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p. 531). Reducing these types of non-tariff barriers can have a significant impact on trade. Examples of this impact include ensuring goods retain more of their value through a reduction of the time they spend in customs, or an agreement on laws that facilitate trade – e.g., the enforcement of intellectual property rights.

Potential Mutual Economic Benefits

Since April 2005, China and Australia have tried to formalise their long standing historical efforts to liberalise bilateral trade by establishing a Free Trade Agreement (DFAT, 2014). But how could this complex economic policy help these two countries move towards a mutually prosperous future? The answer lies within the heart of these governments' strategies: economics. By first analysing the historical genesis of the current negotiations, this paper will outline the five main benefits both countries can expect to receive subsequent to FTA adoption. Formation of this FTA could be the clarion call for greater engagement within both countries and could present both with the opportunity to become *zhengyou* to each other (Australian National University, 2012, viii).

In the 42 years since the beginning of Sino–Australian relations, bilateral trade has significantly grown and aided both countries in their journey towards greater prosperity (Australian Embassy in Beijing, *Anniversary* 2012). Such a strong partnership has moved beyond comparatively humble origins to one of the most significant trade and diplomatic relationships for contemporary Australia. The Sino–Australian trade relationship began at worth less than AUD\$100 million per annum and has developed into China becoming Australia's largest export partner whose business is now worth over AUD\$100 billion per annum (Australian Embassy in China, *Overview*, 2012). When coupled with an over 1,400 per cent increase in Chinese investment within the last decade, it becomes clearly evident how China has secured its position as Australia's largest trading partner and why both governments have undertaken efforts to promote increased economic cooperation and engagement (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.; Australian Embassy in China, 2012).

Contemporary efforts to liberalise this bilateral trade relationship have been built upon the good-faith efforts of previous governments. These efforts include Australia's gradual reduction in trade barriers since the 1980s, which include floating the Australian dollar, facilitating greater financial/currency trade, and issuing new three-year multiple-entry visitor visas for ease of business travel (Emmery, 1999; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.). A recent notable example is of the Australian Minister of Trade and Investment leading Australia's largest trade delegation in history to Guangzhou, Chengdu, Shanghai and Beijing to promote further Sino–Australian business relations. Collectively, these efforts provide further context to the Australian government's declaration that the conclusion of the Sino–Australian FTA is its top trade priority (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.).

Should the Sino–Australian FTA negotiations be concluded, it will mark the establishment of a time-tested means of securing a greater amount/variety of goods at lower prices for both countries. History has shown that FTAs aid in reducing the costs associated with international trade, thereby making more goods more accessible to a larger income-bracket in more markets. A joint government feasibility report conducted by both countries concluded that there are five main benefits to implementing the Sino–Australian FTA (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Joint Feasibility Report*, 2005, pp. 126–27).

First, substantial economic benefit can be gained for both countries by liberalising trade in industry sectors that permit using each country's comparative advantage. China can exploit its comparative advantage in manufacturing, human resources and market size; and Australia can exploit its comparative advantage in raw materials, agriculture and services (e.g., financial, telecommunication and education). Second, the structural adjustments required for trade liberalisation can be more efficiently

Chinese SOE as anything other than standard foreign investors willing to invest in the Australian market in a way that complies with Australian laws (Drysdale, 2014).

As both countries move forward into the ever globalising century, this FTA could set a firm foundation for greater resource security and access to ever expanding markets. Steeped in history, this trade liberalisation would mark the strongest trade ties between these two countries in their 42 year relationship. What few concerns there are can be assuaged by an appreciation of the positive-sum nature of trade and the positive bilateral history of these countries. The passing of this FTA could act as the keystone for future relations and allow China and Australia to become true *zhengyou*.

Potential Political Implications for the People's Republic of China

With the gradual deepening of economic globalisation, and in view of the difficulties in WTO multilateral agreements, free trade agreements have been developed vigorously throughout the world. Bilateral FTAs between countries go through several rounds of consultations so as to promote both trade and investment liberalisation, and to strengthen and deepen the relationship and cooperation, economically and politically, within the region. Such integration is bound to have an important impact on the politics of China.

China and Australia started the first round of FTA negotiations in May 2005 and ended the 19th and final negotiation, in June 2013 (Chinese Commerce Ministry's Press Office, 2013). China and Australia both agreed to a pragmatic and flexible way to actively promote the FTA negotiations. As the bilateral FTA proceeds, it will be an important political milestone for China if the two partners successfully sign a Sino–Australia FTA. This will be a strategic opportunity that brings considerable political benefits. From a political perspective, a Sino–Australian bilateral FTA will mainly influence China in five ways.

The first is by reiterating Australia's political and economic recognition of China. In 2003, the trade and economic framework between Australia and the People's Republic of China stated that Australia and China have equal status and that Australia's official recognition of China's full market economy status is the premise of FTA negotiations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2012). This was confirmed in 2005 with the commencement of negotiations (The Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2005). Mutual recognition among countries is the premise of national cooperation. This means the need for recognition is always an important topic of international politics. The establishment of the Sino–Australia free trade mechanism will deepen Australia's political recognition and identification of China, enhance international competitiveness, and promote China's legitimacy as an international political entity by reducing discrimination in international trade.

The second is by creating a stable and secure political environment. Within the geo-strategic environment of the Asia Pacific, China's development is facing challenges and perceived security threats from the United States. China has long recognised the salience of alliances constructed by other nations in the region with the United States – nations that are also increasingly intermeshed with China economically. In light of this, tension between China and the United States could create major foreign policy challenges for Australia (CIW and CICIA, 2012). Therefore, Australia will need to continue to adjust its foreign policy in order to adapt to the demands of the new situation. China and Australia can effectively promote bilateral and regional economic cooperation and the development of political dialogue to enhance China's strategic opportunities for stability and security in its economic development by building a comprehensive FTA.

Regionally based bilateral FTAs are regarded as an important means to promote security. Close economic relations reduce the potential of military and political

opportunity. Furthermore, this is an important step for the continued maintenance of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

While a potential Australia–China Free Trade Agreement would ‘encourage greater trade and investment flows as well as economic co-operation’ (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2005), motivations beyond economic also inspire trade deals (Wesley

the Sino–

Analysis of the Potential Mutual Benefits from the Proposed Sino–Australian FTA

Ma Shuzhong Liu Wenjun, A Political Economy Analysis on the Upsurge in Establishing Bilateral Free Trade Area: A perspective of New Regionalism[J];World Economy Study;2007-10

2. Australia–China Relations in Intergovernmental Organisations – Building Bridges or Exacerbating Conflict?

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Abstract

As advanced technology and media channels disseminate information at lightning pace, domestic issues often attract the attention of the international community – especially in relation to

China–Australia bilateral relationship as its case study, this essay seeks to analyse the potential for conflict between these two countries in three intergovernmental organisations: the United Nations (UN), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

This essay begins with a brief summary of the history and current state of the China–Australia bilateral relationship, and then of each of these organisations. The essay ultimately demonstrates the crucial role that these intergovernmental organisations play in fostering the Australia–China relationship. The focus of these organisations on mutual understanding, cooperation, relationships and solutions will assist in building stronger ties between Australia and China in the Asia–Pacific region.

mandate to deliver punitive sanctions for any breach of international law, which means it possesses the power of coercion that the League of Nations lacked. On 10 December 1948, resolution 217A adopted the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is accompanied by a commitment to the fundamental human rights of the person enshrined in the Preamble of the UN Charter. Over time, the number of UN organs has grown, and the UN now pursues a wide-ranging social and economic agenda that can respond to the complexities and challenges of modern global politics (Heywood, 2011, p. 432). One such new organ is the the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) established in 2006. The following section examines two UN organs that have proven key to the development of Australia–China relations: the UNSC and the UNHRC.

A: China's relationship with the UN

In October 1971, the People's Republic of China replaced the Republic of China (or Taiwan) as the 'real' China on the United Nations, after General Assembly Resolution (GAR) 2758 was passed by a two-thirds majority (Morphet, 2002, p. 151). Since then, as Morphet argues, China has increased its involvement in global affairs, partly due to its permanent position on the Security Council, and has displayed flexibility and consistency on the world stage. China has illustrated its adherence to the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence', the foundation of which is sovereignty, by exercising its veto on Security Council resolutions seven times since 1971. China's most recent veto, for example, was against a resolution that threatened sanctions against Syria. China has tended to abstain from matters that do not directly involve its interests (Morphet, 2002, pp. 164–65).

As Wei (2014) posited, China's historical relationship with the UN can be classified in key stages. The first is characterised by Mao's leadership. During this stage, China presented itself as a 'third world country' and 'anti-hegemonic/anti-imperialist' state that 'stood with other peoples being exploited and repressed by the superpowers'. As China was unwilling to involve itself in the issues dominated by the two superpowers, during this time China was a substantively inactive participant in the UN and was

an international investigation into the MH17 plane crash in 2014. This is the strategy that guides Australia's participation in the UN. According to Harry (1980, p. 19), it is

p. 41). ASEAN has ‘become increasingly important to Australia’s economic and trade interests’ (Australian Parliament House of Representative Committee, n.d., p. 41), which are now ‘more dependent on the fortunes of the ASEAN economies than at any time previously’ (Australian Parliament House of Representative Committee, n.d., p. 41). The value of Australian exports to ASEAN has been rising at an average of 18 per cent per annum, with imports rising at an average of 14 per cent per annum (Australian Parliament House of Representative Committee, n.d., p. 44). ASEAN is now Australia’s second biggest trading partner (Blaxland, 2011). Not only is ASEAN a valuable economic partner for Australia, but commentators have argued that ASEAN will lead Australia in terms of future security and stability of the region (Louie and Willett, 2012). Some commentators have alluded to the possibility of Australian membership of ASEAN, due to the migration and educational links, as well as Australia’s membership of a range of ASEAN-centric international bodies (Blaxland, 2011).

B: China’s relationship with ASEAN

ASEAN–China Dialogue Relations commenced at the initiative of H.E. Qian Qichen, former Foreign Minister of the PRC (ASEAN, n.d.). China was accorded ‘full Dialogue Partner status’ in July 1996 (ASEAN, n.d.). Since then, ‘China has pursued a policy of building strong bilateral China–ASEAN ties’, and was the first major power to negotiate the establishment of free trade agreements with ASEAN (Kun, n.d., p. 29). This free trade area encompasses some 2 billion people (Heywood, 2011, p. 491). China is currently ASEAN’s major trading partner, with exports to China valued at US\$113 billion in 2012, and imports valued at US\$119 billion in 2012 (Asialink, 2012).

China has ‘signalled readiness to discuss political and security issues in the context of the forum, starting out with non-traditional security issues and transnational crime, initially and gradually proceeding to more sensitive issues’ (Hund, 2003, p. 294). Commentators have argued that ‘China and ASEAN have achieved a win-win relationship’, bringing ‘feelings of stability, sureness and accomplishment to China’s neighbour policy’ (Kun, n.d., p. 30) and ‘smile diplomacy’ to Southeast Asia (Kun, n.d., p. 29).

C: The achievements of ASEAN

East Asian nations are ‘remarkably different in terms of their political systems, cultural

culturally understanding. ASEAN has a powerful role to play in developing the relationship between Australia and China, and will continue to be influential in the future. Australia is able to engage as a middle power, avoiding the need to choose between its security ally the United States, and its new ally in the East, China. The unique ASEAN way will ultimately provide both countries with the mechanism to engage with each other in the region and will lead to strengthening of the China–Australia relationship.

V: APEC

The Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum is the most influential economic cooperation mechanism in the Asia–Pacific region (MFA of PRC). It was established in 1989 with 12 founding members, those being Australia, Brunei, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. Two years later, the Seoul Declaration was approved which formalised the purposes and aim of APEC as interdependence, mutual benefit, adherence to the open multilateral trading system, and reduction of barriers to trade in a region. In 1991, China joined APEC as a sovereign state while Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong joined in the name of the regional economy. In 2014 APEC had 21 member economies.

A: Australia's relationship with APEC

On his visit to Seoul in 1989, Australia's former Prime Minister John Howard proposed convening ministerial conferences to strengthen cooperation among countries in the Asia–Pacific region. In November that year, the first APEC ministerial meeting was held in Canberra, Australia. In 1993, the first informal APEC leaders' meeting was held in Seattle (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC). In 2007, the fifteenth informal APEC leaders' meeting was held in Sydney and it issued The Sydney Declaration that focused on the meeting's consensus on climate change, the Doha Round negotiations, and regional economic integration. In the past 25 years, Australia has combined its high technology, sufficient capital and abundant natural resources with the ample labour force and broad market of APEC developing countries. This has resulted in enhancing the welfare of all members and has promoted the development of Australia's industrial structure (Xu Shanpin, 2014).

B: China's relationship with APEC

China joined APEC as a sovereign state in 1991, and held the ninth informal APEC leader's meeting in Shanghai in 2001 in which participating leaders engaged in in-depth discussions on the world economic situation, the effect of the 11 September terrorist attacks on the world economy, and the future direction of APEC (Zhang Jianjing, 2011). The meeting endorsed The Shanghai Consensus and Leader's Declaration: Meeting New Challenges in the New Century. With development of the Chinese economy, China has made a large contribution to APEC. China has changed its role from listening to rules to rule-making. China is also offering capital and technology to other members and protecting the interests of developing countries through APEC (Zhao Jianglin, 2012).

C: The achievements of APEC

Economic growth

Since its inception in 1989, the APEC region has consistently been the most economically dynamic part of the world. In APEC's first decade, APEC member economies generated nearly 70 per cent of global economic growth and the APEC region consistently outperformed the rest of the world (Wang Yi, 2014).

APEC member economies work together to sustain this economic growth through a commitment to open trade, investment and economic reform. By progressively reducing tariffs and other barriers to trade, APEC member economies have become more efficient and the flow of exports has expanded dramatically (Wang Yi, 2012)

Benefits to the people

Consumers in the Asia–Pacific have benefitted both directly and indirectly from the collective and individual actions of APEC member economies. Some direct benefits include increased job opportunities, more training programs, stronger social safety nets, and poverty alleviation. More broadly, however, APEC member economies on average enjoy a lower cost of living because reduced trade barriers and a more economically competitive region lowers prices for goods and services that everyone needs on a daily basis – from food, to clothes, to mobile phones (*Beijing Morning Post*, 12 November 2014).

D: The future of APEC

APEC conforms to the tendency of economic globalisation and strengthening cooperation among economies, which reflect its vitality now and into the future. In terms of trade and investment liberalisation, APEC also provides a strong impetus which sets the stage for an increased degree of intergovernmental economic cooperation. Through the efforts of APEC, the importance of knowledge and technology cooperation has been borne deeply into the human mind (Lu Jianren).

On the other hand, the conference form of APEC is instructive. The annual leader's informal meeting provides an opportunity for every member to express their views about the world economy, which leads to a relatively balanced agreement considering the interests of all member states. The meeting of leaders also offers an occasion of diplomatic activity, which also shows the charm of APEC.

For these reasons we can conclude that the value of APEC will live forever. APEC is an economic forum with the purpose of promoting cooperation rather than making regulations. What this really means is that the agreements may not be workable. However, through a macroscopic lens, APEC is of long-term value and will benefit the world and the Australia–China relationship.

E: Implications

Australia, as one of the initiators of APEC, has a profound influence on the organisation, and benefits immensely from its relationship with Asian countries. After the establishment of APEC, Australia started to take an active part in Asian affairs through institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and East Asia Summit (EAS)

VI: Concluding Remarks

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3. Climate Change Policy: A Comparison between China and Australia

and their policies are thus vastly different. One way to compare the success of each nation's policy is to assess each policy and its development using the policy development principles outlined by Venema and Drexhage (2009).

Challenges of Climate Change

Australia

Past effects

Large portions of the Australian population live near the coastline where all the largest cities are located, which means there is serious vulnerability to sea level rises (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Monitoring of sea level rises at Australian coastal sites has shown that from 1920 to 2000, water level has risen 10cm. Additionally, the average temperature of Australia has increased 0.9°C since 1950. However there have been difficulties in developing policies to deal with these impacts. In the State of Queensland, the State Government invested billions into water pipelines and desalination plants after many local dams dried up following years of severe drought. Queensland is not alone in facing these events. In recent years, Victoria has had deadly bushfires, as well as floods. The same has occurred in New South Wales and Western Australia, and Tasmania, too, faced severe bushfires in January 2015. In the year ending June 2012, emissions per capita were estimated to be 24.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per person. Only Bahrain, Bolivia, Brunei, Kuwait and Qatar have higher levels (Carbon Neutral, 2011). These facts indicate the need for serious climate change mitigation policy to be undertaken in Australia.

Future challenges

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology both have modelling showing that by 2030 the average temperature in Australia will have increased between 0.6 and 1.5C (CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology, 2014). They expect that rainfall patterns will continue to change with less rain in southern areas during winter, in southern and eastern areas during spring, and in south-western areas during autumn.

Another concern for the future is significant loss of the unique biodiversity that Australia currently enjoys. A report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014) identifies concerns that include areas such as the Great Barrier Reef that is listed as one of the seven natural wonders of the world (The Seven Natural Wonders, 2011), Queensland Wet Tropics, Kakadu Wetlands, Sub-Antarctic Islands, Alpine Areas, as well as changes to the unique biodiversity in Southwest Australia. The report also raised concerns about likely reductions in Australia's agricultural output and loss of infrastructure due to extreme weather events.

China

Past effects

The effects of climate change in China have been felt in a number of ways in the past. The average air temperature has increased by 0.5 to 0.8 degrees during the past 100 years, slightly higher than the global average, and most of the temperature rise was observed in the past 50 years. The type of weather events in China over the past 50 years has also changed, particularly in terms of extreme weather events. This is evidenced by the growing disparity of weather events throughout the country, with the northern and north eastern parts of China suffering from severe drought even while the country experiences higher than average precipitation. This is because the middle and southern areas have received large amounts of precipitation, so large they have resulted in flooding in many areas. As well as these climate changes, the rate at which sea levels along China's coastline have risen over the past 50 years, by

2010 and did not pursue the CPRS. The 2010 election resulted in a hung parliament with both the Labor Party and the Coalition each winning 72 seats. After several days of negotiations Gillard was able to form a minority government with the support of three independents and the Australian Greens (an environmentalist party with several Senators and one seat in the House of Representatives).

As part of an agreement with the Greens, in February 2011 Prime Minister Gillard announced the Clean Energy Legislation which passed that year. However the Labor Government was defeated at the 2013 election, replaced by the Coalition Government led by Prime Minister Abbott. In July 2014, Prime Minister Abbott repealed what he called the Carbon Tax passed under the Labor government, and the Abbott government has implemented a 'direct action plan' whereby government subsidises polluters to reduce emissions.

Now only a few other climate change policies remain, since when the Abbot Government repealed what it called the carbon tax, it also repealed much of the other climate change related legislation passed under the Labor government. Renewable Energy Targets to ensure 20 per cent of Australia's energy comes from renewable sources by 2020 remain in effect, as does the Clean Energy Finance Corporation that is to provide a new source of finance to renewable energy, energy efficiency and low emissions technologies. Also, in the deal brokered by the Abbott government to legislate the direct action model, the Climate Change Authority has been reinstated to examine the viability of a future emissions trading scheme.

The Clean Energy Finance Corporation's purpose is to enhance the clean energy sector by creating commercial investment into viable projects. Its powers therefore include power to issue loans, loan guarantees and equity investments, seeking not to crowd out private investment but to provide extra assistance where private investment is too expensive or not available at all. The Corporation cannot provide grants and cannot invest in carbon capture and storage or in nuclear energy. A large focus of the Corporation's investment will be in the renewable energy sector, and its other investment areas include energy efficiency and low emissions technology. The Corporation's overarching purpose is to transform how the business sector views the green technology sector.

The Renewable Energy Target is legislated to reduce pollution levels from those of

divisive campaign between then Prime Minister Julia Gillard and then Opposition Leader Tony Abbott. There is still? not yet agreement amongst the community in Australia about how to proceed and deal with the complex and important challenges that climate change presents.

In comparison, engagement with the community is a part of China's large and multifaceted climate change policy. The Government is engaging with industry to reduce pollution levels and engaging with communities to improve energy efficiency. These moves improve the likelihood that China will be able to successfully reduce its emissions.

The second stage of adaptive policy is 'policy design and implementation'. Australia's remaining policy is the Renewable Energy Targets and the Clean Finance Corporation. While these two are important in addressing climate change, on their own they will not meet the targets that Australia has set for itself. China on the other hand has given its self the best chance of dealing with climate change by enacting a policy that deals with both mitigation of climate change by reducing emissions, and adapting to climate change by developing strategies to deal with climate change related disasters. The Government is also talking about the issue on a global level by participating in global, bilateral and multilateral climate change discussions. These steps are in addition to plans to transform industries from old emission intensive industries to new cleaner industries.

The last stage is 'monitoring, learning and improvement'. The current Australian Climate Change policy does not contain any monitoring and improvement mechanisms to deal with changing situations. China's policy has implemented these changes to its government bodies to include expertise in climate change issues, so that future government decisions can reflect the goals highlighted in the Government's climate change policy. Through its political system, China has implemented a comprehensive climate change policy that will transform industry and is capable of meeting future changes. Australia's climate change policy response is weak by comparison with China's. Australia has no long term systems in place to ensure that the county will meet its emission reduction targets.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Australia and China have very different political systems and very different climate change policies. The Australian government has not been able to commit to a policy that has bipartisan support from the two major parties and climate change policy has been changed repeatedly. This has undermined any real benefits of policies aimed at addressing the effects of climate change. It has also eroded confidence in the business community as the regulatory environment in which they are operating continues to change. In contrast, China has maintained fairly consistent climate change policy settings, with a gradual shift towards greater action. In China's stable political environment, business has been able to operate with certainty and policies have been allowed to operate for long enough to have an impact. Despite this benefit of stability in policy and government, China still has a very long way to go before its climate change policy is stringent enough to effect any substantial change in carbon emission levels and the related effects of climate change. Australia's policies have in the most part been more ambitious than those pursued in China. If the two major parties in Australia can agree on an effective policy, such as in the lead up to the 2007 federal election when both parties were proposing an emissions trading scheme, then Australia could still take a leading role in addressing climate change globally. However without a similar level of stability as has been seen in the Chinese approach to this policy area, Australia will continue to lag behind much of the world in addressing one of this century's most important policy areas.

References

4. Comparison of Attrition in Education in Australia and China – Causes and Solutions

Monique FILET, Branden ROWE, LIU Wen Xin and SHANG Fei

Australian and Chinese citizens are fortunate that education is a fundamental right, provided under and protected by the rule of law. Although the two countries' systems are very different from each other, they both allow for and enforce fundamental education beginning for children at a young age. Importantly, Zhang and Zhu (2009) assert that the depth and breadth of a country's education system reveal the degree of civilisation within that country. For many in the twenty-first century, education is seen as the pivotal driver in reducing classic societal class differences through promoting academic and professional development and thereby increasing the opportunities available to society as a whole. However, modern societies continue to face a variety of barriers in their quest for a universal standard of education. This paper highlights and analyses the significance of geography in relation to Chinese student retention. It then critically contrasts these retention indicators with Australia's dominant educational barriers, which are students identifying with low socioeconomic status and belonging to at-risk cultural groups.

Dropout in China

After the vast economic, political and policy reform in China during the 1950s, overall retention rates in Chinese schools have continually improved. The attrition rate in rural areas, where more than half the Chinese population lives, has however, remained persistently high. According to the Statistical Communique of Development of the Chinese Educational Ministry, in 2003 the national attrition rate for middle school students in China was 2.84 per cent, but in rural areas this figure was between 5 per cent and 15 per cent. Investigations of three provinces in western and central China in 2015 found the attrition rate in rural areas is almost 23 per cent and sometimes even more than 50 per cent (Wang 2005). Thus it can be seen that the countryside accounts for the main body of Chinese attrition. Attrition in rural areas have obvious characteristics. First, a surge occurs when rural students from different areas are in Grade 8 (Chen, 2010). Second is a trend in group attrition, meaning once a few students drop out, others will follow more quickly (Chen, 2010). Third, in poor areas

academic burden. Teachers need to improve their ideological and moral qualities and sense of responsibility, and strengthen communication with students to help establish democratic, equal and harmonious relationships between students and teachers. Yao (2010) suggests that teachers should improve their academic level, transfer old concepts, optimise lesson structures and explore new teaching methods.

It is clear that governments' quality investment in education plays a significant role in enhancing not only access to education, but also students' motivation and support for

to make sure schools stay as interesting and engaging as possible. By placing value on education no matter the results, students will feel more confident within themselves and supported by their community to finish their schooling. The most marginalised and disadvantaged in our society should not be further disadvantaged by lack of access to quality education. The cycles of class differences and marginalisation should not be perpetrated by any barriers in society, including barriers to education. Accessible, high quality education is the building block of every great nation. It is the responsibility of all parties to ensure that no child feels undue pressure to drop out from their studies, but rather feels supported through the whole education journey.

It is quite easy to comment from a position of privilege on the plight of the disadvantaged and suggest methods to combat these issues. However, real fundamental and effective change stems from the opening up of quality, transparent dialogue between all parties, whereby viable solutions can be created from a cooperative stance. Critically, this will enable a more holistic representation of society than the traditional, and largely unsuccessful, method of the privileged representing and directing the less fortunate, and in ways that require much more than a 'one size fits all' approach. In this, both nations have a long way to go to ensure that educational gaps are addressed to ultimately ensure overall national prosperity.

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national People's Congress has less power', and 13.2 per cent thought 'the result has nothing [to do] with them' (Fang, 2012, p. 208).

The survey also showed that 14.5 per cent of students 'know a lot about the election process, the meaning, the candidates'; 32.6 per cent 'know some'; 49.3 per cent are 'not very clear'; and 3.6 per cent 'know nothing'. In terms of opinions on the value of elections, the survey found that 31.2 per cent thought the election had nothing to do with them, 47.8 per cent thought the election was just a form, 21.1 per cent said they are 'indifferent about voting', and only 18.9 per cent believed that elections are the embodiment of political rights. With regard to election results, 9.7 per cent said they focussed on the result of the election, 26.6 per cent said they would not concentrate on the result but would be aware of it, and 63.7 per cent said they did not care about the result (Yonghong cited in Fang, 2012, p. 207).

(ii) Australia

Voting in Australia is compulsory, and Australian youth aged 17 must register on the Australian Electoral Role and then take part in voting in State, Territory, or Federal elections from the age of 18 (Edwards, 2007, p. 540). If youth refuse to enrol, or alternatively refuse to vote, they may receive a fine (Edwards, 2007, p. 540). Young Australians in particular participate less in voting as it is estimated that only 80 per cent of eligible young Australians between the ages of 18 and 25 are actually enrolled to vote, compared to 95 per cent of the general population (Edwards, 2007, p. 540). Other authors have put the estimated percentage of youth voting in an election at 85 per cent (Fyfe, 2009, p. 39), which is generally lower than the population as a whole. Most young people vote because it is compulsory, but they do not see the efficacy in voting (Collin, 2008b, p. 6). It was found in a study that if voting were not compulsory, only 50 per cent would enrol to vote (Collin, 2008b, p. 13).

have to be senior members of the Communist Youth League (CYL) but it is essential that all members undertake a complex political investigation. The excerpt of political rights of CCP members is as below:

- 1) To attend relevant Party meetings, read relevant Party documents, and benefit from the Party's education and training.
- 2) To participate in the discussion of questions concerning the Party's policies at Party meetings and in Party newspapers and journals.
- 3) To make suggestions and proposals regarding the work of the Party.
- 4) To make well-grounded criticism of any Party organisation or member at Party meetings, to present information or charges against any Party organisation or member concerning violations of discipline or the law to the Party in a responsible way, to demand disciplinary measures against such a member, or call for dismissal or replace

August 2014, the Australian Democrats re-elected the youngest president of a political party in Australia at 21 years old.

Such low numbers of youth entering political parties have been attributed to a variety of causes. Some have argued that the lack of choice and variety of political parties has been a trigger for such low levels and has resulted in young Australians' reluctance to join a political party, as they may not always support the values and policies of one party (Beresford & Phillips, 1997, p. 14). This is supported by research finding that 72 per cent of Australian youth were not committed to the values or ideals of any political party (Beresford & Phillips, 1997, p. 14). Other youth have stated that it is their distrust in the government and political parties that hinders their desire to become a member, believing that their opinions would not influence the policies or actions of parties (Saulwick & Muller, 2006, p. 9). Another cause is the belief that political parties are not interested in representing the views and opinions of Australian youth, nor are they interested in creating policies concerning issues that affect young people (Collin, 2008b, p.

have had the opportunity to become more involved (Bei, 2012, pp. 29–31). According to Tang Jiayi, more than 60 per cent of college students have an opinion on the 'hot topics' of Weibo, among which 44 per cent 'pay close attention and participate in discussion actively' (Tang, 2013, p. 229). The results of surveys discussed above depict young people in China as active and enthusiastic in online political discussion. But some scholars point out that these discussions, in which most of the youth are 'onlookers', tend to be irrational and disordered and are widening the gap between the virtual and realistic political situation (Wang, 2014, p. 102). Others recognise that, by working as a free channel to express young people's political views, the Internet may weaken youth's desire for participating in political activities in the real world (Wang, 2012, p. 21).

(ii) Australia

Political discussion among youth in Australia takes different forms, but particularly for youth these avenues can include participation in adult-organised decision making processes in schools and governments, and 'everyday' forms of discussion and participation, which include discussions in class, with families and friends, and particularly online (Collin, 2008b, pp. 14–16). Involving youth in decisions through 'managed forms of participation' is becoming more popular, however literature does not tend to focus on results and is adult focused (Collin, 2008b, p. 14).

At the Federal level of government, different initiatives have been utilised to involve young people in policy decisions such as the National Youth Roundtable, and National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group (Collin, 2008b, p. 14). In local governments there

take action. With regard to protests, 63.2 per cent of students 'are willing to take action to protest', 21.1 per cent of students are not clear, and 14.9 per cent choose not to protest. As found by a survey of whether a number of college students had participated in protests, only 7.6 per cent had participated, 11.2 per cent were 'neutral', and 80.1 per cent had not participated (Wang cited in Fang, 2012, p. 210). This result shows that the proportion of students who have participated in protests is low, but students do choose street politics under certain conditions.

Offline political protest for Chinese youth is limited; online protest is more common. A typical online protest was in relation to the Diaoyu islands event. A Chinese fishing boat collided with two Japanese patrol boats in the waters off the Diaoyu islands on 7 September 2010. After this incident, there were a number of actions taken by Japan, such as inspecting the Diaoyu islands. Japanese lawmakers patrolled the islands, which caused tensions between China and Japan. On 11 September 2012, the so-called 'nationalisation' behaviour towards the Diaoyu islands by the Japanese government increased the gravity of the situation. Chinese young people conveyed online protest information to each other over the Internet, and QQ, Weibo and BBS came to be important instruments in allowing young people to participate in the activities of defending the Diaoyu islands. The number of articles related to this political protest was 18,598 (Yang & Zhang, 2014, p. 47), and on one day, the number of posts in BBS was 7485.

participation, it is questionable whether what some have deemed 'slactivism' is actually participation (Walsh, 2012, p. 3). Campaigns such as 'Kony 2012' and 'Occupy' have drawn much negative commentary, however this overlooks and 'infantilises' young people and contributes to marginalising them from the political sphere (Walsh, 2012, pp. 3–4).

IV: Discussion

Youth participation in the political process is a complex issue, and not one that can (or should) be reduced to simple comparison. However, this essay aims to identify common themes in both conventional and non-conventional political participation by youth in in Australia and China.

With regard to voting behaviour, in both China and Australia the right to vote is considered a key political right (Constitution of the People's Republic of China; Edwards, 2007, p. 540), despite differences in its implementation. In terms of voting behaviour, a much smaller percentage of Chinese college students vote than do Australian youth (Fang, 2012, p. 207; Fyfe, 2009, p. 39). Despite this seeming to indicate a higher participation in conventional forms of politics in Australia than in China, in Australia just under half of the youth also do not feel they have enough knowledge about political issues, parties and voting, and if voting were not compulsory it is likely that only half would enrol to vote (Collin, 2008, p. 13). The reasons for these low turnouts in both China and Australia may be complex, however it seems evident that youth in both nations at times feel that either they do not have

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