



*Democratization, Poverty of
Political Leaders, and Political
Inefficacy in Hong Kong*

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HK\$15.00
ISBN 962-441-072-0

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This paper was subsequently published as:

Lau, Siu-kai. 2000. “Democratization, Poverty of Political Leaders, and Political Inefficacy in Hong Kong,” in Siu-kai Lau (ed.), *Social Development and Political Change in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, pp. 355–375.

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Acknowledgements

This study is part of the Social Indicator Research Programme, jointly undertaken by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong, and the Department of Applied Social Studies of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I am grateful to the Research Grants Council and the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies for funding this study. Special thanks are due to Ms Wan Po-san, Mr Cheung Yin-bun, Mr Shum Kwok-cheung and Mr Eddy Liu of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies for assistance in conducting the survey and helping with data preparation.

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ISBN 962-441-072-0

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Democratization, Poverty of Political Leaders, and Political Inefficacy in Hong Kong

In the third wave of democratization, which has galvanized the world since the early 1970s, political elites from both the regime and the opposition have played a critical role in the initiation, development and consolidation of democracy in Southern Europe, Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.¹ The success of the democratization process hinges inordinately upon the existence of political leaders who are trusted and respected by the people and who can garner political support from them through some form of organizational linkage. It is thus difficult to envisage a situation where democratic development can be successfully consummated without the presence of trusted political leaders.

The poverty of trusted political leaders in Hong Kong is a widely recognized and lamented fact.² Despite the inauguration of the partial democratization in Hong Kong in the early 1980s — a process centring upon the introduction of elective elements into the Legislative Council³ and activated by the British colonial rulers to transfer a portion of political power to the local populace in preparation for the return of the territory to China in 1997 — the leadership problem persists and might have even slightly worsened. Accordingly, the poverty of political leaders in Hong Kong has thrown a long shadow on the territory's democratic prospect. At the very least, the dearth of trusted political leaders in Hong Kong has engendered pervasive feelings of political inefficacy which in turn weaken people's enthusiasm for democracy. The fact that Hong Kong is as yet far from being a full-blown democracy and that anti-democratic forces there are quite power-

ful means that Hong Kong's path of democratization is bound to be extremely difficult.

In this paper I shall explore the relationship among the Hong Kong people's attitudes toward democracy, their views of the political leaders, and their sense of political inefficacy. The main argument is that, given the particular conception of democracy by the Hong Kong people, they find their leaders as incapable of meeting their expectations about democracy. Consequently, they are disappointed by the results of democratization and take on a pessimistic view of democratic development, which in turn breeds political disengagement.

The main body of findings in this study comes from a questionnaire survey of a Hong Kong-wide sample of respondents conducted in the summer of 1995.⁴ In total, 408 interviews were successfully completed, yielding a response rate of 61.5 per cent. In terms of age, sex, education and occupation, the socio-demographic profile of the respondents basically resembles that of the Hong Kong population as a whole. Unless otherwise specified, the data presented in the paper refer to those obtained in the 1995 survey.

Instrumental and Partial Conception of Democracy

Since 1984, after Britain and China had sealed Hong Kong's political future through the Sino-British Joint Declaration, a mild demand for democratization has appeared in the territory. In my survey, about half (50.7 per cent) of the respondents said that, for them personally, the problem of democratization in Hong Kong was important, with only 7.4 per cent saying "not important." These responses however should be not taken to mean that there is overwhelming support for democracy in Hong Kong. For, aside from the lack of the concomitant public actions and commitments to fight for democracy, Hong Kong people are afflicted by ambivalence toward democracy. A telling example of this ambivalence can be found in the finding that about equal proportions (36.6 per

cent vs. 36.3 per cent) of the respondents disagreed and agreed with the statement that "if a powerful but not that democratic government can perform better than a more democratic government in making Hong Kong prosperous and stable, it should be allowed to run the place." Similarly, despite all the fanfare produced by the democratic reforms of Governor Chris Patten in 1992 and 1993, which are vehemently opposed by China and have strained Sino-British relations, public reaction to them is far from enthusiastic. While 26.7 per cent of the respondents considered the reforms to be beneficial to Hong Kong, 23.8 per cent took the opposite view, and the rest were basically indifferent. Even in 1995, two years before China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong, still 63 per cent of the respondents in my survey agreed with the comment that "even though Hong Kong's [non-democratic] political system is not perfect, it is nonetheless the best under Hong Kong's actual circumstances."

The mildness of the demand is by and large the result of persistent general acceptance of the non-democratic colonial system, the non-existence of serious social and economic grievances and satisfaction with the performance of the government. Except for their educational achievement (with 47.3 per cent expressing dissatisfaction), people were generally not dissatisfied with their livelihood (with 10.7 per cent dissatisfied), family life (5.8 per cent), health (12.7 per cent), economic conditions (17.9 per cent), job (10.3 per cent), friends (2.4 per cent), relatives (4.7 per cent), living environment (19.1 per cent) and leisure activities (9.6 per cent). Moreover, except for employment opportunities (with 55.6 per cent dissatisfied), less than half of them were dissatisfied with Hong Kong's economic conditions (42.6 per cent), law and order (33.4 per cent), political conditions (26.7 per cent), transportation (31.4 per cent), housing (34.6 per cent), medical care (21.1 per cent), education (14.4 per cent), social welfare (27.7 per cent), and leisure facilities (9.5 per cent). With respect to the work of the government, all in all the people were fairly satisfied, as only one-quarter of the respondents rated governmental performance as poor or very poor. In all, Hong Kong has a basically complacent

populace whose demand for democracy is not surprisingly subdued.

The impending return of Hong Kong to China has however produced a lot of political uncertainties in the mind of the people. Public confidence in Hong Kong's future is weak. Only 32.1 per cent of the respondents were confident about Hong Kong's future, 24 per cent did not have confidence, while 32.1 per cent had only weak confidence. Public trust in the Chinese government is extremely low, as only a minuscule 12 per cent of the respondents were trustful or very trustful. As many as 43.8 per cent did not trust it, whereas 31.6 per cent had only weak trust. Even though China promises Hong Kong a high level of autonomy after 1997, the policy of "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong" however was only believed by 25.3 per cent of the respondents. The people of Hong Kong harbour a pessimistic, though still inchoate, view of the post-1997 Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government. Only 12.5 per cent of the respondents expected that government to surpass the colonial government in performance, the opposite view nevertheless was held by more respondents (39.5 per cent). Yet, it is interesting to find that just less than half (44.6 per cent) of them were not able to come up with a definite opinion. This lower expectation of the future government results from public belief that it will toe the line of China instead of placing top priority on Hong Kong's interests. Behind this pessimistic view is an assumption, generally accepted in Hong Kong, that there is a conflict of interest between China and Hong Kong. In my survey, more than half of the respondents (60 per cent) took that assumption for granted, whereas only a quarter of them rejected it. Given this assumption, public pessimism can easily be understood by the fact that just below half of the respondents (49.3 per cent) believed that the future government would give China's interests top priority. Only 12 per cent thought that Hong Kong's interests would be most emphasized by it, whilst 17.4 per cent expected the future government to give the interests of China and Hong Kong equal attention.

Public anxieties about Hong Kong's future, mistrust of the Chinese government and worries about the SAR government together provide the impetus for the mild demand for democracy in Hong Kong. The supporters of democratization hope that it will give them some political protection and help ward off Chinese interference in local affairs after 1997, when the political shelter erstwhile provided by the British is gone. Needless to say, the desire to make the government perform better and be more accountable to the public also plays a role in inducing public support for democracy, but this factor pales in significance when compared to the need to alleviate political uncertainties and fears.

Results of the analysis of the survey data underscore the importance of diffidence in Hong Kong's future and mistrust of China in prompting people to favour democratization.⁵ Not surprisingly, respondents who had low confidence in Hong Kong's future were more likely to mistrust the Chinese government. Simultaneously, they were more likely to perceive conflict of interest between China and Hong Kong, mistrust China's promise of "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong," expect the future government to side with China's interests, and anticipate worse administrative performance after 1997. More importantly, respondents who did not have confidence in Hong Kong's future were more inclined to support the democratic reforms introduced by Governor Chris Patten.⁶

The explicit linkage between support for democracy and mistrust of China can be illustrated in various ways by statistical findings.

(1) Respondents who were mistrustful of China were more likely *not* to allow a non-democratic but strong government to govern Hong Kong, even though that government was more capable of making Hong Kong prosperous and stable. They were more likely to support Patten's political reforms, say that democratic reforms had made Hong Kong's political system better, mistrust political leaders groomed by the Chinese government, trust the pro-democratic leaders in Hong Kong, mistrust the post-1997 leaders, perceive conflict of interest between China and

Hong Kong, expect the future government to side with China's interests, and think that the future government would perform worse than the current government.

(2) Respondents who believed that direct election of legislators would ward off Chinese interference in Hong Kong affairs were more inclined to think that Patten's political reforms were beneficial to the territory and to rate democratization as important to themselves.

(3) Respondents who were of the opinion that Patten's reforms were beneficial to Hong Kong were more likely to perceive conflict of interest between China and Hong Kong, not believe in China's promise of "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong," and think that direct election of legislators would prevent Chinese interference in local affairs.

(4) Respondents who said that democratization was important to them personally were more likely to report lack of confidence in Hong Kong's future and lack of trust in the Chinese government.

(5) Respondents who were satisfied with the progress of democratization in Hong Kong were more confident about the future of the place.

(6) Respondents who saw the chance of democratic success in Hong Kong great were more prone to believe that, if the Hong Kong people organized themselves and faced up to the Chinese government, the latter would accede to their demands.

Accordingly, Hong Kong people's conception of democracy is instrumental in the sense that they expect democracy to achieve some concrete political goals. It is also partial because Hong Kong people tend to conceive of democracy in *negative* terms: the purpose of democracy is to protect their rights and interests against encroachment by China and the present and future governments of Hong Kong. The *positive* sense of democracy as the right and opportunity to participate in politics is much less understood and treasured.⁷ This partial and negative view of democracy might have accounted for the fact that a plurality of Hong Kong people tend to define a democratic government as a government that is

willing to consult public opinion.⁸ As the Hong Kong government is generally seen to be fairly sensitive to public opinion, an intriguing phenomenon consequently appears: despite its authoritarian nature, as many as 36.5 per cent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the comment that "the Hong Kong government is already a democratic government." Less than a third of them (28.5 per cent) disapproved of this view, whilst 24 per cent expressed an attitude which was between agreement and disagreement. Obviously, the mild democratic aspirations in Hong Kong are not instigated by discontent with the performance of the colonial government but have to do with the haunting changes in the larger political environment which are beyond the control of the incumbent authorities. The objectives of democratization to the Hong Kong people are to take on China and to safeguard their political future.

Political Leaders and Democracy

For democratization to meet the expectations of the Hong Kong people and hence to secure public support, it is crucial that it can produce political leaders who are trusted and respected by the people. Particularly in a context of Chinese political culture, where the syndrome of dependency on authority still prevails, the presence or absence of political leaders is fundamental to the development and consolidation of democracy in Hong Kong. Were there political leaders who were widely perceived to be strong and effective to hold China at bay, morally upright, and compassionate to the needs of the people, not only would the prospect of democratization in Hong Kong be brightened, people's confidence in the political future of their community would also be significantly enhanced.

Alternatively put, public anxieties about their future are produced by the fact that people are worried about and suspicious of the post-1997 political leaders. In my survey, a plurality of respon-

dents (40.2 per cent) did not think that political leaders whom they would trust would appear before 1997. Only a tiny 16.9 per cent thought otherwise. The fact that as many as 38.7 per cent of them answered "don't know" or "no opinion" means that, though the situation is not good, still people have not totally given up hope.

Moreover, people largely lack confidence in the post-1997 leaders. Only a negligible 7.3 per cent of the respondents expressed confidence or a lot of confidence in the ability of leaders of the Hong Kong SAR, whereas a larger proportion (23 per cent) reported no confidence. Yet, the dominant attitude in this regard is that of uncertainty, for 36.3 per cent of the respondents gave the answer of "somewhat confident" and 29.2 per cent chose to answer "don't know" or "no opinion." The sense of pessimism with regard to future political leaders originates from the common belief that China will groom and pick the leaders for Hong Kong rather than the other way round. Folk wisdom has it that leaders hand-picked by China will only do the bidding of the Chinese government and thus will not serve as the guardians of Hong Kong's interests. That is the reason why only 12.8 per cent of the respondents responded that they would feel all right if Hong Kong was to be ruled by political leaders who were primarily supported by the Chinese government. A larger proportion of them (38 per cent) said that they would be worried, whilst 23.8 per cent had no strong feelings and 20.3 per cent answered "don't know" or "no opinion." To the contrary, if Hong Kong were to be governed by the pro-democratic leaders, a plurality of respondents (32.6 per cent) confessed that they would feel at ease, and only 16.2 per cent said they would be worried. Again, public opinion here is far from congealed, as 26 per cent had no strong feelings and 21.6 per cent said they did not know or had no opinion.

Nevertheless, a strand of political pragmatism can be detected in public attitudes. In view of the towering presence of China and the preponderant power at its disposal, Hong Kong people know full well that leaders, to be effective in catering to Hong Kong's interests, have to be able to cooperate with China and enjoy the

trust of the Chinese government. Hence, there is a degree of public ambivalence toward leaders who get along well with China. In my survey, when queried whether they would support those people who were out of favour with the Chinese government to be the territory's future leaders, respondents who had definite views were split as 30.1 per cent said they would not, whereas 28.2 per cent said they would. Still a lot of them (33.3 per cent) had no views. Needless to say, such ambivalence does not change the overall picture of pervasive mistrust of post-1997 leaders.

From my survey data, there is found a fairly explicit connection between democracy and trustworthy leaders in the minds of the people. In a survey of a territory-wide sample of 868 Hong Kong people in the summer of 1992, it was found that they had a sanguine but also somewhat unrealistic expectation of the effects of democratization. In essence, the respondents in the study expected to see a more responsive political leadership as a result of democratic reform. For instance, a majority of them (80.1 per cent) thought that the Hong Kong government would pay more attention to the views of the people. Notwithstanding public mistrust of the Chinese government, still a plurality of the respondents (48.4 per cent) expected it to be more attentive to public opinion.

It is thus small wonder that a significant proportion of people believe that direct election (a key component of democracy) is an effective means to generate good leaders. In the 1995 survey, 35.3 per cent of the respondents agreed that direct election of members to the Legislative Council [the legislature of Hong Kong with limited constitutional powers] could produce more trustworthy political leaders. Nevertheless, the same percentage of respondents disagreed, and 23.8 per cent answered "don't know" or "no opinion." Thus, while the connection between democracy and trustworthy leaders is far from generally recognized, still it is a politically important view in Hong Kong.

However, people are much less sanguine about the ability of local leaders to ward off interference by China after 1997. In fact, people have been pessimistic in this respect in the last decade. In a survey of 396 Hong Kong residents in 1988,⁹ only a quarter (25.5

per cent) of them agreed with the view that direct elections could prevent the Chinese government from interfering in local affairs, but this view was repudiated by 49.8 per cent of the respondents. By the same token, 44.8 per cent of the respondents in the 1992 survey¹⁰ did not think that if Hong Kong was to democratize further, the Chinese government would meddle less in local affairs; only 29.7 per cent thought democratization could bring about such an outcome.

Similarly, in the 1995 survey, only 25.5 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that "we can ward off Chinese interference in local affairs if only we have direct elections," with 45.8 per cent disagreeing. The sense of powerlessness *vis-à-vis* China is also revealed in another finding. I asked the respondents whether the Chinese government would accede to the people's demands if they organized themselves to fight it, only 10.3 per cent of them thought so, whilst a majority (64.2 per cent) believed that China would not budge. Thus, while in general the people of Hong Kong expect democratization to deliver trustworthy political leaders, when it comes to leaders who can effectively stand up to China, most of the people simply look despondent. As can be seen below, public perception of leadership ineffectiveness *vis-à-vis* the Chinese government significantly influences people's support for democracy in Hong Kong.

The Poverty of Political Leaders

Notwithstanding the importance of trusted political leaders to democratic development in Hong Kong, the unfortunate reality is that, despite a decade of partial democratization, today there is still a dearth of leaders. The 1995 survey shows that 64.5 per cent of the respondents reported that they had no trustworthy political leaders in mind, as against 14 per cent who had. In the same vein, 56.4 per cent of them had no trustworthy political groups in mind, only 17.2 per cent had. The persistent lack of publicly trusted

leaders apparently does not reflect favourably upon the process of democratization in the territory.

Not only is public trust in political leaders low, the people of Hong Kong in addition are suspicious of their motives and skeptical about their ability. Despite the priority laid on political leaders' moral integrity in traditional Chinese political culture, the pragmatic Hong Kong Chinese place equal emphasis on moral probity and ability. There is a clear instrumental strand in public conception of political leadership. In view of the preponderant power of China and Britain, as well as the plurality of political views in Hong Kong, people recognize the necessity of compromise in achieving political results. In my survey, I asked the respondents to choose between two types of leaders: those who insist upon principles and place secondary importance on solving problems, and those who put priority on solving problems through compromises with their adversaries and are willing to concede on matters of principle. It is telling to find that more respondents (40.7 per cent) preferred leaders who were ready to compromise, and the principled leaders only received support from 29.2 per cent of them. Political pragmatism of the people can also be spotted in another finding: when asked about whether the ability or the morality of political leaders was more important, 37.5 per cent of the respondents chose ability, whilst 37.3 per cent picked morality. However, further probing of the respondents showed that they were not satisfied with either aspect of local political leaders. Only 16.7 per cent of them rated the leaders' moral conduct to be good. A plurality (46.1 per cent) found it just about average, whilst 10.1 per cent described it as deplorable. Public ratings are even worse with regard to the leaders' ability, when 24 per cent of the respondents saw their ability as low or very low. Only 17.1 per cent ranked it as high, with 40.7 per cent saying "about average." The lack of respect for their leaders' morality and ability among Hong Kong people is indubitable.

Political cynicism toward political leaders is also pervasive in Hong Kong, and it inevitably reinforces negative attitudes toward them. Public suspicion of leaders' motives can be seen in the

finding that about half (49.8 per cent) of the respondents agreed that Hong Kong's political parties were only interested in the votes of the people and were not concerned about what they thought, with only 17.2 per cent disagreeing. Likewise, 45.3 per cent of them were of the opinion that, as soon as elections were over, the elected politicians lost touch with the people. Such cynical attitudes toward parties and politicians definitely do not bode well for Hong Kong's democratic future.

The generally mistrustful public attitudes toward political leaders by and large hold true as far as specific leaders are concerned. Table 1 clearly shows that in varying degrees political leaders are mistrusted by the people.¹¹ Ironically, despite the vulgarity of Hong Kong's mass media, they are trusted more than politicians and parties. The popularity of the mass media says more about public disappointment with the political leaders than the public credibility of the journalists.

By the same token, with the exception of journalists, Hong Kong people have an unfavourable assessment of the representativeness of the political leaders. I asked the respondents whether a select group of political leaders could represent their views, and the results are contained in Table 2.

The findings in Table 2 that even the elected (both directly and indirectly) Legislative Council and the populist Democratic Party fail to win the heart of the people are particularly ominous as far as Hong Kong's democratic prospect is concerned.

Political mistrust of leaders and low evaluation of their representativeness naturally breeds political inefficacy among the people. Most people do not think they have influence upon political leaders, the journalists this time not excepted (which is interesting in view of the commercial nature and consumer-orientation of the mass media). The sense of political alienation is evident in the figures of Table 3.

Behind political mistrust and political inefficacy is public skepticism of the motives of the political leaders. As can be seen in Table 4, in view of the importance of morality as a criterion for evaluating leaders in the public mind, people's perception of the

Table 1 Trust in Political Actors (%)

	Mistrust	Average	Trust	DK/NO	NA
1. Governor Patten	31.8	36.8	15.7	14.7	1.0
2. Legislative Council	19.4	36.5	25.0	18.1	1.0
3. PWC	30.7	23.5	9.3	34.8	1.7
4. Civil servants	15.2	41.2	27.2	14.2	2.2
5. Democratic Party	25.0	25.5	17.6	31.1	0.7
6. Liberal Party	30.4	27.2	9.0	31.9	1.5
7. DAB	27.3	28.7	9.3	33.3	1.5
8. News media	10.3	31.6	46.1	10.5	1.5

Notes: DK/NO: Don't know/No opinion; NA: No answer;
PWC: Preliminary Working Committee; DAB: Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong.

Table 2 Representativeness of Political Leaders (%)

	Cannot	Sometimes	Can	DK/NO	NA
1. Governor Patten	65.4	1.0	9.8	21.3	2.5
2. Hong Kong government	51.5	1.0	22.8	22.3	2.5
3. Legislative Council	43.6	1.0	26.5	26.7	2.2
4. PWC	55.9	0.5	6.6	34.3	2.7
5. Democratic Party	44.4	1.0	22.1	29.7	2.9
6. Liberal Party	52.0	0.7	12.5	32.1	2.7
7. DAB	48.8	1.0	14.0	33.6	2.7
8. News media	30.4	1.0	41.7	24.0	2.9

Notes: DK/NO: Don't know/No opinion; NA: No answer;
PWC: Preliminary Working Committee; DAB: Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong.

Table 3 Influence on Political Actors (%)

	Little	Average	Large	DK/NO	NA
1. Governor Patten	61.2	13.7	8.4	14.2	2.5
2. Hong Kong government	59.8	14.2	10.3	13.5	2.2
3. British government	62.5	14.0	5.9	15.0	2.7
4. Chinese government	61.0	8.8	12.5	15.0	2.7
5. Legislative Council	55.4	22.8	4.4	15.2	2.2
6. PWC	56.6	10.8	5.2	25.0	2.5
7. Democratic Party	56.4	15.7	3.7	21.8	2.5
8. Liberal Party	58.8	14.5	1.5	22.5	2.7
9. DAB	57.6	14.5	2.7	22.5	2.7
10. News media	49.8	19.9	13.8	14.0	2.7

Notes: DK/NO: Don't know/No opinion; NA: No answer;
PWC: Preliminary Working Committee; DAB: Democratic Alliance
for the Betterment of Hong Kong.

Table 4 Motives of Political Actors (%)

	Social service	Both	Self- interest	DK/NO	NA
1. Governor Patten	10.3	47.5	22.8	16.7	2.7
2. Legislators	12.3	47.1	20.3	17.4	2.9
3. PWC members	8.8	28.7	24.0	35.5	2.9
4. Members: Democratic Party	14.5	39.2	17.2	26.2	2.9
5. Members: Liberal Party	9.6	35.5	23.5	28.4	2.9
6. Members: DAB*	9.1	38.0	18.9	30.4	3.4
7. Civil servants	17.9	38.2	21.8	19.4	2.7
8. Journalists*	33.3	36.5	12.5	15.0	2.5

Notes: DK/NO: Don't know/No opinion; NA: No answer;
PWC: Preliminary Working Committee; DAB: Democratic Alliance
for the Betterment of Hong Kong.

* 0.2% of respondents answered "neither social service nor
self-interest."

major motive of leaders in participating in public affairs is by and large not favourable. This cannot but widen the gap between leaders and people.

Political Leaders, Political Inefficacy and Democratization

Hong Kong's partial democratization has been accompanied by the poverty of political leaders and a pervasive and enduring sense of political inefficacy.¹² Public attitudes toward democratization remain ambivalent and enigmatic. On the one hand, somewhat less than half (45.1 per cent) of the respondents were of the view that since Hong Kong had had all sorts of elections, Hong Kong had been governed better, with 20.1 per cent disagreeing and 19.9 per cent without definite views. A plurality of them (38.5 per cent) also thought that, after several years of political reform, the present political system was better than the previous one, with 31.4 per cent saying "more or less the same" and only 12.7 per cent believing that it had become worse.

On the other hand, democratization has not increased political activism among the people. Instead, political passivity still dominates. Just above half of the respondents (52.9 per cent) did not consider that their political influence had increased despite the introduction of all types of elections. Only 11.5 per cent said it had increased, with 18.1 per cent thinking that it had increased "slightly." A low proportion of the respondents (28.9 per cent) were of the view that the existing opportunities for political participation were adequate for them, whereas 22.8 per cent saw them as inadequate and 23.3 per cent as "somewhat adequate." However, even these opportunities have not been fully utilized.¹³ Political interest is also low among the people. Less than one-third (27.7 per cent) of the respondents reported an increase of interest in politics compared with three years ago, while 50.2 per cent described it as "more or less the same" and 8.3 per cent even saw their political interest dropping. More concrete indicators of polit-

ical interest provide an even more discouraging picture. Only 13 per cent of the respondents were interested in the debates on issues related to the political system, with 43.3 per cent showing no interest and 32.8 per cent having only little interest. In the last several years, local mass media have frequently reported on the improper behaviour of political figures. Yet, only 19.6 per cent of the respondents were interested in it, whilst 42.1 per cent expressed no interest and 25.2 per cent had only little interest.

Analysis of the survey data shows that the poverty of political leaders has to do with the problematic prospect of Hong Kong's democratic future. In my survey, it is evident that favourable public imagery of political leaders will engender positive attitudes toward democratization. For instance, in the survey, respondents who had trustworthy leaders in mind were inclined to think that democratic reform made the political system better, that elections had made them feel more politically influential and had increased their interest in politics. Likewise, respondents who had trustworthy political groups in mind were more satisfied with the development of democracy in Hong Kong, more likely to feel more politically influential as a result of elections, more interested in politics and more interested in discussions about the political system.

In the same vein, even optimistic views of the future SAR political leaders would seemingly benefit democratization in Hong Kong today. In my survey, respondents who expected to find trustworthy leaders before 1997 were more disposed to conclude that democratic reforms had improved the political system, were more satisfied with the progress of democratization and more inclined to say that elections had increased their political influence.

However, as political leaders are, generally speaking, not trusted by the people and as the latter are afflicted by political cynicism and inefficacy, the natural outcome is a gloomy public view of democratization. In my survey, only 26.5 per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the progress made in democratization, with 23 per cent dissatisfied and 30.9 per cent "somewhat

satisfied." More importantly, people were not optimistic about democratization in Hong Kong. About half (49.3 per cent) of the respondents were of the opinion that the chance of success of democratization was small. Only 17.2 per cent were optimistic about democratic success in the territory. While 32.6 per cent of the respondents felt comfortable if Hong Kong was governed by the pro-democratic leaders (only 16.2 per cent did not like it), only 12.9 per cent of them however thought that democratic leaders had great or very great influence in Hong Kong affairs. Therefore, even though political leaders who do well in popular elections are more acceptable to the people, the fact that they are not considered effective leaders will unavoidably erode public confidence in the electoral, and by extension, the democratic process.

Conclusion

Political leaders have played an indispensable role in Third Wave Democratization. Moreover, as can be seen in other countries, public disappointment with democratically elected leaders will engender disaffection with the democratic process.¹⁴ In Hong Kong, the partial democratic process was largely inaugurated from above — from the decision of the British to transfer a portion of political influence downward on the eve of termination of colonial rule.¹⁵ The role of local political leaders in the struggle for democracy was limited, so was their capacity for mass mobilization in support of the democratic cause. Hong Kong's limited democratization has had minimal potential for leadership formation and for forging strong linkages between leaders and people. The poverty of political leaders impedes the democratic process in Hong Kong, for it inhibits the formation of political and psychological ties to attach the public to democratization. Further democratization (which is stipulated by the Basic Law, the mini-constitution of Hong Kong after 1997) *might* alleviate the leadership problem. In the meantime, however, the partial democ-

racy in Hong Kong has to function under pervasive public political disillusionment.

Notes

1. See for example Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman: University of California Press, 1991); John Higley and Richard Gunther (eds), *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Doh Chull Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (October 1994), pp. 135-70; J.F. Brown, *Surge to Freedom: The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); and M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
2. See Lau Siu-kai, "Institutions Without Leaders: The Hong Kong Chinese View of Political Leadership," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Summer 1990), pp. 191-209; "Colonial Rule, Transfer of Sovereignty and the Problem of Political Leaders in Hong Kong," *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (July 1992), pp. 223-42; "Social Irrelevance of Politics: Hong Kong Chinese Attitudes Toward Political Leadership," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 225-46; and "Public Attitudes Toward Political Leadership in Hong Kong: The Formation of Political Leaders," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (March 1994), pp. 243-57.
3. Constitutionally, in Hong Kong's authoritarian political system, the Legislative Council is a weak legislature with primar-

ily advisory functions. The step-by-step enlargement of its elective component and the declining authority of the colonial regime have however increased its political influence. See for example Kathleen Cheek-Milby, *A Legislature Comes of Age: Hong Kong's Search for Influence and Identity* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995).

4. The sample used in the questionnaire survey was drawn by means of a multi-stage design. The target population of the survey was the Chinese inhabitants in Hong Kong aged 18 or over. Since the full list of such adults was impossible to obtain, I used the list of permanent and residential areas prepared and kept by the Census and Statistics Department's computerized Sub-Frame of Living Quarters as my sampling frame. With the assistance of the Department, a replicated systematic random sample of 825 addresses was selected from the sampling frame. After the exclusion of vacant, demolished, unidentifiable addresses, addresses without Chinese residents, and addresses eventually unused, the actual sample size was reduced to 663.

The next stage of sampling involved the selection of households and eligible respondents by the interviewers. Interviewers were required to call at each address and list all the households residing there. If there were two or more households, only one would be selected according to the random selection table pre-attached to each address assignment sheet. For each selected household, the interviewer was required to list all persons aged 18 or over and arrange them in an order according to sex and age. The respondent was then selected from the list by means of a random selection grid (a modified Kish grid) pre-attached to each address assignment sheet. Face-to-face interviews with structured questionnaires were carried out by interviewers who were recruited from local tertiary institutions and required to attend a half-day briefing session. Fieldwork was conducted in the summer of 1995. All completed questionnaires were subsequently checked by follow-up phone calls to the respondents concerned as a means

- of data quality control. Additional data control checks were also made to improve data quality.
5. Throughout the paper, all statements made about relationships between variables are based on statistically significant relationships measured in Pearson correlation coefficients or in χ^2 scores.
 6. Chris Patten was Hong Kong's Governor from July 1992 to June 1997. He introduced a series of democratic reforms in Hong Kong, centring upon the electoral arrangements for the Legislative Council. His reforms were vociferously opposed by China, who saw his reforms as an attempt to institutionally entrench anti-China forces in Hong Kong's political system. Despite substantial, though mild, support by the people, his reforms however deeply divided Hong Kong society.
 7. See Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai. "The Partial Vision of Democracy in Hong Kong: A Survey of Popular Opinion," *The China Journal*, No. 34 (July 1995), pp. 239-64.
 8. Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1988), pp. 75-76.
 9. The 1988 survey was undertaken in the summer of 1988. The sample used in the survey was prepared by means of a multi-stage design, starting with a sample of 3,488 residential addresses from the computerized Sub-Frame of Living Quarters maintained by the Census and Statistics Department. The sample consisted of 649 households. In total, 396 successful interviews were obtained, yielding a response rate of 61 per cent.
 10. The sample for the 1992 survey was drawn by the same method as used in 1988. The sample size for the survey was 1,568. The survey was conducted mostly from May to November 1992. At the end of the survey, 868 interviews were successfully completed, yielding a response rate of 55.4 per cent.
 11. The Preliminary Working Committee was an advisory body set up by China in 1993 after Sino-British cooperation on the

- transition of Hong Kong's legislature collapsed. The body was composed of members from Hong Kong and China, with the former in a slight majority, and its main task had to do with the formation of the post-1997 legislature. The Democratic Party is a strong advocate for democracy in Hong Kong. The Liberal Party is business-oriented and conservative. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong is pro-China but at the same time sympathetic to democratization and expansion of social welfare in Hong Kong.
12. See Lau Siu-kai, "Decline of Governmental Authority, Political Cynicism and Political Inefficacy in Hong Kong," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. XI, No. 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 3-20; and "Democratization and Decline of Trust in Public Institutions in Hong Kong," *Democratization*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 1996), pp. 158-80.
 13. Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, "The Attentive Spectators: Political Participation of the Hong Kong Chinese," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 3-24.
 14. Kristen Hill Maher, "Political Values in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania: Sources and Implications for Democracy," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 24, Pt. 2 (April 1994), pp. 183-223; James L. Gibson, Raymond M. Duch and Kent L. Tedin, "Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (May 1992), pp. 329-71; Andrei Yu Melville, "An Emerging Civic Culture? Ideology, Public Attitudes, and Political Culture in the Early 1990s," in Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger and Vicki L. Hesli (eds), *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 56-68; James L. Gibson and Raymond M. Duch, "Emerging Democratic Values in Soviet Political Culture," *ibid.*, pp. 69-94; Arthur H. Miller, "In Search of Regime Legitimacy," *ibid.*, pp. 95-123; and James R. Millar and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Introduction: The Social Legacies and the Aftermath of Communism," in Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger and

Vicki L. Hesli (eds), *The Social Legacy of Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-28.

15. Lau Siu-kai, "Hong Kong's Path of Democratization," *Asiatische Studien*, Vol. XLIX, No. 1 (1995), pp. 71-90.

Democratization, Poverty of Political Leaders, and Political Inefficacy in Hong Kong

Abstract

Political leaders have played an indispensable role in Third Wave democratization. Moreover, as can be seen in other countries, public disappointment with democratically elected leaders engenders disaffection with the democratic process. In Hong Kong, the partial democratic process was largely inaugurated from above — from the decision of the British to transfer a portion of political power downward on the eve of termination of colonial rule. The role of local political leaders in the struggle for democracy was limited, so was their capacity for mass mobilization in support of the democratic cause. There is pervasive public suspicion of the power and effectiveness of the political leaders. At the same time, people are not optimistic about the competence and moral integrity of future political leaders. Hong Kong's limited democratization has minimal potential for leadership formation and for forging strong linkages between leaders and people. The poverty of political leaders impedes the democratic process in Hong Kong, for it inhibits the formation of political and psychological ties to attach the public to democratization. Further democratization (which is stipulated by the Basic Law, the mini-constitution of Hong Kong after 1997) *might* alleviate the leadership problem. In the meantime, however, the partial democracy in Hong Kong has to function under public political disillusionment.

民主化、政治領袖的匱乏， 及香港人的政治無效感

劉兆佳

（中文摘要）

政治領袖在第三波的民主化中擔當一個不可或缺的角色，根據其他國家的經驗，公眾對經由民主程序產生的領袖如果感到失望的話，他們亦會對整個民主過程表示不滿。香港的局部民主化基本上是一個自上而下啟動的過程，它來源於英國政府在其殖民管治結束前把部分政治權力下移的決定。在爭取民主的過程中，香港的政治領袖的角色是有限的，而他們在動員群眾支持民主改革方面的能量亦不足。公眾對政治領袖的力量及效能懷疑，對未來領袖的能力及操守亦不表樂觀。香港的有限度民主化，對於政治領導的形成及領袖與人民之間的強固連繫的建立，作用極之有限。香港政治領袖的匱乏，阻礙了香港的民主進程，因為這個現象妨礙那些可以使香港人在政治上與心理上認同民主化的紐帶的形成。進一步的民主化也許可以紓緩香港的政治領導問題，不過就目前來說，香港的局部民主化卻只能夠在普遍的公眾政治幻想破滅的氣氛下蹣跚地前進。