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Noises and Interruptions

The Road to Democracy in Hong Kong

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Introduction

Scholars have experimented with various characterizations of Hong Kong's political culture: apathetic, utilitarian, alienated, populist, cynical, depoliticized, and so on.[1] All have attempted to answer the question of why large-scale collective mobilization has been relatively rare in the territory. In this study, we seek to clarify the local understanding of, and degree of commitment to, democracy. Based on a sample survey conducted in 2001,[2] the study depicts the extent of the acquisition and consolidation of democratic values in Hong Kong. In attempting to explain the antecedents to the acquisition and consolidation of democratic values, we will examine findings on the people's assessment of democracy in their governmental system (past and present); their sense of empowerment and their perceptions of the responsiveness of the system; their perceptions of the performance of democracy; and their trust in institutions. These conditions and the extent to which democratic values have been acquired in Hong Kong throw light on the challenges that Hong Kong faces in furthering democracy and the prospects for expanding the present limited scale of democratic rule. Finally, the paper gives an account of Hong Kong people's perceptions of the prospects for democracy in Hong Kong.

While full democracy has yet to be achieved in Hong Kong, this situation should not be interpreted as due to a lack of commitment by the people. As a matter of fact, this study finds that the Hong Kong people have a passion for democracy, whether procedurally or substantively understood, although a segment of the population does

not always consider a democratic system to be preferable. In addition, the Hong Kong people have made strong demands on the government with regard to its democratic performance. External political factors, which tend to act beyond the wishes of the people, have played an important role in creating a detour towards partial democracy in Hong Kong.[3] In light of the ambivalence that people feel about the possible conflicts between democratization and economic development and efficiency, and their sense of political powerlessness, we may say that they also have had a part to play in this process.

Noises and Interruptions

Hong Kong is a case that testifies to the limitations of the modernization theory of democratization. Despite having achieved the prerequisite socio-economic conditions for democratization from the 1970s onwards, Hong Kong has still not installed a fully democratic government. Before the 1980s, the Urban Council, a local assembly with limited jurisdiction, was the only government body that consisted of elected members. In 1973, the maximum number of eligible voters was likely less than 600,000 out of a population of around 4.2 million (Miners, 1977:177). The colonial Hong Kong government did not introduce democratic reforms in Hong Kong until 1981. The 1981 White Paper on *District Administration in Hong Kong* represented a turning point in government policy, introducing universal suffrage into Hong Kong's elections (Hong Kong Government, 1981). A District Board (subsequently renamed the District Council) was established in each district. Members were directly elected to their posts. All citizens were eligible to participate in District Board elections, held every three years. Now composed of 529 seats of which 400 are elected, the District Council elections still represent an important element of direct representation available to Hong Kong citizens in addition to the Legislative Council elections. The Legislative Council did not have an elected component until 1985, when the colonial government's White Paper of 1984 on *The Further Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong* ushered

in indirect elections by giving members of the District Boards, the Urban and Regional Councils,[4] and the functional constituencies the right to return 24 out of the 57 seats in the Legislative Council (Hong Kong Government, 1984).

Beyond the scope of various theories of democratization, external political factors played a significant part in the interrupted history of democratization in colonial Hong Kong (Kuan, 1991; Lo, 1995). Due to the bitter Sino-British row over the future of Hong Kong, as well as the cleavages among key stakeholders, the democratic project only resulted in partial democracy. It was not until 1991 that the Hong Kong government allocated 18 seats for direct election by geographical constituencies to the 60-member Legislative Council. The number of indirectly elected functional constituency seats was increased to 21, with the number of officials reduced to 4. This reform was in line with the promises of the Basic Law,[5] although falling far behind the aspirations of the people.

With the arrival of the new governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, in 1992, some significant political and administrative reforms, indirectly resonating with the people's desires for democracy, were introduced. Although Patten could do little to bring about a more democratic political system, he managed to work within the limits of the Basic Law to give Hong Kong people a taste of a much more democratic senate. For example, in the 1995 Legislative Council elections, apart from the 20 seats for direct election by geographical constituencies, functional constituency seats were increased from 21 to 30. Also, with the redefinition of functional constituencies, more than 1.1 million registered voters were entitled to participate in the functional constituency elections. In the 1991 election, only around 70,000 people were eligible to vote in these elections. All official and appointed seats in the Council were abolished. The central government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) viewed all of these proto-democratic moves with suspicion, just as they did the supporters of democracy in Hong Kong. As tensions heightened in 1996, China inaugurated an appointed Provisional Legislative Council that was returned in 1995 and whose term was supposed to expire in 1999. Once again, Hong Kong's political fate was in the hands of its

sovereign governments, as it had been at the time of the establishment of the British colony a century and a half earlier.

The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) enacted in 1990 envisages a gradual and controlled programme of democratic transition. Universal suffrage is proclaimed as the long-term goal. In the interim, until the year 2007, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR is to be indirectly elected by an Election Committee of delegates who are in turn selected on the principle of functional representation. The legislature is to be filled by 60 members returned by three different constituencies: the above-mentioned Election Committee, the functional constituencies, and the geographical constituencies. To ensure an executive-led government and to prevent the popularly elected politicians from controlling a legislative majority, the proportion of seats directly elected from geographical constituencies may be slowly expanded up to one half of the membership of the legislature in 2007. However, in such a partial democracy, the intention behind the holding of elections is not to select people to form the government. Elections are not a contest between the incumbent rulers and the challengers; therefore, such elections do not serve to ensure political accountability. Apart from the denial of universal suffrage and violation of the principle of "one man, one vote," the Basic Law also imposes severe limitations on the constitutional competence of the legislature. Legislators are not allowed to introduce bills related to public expenditure, political structure, or the operation of the government. Nor may they introduce bills relating to government policies without the written consent of the Chief Executive. In addition, for a private member's bill to be passed, a majority vote of both the category of directly elected lawmakers and the other categories of non-directly elected lawmakers is required.

A weak legislature goes well with a strong executive. Hong Kong has an executive-led system of government. Under this system, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, like the Governor during the colonial era, is the head of the region. While the appointed members of the Executive Council assist the Chief Executive in policymaking, the day-to-day operations of government are left to the discretion of the civil servants, supposedly politically neutral, who thus will function

with optimum efficiency. In 2002, Tung Chee-hwa implemented the Accountability System for Principal Officials. The Executive Council is now comprised of 14 Principal Officials and 5 non-official members. They make politically sensitive decisions and shoulder all political responsibilities. Given the lack of adequate legislative checks and balances on the executive, many in Hong Kong see this system as dangerous: Tung can control who is in or out of the circle of power.

Hong Kong has had a robust but divided civil society, which helps to explain why massive movements for democratization have not taken place. Before political parties burgeoned in the 1980s as a result of the introduction of partial elections, Hong Kong had numerous social organizations and an active mass media, most of which were popularly labelled by their political alignment with respective regimes as left, right, or centre. Never lacking in political activity, the territory was notorious for the struggle for hegemony between the supporters of the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang. On top of this, Hong Kong has had a historically liberal tradition, ushered in by the Reform Club of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Civic Association, and handed down by a colonial government that exalted a free Hong Kong individuality while denouncing a collective communist identity (Lam, 2004). As this study has found, this liberal tradition partially explains the people's passion for freedom and rights.

The political groups and parties that have emerged since the 1980s have more or less been organized for the purpose of winning the limited governmental power open to them through electoral means. Together, they represent various sections of the public and diverse political views, but can basically be differentiated by the extent to which they are pro-establishment or pro-democracy — although this is not the only line of cleavage in Hong Kong.[6] For instance, the Democratic Party, a merger of the former Meeting Point and United Democrats of Hong Kong, is critical of both the Chinese and Hong Kong governments, and supports a quicker pace of democratization. The Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong is comprised of local affiliates of Beijing and has been a stable pro-government force. The Liberal Party is composed mainly of businesspeople and

usually adopts a pro-government stance. While the political divisions in society have rendered consolidation of a strong democratic force difficult, the limited membership in the existing political parties has also made them weak leaders for democratization in Hong Kong.[7]

Unlike some other countries, Hong Kong is a partial democracy. The problem for Hong Kong is not democratic consolidation or improving the quality of democracy, but completing the installation of a democratic system. Although the relationships among economic development, political culture, and democracy are indeterminate,[8] the public's belief in democratic legitimacy matters in a democratic transition. Democratic legitimacy, defined as the belief of citizens in the legitimacy of democracy, or their commitment to democracy as the most preferred type of regime, serves as a critical condition for successful democratization (Montero et al., 1997; Kuan and Lau, 2002:59, 65). How do the people feel about their system of partial democracy? Do they want further democratization? Answers to these questions will shed light on the prospects for expanding Hong Kong's system of partial democracy. In the following discussion, we will look at the features of Hong Kong's democratic culture. As we will show, although politically frustrated, Hong Kong people have not given up their aspirations for democracy.

Hybridity and Ambivalence in Hong Kong's Democratic Culture

This section will investigate the local conception of democracy and the various dimensions of democratic commitment in Hong Kong, including how far various authoritarian alternatives are rejected, and the desirability, preferability, suitability, priority, and efficacy of democracy.

The Hybridity of the Understandings of Democracy

Table 1 shows that democracy is largely understood in liberal terms as freedom and liberty (60.7%) which mostly include freedom of speech, of the press, association, belief, and individual choice. The

Table 1 The Understandings of Democracy

Meaning of democracy	Frequency	Percentage of valid cases
Freedom and liberty	390	60.7
In other abstract and positive terms	124	19.3
Social equality and justice	116	18.1
In generic or populist terms	105	16.4
Political rights and democratic institutions and processes	75	11.7
In negative terms	54	8.4
Good government	35	5.4
Market economy	8	1.2
Others	89	13.9
Total responses	996	155.1

Note: The respondents could give up to three answers. There were 642 valid cases and 169 missing cases.

high figure for this category is likely due to the history of a liberal tradition in Hong Kong, where the colonial government was more willing to offer freedom than political rights. It is also the legacy of a society consisting largely of immigrants who escaped from mainland China to Hong Kong in pursuit of a better life. The love of freedom has thus become an intrinsic element of the local identity. Along with this, we see another significant percentage under "in other abstract and positive terms" (19.3%). This category is mostly comprised of the understanding of democracy as the preservation of a democratic style in society, embodied in such ideas as communication, compromise, tolerance, and rationality. Relatively little attention is paid to political rights and democratic institutions and processes (11.7%), for example, elections and a competitive party system.

Although the ideas of freedom, liberty, and democratic institutions and processes are closely tied to each other, they refer

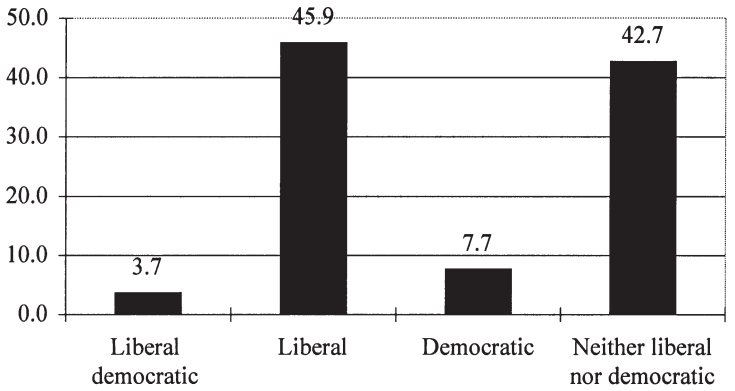
to separate phases of democratization. Scholars have pointed out that the differentiation of liberal and democratic notions in understandings of democracy is significant, as this delineates both the distinctiveness and interconnectedness of the processes of liberalization and democratization. While liberalization refers to the fight for a system of government that guarantees individual liberty and rights, democratization has a clear purpose of making a system of government representative of the whole population by introducing competitive elections. Without liberalization, democratization may exist in form only. Without democratization, liberalization may be easily manipulated and retracted (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Lo, 1995:2-4). The processes of liberalization and democratization may converge if actors consider rule by the people as the best way to guarantee individual liberty and rights.

However, such a convergence appears remote in Hong Kong, as reflected from the above discussion that ideas of freedom and liberty predominate in local conceptions of democracy. Further, by regrouping the various understandings of democracy into the categories of liberal democratic, liberal, democratic, and neither liberal nor democratic, Figure 1 demonstrates the extent to which the respondents view democracy in liberal and/or democratic terms.[9] Democracy in Hong Kong is viewed predominantly in liberal (45.9%) rather than democratic (7.7%) or liberal democratic (3.7%) terms.

Apart from the category of "liberal," another category stands out in Figure 1. This is the understanding of democracy as "neither liberal nor democratic" (42.7%). This category comprises notions of democracy as social equality and justice, social entitlements, government for the people that is responsive to their needs, and others. It testifies to the substantive emphasis of the local understanding of democracy, which competes with the liberal emphasis.

Specifically, Table 1 shows that the category of "social equality and justice" is significant in understanding conceptions of democracy in Hong Kong (18.1%). This category primarily includes the ideas of social equality and social justice, social rights and entitlements, and equality of opportunities. The category of "others" (13.9%) similarly testifies to the substantive emphasis of the local understanding

Figure 1 Level of Understanding of Liberal Democracy (%)



Note: There were 642 valid cases and 169 missing cases.

of democracy. Half of the responses in this category recognize democracy as direct participation and the freedom to demonstrate and voice one's concerns. On the other hand, ideas of democracy in Hong Kong are interestingly close to the concept of *min-ben* in traditional Chinese political culture. *Min-ben* means a government for the people and refers to substantive outcomes of governance. As shown in Table 1, the category of "in generic or populist terms" constitutes 16.4% of the total valid cases. It is comprised chiefly of understandings of democracy as government for the people that is responsive to their needs, cares for the people, and governs in their interest. In this light, a substantial proportion of the respondents view democracy in substantive terms, as a political opportunity to create caring institutions that are also capable of generating structural fairness.

Thus, the Hong Kong notion of democracy is both liberal and substantive in emphasis but also marginally manifests support for democratic rights and institutions. Interestingly, it contains both westernized traits of individualism and traditional Chinese cultural

definitions of good governance. These findings point to the importance of strengthening the democratic notions, relative to the liberal notions, in local understandings of democracy, to cultivate more commitment to democratization among the people of Hong Kong.

As alluded to above, the hybridity of the Hong Kong notion of democracy is bred within the history of the territory. On the one hand, the historical nature of Hong Kong as an immigrant society, the older generation of which fled from communist rule to pursue individual and familial development, has foreshadowed the people's love for freedom and liberty. Hong Kong people have had experience with China. What China has set, however, is a counter-role-model of governance. In addition, the development of Hong Kong into a cosmopolitan city where the colonial Hong Kong government promoted a laissez-faire policy and where the ideology of the market prevails has also contributed to a cultural attachment to freedom and liberty. On the other hand, Hong Kong is a Chinese society; thus, it is no surprise that the people still have a tendency to look to a traditional Chinese model of good governance, of *min-ben*. The colonial experience of the people has further reinforced their wish for substantive democracy, which is a political opportunity to create caring institutions and generate more structural fairness.

The Ambivalence towards Democracy: Desirable but Not Always Suitable

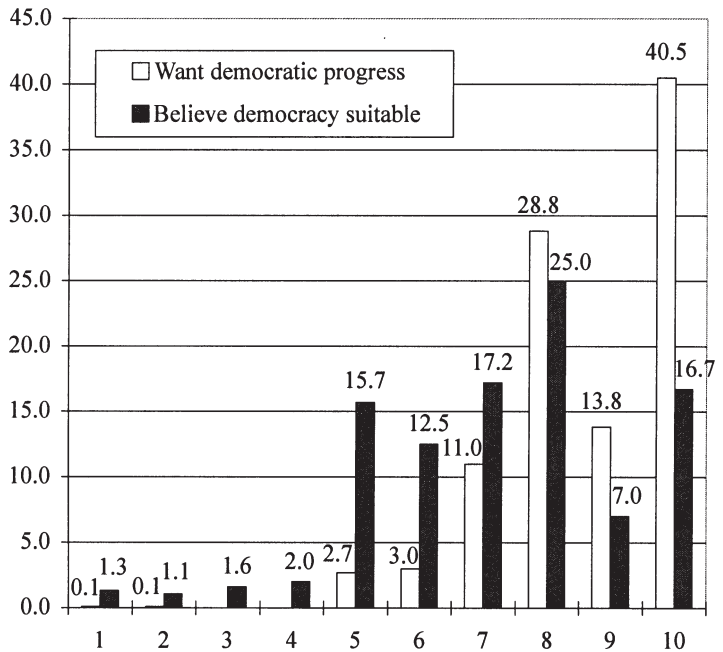
While hybridity is a salient characteristic of the democratic culture in Hong Kong, ambivalence is another. The following discussion will show that, although the people desire democracy as an ideal, it is not considered always suitable because it leads to a conflict of values.

There is no doubt that the people of Hong Kong aspire to democracy in principle. In our survey, the respondents were asked to indicate how much democracy they want Hong Kong to achieve, using a ten-point scale with "1" denoting complete dictatorship and "10" complete democracy. No less that 40.5% of the respondents indicated that they want "complete democracy," and 42.6% want "close to complete democracy"; that is, from points eight to nine inclusive (Figure 2).

To depict the extent of democratic progress towards the political system desired by our respondents, we compared their ratings of how much democracy they want Hong Kong to achieve with how democratic the present Hong Kong is. The positive difference between the two scores, ranging from one to nine, denotes the extent of the democratic progress wanted. The result is very impressive: 93.7% of the respondents want the current political system to become more democratic.

Given their passion for democracy, it is no surprise that the people of Hong Kong dislike many hypothetical authoritarian alternatives of

Figure 2 Desirability and Suitability of Democracy (%)



Note: There were 732 valid cases for "want democratic progress" and 691 for "believe democracy suitable."

governance.[10] There is a strong consensus against personal rule by a strong leader (82.4%), one-party rule (77.1%), military rule (94.3%), and rule by experts (85.4%).[11] Respondents feel more resistant to military rule than to one-party rule. A great majority of the cases (70.8%) reject three or all four undemocratic alternatives.

Despite the people's love for democracy, they do not necessarily consider such a system suitable for Hong Kong. On a ten-point scale that runs from "1" for the total unsuitability of democracy for Hong Kong to "10" for total suitability, 48.7% of the respondents gave a rating of eight through ten, indicating that about half of them find democracy very suitable for Hong Kong. A significant proportion of our respondents hesitated to select democracy unconditionally, although most of them want complete or close to complete democracy (Figure 2). Why is the reason for this? What are the barriers to the total endorsement by the people of democracy as a system suitable for Hong Kong?

The people's ambivalence about democracy is also revealed by another set of figures (Table 2). When raised in the context of alternative forms of government, or alternative values, democracy does not necessarily enjoy priority in the eyes of the public. Only about half of the respondents (45.7%) consider democracy always preferable to any other kind of government. The figure ranks Hong Kong the second lowest in Asia, higher than Taiwan but lower than all other Asian countries. For another one-third of the respondents (36.3%), it does not matter whether the government is democratic or not, and about one-fifth (18.1%) would prefer an authoritarian government under some circumstances. On this point, opinions are quite divided.

Although the people desire complete or close to complete democracy, some people would give up this goal in situations involving other considerations, making democracy a lesser or less urgent value. So, at most, the figures illustrate divided opinions over a conflict of values. At worst, some values are considered more important than democracy. What are these considerations? What are the situations that prompt people to relinquish democracy? We designed a number of questions to probe these conflicts between democracy and other

Table 2 Preferability, Efficacy, and Priority of Democracy (%)

Country/Region	Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government	Democracy can solve social problems	Democracy is much more/more important than economic development
Hong Kong	45.7	47.4	9.0
Japan	68.5	63.1	32.2
Korea	49.0	72.0	19.0
Mainland China	53.9	60.4	22.2
Mongolia	54.9	76.3	26.6
Philippines	64.0	61.0	19.8
Taiwan	40.4	46.8	10.6
Thailand	84.3	90.8	16.7

Source: East Asia Barometer: A Comparative Survey of Democratization and Value Changes.

considerations. With regard to whether democracy can solve social problems, we encountered another division. About half of the respondents (47.4%) think it can, as against the other half (52.2%) who think it cannot.[12] Again, Hong Kong ranks low in this regard among the countries in the comparison (Table 2). The opinion on the issue of democracy versus a strong government with authority was equally divided, with 48.7% supporting democracy and 51.3% supporting a strong government with authority.[13]

However, the respondents are extremely unified in their view of the relative importance of economic development. Less than one-tenth (9%) regard democracy as more important than economic development (Table 2). The rest believe the reverse to be true (79.5%), or that both are equally important (11.5%). In the same vein, 80.9% of the respondents preferred an efficient but insufficiently democratic government to a government that is democratic but inefficient, as against 19.1% who opted otherwise.

The above findings expose those conflicts in values that may have informed the respondents' weak commitment to democracy as the best political regime under all conditions. Among the competing values, economic considerations and considerations of efficiency are considered overwhelmingly important by all of the groups holding different views of democracy. The overall percentage of cases that accentuate the relative importance of economic development is 80%. However, even among those who regard democracy as always preferable, as many as 72.3% of them would opt for economic development if they had to make a choice between it and democracy. Equally interesting is that, among those indifferent to all political systems, a particularly high proportion (89%) consider economic development to be more important than democracy. With regard to those who think authoritarian governments can be preferable under some circumstances, 81.2% prefer economic development to democracy, which is close to the overall percentage distribution. A similar pattern is found in the relationship between an efficient government and the desirability of democracy. The proportion of respondents opting for a government that is efficient but not democratic enough ranges from 77.4% to 86.6% across varying preferences for democracy (Table 3).

Although the people of Hong Kong care about the efficiency of the executive, they also respect the rule of law, an intrinsic element of democracy. Again, this finding reflects the ambivalence embedded in their democratic culture. Table 4 shows that only a small section of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed with the view that the Hong Kong government can disregard law when solving big problems (21.3%), and that the end is more important than the means for political leaders (15.1%). However, opinions are divided as to whether or not judges should accept the views of the executive in important cases and whether or not government can accomplish its work if the legislature is constantly checking up on it.

In this light, in Hong Kong, the obstacle to public commitment to democracy is likely the obsessive concern about economic development and government efficiency. As a matter of fact, a widely held view, prevalent especially after 1997, is that Hong Kong should be "an economic city" instead of "a political city," which presumes

Table 3 Considerations of Economic Development, Government Efficiency, and Efficacy of Democracy by Preference for Democracy (%)

Preference for democracy	Economic development is much more/more important	Preferred an efficient but insufficiently democratic government	Democracy cannot solve social problems
Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government	72.3 (322)	80.0 (270)	41.4 (295)
Under some circumstances, authoritarian governments can be preferable	81.2 (128)	86.6 (112)	64.4 (118)
It does not matter to me whether or not the government is democratic	89.0 (255)	77.4 (195)	60.6 (213)

Note: Figures in brackets refer to number of cases.

Table 4 The Rule of Law and Constraints on Power

Item	Strongly or somewhat agree (%)	Total number of valid cases
The Hong Kong government can disregard law when solving big problems	21.3	719
For political leaders, the end is more important than the means	15.1	729
Judges should accept the views of the executive in important cases	44.8	686
Government cannot accomplish its work if the legislature is constantly checking up on it	44.3	681

that Hong Kong survives through its economic achievements and through its success in repressing the emergence of politics. This view affirms the vision of the Hong Kong people as economic animals and sees society's primary goal as enabling economic activities to flourish. By the same token, demands for a faster pace of democratization are criticized for their "malicious" motives. Hong Kong people are often warned against pursuing too much democracy, with the suggestion that this will achieve nothing but an inefficient government. Also, it is claimed that there is no place within a democratic political system for resolving the polarization that necessarily accompanies economic development (Lam, 2004). Despite the fact that contradictions between democracy, economic development, and efficiency are not always true, they are very real to our respondents.

If democracy is not desired for its ability to achieve economic development and government efficiency, and to solve social problems, what is appealing about democracy? Because our respondents overwhelmingly define democracy as constituting freedom, rights, social equality, and justice, it is possible that, for them, these political values are the chief attraction. Although drawn to these political

values, the people's commitment to democracy is conditional, delivered only if democracy, defined as freedom and rights, is not in conflict with concerns over economic development and efficiency. As a result, democracy is desired to be an ideal, but is not considered always suitable. This discovery points to the ambivalence embedded in Hong Kong's democratic culture about the inter-relationship of democracy, economic development, and efficiency, and to the importance of resolving this ambivalence in order to cultivate a more perfect commitment to democracy among the people of Hong Kong.

Considered in total, measuring the various views of democracy expressed by our respondents by the scale of commitment to democracy,[14] we find that democracy in Hong Kong has both supporters (49.3%) and opponents (14.9%). The scale of commitment to democracy shown in Table 5 indicates that, on the whole, supporters considerably outnumber opponents.

What is worthy of note is that 15.8% are sceptical supporters. This group consists of respondents who reject all four authoritarian alternatives. Of them, 94.4% want democracy (giving a rating of six through ten on a ten-point scale) and 72.4% believe that democracy is a suitable system (giving six through ten on a ten-point scale). However, almost all of them (99%) do not consider democracy always preferable to any other kind of government or care about whether or

Table 5 The Scale of Commitment to Democracy (%)

Type	Per cent
Strong supporters	14.5
Moderate supporters	19.0
Sceptical supporters	15.8
People with split views	35.6
Weak opponents	9.0
Strong opponents	5.9
(N)	(811)

not a government is democratic. Furthermore, 90% of them prefer economic development to democracy, and all of them think that democracy cannot solve social problems.

Around one-third of the respondents (35.6%) are classified as "people with split views." A close analysis of this category reveals that about 41% of them reject none or one of the four authoritarian alternatives. These people are removed from the category of supporters of democracy. Another 59% reject two or three of the authoritarian alternatives. Upon further analysis, this group is found to exhibit a similar level of aspiration for democracy in the overall distribution. A slightly lower proportion of them consider democracy suitable (giving six through ten on a ten-point scale). Also, a higher proportion of the respondents in this group indicate that they do not care whether or not the government is democratic. Lastly, relatively more respondents in this group believe that democracy cannot solve social problems and prefer economic development to democracy. Overall, they are not classifiable under the present parameters. For instance, although some of them reject three authoritarian alternatives and thus are potentially classifiable according to the present definition, they can meet only one of the three other specified criteria of giving positive responses to questions on the desirability, suitability, and priority of democracy. It can be postulated that this is the group that is most ambivalent about democracy and, hence, does not maintain a thoroughgoing democratic stance in their answers.

Therefore, the commitment to democracy always depends on the strength of competing alternatives. Why is there ambivalent commitment? The above discussion demonstrates that this ambivalence is probably due to the hegemony of political discourses, particularly the discourse of "prosperity and stability" and that of "let's be an economic city, not a political city," which have become the leitmotiv for Hong Kong's development. The cultural obsession with pragmatic orientations in the territory has helped to sustain the hegemony of the discourse.

Overall, the local conception of democracy is a crossbreed of western individualism, colonial experience, and Chinese traditionalism. The people of Hong Kong aspire to democracy and

reject authoritarian alternatives of governance. Democracy is loved not for its capability in solving social problems, but rather for its embedded values of freedom, rights, social justice, and representation of *min-ben* governance. However, democracy is not always considered the most suitable form of governance. In some circumstances, it can be overridden. The above discussion unravels the ambivalence in Hong Kong's democratic culture and the importance of the competing values of economic development and efficiency for the people of Hong Kong. These findings show that, although the people's commitment to democracy is not unconditional, it has enormous potential for growth if sufficient steps can be taken to resolve the prevalent ambivalence towards the question of democracy versus economic development and efficiency.

Perceptions of Democratic Progress and Regime Performance

Given that our respondents define democracy as freedom and liberty, rights, social justice, and government for the people (*min-ben*), how do they compare the extent of democratization during the eras of Chris Patten and Tung Chee-hwa? Previous studies have found that, in Hong Kong, political discontent strengthens rather than undermines the legitimacy of democracy as the best form of government under all circumstances (Kuan and Lau, 2002:68). Therefore, is it possible that the discontent that people feel towards the Tung administration, which accumulated since Hong Kong's transition, will have reinforced their commitment to democracy? Before we address this question in the next section, let us first examine our respondents' views on democratic progress and regime performance.

As illustrated by Table 6, most of our respondents perceived no democratic progress since Hong Kong's return to China. About 60% of our respondents considered the political change as one of authoritarian reversal (40.9%) or authoritarian persistence (17.7%), meaning that they rate the present regime as less democratic than the past regime, or both the present and the past regimes as undemocratic.

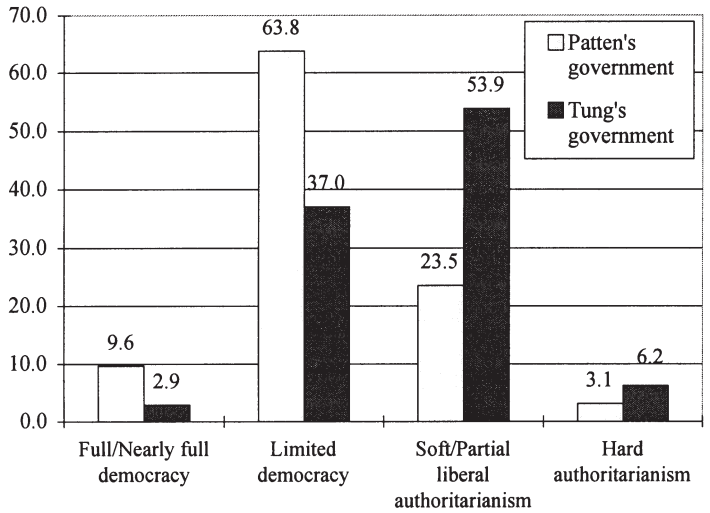
Table 6 Perceived Patterns of Democratic Progress since the Regime Transition (%)

Pattern	Per cent
Authoritarian reversal	40.9
Authoritarian persistence	17.7
Authoritarian liberalization	1.4
Limited democratic transition	6.0
Advanced democratic transition	0.9
Democratic continuity	33.1
(N)	(696)

About one-third (33.1%) of them perceived there to have been a continuation in democracy, believing that both the governments of Patten and Tung are democratic.

Regarding the democratic performance of the governments of Patten and Tung (Figure 3), on a ten-point scale, the majority of the respondents gave a score of six to eight (63.8%) or nine to ten (9.6%) to Patten's era, identifying it as a limited or a full/nearly full democracy. However, relatively fewer see Tung's government in the same terms. Only 37% of the respondents see it as a limited democracy and another 2.9% as a full/nearly full democracy. More of them, by giving it a score of between three and five, indicate that they think it is a soft/partially liberalized authoritarian regime (53.9%). Also, Tung's government achieves a lower mean score (5.2, standard deviation: 1.78) than Patten's (6.6, standard deviation: 1.81). It is obvious that although our respondents do not consider Patten's government to be fully democratic, Tung's appears to be even less so. Also, the interruption of democratization upon the transfer of sovereignty in Hong Kong certainly is not a positive indicator, given the people's aspirations for democracy. There is thus no wonder that 42.5% of our respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the ways in which democracy operates in Hong Kong.[15]

Figure 3 Extent of Democratization: The Governments of Patten and Tung (%)



Note: There were 712 valid cases for "Patten's government" and 724 for "Tung's government."

By comparison, more respondents perceive there to have been a deterioration than an improvement in Tung's governance in seven major areas. The government's political performance in all of the areas concerning democracy and the rule of law is perceived as worsening (Table 7). The dimension of equal treatment by the government (-40.5%) received the most negative assessment, followed by the independence of the judges (-30.5%), popular influence on the government (-21.4%), freedom of expression (-15.8%), and the freedom to join associations (-12.5%).

In a similar vein, Table 7 shows that a very unfavourable assessment is made of the present regime's policy performance based on the government's economic performance (-87.5%). This item also gains the highest mean score of -1.31 on a five-point scale, with -2 indicating the worst. The present government's transparency with

Table 7 Perceptions of Political and Policy Performance of the Present Regime

Performance	Negative change (%) (a)	Positive change (%) (b)	PDI (%) (b-a)	Mean score	Standard deviation	Total number of valid cases
Political performance						
Freedom of expression	34.1	18.3	-15.8	-0.16	0.77	744
Freedom to join associations	27.8	15.3	-12.5	-0.14	0.70	702
Equal treatment by the government	52.7	12.2	-40.5	-0.46	0.79	688
Popular influence on the government	31.4	10.0	-21.4	-0.26	0.69	634
Independence of the judges	44.1	13.6	-30.5	-0.34	0.80	633
Average	38.0	13.9	-24.1	-0.27	—	—
Policy performance						
Transparency of policy formation	48.9	18.9	-30.0	-0.36	0.88	670
Ability to get rid of corruption	25.0	26.3	+1.3	0.00	0.81	701
Economic performance	90.9	3.4	-87.5	-1.31	0.74	794
Average	54.9	16.2	-38.7	-0.56	—	—

Notes: PDI is the Percentage Differential Index. Its values range from -100 to +100.
The values of mean score, ranging from -2 to +2, indicate the level of perceived change in the political and policy performance of the present regime.

regard to policy formation also experienced a significant decline (-30%) compared with that of the Patten administration. Only in their ability to get rid of corruption are the present and the past governments perceived as comparable. In this regard, the Percentage Differential Index (PDI) records a tiny perceived improvement (+1.3%). Also, corruption at the government level is not considered widespread. The majority of the respondents believe that not many officials are corrupt (67.8%) or that hardly anyone is involved in corruption (8.3%).

To what extent and in what ways is the public assessment accurate? Sadly, the people's perceptions of the negative change in democracy and the rule of law appear to be in accord with the reality, especially if we take into account the interruption in the progression to more democracy upon the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong and the series of policy failures on the part of the government after 1997. For example, the municipal councils, which were originally directed elected to a certain extent, were abolished. The abolition was interpreted as a move by the government to reduce the influence of political parties at the district level and to centralize the government's power. The appointment system in the District Councils, which had been abolished by the Patten administration, was restored. The District Councils were weakened in function. In addition, because of the controversy over the right of abode stipulations in the Basic Law (regarding the right of abode of children of Hong Kong citizens who were born outside Hong Kong), the government invited the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to interpret the Basic Law. Also, the government has been criticized for its links with business elites. In 1999, the government's decision to give development rights to the Cyberport project to Li Tzar-kai's PCCW was bitterly criticized as a surrender to cronyism. Some property developers said that they had been excluded from the discussions before the project was announced. The government's series of attempts to push up the price of property has been regarded as favouring the property developers.

Equally true is the people's perception of economic deterioration. In fact, between 1997 and 2001, the rate of growth of Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant (2000) market prices declined. The GDP in 1997 represented an increase of 5.1% over the

previous year. However, the 1999 GDP saw only a growth of 3.4%. Although there was an increase of 10.2% in 2000, in 2001 the rate of growth decreased to 0.5%. Put together, all of these figures added to the soaring rate of unemployment of 5.1% in 2001 and around 7.9% in 2003, shows that the public's perception of economic deterioration is well grounded (Census and Statistics Department, 2003: 377, 2004:19).

From an outsider's point of view, Hong Kong people have a low level of political rights. During the period of 1997 to 2000, Hong Kong was consistently accorded a score of five or six on a seven-point scale, with seven reflecting the lowest, in the Freedom House score on political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, various years).[16] Political discontent has been aggravated by social grievances. In 2000, the level of social inequality in Hong Kong reached new highs. The number of people whose monthly income at or below the median level reached 1,090,000, and the poverty rate rose to 16.1% of the population from 11.7% in 1991. The Gini Coefficient in Hong Kong was 0.525 for 2001, ranking the territory above only 16 developing countries from South America and Africa (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2001; World Bank, 2001:Table 2.8).

Further correlation analyses show that the respondents' satisfaction with how democracy works in Hong Kong is moderately, and positively, correlated to their satisfaction with Tung's government (0.376, significant at the 0.000 level). Also, there is a moderate negative correlation (-0.298, significant at the 0.000 level) between the items of satisfaction with how democracy works in Hong Kong and the sum score of perceived changes in democracy and rule of law (Table 8).[17] The negative correlation of these two items means that the more dissatisfaction a person feels with the way democracy works in Hong Kong, the more likely he or she is to perceive the performance of Tung's government in democracy and the rule of law as worsening, and vice versa.

Indeed, the situation in Hong Kong is alarming. It is thus no surprise that the Hong Kong people have relatively lower levels of trust in the Hong Kong government among the various institutions under study (Figure 4). The Hong Kong government ranks the second

Table 8 Correlation between Satisfaction with the Way Democracy Works and Relevant Variables

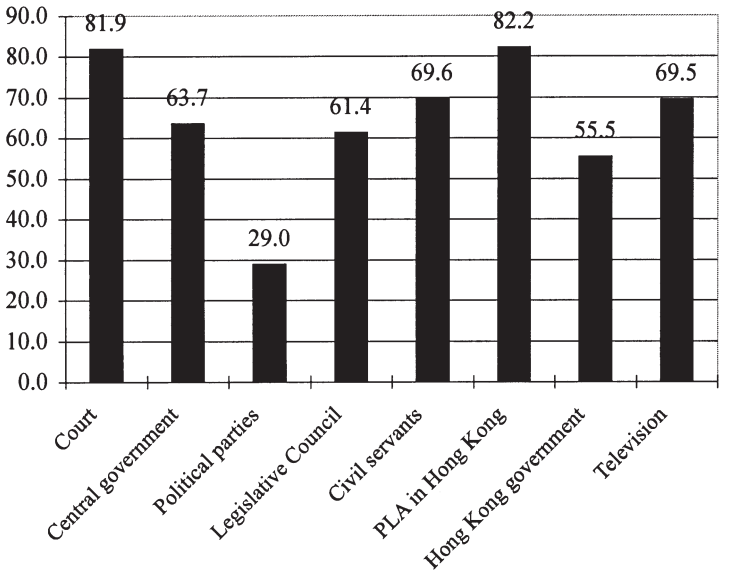
Variable	Pearson correlation	Significance level (two-tailed)
Years of formal education	0.164	0.000
Age	-0.124	0.002
Monthly household income	0.145	0.000
Evaluation of the economy today	0.153	0.000
Evaluation of the economy over the past five years	0.143	0.000
Satisfaction with Tung's government	0.376	0.000
Sum score of perceived changes in democracy and rule of law	-0.298	0.000
Perception of the government's performance in getting rid of corruption	-0.200	0.000
Perception of corruption in the government	0.046	0.271

lowest in terms of the amount of trust garnered (55.5%), reflecting the public's general dissatisfaction with the government's performance, as discussed.[18]

Further, there is a moderate correlation between the scale of trust and satisfaction with the way democracy works (0.356, significant at the 0.000 level),[19] and a relatively strong correlation between the scale of trust and satisfaction with Tung's government (0.474, significant at the 0.000 level) (Table 9). Again, these findings illustrate that political trust, evaluations of the government, and the perceived performance of the government in democratization are associated.

In fact, previous studies demonstrate that, relatively speaking, Hong Kong people approved of the colonial form of government before 1997 and probably still have fond memories of it.[20] Given the understanding of democracy as consisting of freedoms and liberties, and the fact that the colonial government had given the people

Figure 4 Trust in Institutions (%)



Note: There were 686 valid cases for "court," 715 for "central government," 619 for "political parties," 684 for "Legislative Council," 693 for "civil servants," 620 for "People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Hong Kong," 733 for "Hong Kong government," and 711 for "television."

Table 9 Correlation between the Scale of Trust and Relevant Variables

Variable	Pearson correlation	Significance level (two-tailed)
Satisfaction with Tung's government	0.474	0.000
Satisfaction with the way democracy works	0.356	0.000
Years of formal education	0.036	0.413
Age	-0.054	0.222
Monthly household income	0.012	0.790
Frequency of reading news about politics	-0.033	0.443

all of these, it is not surprising that the government was deemed acceptable. Only those who understood democracy in institutional or procedural terms would be dissatisfied. On the contrary, because of the interruption in the progression to more democracy and the series of policy failures after 1997, the present government is rejected by the people.

Regime Performance, the Workings of Democracy, and Democratic Commitment

We asked above whether the people's discontent with the Tung administration reinforces their commitment to democracy. It should be noted that unlike other countries, the perception of no democratic progress but authoritarian reversal, poor performance, or political discontent tends to reinforce the desire for and commitment to a fuller democracy. The relationship between the scale of commitment to democracy and the perceptions of the performance of the regime is evident (Tables 10 and 11). The more one perceives deterioration in various aspects of the performance of the system, the more one supports democracy. In general, supporters of democracy tend to give a more negative evaluation of the government's performance during the past five years than opponents of democracy. For example, concerning the independence of the judges, a higher proportion of the strong supporters of democracy feel that there has been no change and fewer of them consider the situation somewhat better. In a similar vein, while more strong supporters hold that freedom of expression in Hong Kong is decreasing, a lot more of the strong opponents see it as getting better. A similar pattern is also found in the rest of the tables comparing the scale of commitment to democracy and perceptions of the performance of the regime, except for economic performance.

The group of people with split views deserves some discussion. Although unclassified in their extent of support for liberal democracy, the respondents of this group appear to share many of the views of the opponents of democracy. For instance, more of them think that the government has become somewhat fairer than before. A higher

Table 10 Perceptions of Political Performance of the Present Regime by Commitment to Democracy

Commitment to democracy	Political performance (% perceiving negative change)				
	Freedom of expression	Freedom to join associations	Equal treatment by the government	Popular influence on the government	Independence of the judges
Strong supporters	42.9 (119)	38.8 (116)	63.7 (113)	32.7 (104)	37.1 (108)
Moderate supporters	38.2 (149)	30.8 (146)	62.2 (143)	31.9 (135)	48.1 (131)
Sceptical supporters	26.8 (127)	21.3 (122)	56.3 (119)	34.6 (107)	40.5 (116)
People with split views	31.9 (238)	24.6 (211)	42.3 (206)	28.0 (186)	48.1 (179)
Weak opponents	36.2 (69)	26.1 (69)	47.8 (67)	36.5 (63)	39.4 (61)
Strong opponents	25.0 (44)	25.0 (40)	39.0 (41)	25.6 (39)	50.0 (38)

Note: Figures in brackets refer to number of cases.

Table 11 Perceptions of Policy Performance of the Present Regime by Commitment to Democracy

Commitment to democracy	Policy performance (% perceiving negative change)		
	Transparency of policy formation	Ability to get rid of corruption	Economic performance
Strong supporters	51.3 (115)	33.1 (112)	94.1 (118)
Moderate supporters	54.3 (149)	16.0 (144)	94.1 (154)
Sceptical supporters	48.8 (119)	23.4 (124)	96.8 (127)
People with split views	42.4 (184)	28.3 (212)	85.9 (277)
Weak opponents	58.7 (63)	21.2 (66)	82.6 (69)
Strong opponents	38.1 (42)	28.6 (42)	95.9 (48)

Note: Figures in brackets refer to number of cases.

proportion of them rate the freedom to join associations as improving, and relatively fewer respondents in this group rate economic development as much worse. Overall, the group holding split views tends to give a relatively positive assessment of regime performance, similar to the assessment made by the opponents of democracy.

The scale of commitment to democracy relates to the level of satisfaction with the way democracy works in Hong Kong (Table 12). The overall percentages of respondents indicating satisfaction or dissatisfaction are 57.6% and 42.4%, respectively. It has been found that a higher proportion of the strong supporters are dissatisfied with the way democracy works (54.9%), in contrast to a higher proportion of the weak opponents, who feel satisfied (70.4%). Both the strong supporters and strong opponents are least satisfied with the way democracy works, while weak opponents and people holding split

Table 12 Satisfaction with the Way Democracy Works by Commitment to Democracy (%)

Commitment to democracy	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	(N)
Strong supporters	0.9	44.2	46.9	8.0	(113)
Moderate supporters	2.8	52.4	41.3	3.5	(143)
Sceptical supporters	0.9	58.4	38.9	1.8	(113)
People with split views	2.0	61.0	33.7	3.4	(205)
Weak opponents	1.6	68.8	28.1	1.6	(64)
Strong opponents	5.4	43.2	43.2	8.1	(37)
Overall	1.9	55.7	38.4	4.0	(675)

views are relatively satisfied with Hong Kong's limited level of democracy. While the strong supporters might feel unhappy with the system's undemocratic features, the strong opponents are likely to be unhappy with the conflicts and disruption brought about by the territory's democratic process.

Socio-economic Correlates of Democratic Commitment

Several socio-economic factors have been found to relate to the level of commitment to democracy. People with higher levels of education tend to be more supportive of democracy (Table 13). We find in the category of strong supporters relatively fewer respondents with only a primary level of education and more with secondary and university levels as well as vocational training. By the same token, relatively more of the moderate and sceptical supporters have received a university education. With regard to the strong opponents, more of them have received only a primary education. It is again noteworthy that more respondents in the category of "split views" have only a primary education.

What is the relationship between commitment to democracy and age? Supporters of democracy tend to be younger. More of them are between the ages of 20 to 39. Strong opponents tend to be older, with a higher concentration between ages of 40 to 59.

A higher proportion of the strong, moderate, and sceptical supporters of democracy have a monthly household income of HK$25,000 and above. The percentages are 36.8, 31.9, and 41.7, respectively. The overall percentage of respondents with a monthly household income of this level is only 27.9%. Opponents of democracy are found to earn less. More respondents of the group of weak opponents have a household income of between HK$15,000 and HK$24,999. The percentage is 38.8, as compared to the overall percentage of 25.4. Relatively more strong opponents report a monthly household income of below HK$15,000, that is, 54.7% compared with the overall percentage of 46.8. The people with split views earn even less, with many more of them recording a monthly household income of below HK$8,000.

It appears evident that those who were born in Hong Kong tend to be more supportive of democracy than those who were not. The percentages of strong, moderate, and sceptical supporters born in Hong Kong are 61.3, 67.5, and 64.8, respectively. The overall percentage of respondents born in Hong Kong is only 54.1. Also, a higher proportion of those in the group holding split views were not born in Hong Kong (60.8%).

In sum, supporters of democracy are likely to be those who evaluate Tung's governance unfavourably and feel less satisfied than other groups with the way democracy has been working during the past few years. Also, they tend to be better educated, younger, relatively well off in terms of their monthly household income, and to be born locally. The group classified as holding split views in the scale of commitment to democracy, which likely consists of those who are most ambivalent about democracy, tends to be less educated, much older, and with lower monthly income than those in other groups. Also, more of them were born outside of Hong Kong.

Table 13 Commitment to Democracy by Age, Education, Income, and Birthplace (%)

Socio-economic variable	Commitment to democracy					
	Strong supporters	Moderate supporters	Sceptical supporters	People with split views	Weak opponents	Strong opponents
Age						
20-39	61.6	52.0	45.2	32.3	53.5	25.0
40-59	28.6	37.5	39.7	34.4	39.4	54.5
60 and above	9.8	10.5	15.1	33.3	7.0	20.5
(N)	(112)	(152)	(126)	(279)	(71)	(44)
			($\chi^2 = 76.7$, df = 10, $p < .01$)			
Education						
Group A	14.4	20.9	18.0	53.5	23.3	56.5
Group B	52.5	49.7	54.7	39.9	65.8	32.6
Group C	16.9	13.1	8.6	1.7	5.5	6.5
Group D	16.1	16.3	18.8	4.9	5.5	4.3
(N)	(118)	(153)	(128)	(288)	(73)	(46)
			($\chi^2 = 146.2$, df = 15, $p < .01$)			
Monthly household income (HK$)						
Below 8000	12.3	15.2	8.3	33.6	10.4	21.4

8000-14999	26.4	25.4	24.2	29.0	25.4	33.3
15000-24999	24.5	27.5	25.8	21.2	38.8	21.4
25000-39999	20.8	20.3	19.2	9.5	19.4	11.9
40000 and above	16.0	11.6	22.5	6.6	6.0	11.9
(N)	(106)	(138)	(120)	(241)	(67)	(42)
			($\chi^2 = 78.9$, df = 20, $p < .01$)			
Birthplace						
Outside Hong Kong	38.7	32.5	35.2	60.8	43.8	48.9
Hong Kong	61.3	67.5	64.8	39.2	56.2	51.1
(N)	(119)	(154)	(128)	(288)	(73)	(47)
			($\chi^2 = 45.6$, df = 5, $p < .01$)			

Note: Education group A: (1) Illiterate, (2) Received no formal education, and (3) Primary education not completed/completed; group B: (1) Junior secondary school education not completed/completed, and (2) Senior secondary school education not completed/completed; group C: (1) Vocational education, and (2) University education not completed; group D: (1) University education completed, (2) Graduate level, and (3) Associate degree level.

Prospects for Expanding Hong Kong's Partial Democracy

It is true that the prospects for expanding Hong Kong's partial democracy is uncertain, partly due to the China factor and to the fact that democracy is locally understood predominantly in liberal terms, which might render the convergence of the processes of liberalization and democratization difficult. Another factor also influential in Hong Kong's case relates to the extreme political disempowerment felt by the local people. Almost all of the respondents somewhat or strongly disagree that they have the ability to participate in politics (96.2%). A large majority of them regard politics and government as too complicated for them (83.8%). Political scientists are interested in the way an unresponsive political regime affects the sense of political inefficacy felt by its people, and Hong Kong can be a case that will shed light on this point. A great majority of the respondents somewhat or strongly agree to the statements that the government is run by a powerful few (73.9%), and that people like them have no influence on the government (83.8%).[21]

How would people react if they felt consistently politically thwarted? The study shows that our respondents in general feel pessimistic about democratic development in Tung's government during the next five years. The respondents' ratings of the extent of democratization in the present regime and in five years' time are analysed on a ten-point scale, with "1" representing complete dictatorship and "10" complete democracy. The mean score attained by the present regime is 5.2 (standard deviation: 1.78), while the score expected in five years is 5.9 (standard deviation: 2.09). The people in Hong Kong expect only a little democratic progress in five years.

Table 14 presents the frequency of the seven types of expectations of democratic development. Of the respondents, 39.3% fall into the category that expects authoritarian persistence, meaning that they rate both the present regime and the regime that will be in place five years later a score lower or equal to five. Another 29.6% belong to the group that expects a struggling democracy, and 19.5% to the group that expects limited democratic transition. Both of the latter categories

Table 14 Expectations for the Future of Democracy (%)

Expectation	Per cent
Authoritarian reversal	2.5
Authoritarian persistence	39.3
Limited democratic transition	19.5
Advanced democratic transition	2.2
Struggling democracy	29.6
Developing democracy	5.3
Consolidating (maturing) democracy	1.7
(N)	(580)

of respondents rate the future extent of democracy as somewhere around six to eight on a ten-point scale. Of the respondents, 5.3% are relatively optimistic regarding Hong Kong as a developing democracy, giving the future Hong Kong system a score of nine to ten. However, this is not the major trend. Overall, these findings are consistent with what we have discussed about the political efficacy of the people and their evaluation of the government's performance during the past five years.

Despite the unfavourable factors mentioned above, several recent developments might make us feel cautiously optimistic about the prospects for democratization in Hong Kong. First of all, public trust in domestic political institutions is declining while trust in the central government is growing. A growing mutual trust between the people of Hong Kong and the central government could ease the central government's concerns about democratization in Hong Kong, even though they are still very concerned about the nature of the democratic camp, and about the protection of capitalist interests in Hong Kong.

Second, although they feel politically powerless, the people of Hong Kong do want to change their political system and government for the better. From their aspirations for democracy, their love for

such political virtues as freedom and justice, and their critique of the governance of Tung's regime, we see that democracy is no longer of marginal value in Hong Kong. Democracy is high on the people's agenda even though they do not envision themselves as having enough capability to achieve it. In fact, we envisage that demands for a more rapid pace of democratization will become more overt following the massive protest in the territory on 1 July 2003. Through this collective experience, the sense of powerlessness of the people is alleviated.

Third, the July 1 protest and its aftermath have awakened the middle class and the younger generation to the importance of participation. Pressures for further democratization have built up; and some elements of the conservative business sector seem to be becoming more sympathetic towards the idea. The remaining requirement is a political leadership that can bring together all stakeholders to build a consensus on the steps that should be taken for reform. Political elites and parties are trying to seize the initiative, the government is still defining its role, the legislative assembly is monitoring developments, and the Beijing government is changing its position from one of watching with concern to one of discreet intervention.

Conclusion

Democracy is not a side dish. For the people of Hong Kong, it is a political system to which they heartily aspire. It embodies the political values that they treasure. The above discussion is evidence that the people are attached to liberal values and are making strong demands on the government to guarantee social equality and justice, and to be *min-ben*. Furthermore, a good political system and quality governance for the people is what they associate with democracy. The intricate associations found between political trust, the evaluations of the government, and the perceived performance of the government in democratization testify to this argument. On the whole, supporters of democracy are likely to be those who are better educated, younger,

relatively well off in terms of monthly household income, and born locally.

However, the people's commitment to democracy is ambivalent, as some may not find democracy always suitable and preferable due to their concerns about possible conflicts among democratization, economic development and efficiency in governance. In addition, they feel politically powerless, a feeling that has been aggravated by the non-responsiveness of the government and the worsening conditions of democracy and the rule of law during Tung's era. This study uncovers enormous political frustration among the people, which is part and parcel of their political experiences during the enforced detour to a partial democracy over the past few years.

What is keeping a nascent democracy in Hong Kong from developing into a full democracy? Apart from the external factors unique to Hong Kong that have contributed considerably to the interruptions in democratization in the territory, the ambivalent commitment and sense of political powerlessness felt by the general population are no doubt additional reasons. This study points to the importance of resolving the prevalent feeling of ambivalence on the links between democracy and economic development and efficiency. Also, commitment to democracy will probably grow if the people can be empowered, both ideologically in terms of their understanding about the intrinsic value of democracy and practically with regard to their political influence. They will then see themselves as having more power to achieve their political ideals.

Notes

1. See, for example, Lau and Kuan (1988, 1995); Lam (2003).

2. This paper is largely based on findings from a sample survey carried out from 21 September to 20 November 2001. The representative household sample of adults aged 18 and above was conducted in multiple stages. From the 1,651 valid individual samples, 811 successful face-to-face interviews took place, yielding a response rate of 49.1%, which is quite normal in Hong Kong. Unless otherwise indicated, all frequency distributions refer to valid percentages with

missing values excluded from the analysis. SPSS nonparametric chi-square tests were conducted to compare the gender, age and educational attainment of the sample with that of the target population as reported in the Hong Kong 2001 population census. Age failed the chi-square test. The results reveal that the younger age group (aged between 20 and 39) is under-represented, while the more mature group (aged 40 and above) is over-represented. The analysis was conducted with a weighting for the variable of age.

3. Partial democracy refers to the situation in which Hong Kong has long enjoyed the rule of law and the benefits of civil liberties. However, it has not yet attained the minimum requirement for democracy, which is the formation of a government by democratic elections.

4. The Urban Council and the Regional Council were the same in structure and function but responsible for the administration of different geographical districts. They were abolished in 1999.

5. The Basic Law is the constitutional document of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

6. See, for example, Li (2000).

7. See, for example, Lau (1998).

8. See, for example, Inglehart (1997:Chapter 6), quoted in Kuan and Lau (2002:60).

9. Answers to the meaning of democracy that cover both freedom or liberty, and institutional or procedural dimensions are classified as "liberal democratic" understandings. The category of "liberal" understandings includes answers concerning only ideas of freedom or liberty, whereas "democratic" understanding refers to conceptions of democracy that are purely institutional or procedural. Answers that fall beyond the said categories are classified as "neither liberal nor democratic."

10. The authoritarian alternatives are hypothetical because, unlike other countries, Hong Kong has not experienced real authoritarian rule.

11. The four authoritarian alternatives are: (1) abolish the Legislative

Council and elections, let a strong leader decide all; (2) opposition party should not be allowed to compete for political power; (3) let the army rule Hong Kong; and (4) abolish the Legislative Council and elections, let experts decide all.

12. Relatively more respondents who think that democracy is always preferable also regard it as capable of solving social problems (58.6%). For those who prefer authoritarian governments in some circumstances or are indifferent, the percentages are 35.6% and 39.4%, respectively. There is an interesting affinity in the views of the latter two groups of respondents, which deserves further analysis.

13. More of those who prefer democracy under all conditions also opt for a democratic government over an authoritative one (60.1%). There are 65.1% of those who prefer authoritarianism in some circumstances choose an authoritarian government over a democratic one.

14. Respondents who satisfied all of the following conditions were classified as strong supporters of democracy: (1) Reject the four authoritarian alternatives (see Note 11); (2) Meet all the following criteria: (a) give six through ten on at least one of the scales indicating respectively the desirability and suitability of democracy (see Figure 2); (b) believe that democracy is always preferable; and (c) prefer democracy to economic development and/or believe democracy can solve social problems (see Table 2). Moderate supporters reject the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet only two of the three criteria of the second condition. Sceptical supporters reject the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet only one or none of the criteria of the second condition. Weak opponents of democracy accept only one of the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet at least two of the criteria of the second condition. Strong opponents accept two or more of the four authoritarian alternatives, and meet none or only one of the criteria of the second condition. People with split views are those who fall into none of the above categories.

15. We encountered divisions of opinion in this regard. A simple majority of the respondents (57.5%) expressed satisfaction on the way democracy works in Hong Kong. The values of "satisfaction with

the way democracy works" range from 1 to 4, with "1" indicating "very satisfied" and "4" "very dissatisfied." The mean score is 2.45 (standard deviation: 0.6), which signifies this division.

16. During the period 1997-2000, Hong Kong was rated as partly free (6,3 PF or 5,3 PF). "PF" represents a state of being partly free. The former score indicates the extent of the political rights enjoyed by the people and the latter the civil liberties. Hong Kong was rated "4,3 PF" or "5,3 PF" from the 1980s to 1997. With regard to the extent of freedom, Hong Kong has received a score of "3" all along.

17. Which variables contributed to the levels of satisfaction? Relevant variables are analysed, including years of formal education, age, monthly household income, evaluation of the economy today, evaluation of the economy over the past five years (evaluations of the economy are analysed on a five-point scale, with "1" representing very good and "5" very bad), the satisfaction with Tung's government, the sum score of perceived changes in democracy and rule of law ("-2" represents much worse, "-1" somewhat worse, "0" much the same, "1" somewhat better, and "2" much better), perception of the government's performance in getting rid of corruption, and perception of corruption in the government (Table 8). Almost all correlations are significant at the 0.05 level or below (two-tailed) except for the item of perception of corruption in the government. Significant correlations run from as small as -0.124 (age) to as large as 0.376 (satisfaction with Tung's government). In addition, the satisfaction that people feel with the way democracy works in Hong Kong appears to relate to their birthplace. More of those whose birthplace is not Hong Kong feel satisfied or very satisfied with the way democracy works (69.5%), as compared to those born in Hong Kong (48.7%). This appears logical, as the following discussion shows that supporters of democracy tend to have born locally (see Table 13).

18. Also noteworthy, the percentage of trust in political parties is alarmingly low (29%), which helps explain the weakness of partisanship in Hong Kong. Ironically, there is a relatively high degree of trust in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Hong

Kong (82.2%) and in the central government (63.7%). A great majority of the respondents vest their trust in the courts (81.9%), testifying to the prevalent belief in the rule of law among the people of Hong Kong. Some institutions or groups also have the trust of a majority of respondents, including television (69.5%), civil servants (69.6%), and the Legislative Council (61.4%).

19. A scale of trust in democratic institutions was constructed by combining the items of trust for the courts, the central government, political parties, the Legislative Council, and the Hong Kong government. The scale ranges from 5 to 20, with a higher score indicating more trust. Overall, the scale shows that there are relatively more responses of the value of "11" (21%), followed by "10" (17.5%) and "12" (16.2%).

20. The following figures collected from previous studies testify to our argument. In a 1995 study, 63.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement that "although the current political system is imperfect, it is still the best under the circumstances." (Data derived from "A Survey of Voting Behaviour of Hong Kong Electorate 1995".) In other studies conducted in 1985 and 1990, 74% and 59% of the respondents, respectively, indicated agreement with this statement. (Data derived from Lau and Kuan (1988:74) and the "Hong Kong Social Indicators Survey 1990: Module D.")

21. The above four items were grouped into two summary measures. While one indicates the level of citizen empowerment, the other signifies the perception of the level of system responsiveness. Each summary measure yields an ordinal scale ranging from "-4" to "+4." A great majority of the respondents gave a low rating ("0" to "-2") to the citizen empowerment measure (84.8%) and the system responsiveness measure (85.4%). There is no question that the extent to which the people feel politically empowered directly relates to how responsive they see the system as being. Our findings demonstrate this association. The more a person finds the system to be unresponsive, the more likely this person is to feel disempowered. The correlation between these two factors is 0.31, significant at the 0.000 level (two-tailed).

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Noises and Interruptions

The Road to Democracy in Hong Kong

Abstract

This study depicts the extent of the acquisition and consolidation of democratic values in Hong Kong. In attempting to explain the antecedents to the acquisition and consolidation of democratic values, we also examine the findings on the people's assessment of democracy in their governmental system, their sense of empowerment and their perceptions of the responsiveness of the system, their perceptions of the performance of democracy, and their trust in institutions. Finally, the paper gives an account of Hong Kong people's perceptions of the prospects for democracy in Hong Kong.

For the people of Hong Kong, democracy embodies the political values that they treasure. The people are attached to liberal values and are making strong demands on the government to guarantee social equality and justice, and to be *min-ben*. However, the people's commitment to democracy is ambivalent. Some may not find democracy always suitable and preferable due to their concerns about possible conflicts among democratization, economic development and efficiency in governance. In addition, this study uncovers an enormous sense of political powerlessness and frustration among the people.

噪音與打岔

香港往民主的路

林蔚文　關信基

（中文摘要）

本研究分析民主價值在香港的認同和強化程度及其前因，同時檢視香港人對目下的民主發展、系統回應能力和民主的效果的態度、對制度/機關的信任程度，以及他們的政治效能感。最後，本文探索香港人對民主前景的看法。

研究發現民主確實包含了大多數香港人所重視的政治價值，包括對自由的執著、對政府保障社會平等和公義，及民本價值的強烈訴求。然而，香港人對民主的承擔是矛盾的，因為顧慮到民主、經濟發展和效率管治間可能出現的矛盾，有些人並不認為民主制度時常都可取和適合。本文同時發現香港人具有嚴重的政治無能感和挫敗感。

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