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Public Perceptions and Democratic Development in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Jordin Montgomery, *University of San Francisco*

ABSTRACT

Beijing's slow progress in implementing a more robust democracy in Hong Kong continues to sow citizen unrest. Considering the Basic Law, what prospects exist for reform given the outcome of governance disputes? By analyzing public polling data following significant political events, citizen expectations are used to project future patterns in government behavior. While popular organizing has yielded success in civil liberties, electoral change has consistently stalled until recent negotiations. Democracy remains a primary aim of Hong Kong political groups, who will continue to pressure leadership to close this deficit. The outcomes of past confrontations offer useful blueprints for reading political change in the future.

The acquisition and subsequent maintenance of democracy is often studied in the field of political science because of its potentially far-reaching implications. By knowing what variables affect different levels and practices of democracy, interested and affected groups can potentially affect efforts to achieve their goals. Scholars have posited a wide range of explanations for what factors may be responsible for influencing a society's trending toward greater levels of democratic institutions. These include, inter alia, civic participation, trade, economic growth, and collective identity. This paper centers largely on the role collective and individual civic variables play in the advancement or retarding of democracy as they relate to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Henceforth referred to simply as Hong Kong) and its quest for increased levels of suffrage. Promised eventual universal suffrage from Beijing, the people of Hong Kong have instead been met with a string of ambiguous and temporizing gestures from the Mainland, generating significant frustration. By channeling this increasing frustration with repeated delays for reform into civic action, Hong Kong protest movements have achieved notable success in defending civil liberties but not universal suffrage. Barring the unforeseen influence of political or social variables and based on collected data and an attention to history, these trends will continue to ensure the high level of political autonomy currently enjoyed by Hong Kong.

To demonstrate this bifurcation of achieved liberties into civil and democratic, the main theoretical framework used in this analysis is Gabriel Almond's landmark study on the role civic and political participation play in sustaining a democratic society. In addition, though written in response to declining trends in the United States, Robert Putnam's influential study on civic society translates well to other locales because it also offers insight into what can motivate political participation. After laying a foundation in political theory, I then give a summary of the history of Hong Kong's democratic efforts, beginning with the British return of sovereignty to China. This history is also punctuated by key events that have galvanized the local populace to strongly assert its dissatisfaction. Furthermore, these mobilizations are instrumental in understanding the impact of civic involvement

on a larger scale of Hong Kong's quest for greater levels of democracy and may also provide clues to the SAR's future. To demonstrate this, I will utilize Almond and Putnam's frameworks while applying related civic data to show empirically how efforts of the engaged populace are affecting the democratic environment. Finally, I conclude with policy implications based upon my analysis of history, the data, and what the future may hold for the movement itself—noting any practical applications they may have for Hong Kong's organized citizenry.

Before discussing the situation in Hong Kong, Almond's theory of popular participation and its connections with democracy provides a broad context for understanding. The relationship between the people and a state's democratic tendencies has been the subject of debate for thousands of years. Looking back in Western history, the Greek statesman Pericles saw an educated and active populace as a critical attribute—indeed responsible for the greatness of Athens itself.¹ Those not informed were deemed useless.² In the modern era, political scientists continue to study the phenomenon of political participation in many societies around the world. While many studies relate to more prominent nascent democracies around the world, those employing theoretical models offer much that can inform the evolution of Hong Kong's own democratic aspirations. Almond provides a general framework that states “the political culture of a nation is the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation.”³ He goes on to describe the “political objects” as comprised of three main parts: first, the “specific roles or structures, such as legislative bodies, executives, or bureaucracies; second, incumbents of roles, such as particular [...] legislators and administrators; and third, particular policies, decisions, or enforcements of decisions.”⁴ In the case of Hong Kong, these three components are shaped by its history as well as by how the people are socialized politically. This socialization can occur because of multiple factors, including influence of the media, globalization, irredentism from the Mainland, and even the extent of exposure to authority figures in early family life. In more industrialized nations however, this familial influence seems to be offset by greater levels of educational attainment.⁵

Because Hong Kong's educational system is largely British in form and execution, consistently high worldwide educational rankings among OECD nations have resulted in a large percentage of educated citizenry.⁶ It can reasonably be assumed that similar educational standards and civic characteristics present in the West are also passed on in Hong Kong and may result in similar levels of political participation and empowerment as found elsewhere in parts of the world with a strong legacy of Western educational and administrative influence. Furthermore, while some scholars like Samuel Huntington and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew have argued Confucianism in Asian culture is incompatible with democracy, Francis Fukuyama feels that in fact democracy and Asian cultural characteristics in fact complement one another. As evidence he points to the Confucian emphasis on education as a key similarity that contributes to compatibility. More specifically he notes the effect literacy and education have on nurturing an increased concern for noneconomic issues like political participation.⁷ This pairing of Confucian influence and the heavy presence of Western systems of politics, thought, and education offer further reason to expect the development of a healthy degree of political participation and awareness in Hong Kong.

In contrast with the previous theory, it is also important to briefly consider what may cause a decline in civic participation among people in societies based on the rule of law. While noting the strong connections between the quality of life, institutions, and the influence of norms and civic engagement, Putnam also notes the precipitous drop in American political involvement.⁸ This he ascribes to several factors: the movement of women into the labor force, mobility, demographics, and what he deems the “technological transformation of leisure.”⁹ While formulated for the United States in the 1990s, I believe these four reasons also have the potential to affect Hong Kong. In order to give context to the two theories, it is constructive to review important events that helped shape its history prior to the 1997 transition.

Hong Kong’s Seeds of Democracy

Prior to 1997, the people of Hong Kong began to agitate for greater political participation. While not widespread, rallies were held during the 1980s and the United Kingdom agreed to discuss the implementation of democratic measures in a limited form, giving rise to Hong Kong’s nascent democracy movement. The events of Tiananmen in 1989 also stoked local feelings of independence and solidarity with the emerging forces of freedom at home and abroad. Upon transfer of sovereignty on July 1, 1997, prior negotiations between China, Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom resulted in the creation of the “One Country, Two Systems” policy. This compromise allowed Hong Kong to keep its extensive civil liberties as well as civil and political infrastructure intact while ceding responsibility for military affairs and ultimate sovereignty to China. Key to the governance of Hong Kong is the constitutional document entitled the “Basic Law” that codifies these differences. One of the primary issues on Hong Kong’s political landscape that stems from the Basic Law’s content and wording is universal suffrage and Beijing’s strenuous opposition to its full implementation. Pro-democracy activists seek the direct election of both the Chief Executive and Legislative Council. The electoral procedure for both entities is addressed directly in the Basic Law under Articles 45 and 68, respectively. Both articles state that “[the Chief Executive and Legislative Council] shall be specified in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the selection of [the Chief Executive or Legislative Council] by universal suffrage [...]”¹⁰ As one might expect, the exact meaning of “gradual and orderly progress” is disputed. Opinions in society are generally divided between parties united in their desire for immediate democracy, known as the “Pan-Democracy” or “Pan-Democrat” camp, and that of the “Pro-Beijing” segment, named for those in favor of closer ties with the Mainland and a slower route to suffrage. In the years following 1997, issues of political reform and Beijing’s heavy-handed role in Hong Kong affairs have cropped up on numerous occasions, generating much friction. One example is the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress in Beijing which functions as a voluntary final arbiter over disputes in the Basic Law that the Final Court of Appeals is unable to resolve on its own.¹¹

In 1999, the Right of Abode conflict saw the Hong Kong Final Court of Appeals ruling on matters of residency within the region, sparking worry over the effect migrations of large numbers of Chinese from the Mainland might have on the local economy and quality of life. In response, the government sought the judgment of

the Standing Committee, which led to a reinterpretation of the original ruling, and thus a reversal. This judicial decision caused widespread dissatisfaction among concerned Hong Kong citizens and many within the SAR worried about the survival of a judicial system independent from Beijing's influence.

July 2003 saw the largest protests in Hong Kong since the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, prompting 500,000 people to demonstrate against a controversial anti-subversion law based on Basic Law Article 23.¹² This proposed legislation aimed to address the need for Hong Kong to enact a series of laws to safeguard its national security following the exit of the British, separate from those of the Mainland. It contains provisions for search and seizure as well as more theoretical definitions such as what defines a threat to the security of the state.¹³ This legislation was seen by most in Hong Kong as a potential avenue for a rollback of Hong Kong's civil liberties and a roadblock in the quest for democracy. Facing intense and focused domestic opposition, the law was tabled indefinitely and the democracy movement in Hong Kong gained a large measure of momentum.

Emboldened by this victory, the push for suffrage continued to gain speed with proposed constitutional reform meetings scheduled for early 2005. Many hoped these meetings would lead to universal suffrage in time for the 2007-2008 election cycle. However, in late 2004, Chief Secretary for Administration Donald Tsang quelled hopes when he stated categorically that anyone pushing for universal suffrage by these dates would be simply "wasting their time."¹⁴ This view on the election process was buttressed further in the same year when the Standing Committee weighed in on the matter and reinforced Tsang by specifically barring direct elections in 2007-2008.¹⁵ A significant blow to democratic hopefuls, the intervening of the Standing Committee into Hong Kong's internal affairs caused many to worry that Beijing was becoming increasingly intolerant of moves toward democracy.

Following the controversy over Basic Law Article 23 and amidst a sagging economy and plummeting approval ratings, Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa resigned in 2005. In a bold move, democratic elements on the election committee nominated a candidate for Chief Executive, thus introducing a measure of competition to the electoral process for the first time. In 2007, the dream of democracy came and went as Standing Committee deputy secretary general Qiao Xiaoyang declared his committee's view that, "dual universal suffrage" for the selection of the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council "shall not be implemented in 2012." However, "2012 may serve as a midway station en route to universal suffrage, which will be conducive to a stable transition," he stated.¹⁶ This was joined by the news that no suffrage reforms would come before 2017 for electing the Chief Executive and before 2020 for the Legislative Council. While disappointing, hopeful pan-democrats who warned of potential false promises and who continue to agitate for a 2012 date, this marks the first time concrete dates have been spoken of favorably by Beijing.¹⁷

Finally, events unfolding in the summer of 2010 offer several notable occurrences that give a glimpse into the process of political maneuvering by the Mainland government and the continued strength of the political freedoms enjoyed in the special administrative region. In a case bringing Hong Kong's free press under pressure, the controversial biography of deceased Communist Party Premier Li Peng and his role in the Tiananmen Square incident was set for publication—only to be halted for stated reasons of copyright uncertainties.¹⁸ In a twist of expectations, the

same publisher announced the publication and release of an excoriation of current Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao during the month of August. This eminently more contemporary and politically sensitive book, "Wen Jiabao: China's Best Actor," is has nonetheless sold steadily in Hong Kong despite threats to the author by Mainland authorities.¹⁹

In the most striking development, previous assertions by the Chinese authorities that Hong Kong democratic aspirations would remain the status quo were altered for a number of reasons. With the Hong Kong government's credibility increasingly in crisis over increased pressure from economic and domestic concerns, the Chinese government took the remarkable step of negotiating directly with the elements of the Pro-democracy camp in search of a compromise to the deadlock resulting from attempted constitutional reform. While the Pro-democracy camp fractured into decidedly moderate and radical factions in response to Beijing's overtures, what resulted were several concessions from both sides, and a sense of a constructive—although minor—move forward in electoral demands. While not securing an agreement for the outright direct election of representatives or the abolition of the functional constituencies, Beijing did allow for the alteration of the composition of the Legislative Council. Ten seats were added, five via direct election and five chosen by popularly elected District Council members, resulting in a full forty of seventy Legislative Council seats chosen by popular vote and up from the previous thirty of sixty.²⁰ While not exhaustive, this rough timeline of history and important events gives one an impression of the climate in which Hong Kong democracy advocates are working through both victories and setbacks. Having dealt with the background issues, I will now synthesize the theoretical frameworks previously introduced with evidence that I believe casts doubt on the prospect of full democracy in Hong Kong in the foreseeable future.

Theoretical Roadblocks

In Almond's theory of civic culture mentioned previously, democracy is said to relate to a society's orientation toward selected groups of what are termed "political objects." In the case of Hong Kong, attitudes toward democracy are significantly affected by these groups because of the former colony's unique history and experience. The first group of "pol. objects", specific roles or structures, are made up of legislative bodies, executives, [and] or bureaucracies.²¹ The second group, particular legislators or administrators, might be specific people that are associated with prominent grassroots movements.²² And finally, the third group, particular policies, decisions, or enforcements, may include influential decisions and rulings—such as two examples—that have shaped Hong Kong's history. In turn, these three categories are classified as either in the political "input" process or the administrative "output" process. This terminology refers to whether demands from the public are converted into policy or how these policies are enforced.²³ According to Almond it is the combinations of these categories and their classification as either input or output that influence levels of political involvement. Political parties, NGOs, and the media are "input" processes and the bureaucracy and courts are "output" processes. When a country has actors within each of these categories it is said to have a "participant" culture.²⁴ Hong Kong clearly retains considerable elements of each in its strong, unfettered media, many active political parties and outspoken legislators,

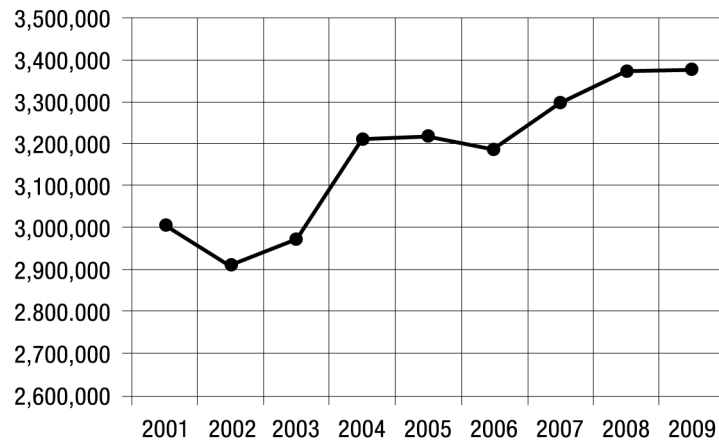
an independent judiciary, and its efficient bureaucracy.²⁵ The citizens themselves provide evidence through their unity in many protests, marches, and challenges to legislation they see as detrimental to the spirit of the Basic Law. The process by which these different entities became structured as they are is a function of both history and the political socialization of Hong Kong's citizens.

As previously discussed, this socialization is affected by many factors, including levels of higher education, which in turn contributes to higher levels of political participation.²⁶ 24.7 percent of Hong Kong's total population is educated beyond the secondary level—16.5 percent of which are degree holders.²⁷ This statistic translates to an educated class at least somewhere between 1.1 and 1.7 million strong—a number that has continued to increase since the 2003 figures of 13.6 percent.²⁸ For comparative purposes, as of 2003 those in the United States with similar levels of educational attainment were around 27 percent.

While this data seem encouraging, it is also important to briefly consider whether Hong Kong is susceptible to a decline in popular participation and what this could mean. In his analysis of the decline in American political participation since the 1950s, Putnam lays out several possible explanations that may be adaptable to Hong Kong: women entering the workforce, mobility, demographics, and leisure transformation.²⁹ While it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail each one, it is constructive to list them in passing. First, women are entering into the workforce in significantly increasing numbers. With women in Hong Kong enjoying the same *de jure* equality status as women in the West, it is possible that the increase in gross hours worked may reduce their involvement in civic organizations. Second, increased mobility can reduce acclimatization to one's surrounding community. Though this feature may not apply to Hong Kong because of its compact geographical area, the high population density may engender the paradoxical phenomenon of one feeling socially isolated in a housing estate of several thousand people. Third, changing demographics may affect a decline in participation through multiple scenarios. For example, demographics in the West reflect decreased marriage and birth-rates. These trends are very likely to take root in Hong Kong if they have not already because of their known occurrence in developed societies. It is unknown whether these trends decrease civic involvement because of longer work hours or less community engagement that may or may not be concurrent with lower birth rates. It is sufficient to say that the accelerated pace of social demographic changes could easily influence civic involvement rates.³⁰ Finally, Putnam describes a "technological transformation of leisure," which translates to large increases in television programming consumption that can direct individual focus inward, away from the community at large.³¹

To determine the presence of any meaningful trends first entails finding out whether political participation has fluctuated in any significant way. Below are graphs of Hong Kong's total voter registrations and subsequent turnout rates for Legislative Council elections since the 1997 transfer:

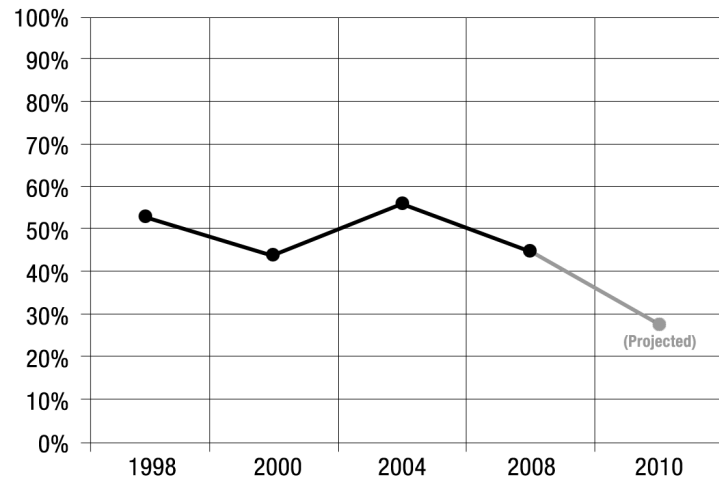
Figure 1: **Total Number of Hong Kong Registered Voters**



(Data from Voter Registration Statistics, Hong Kong Registration and Electoral Office; Hong Kong, 2009.)³²

In Figure 1, we see that after an initial large decline in 2002 and a minimal drop in 2006, the total number of registered voters has increased markedly on an annual basis. Noteworthy is the jump of almost 300,000 registrations in the year 2004—the first election cycle following the controversial proposed Article 23 legislation. This also offers a sign that in terms of raw voter registrations, Hong Kong is not suffering a decline in political participation.

Figure 2: **Hong Kong Voter Turnout for Legislative Council Elections, 1998-2010**



(Data from Voter Registration Statistics, Hong Kong Registration and Electoral Office; Hong Kong, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2008; Lim, 2010.)³³

Referring to Figure 2, turnout has fluctuated approximately every other election cycle. Mirroring Figure 1's increase in aggregate registrations, Figure 2 saw a significant increase in the 2004 turnout—most likely due to discontent over Article 23 legislation. Following a decline in 2008, frustration by a lack of progress toward de-

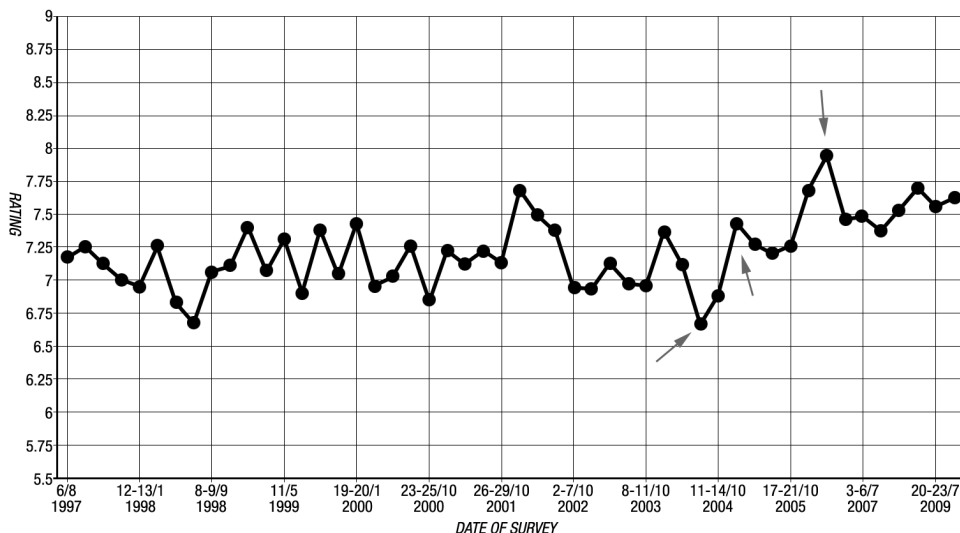
mocracy and the boycotting of the election by major pro-Beijing parties is expected to result in high levels of voter apathy—reflected in Figure 2.³⁴ Thus it is difficult to say whether or not Putnam's theory of declining civic participation alone is at work here. Hong Kong voters seem to turn out when much is at stake or in response to an incident or set of political circumstances present in the local climate. We will now look at two key events that highlight the mentioned mass turnouts: the 1999 Right of Abode issue and the controversial 2003 Article 23 legislation that sparked further activism.

In January 1999, Concerns over the Right of Abode and its potential to grant citizenship to the children of non-permanent residents were voiced by the government of Hong Kong and many citizens who felt that a large influx of Chinese from the Mainland would place undue strain on the economic and social systems of the city. As noted earlier, after the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal ruled in favor of a broader definition of citizenship, the Hong Kong government then appealed to the Standing Committee to interpret Article 24 of the Basic Law, which led to a June 1999 ruling that found their appeal to be in line with the government's demands. The ruling was subsequently appealed to the Court of Final Appeal but denied on grounds of the constitutionality of the Standing Committee decision. This outcome led to mixed responses, as fears over the influx of Mainland Chinese were assuaged when the Standing Committee sided with popular opinion. This apparent reversal negated the need for widespread demonstrations, though the subsequent questions of judicial independence raised even further suspicions, creating an entirely separate controversy over Beijing's superseding of the Final Court of Appeals.

However, popular frustration over the proposed anti-subversion law under Basic Law Article 23 offers strong evidence of the ability of Hong Kong citizens to take matters of politics into their own hands—which was, in this case, preserving the fragility of the status quo in the face of a powerful and determined central government in Beijing.³⁵ Fearing the use of the law as a tool to undermine civil liberties, 500,000 citizens came out on July 1, 2003 to protest the proposed security legislation. The middle of July saw not only the indefinite shelving of the controversial law, but also the resignation of two high-ranking officials within the Tung Chee Hwa administration in response to the protests and perceived need for public accountability. In the months that followed, pan-democratic elements achieved victory in Legislative Council elections, and hundreds of thousands again pressed for democracy and the direct election of the Chief Executive.³⁶ It is apparent that July 1 led to an awakening that emboldened Hong Kong citizens to understand that if enough of the citizenry mobilized, their grievances would be addressed. And yet, while many officials also favored passage of the security legislation, one should not take as coincidence that such a concession by the government was made over an issue unrelated to suffrage, a trend that Hong Kong protests have reflected over time. Along with the robust provisions of the Basic Law for protecting basic civil liberties, political activism has established both a precedent and a legacy in Hong Kong. Public opinion polls on areas of civil liberties falling under the protection of Article(s) 27-38 reflect, with some fluctuation, increasing levels of confidence in the rights of those surveyed.³⁷

For example, in the year following the shelving of the anti-subversion law, perceived freedom of speech levels first decreased before increasing significantly.

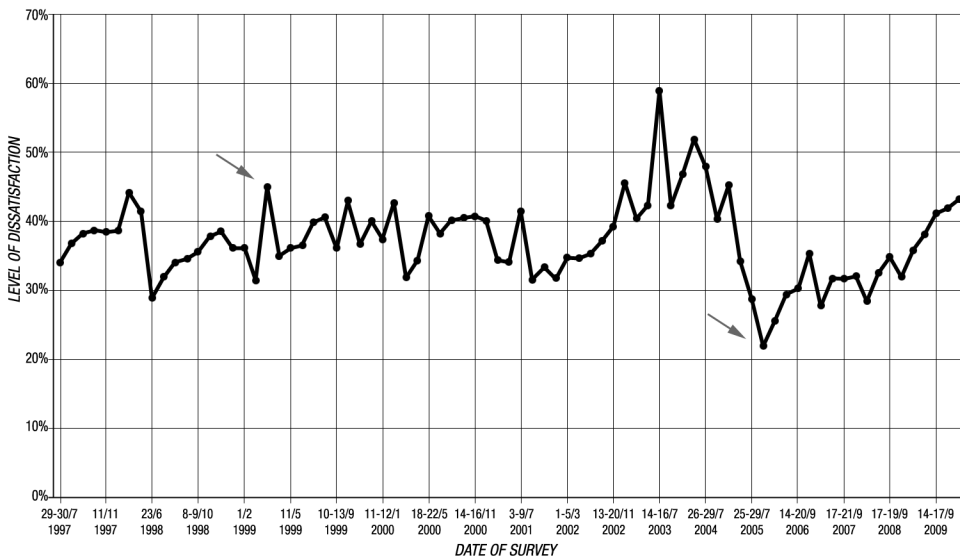
Figure 3: **Hong Kong Freedom Speech Longitudinal Status Poll (8/1997-1/2010)**; rating of appraisal of freedom of speech (per poll).



(Data from "Rating of Appraisal of Freedom of Speech," University of Hong Kong, 2010.)

By contrast, opinion polls gauging the government's efforts toward democratic development are much more varied:

Figure 4: **Hong Kong Democratic Development Status Poll (7/1997-3/2010)**; people's dissatisfaction with the Hong Kong SAR Government's pace of democratic development (per poll).



(Data from "People's Satisfaction," University of Hong Kong, 2010)

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Varying wildly over the years, the graph above offers several interesting data to consider. First, public dissatisfaction with democratic development increased almost 15% during 1999 and the judicial conflict over the Right of Abode. Second, pessimism continued to increase and rose markedly at the time of the 1 July Article 23 controversy. On the other hand, the public apparently became more heartened at the time of the 2005 poll, possibly in response to the resignation of Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa. Finally, public discontent with the pace of democratic reforms has been increasing since 2008, despite Beijing's indication that it is willing to consider suffrage. This frustration may be linked to societal doubt over the achievement of suffrage and associated skepticism over potential reform.

By using significant events in the course of Hong Kong's post-1997 history, we have been able to chart the impact of Beijing and the Hong Kong government's attempts to alter the status quo. When the rights enshrined in the Basic Law that cover protected freedoms are perceived to be under threat, protest exists as a viable and proven medium for popular participation to voice one's discontent. By contrast, this vehicle does not translate successfully when issues of democracy arise—specifically vis-à-vis universal suffrage and the right of Hong Kong to choose its own leader(s) and representatives. While this corollary may cast popular organizing efforts as somewhat futile, the implications of potentially having a predictable outcome offer a wealth of information that may prove fruitful for future civic and political leaders. Along these lines I offer several potential policy implications—practical and strategic—as well as where the movement may be heading as a result of new political opportunities.

Almond's theory describing the formation of a political culture details how Hong Kong's spirit of participation is rooted in its institutions. Subsequently, popular organization has tended to emerge in the wake of specific issues, most notably perceived affronts to civil liberties and the process of democratic reform and suffrage. The opinion polls provided show the creation of an expectation within the public at large: namely, the ability to preserve the status quo and the ineffectiveness of movements toward democracy. When the government attempts legislation that represents a potential threat to basic freedoms, the citizenry marshals its efforts and widespread protest ensues. The success of popular efforts during the anti-subversion bill controversy created a confidence reflected in the opinion polls and sent a message that any attempt at altering the status quo would entail significant resistance. On the other hand, the poll that surveyed progress made by the government toward greater levels of democracy reflected increased pessimism and an expectation that specific events may bring a setback in efforts—eventually leading to a consistently climbing rate of negative outlook on the matter.³⁸ It also is worth considering any potential decline in political participation as noted earlier. Particularly noteworthy is the possibility of what Putnam calls "intercohort" shift in opinion that sees growing numbers of individuals less interested in democracy and civic involvement than the preceding generations.³⁹

However, this reality does not mean that pan-democrat groups in the Legislative Council and grassroots organizations have not attempted to effect change. On the contrary, Hong Kong has a well-documented history of efforts to bring about constitutional and electoral reform. These efforts entailed repeated marches with protestors numbering in excess of 100,000, extensive debate among

lawmakers and even the resignation of prominent Legislative Council members in symbolic gesture.⁴⁰

These actions, while historically ineffective and when paired with an inflexible Hong Kong central government and regime in Beijing, create little cause for hope. The 2007 declaration by Standing Committee Deputy Secretary Qiao Xiaoyang that Beijing is open to eventual suffrage at some point in the future imbued much cynicism among Hong Kong people. With the current timetable for democratic reforms set at 2017 for Chief Executive and 2020 for the Legislative Council at the earliest, it is little wonder that many are skeptical. In response, prominent Democratic-party founder Martin Lee remarked, "If you throw a frog into boiling water, it will jump out right away. But if you put the frog in warm water and cook it slowly, it doesn't jump. We are being slowly cooked in Hong Kong, but hardly anyone is noticing."⁴¹ This pessimism is echoed in Pepper's assessment of Hong Kong's democratic future. She sees the structural changes dating to Beijing's 2004 intervention as inimical to progress on the electoral front for Hong Kong. By arrogating themselves the right to nullify any reform that upsets the existing balance of direct and indirect representative elections, Beijing effectively keeps the parameters for democracy susceptible to their caprice. This intervention of course is said to be in defense of any contravention of the Basic Law's design and intent.⁴²

It is amidst this climate of discontent and uncertainty that the events of the summer of 2010 unfolded, creating a much more ambiguous view of the future of Hong Kong's democratic aspirations. While the publication of a controversial book harshly criticizing Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao went ahead as scheduled, the outcome in the quest for democracy was not as readily apparent.⁴³ As noted earlier, following the resignation of Pan-democracy legislators and a stalled reform package that stood to be rejected by much of the Legislative Council, Beijing stepped in directly with an offer to negotiate with Pan-democrats. With negotiation rejected by the hard-line democracy advocates, moderate elements agreed and the talks began. This circumvention of the Hong Kong government as an intermediary signaled the seriousness with which the Mainland government viewed the matter.

With the talks completed, a tentative agreement was reached, as discussed earlier. The composition of the Legislative Council is set to undergo alterations, yielding ten more seats, five of which are subject to popular election, the other five nominally so via directly elected District Council members. In regard No promises were made regarding elections of the Chief Executive and abolition (and thus full direct election) of the Beijing-friendly functional constituencies. These concessions should not be disregarded, no matter how insignificant they may seem, should not be disregarded. This direct negotiation marks the first time Beijing has met with democracy advocates since the 1997 handover, and signals the presence of circumstances the Mainland government has not faced previously.⁴⁴ The exact reasoning behind Beijing's willingness to come to the table is unknown, though the following reasons could be considered as impetus to renegotiate. First, as Ma Ngok notes, Beijing is acutely aware of the crisis in credibility faced by the Hong Kong government and its inability to effectively address the matter of reform.⁴⁵ In addition, the volume of protest led by the more ardent democracy advocates threatens to siphon support from the more mainstream moderates. Unemployment, concerns over the economy, and growing disparities between rich and poor offer further

noteworthy factors to consider.⁴⁶ When taken together, the common thread among these variables is the potential for political and social instability—a condition which is anathema to Beijing. So while matters of democracy are typically not open for negotiation, Beijing has managed to grant moderate change to the electoral machinery while sidestepping the looming demand of direct election of the chief executive and abolition of the functional constituencies. Furthermore, by reaching out to the moderate Pan-democrats—overtures rejected by the hardliners—the Mainland government's main source of opposition in Hong Kong is now divided over how to proceed, relieving political pressure for the time being. The moderates see small concessions as progress nonetheless, while full democracy advocates see the negotiations as a betrayal of their core cause. More simply put, there is a split between pragmatism and principle.

Outside of Hong Kong, changes in the political zeitgeist within Mainland China may offer democratic activists even more potential political opportunities in the future. Disgraced former Communist Party Chief Hu Yaobang has long been seen as a pariah by the Chinese government because of disagreements stemming from his views on reform. Many within the government blamed Hu's leniency toward calls for change and flexibility as a catalyst for the subsequent Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. In the decades that followed, little was said about Hu and overt discussion was largely proscribed from the media. However, on the 2010 anniversary of his death, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao penned an essay in the People's Daily praising Hu's life and reminiscing over a trip taken together in 1986.⁴⁷ No mention was made of Hu's political career and legacy. While this may seem innocuous because of the circumvention of any material that could be deemed controversial, it should not be ignored as mere coincidence. Reviving the image and life of Hu may in fact serve some political end that Western observers are as of yet unaware. For example, it could presage a coming change in leadership or of an interest in discussing reform. On the other hand, Hu's image was revived briefly in 2005, but amounted to little in the way of change—much to the disappointment of those wishing for an official re-examination of the Tiananmen Square incident.⁴⁸

Taking note of any sign of potential movement within the upper-levels of the Chinese Communist Party may bear fruit by serving as a rare bellwether for activists in Hong Kong. This is not to say that change is immediately possible, but historically futile agitation for democracy may gain traction when the political situation in Mainland China offers careful observers a signal that the parameters are moving on what is deemed acceptable. The practical implications for the democracy movement are clear: by choosing to act when the political climate is expedient, they maximize their use of political and social capital. Indiscriminate actions, resignations, marches, and emasculated Legislative Council bills risk increasing both formal and informal citizen and voter apathy.⁴⁹

Pro-Beijing groups are largely subject to the the political and social climate in Mainland China and thus can use similar signals to plan their strategies for increasing their influence as well. Repeated appeals to the “orderly and gradual progress” clauses of the Basic Law have provided a sustainable measure of ambiguity that has thus far effectively deferred the need to grant significant concessions. Keeping a keen eye on Mainland politics and Hong Kong public opinion will allow Pro-Beijing groups to effectively maintain a narrative that favors “order-

ly and gradual progress." With the negotiations between moderate democrats and Beijing in the summer of 2010, the Pro-Beijing elements may now have unlikely bedfellows in the wake of the pan-democratic divide, giving groups like the DAB more credibility and enhancing their image among voters.

I have shown in this paper what elements comprise the participant political culture that Hong Kong has, including an educated class similar in size to that of the United States and the presence of key domestic institutions. I have also demonstrated that Hong Kong possesses a vibrant and active citizenry that is able to mobilize when issues of civil liberties and the desire for substantive democratic reform arise. Repeated mobilizations and success in response to civil liberties issues and relative failures in response to democratic issues have set a precedent for citizen expectations reflected in voter opinion polls and participation. These results lead to the conclusion that success in defending civil liberties is more likely than progress toward democratic reform, which for the most part have met with negligible success. This apparent mutually exclusive relationship between civil liberty and democracy should not be taken as a foregone conclusion however. Events of summer of 2010 and the recent media nod to Hu Yaobang by the CCP should serve as a reminder to activists seeking to advance their democratic agenda that political windows of opportunities may arise at any moment. While the potential for progress exists, it is unclear whether historical precedents for success and failure in Hong Kong will help forecast future events. Even so, barring countervailing forces that may contribute to the decline of society, this paper presents several examples supported by evidence that shows the likelihood that Hong Kong's citizens will remain engaged is strong. As always, the future is never certain, and the impending leadership shuffle in Beijing is a question mark with regard to the central government's orientation toward its restive SAR.

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ENDNOTES

1. Of course at this time in history, the "populace" excluded those not falling under the category of elite, propertied males.
2. Harold H. Friend, *The Speeches of Thucydides* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1973), 58.
3. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963) 14-15.
4. Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture*, 15.
5. *Ibid.*, 349-350
6. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World* (Paris: OECD Press, 2007) 3.
7. Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism and Democracy," in *The Global Divergence of Democracies*, ed. Larry J. Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 28.
8. Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65.
9. *Ibid.*, 75.
10. *Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China* (Hong Kong, 2006), 31, 41-42.
11. Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, henceforth referred to simply as the "Standing Committee".
12. Ma Ngok, "Civic Society in Self-Defense: the Struggle Against National Security Legislation in Hong Kong," *Journal of Contemporary China* 14, no. 44 (August 2005): 480.
13. "Proposals to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law," Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, 2003, <http://www.basiclaw23.gov.hk/english/download/CSA-markup-e3.pdf>
14. Cannix Yau and Michael Ng, "Push to Change Democracy Timetable 'a Waste of Time,'" *The Standard*, December 16, 2004, http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=&art_id=15295&sid=&con_type=1&d_str=20041216&sear_year=2004. Donald Tsang became Hong Kong's Chief Executive in 2005, completing Tung Chee Hwa's unfinished term.

15. Michael Davis, "Constitutionalism and the Politics of Democracy in Hong Kong," *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs Journal* 30, no. 165 (Summer 2006): 4.
16. Qiao Xiaoyang, "Qiao Xiaoyang's Explanation of the NPC's Decision," *South China Morning Post*, December 30, 2007.
17. These events (Right of Abode and Article 23) are discussed in further detail later in the paper.
18. "Tiananmen Square Memoir Axed By Hong Kong Publisher," *The Guardian*, June 20, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/20/tiananmen-square-memoir-axed-hong-kong-publisher/print>
19. Polly Hui, "Book Critical of China Premier on Sale in Hong Kong," *Agence France-Presse*, August 15, 2010, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gCpIoze49lXFrGyvX_NBBntN2xDQ
20. Ma Ngok, "The Beginning of a Thaw—Or a Fatal Split in the Democracy Movement?," *Hong Kong Journal*, no. 19 (July 2010): 6.
21. An example of a legislative body is the Legislative Council; Executives, the chief executive position; and bureaucracy, the British-inherited and modeled civil government in Hong Kong.
22. E.g. the accepted de facto spokesman of democracy and the leader of efforts to increase ties to Beijing: Martin Lee and Ma Lik, respectively.
23. Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture*, 15-16.
24. Or in this instance, a city-state.
25. Guaranteed in Basic Law Article 27 which states, "Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, of the press and of publication; freedom of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration; and the right and freedom to form and join trade unions, and to strike."
26. Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture*, 349-350. Familial life and participatory school experience are notable as well, though when higher education is present it seems to supersede and render these variables less significant.
27. Hong Kong 2008 Estimated total population: 7,026,000.
28. "Distribution of Educational Attainment of Population Aged 15 and Over," Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2007, <http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=6504&langno=1>; U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau. *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2003*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 1.
29. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: Declining Social Capital*, 73-74.
30. A greater influx of workers and residents from Mainland China may also affect participation rates if political socialization differs significantly in one's country of origin—as Mainland China clearly does from Hong Kong.
31. While written in the mid-1990s, this possibility remains just as salient with the advent of the internet, video games, and the greater breadth of media options.
32. "Voter Registration Statistics," *Hong Kong Registration and Electoral Office*, 2009, <http://www.voterregistration.gov.hk/eng/statistic20091.html#1>
33. "1998 Legco Election Results," *Hong Kong Registration and Electoral Office*, 1998, <http://www.elections.gov.hk/elections/legco1998/524-e.htm>; "Legislative Council Elections Results," *Hong Kong Registration and Electoral Office*, 2000, http://www.elections.gov.hk/elections/legco2000/update/result/index_e.htm; "2004 Legislative Council Election Turnout Rate," *Hong Kong Registration and Electoral Office*, 2004, http://www.elections.gov.hk/elections/legco2004/english/turnout/tt_gc_overall.html; "2008 Legislative Council Election," *Hong Kong Registration and Electoral Office*, 2008, http://www.elections.gov.hk/legco2008/eng/turnout/tt_gc_GC.html
34. Roland Lim, "Low Voter Turnout Expected for HK By-Election, After Snubbing by Major Parties," *Channel NewsAsia*. April 10, 2010, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/eastasia/view/1049075/1/.html>

35. Article 23 states, "The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies" (*Basic Law*, 2006).
36. Francis L. F. Lee, and Joseph M. Chan, "Making Sense of Participation: The Political Culture of Pro-Democracy Demonstrators in Hong Kong." *China Quarterly*, no. 193 (2008): 85
37. Article(s) 27-38 include civil liberties such as, inter alia, freedom of the press, religious practice, and speech.
38. Specific events like the Right of Abode or Article 23 legislation.
39. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 34. For example, as time progresses past significant events such as the 1989 protests over Tiananmen, 1997 transfer of sovereignty, and 2003 Article 23 security legislation, it is possible that it becomes more difficult for those making up the bulk of the protesters to personally identify with any given cause. We see this starkly evident in Beijing now with few if any youth having any recollection or knowledge of the 1989 protest movement. While no doubt a combination of concerted government censorship and the pervasive effects globalization, in the case of Hong Kong it is almost certainly an exclusive function of the latter.
40. Jonathan Manthorpe, "Hong Kong Shufies [sic] Toward Democratic Reform," *Vancouver Sun*, April 19, 2010, Final Edition, C9.
41. Andrew Jacobs, "Civil Liberties Within Limits After 12 Years of Beijing Rule," *New York Times*, May 31, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/01/world/asia/01hong.html>.
42. Suzanne Pepper, *Keeping Democracy at Bay: Hong Kong and the Challenge of Chinese Political Reform* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 390.
43. Reinforcing the significant press freedoms enjoyed by the SAR, especially when dealing with matters as sensitive as the image and perceived competence of the present leadership.
44. The only other instance of direct negotiation occurred in 1989 with the former colonial government in response to the Tiananmen Square incident.
45. Ma, "Beginning of a Thaw," 3.
46. Robert Keatley, "Beijing Bends—Just a Little—and Brings a Hint of Hope to Hong Kong Politics," *Hong Kong Journal*, no. 19 (July 2010): 4.
47. Sharon LaFraniere, "Chinese Premier Honors Reformist Who Inspired Tiananmen Protests," *New York Times*. April 15, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/16/world/asia/16china.html>.
48. Philip P. Pan, "China Gives Political Outcast Rare Revival; Tiananmen Figure Recognized, Raising Hopes for Official About-Face on Incident," *Washington Post*, November 19, 2005.
49. Formal in the sense of participation in the electoral process, informal in the sense of popular cohesive efforts such as protests and marches.

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