visit Australia, and Prime Minister John Howard meeting the Dalai Lama in person, further illustrated the extent of the differences between the two nations.

Recent frictions between Australia and China have included the case of

as well as the visit to Australia. Due to the incident, He Yafei, the Chinese delegate to the Summit of the Pacific Islands Forum did not attend the meeting in Cairns, which is somewhat similar to the aftermath of the disputes between France and China in 2008. According to The Australian, China was 'expressing its unhappiness' to Australia, while the delegates present regarded this action as a deliberate contempt for Australia. China was already 'very unhappy' after the failure of equity partnership a sentiment which was exacerbated. According to the same source, the issue of an Australian visa to was the last straw before the bilateral relationship fell to its historic low.

Of course, it was solely the political relationship between Australia and China which was affected by the above mentioned incidents. In the meantime continuous development of bilateral co-operations in economic trade, culture and technology flourished.

In addition, China has always been concerned about the development of the US-Australia alliance. It publicly paid attention to Australia's support to America's missile defense program, as well as the recent US-Australian agreement on the establishment of a US military base in Darwin. In a word, the

development of Australian-Chinese relations has been largely influenced by Chinese-American relations. Therefore, 'it is simple that Australia can be assured when China has a good relationship with the US. Otherwise, we are worried when there is a tension between them,' a senior Australian diplomat commented.

Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd said: 'Australia is a major player in the region. We are a key alliance partner of the United States, whose presence in the region since WWII has provided the security and stability in which Asia's economies have developed and prospered. I believe a continued American presence in Asia is vital for regional security.

He also said that we (Australia and China) are critical to each other — and have a lot to gain by working more closely together. China is our most important economic partner. And Australia is more important to China's economy than any other. Australia has become an integral engine for China's growth — just as China has become a dynamo driving our prosperity.

Australian people may comprehend the message in the following manner: Australia will rely on America for security, and rely on China to keep its prosperity. Australians are familiar with their most important partners in the past, namely Britain and the US, with whom they share the same fundamental values, cultural background, language and historical experience. China's presence makes a totally different scenario. Kevin Rudd's answer to this is that we are steadfastly committed to addressing challenges in our relationship, finding common ground between two states with a different cultural base, with different political systems.

How to face this challenge will be a test of people's wisdom. The key to this issue is how to understand the 'Chinese challenge', what will be China's future effects on Australia, what possible stances Australia will take when facing a rising China, and how to project the future.

A rising China is being more and more strongly felt by Australians. The newspapers in Australia have China-related coverage almost every day. The urban centres of Sydney and Melbourne are more and more 'Asianised'. We often meet Chinese on the streets, either Chinese Australians or tourists and international students from China. China has become the largest trading partner of Australia as well as the largest source of international students, making the continuous growth of Chinese economy a prime mover of the Australian mining boom.

Then why is it that the investments in Australia by the Chinese mining industries have raised such grave concerns in Australia, even when the two nations have close relationship? What is the underlying cause of the frictions between the two nations?

Australian opinion polls show that the two nations have many shared interests but very few shared values, which gives a plausible explanation about the concern of Australians towards a rising China.

We are quite interested in this view. It is clear that interests and values are the crucial factors at play when it comes to international relations.

There are indeed differences in political culture and the national situation between Australia and China, but the fundamental difference lies in the notion of human rights and the democratic political system, both of which are cardinal birthrights held dear by Australians. Australia places a high priority on the human rights of the individual, while China advocates for national sovereignty. China's reactions to other nations' criticisms in regard to some of its policies are often negative and defensive. The tensions between Australia and China in this area are due to the differences in their values, making the problem somewhat intractable.

Because there are so many common interests and only few common values shared between Australia and China, Australia is ambivalent when it comes to its own policy towards China. On the one hand, China's rise is seen as an opportunity. Australia supports such a rise and hopes to establish a constructive relationship with China. On the other hand, Australia is concerned about the possibility that China will become a regional hegemonic power which disregards the "norms" expected by Western nations.

This growing concern leads to the second topic today, namely how to view the rise of China. Due to the vast size of China, we Chinese democrats feel that it is difficult to keep abreast of all the changes happening within. In my opinion, many Chinese people also find this very difficult.

China 40 years down the track will be very different from the one we see today. We must address this issue and its implications for all of us with serious and discerning scrutiny, to discuss it actively and openly, even if we cannot accurately predict the future direction of China. It is important to discuss all possibilities to ensure we are not ignorant and ill prepared for whatever is to come in the future.

Since 1989, there has been a dilemma for the Western scholars trying to understand China.

On the one hand, they regard the totalitarian system as fragile due to its weakness in legitimacy, overreliance on violence, excessive concentration on decision making, as well as the leaders' power being exercised above systematic rules etc,. Thus, right after 1989, many Western experts on Chinese issues and democracy theorists predicted that China, as part of the totalitarian bloc, would democratize during the third wave of global democratization. That it would be just be a matter of time, between five and twenty five years, for the Chinese Communist Party to go down the same track as its Soviet and Eastern European counterparts.

There are a growing number of complex factors emerging, which in combination could speed the downfall of the Chinese communist regime. It is looking more likely to be a matter of years rather than decades. It is impossible for China to maintain a totalitarian and insulated political monopoly while attempting to stabilise society at the same time. Inevitably, freedom-related issues will always appear. The upsurge of

independent thinking will overthrow the dictatorship brainwashing of the masses, and this will open the doors for a democratic political system. We cannot predict if it will take 2, 10 or 25 years.

On the other hand, Chinese development over the past two decades has forced Western scholars who specialize in Chinese politics to rethink the errors in their predictions regarding the timing of the downfall of the Chinese communist regime. Classical Western theories on regime change can no longer be applied to China, because China's development since the 1989 crisis proved that the communist regime has the capability to ride roughshod over such crises and restore its rule.

Far from facing the predicted downfall, the Chinese communist regime has been exerting greater and greater influence on the world due to its two decades of economic achievements.

China, regardless of its socio-political nature, is changing the world.

Now we are witnessing a historic change, albeit it still at its embryonic stage (and we cannot accurately predict its influences). According to a prediction of Goldman Sachs, the three largest economies in the world by 2050 will be China, the US, and India, followed by Brazil, Mexico, Russia and Indonesia. Only two European nations, namely Britain and Germany, will linger on as the ninth and the tenth largest economies. If these kinds of predictions come true, then over the next forty years, the world will become fundamentally different from what we know today.

Just take 'globalisation' as an example. It is the perception of most of the Western nations that the process of globalisation is a process of 'Westernisation' for the entire world, which includes market liberalisation, acceptance of Western capitals, privatisation, legal jurisprudence, human rights systems and democratic regulations. To achieve this long term goal, Western nations have already exerted a great deal of political effort. At the same time, the combined effects of competition, market dynamics, technology and other contributing factors spewed a mushrooming of monotone characteristics across the metropolises of developing nations. These characteristics include skyscrapers, motorways, computers, mobile phones, etc. However, due to the serious clash of cultures and civilisations, these late-developing nations are enmeshed in their own paradigms, and have become more confident about their own culture and history as a result of their prosperity; hence they have less incentive to emulate the West.

Globalisation is far more than a one-way process to Western ideals. It is very complicated. The US may be the most influential player on the field at the moment, exerting powerful pressure over several rounds of global trade negotiations, but the ultimate winner will be East Asia, with China as the largest beneficiary.

According to the mainstream views in the West, the rise of China will not create any fundamental change to the world. They base this view on three key assumptions: 1. China's international influences are mainly economic. 2. At a certain point of time, China will become a typical Western nation. 3. With China joining various international organisations, it will be cajoled into accepting and obeying the rules

of play. The international system will move China forward into a more accountable position which will comply with the currently accepted 'norms' expected from global leaders.

FDC believes that all these assumptions are wrong. The rise of China will inevitably trigger changes to its relationships with its neighbors as well as the global situation. The rise of China will construct new regional orders, which are more multi-polar, more fluid and challenging. This kind of regional order will be less affected by the values and methodologies of the West. Therefore, this will be a tremendous change, which will affect the Asia-Pacific region in a manner greater than any of its predecessors in the past two centuries.

China is already a superpower in terms of economic modernization. From the perspective of food consumption, China has a population of 1.4 billion, which doubles the total population living in Europe (including the western half of Russia). When it comes to the speed of economic development, China's economic achievements after the communist takeover more than 60 years ago, particularly in the past 30 years, equals that of Europe between the 1750s and the 1950s. With the rise of China, the industrial revolution in human terms is coming into a third stage. The first stage saw the industrialisation integrating tens of millions of people in Europe, the second stage involved the industrialisation of hundreds of millions of people in the US and the Soviet Union, while the third stage will be an industrialisation which conglomerates almost one and half billion people in China, whose global impacts can never be overestimated.

The world is experiencing the influence of China's economic rise, especially the rise in raw material prices compared with the decline in commodities prices before the subprime mortgage crisis. Chinese population quadruples that of the US, with an annual economic growth rate above 10%. According to an estimation of Goldman Sachs, China will replace the US as the largest economy in the world by 2027, despite the fact that China is still in its early stages of transition to becoming a modern economic entity. These predictions can be called 'astounding'. But why should we assume that the underlying factor of China's influence is economic rather than political?

It is an international rule of thumb that a rising power will use economic muscle to pursue political, cultural and military goals, and it is the essence of a hegemonic power, which China clearly envisages as its goal. Do not assume that China will automatically become a Western style nation. That is just a wishful fantasy of the West. The notion that the political and cultural differences between China and the West will be eliminated by economic modernisation is erroneous. China's history and culture barely shares any common ground with the West. Only if one puts aside the influences of political systems, history and culture, simplifying the world to a realm of only economies and technologies, can the person conclude that China is moving towards Western trends.

China has been exerting increasing influence over the world using its massive growing economic clout. I can give two outstanding examples to demonstrate that China has a hidden agenda of broadcasting the

same contrived information into the free world outside of China as it monopolised inside China.

1. The establishment of hundreds of Confucius Institutes across the globe. The Confucius Institute is ostensibly a way of Chinese cultural export to the West, but it really serves as a gradual indoctrination of current Chinese political system.
2. The Chinese regime exploits the Western freedom of speech loop hole to procure media space to broadcast a favourable spin on current affairs, to permeate and indoctrinate Chinese nationals living in the West,. It also projects a favourable image into the homes and minds of gullible Westerners who are learning about China for the first time, thus beautifying the Chinese government and the Chinese political system.

Totally unlike the West, China has a history of 2 millennia of totalitarian rule. All countries view the world in light of their own experience. So it will be with China. Therefore, the view that China's global influences will mainly be economic is obsolete. China's politics and culture will also create huge influences. What may be the most shocking to the West is that China's rise will be cultural, political, ethical, plus more, rather than purely economic, and the influence of a rising China will far exceed that of a rising America in the past.

This raises a big question for us: Will China accept the international order as it is now, or will it change the fundamentals of the system in the long run? At present, we cannot provide any definite answer to this question. To date, any new hegemonic power has rapidly changed the global order profoundly, as was definitely the case for Britain and America over the past 200 years.

For Western nations, it is difficult to assess the current status of China. There is no yardstick to use as a measure. China is rapidly industrialising, but also facing a severe social disorder, with no realistic alternative socio-political structure vying to replace the outdated one. Thus, China is a great power which has the most complex internal problems. It has become a kind of an unstable massive experiment within which more and more molecules are increasingly crashing against each other, plunging the whole mass towards the verge of explosion or implosion. In our view, the prediction that China's economy will exceed the US in 2027 based on its current annual economic growth is premature. China's economic progress will pass through a bottleneck in the next 15 years. If it cannot transform from a high-energy-consumption, high-saving-rate and high-investment-rate economic model to an alternative model, such a rapid economic growth will not be sustainable.

In general, the so-called 'Chinese model' will face threats on several fronts. However it is acknowledged that the strengths of Chinese development, under serious analysis, include cheap labor with scant human rights protections, merciless yet efficient autocratic administrative capacity, high development velocity at the cost of the natural environment, and fundamentally, China is an oversized nation.

In our view, there are both inevitabilities and unsustainable factors regarding the current rapid economic development in China. With an abundance of captive cheap labour, high administrative capacity under an autocracy, relative stability achieved by extreme political pressure, and a massive amount of external investments attracted by rigid yet predictable policies, China has become the base of assembly and reproduction for the multinational corporations, creating an economic model of huge quantity of input and output, high energy consumption, low wages and low environmental protection. The major limitation to this model is the fact that it sacrifices the security and wellbeing of the labourers as well as exploiting natural resources to the detriment of the environmental balance, rendering it an unsustainable model.

Despite the fact that China is a great power with massive captive human resources and a relatively broad domestic market, it is unavoidable that labour costs will rise, with labour resources in the countryside becoming drained, and a better-educated new generation having more material demands. To make matters worse, this model indicates that China's development velocity is largely constrained by international leverage, through means such as monopoly over certain mineral resources and their price hiking by the exporters, and developed countries' reliance on markets and technologies.

China is playing the role of world labourer, working the hardest but gaining the least. What China sells is human labour. However, It does not pay its labourers their dues, but retains the lion's share of the payment within the coffers of the dictatorship, thus using the labourers wages to fund the well advertised economic success.

Despite a high GDP, a large percentage of the yields go into the deep pockets of foreign investors, while there are still countless China people who have an atrocious standard of living well below the poverty line. Chinese factories will always face the problem of closure whenever there is a change in foreign markets.

Ordinary Chinese people have a meager livelihood but they work hard. They suffer from the capitalist oppression in the 'factories of blood and sweat', providing a colossal volume of high quality cheap goods.

Foreign consumers, however, do not appreciate competing against sweat shop pricing competition, leading to boycotts, protests and setting up tariff barriers, as if it was the Chinese people forced them into unemployment, or as if their incomes were all transferred into China. As a result, the cheap Chinese products have become the scourge and the scapegoat of the global capitalist forces.

Therefore a strange phenomenon has appeared. The only great power led by a communist party is a country which is the friendliest to capitalism. The world's largest communist party has allied with the world's capitalists. The proletarians of the world could not unite, but the capitalists did (if we regard the Chinese Communist Party as a red-capitalist upstart). Hence the Chinese Communist Party has been protested against and opposed by the world's working classes, which is evident by virtue of the fact that the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party faces all kinds of protests when attending international summits.

This alternative approach could lead us to analyse whether the Chinese communist regime has survived mainly because of its reinvigoration by international capitalism.

Of course, internal demands are also playing a more important role in Chinese economic development. With a massive population which exceeds the total population of the developed countries (the EU members, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand have a combined population of no more than 1 billion), the aspirations of the Chinese people to enjoy the same living standard as the West is implausible.

Another threat arising from the Chinese economic development model is its impact on global warming.

China has replaced the US as the largest CO₂ emitter since 2007, and China's commitment to carbon emission reduction is far from satisfactory from an international perspective. Due to China's use of coal as its major source of energy, enormous amounts of soot and other pollutants are emitted, forming what the UN meteorological department calls the 'Asian Brown Cloud'. It was pointed out by the UN meteorological department that the 'Asian Brown Cloud' is a contributor to the melting of Himalayan glaciers. Despite Australia's distance from the Himalayas, environmental disaster is a global issue. There is only one earth therefore we are all affected, and we should take action.

Australia needs to maintain a good relationship with China to sustain reciprocal economic development. But it must also retain our fundamental values of human rights and commercial ethics. Australia will coexist with a rapidly rising China in the Asia-Pacific, and the challenges are foreseeable and unavoidable. Despite our inability to predict the future, the golden rule must be: if human lives are not directed by ethically correct ideas and notions, our development will be off track, thus endangering our earth.

I apologise that I have talked about the rise of China for too long, but in my own defence I believe that it is more important to see the entire perspective rather than focus solely on China's human rights issues, and I hope that this will be useful for future Australian-Chinese human rights talks. Now let us return to the topic of Chinese human rights and review what Australia and China have achieved after two decades of human rights talks.

China is a country with thousands of years' continuous autocratic rule with the associated atrocious human rights records, which continue into this day. Doubtlessly, a nation which stifles freedom of expression and does not encourage independent thought and responsibility will not have a satisfactory human rights record. China is such a nation. The notion of 'human rights' is relatively new to Chinese leadership. The concept was introduced by the West after China started to open up its economy in the late 1970s after the death of Mao.

Are there any severe human rights violations in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the US,

Canada, Japan, Taiwan, and the European democracies? If not, why not? It is because the governments of these nations have a limited power, which is restrained by a certain years of tenure, and is legitimised by their citizens; whereas Chinese government's legitimacy does not come from the people, but from a military victory in the Civil War in 1949, making the Party's rise to power no different from any other dynastic change in Chinese history. No matter how inhumanely its people are treated, its rule remains intact.

Therefore, whether a country has a good human rights record or not totally depends on its political system. An autocratic and dictatorial political system is a breeding ground for human rights abuses, as is the case with China. If we cannot obliterate this breeding ground to cure the fundamental problem, but rather hope that the Chinese government will volunteer to improve its human rights record as a result of human rights talks, it is akin to going fishing in the wrong hole, which is ridiculous.

The Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 shocked the world, placing Chinese human rights issues under international scrutiny forever. Australia took the lead in the dialogue with China on human rights issues at that time. The Australian Human Rights Delegation visited China in July 1991 and again in November 1992, paving the way for regular human rights talks in the future. But such dialogue is truly impotent in securing any improvement in Chinese human rights.

Has China improved its human rights record after dialogue with Australia and the other Western nations? Not at all.

China's economic success is largely due to the West's misinterpretation of China, resulting in the collaboration between Western capitalists and Chinese politico-economic power. The economic world is applauding China's economic success, causing the vast Chinese market to attract investments from all over the globe. It has been widely voiced by the West that China will replace America as the world's superpower. But in our view, this scenario is naïve and cannot be realised. We foresee that China will not be able to develop beyond the current socio-political bottleneck, and this economic mansion built on sand will inevitably crumble and fall. This may seem to be just an alarming prophecy. Only time will tell. If an undemocratic China becomes the future empire and superpower, it will be an unmitigated disaster for humanity and the environment, instead of China being the economic saviour of all nations as perceived by some in the West.

We have noticed that the West has been infirm and irresolute when faced with confrontation against tyrannical autocracies. This is a high level political conflict between justice and evil, where evil seems to be persistent and tenacious, and justice appears to be perfunctory and complacent.

The evidence is clear that human rights violations in China will not improve under the dictatorship of the

Chinese Communist Party. As long as the current political situation continues to exist, human rights violations in China will continue unchecked.

Now let's glance at the recent human rights conduct of the Chinese Communist Party.

Chinese authorities continue to maintain a wide range of restrictions that deny Chinese citizens their right to freedom of speech as guaranteed under China's Constitution. They continue to misuse and manipulate vague criminal laws to imprison prominent high calibre intellectuals,

Since the end of 2010, the mafia-style of treatment of dissidents triggered a spate of brutal corporal punishments of prominent writers and lawyers , who had previously received an audience with former US President George W. Bush, , and so many others. These ethical academics and professionals have been locked away and silenced, too many of them forced to endure harsh imprisonment terms and physical torture.

Human rights violations are rampant throughout China. Since 2009, over 25 Tibetans have self immolated as a desperate cry for help to the world to do something to save Tibetans from this ruthless and barbaric 'governance at gunpoint'. This year, on 23 January 2012, Chinese security fired indiscriminately on hundreds of Tibetans who were participating in a peaceful public protest to protect their rights, with several shot dead and over 60 seriously injured. It is not unusual for Chinese security to shoot to kill at peaceful protests. The West takes public note of the human rights violations in China and frequently expresses concern at the criminal behaviour of the regime. Does the Chinese government care about the criticism of the international community? No! The Chinese government just ignores it because it knows that the West is not serious and that there are no adverse consequences to them if they continue with this behaviour. Therefore the Chinese government remains intractable regarding any changes to its human rights violations.

Could there still be any doubt about this? We are sure this is clearly evident to all.

Australian-Chinese human rights talks have now been going on for over twenty years. As with all other human rights talks between democratic nations and China, the Australian effort has also proved to a dud. All human rights dialogues with China are ineffective and only serve as perfunctory political etiquette for Western leaders to display to their voters. To continue working on a trajectory that is destined to be fruitless is unwise. Therefore, we are not over optimistic about the potential for any positive outcomes through the strategy of talking about the subject. Nevertheless, we do not object to making the effort, albeit that it is our view that the current vacuous coaxing and diplomatic posturing being espoused during so called high level talks with China will not result in any changes at all to human rights violations in China.

If one sincerely wants to prompt China to improve its human rights record, one should fundamentally aim at prompting a change to China's current political system. Only if China undertakes political reforms and becomes a democracy can its human rights record begin to improve.

FDC hopes that the Australian government will pay more attention to the grass roots Chinese society, to the growing number of mass incidents happening there every day, and to provide the necessary moral and material support, thus enabling further development of human rights protection movements in China and exerting pressure on Chinese government to push through its political reforms. FDC hopes that Australia will uphold its democratic moral principles and values. FDC hopes that Australia will not be tempted by China's flaunting of alluring economic benefits and that it will not be subjected to China's game of divide-and-rule. FDC hopes that the Australian government will understand and sympathise with those who oppose the current political regime in China.

I again sincerely thank the Committee for providing us this opportunity to voice our opinion here today.