

Localism in Hong Kong: Its Origins, Development and Prospect

Yiu-chung **Wong***
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Abstract

The paper firstly aims to analyse the changing political landscape after the Legislative Council election in September 2017. Secondly, the social political context in which localism emerged is delineated. An analysis of the rise of the politics of democratization and identities in the post-Handover Hong Kong is provided. The policies of “One Country, Two Systems” (1C2S), initiated by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to resolve the sovereignty issue of 1997 are discussed. It is argued that in the implementation of the 1C2S since the Handover in 1997, the Chinese party/state has shifted from non-interventionism to pervasive integration, which violates its pledges of “fifty years unchanged”. The Basic Law is arbitrarily interpreted to suit political expediency. Its Leninist absorption of Hong Kong into Chinese authoritarianism has directly triggered the rise of localism in the younger generation. The paper also explores the two theoretical discourses of the “independence” and “self-determination” narratives in contemporary Hong Kong and finally the prospect of the “independence” movement is examined.

Keywords: *“One Country, Two systems” (1C2S), localism/nativism, universal suffrage, democratization, identities, nation-building movement, Occupy Central, Umbrella Movement*

1. Introduction

In October 2016, Beijing’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) abruptly launched its 5th interpretation of the Basic Law (香港基本法). The interpretation states that the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Legislative Council (LegCo, 立法會) members must be “respectful” and “sincere”. The CY Leung (梁振英) administration was swift to launch a judicial review on the validity of the oath-taking ceremonies by the two new localist lawmakers Sixtus “Baggio” Leung Chung-hang (梁頌恆) and Regine Yau Wai-ching (游蕙禎), members of a prominent localist group Youngspiration (青年新政). In November, the High Court ruled that the two members’ behavior amounted to a rejection of the oath-taking and they subsequently lost their LegCo seats. However, The government did not stop there, but followed up by launching another judicial review against four other localist/pan-democratic lawmakers including the famous “long hair” Leung Kwok-hung (「長毛」梁國雄).¹ On 14 July, the High Court handed the verdict that all four lawmakers were disqualified because “the oath is unlawful if it is altered in form, substance or manner, or with extra words.” All six legislators vowed to appeal.

The loss of a total six seats obviously deals a heavy blow to the localist/pan-democratic camp. Not only do the pan-democrats fail to keep a sufficient strong voice in the LegCo, they could not even preserve the veto power in the chamber constituted by legislators returned by geographical constituencies, as required by the Basic Law in any of the

bills proposed by legislators.² In recent years, as localism has spread more widely, Beijing's concerns over the issue has deepened. The move of the interpretation by the NPCSC was, therefore, perceived as a determination by Beijing to stamp out the increasingly influential nativistic movement and keep the young radicals off from the constitutional structure.

2. Legislative Council Election in September 2016

The Legislative Council (LegCo) election in September 2016 was a landmark development in Hong Kong's political landscape. The Council has a total of 70 seats since the 2012 election, with half of it elected by functional constituencies (indirect elections), and half by geographical constituencies (direct elections). Among the 35 seats by the functional constituencies, 5 seats are called "super seats", which means that a legislator has to be nominated by 10 District Councillors and then elected by the Hong Kong territory-wide eligible electorate. With 2.2 million registered voters (out of a population of 7.34 million), the turnout rate reached 58.3 %, a record high level and 5 points higher than the previous LegCo election in 2012. The general public exhibited such enthusiasm that there were long lines queuing up in the polling stations waiting to cast the votes, a phenomenon not seen in Hong Kong for a long time.

In the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement (UM) in 2014, Hong Kong society seems to embrace two contradictory social and political climates. On the one hand, general social atmosphere seems to be bleak and gloomy, which is understandable for the 79- day long UM nominally falls short of its most important political goal: lifting of the 8.31 restrictions on the election of the Chief Executive (CE) in 2017 imposed by China's National People's Congress (NPC) on 31 August 2014. On

the other hand, mostly formed or organized by the younger generation, such as Hong Kong Indigenous (本土民主前線), Youngspiration (青年新政), Civic Passion (熱血公民), Demosistō (香港眾志, formerly Scholarism / 學民思潮), Proletariat Political Institute (普羅政治學苑), Land Justice League (土地正義聯盟), and People Power (人民力量), etc., the localist or nativistic groups proliferated. More importantly, in fact, the District Council elections in November 2015 saw the resurgence of the localist/self-determinist ideas and active participation of the so-called “Umbrella soldiers” (傘兵).³ Among more than fifty participants in the elections, only nine were elected,⁴ but they revived the optimism of the young people and directly contributed to the spreading of the ideas of “independence” of Hong Kong among the electorate. And more importantly some localist groups such as Youngspiration and Hong Kong Indigenous, e.g. Edward Leung Tin-kei (梁天琦), even devised a strategy of “violence” in advancing their political ideas.⁵

The outcome of the LegCo election in September 2016 was beyond the expectations of most of the pan-democrats as well as the general public. Since the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the political landscape has been long characterized by the existence of two camps: pro-Beijing/pro-establishment (建制派) and pan-democracy (泛民主派) camp. As the central government in Beijing and the local Liaison Office intervened more, the pro-establishment camp has become increasingly more dominant. As such, the strategy of the pan-democrats in the LegCo has been to maintain two kinds of “veto power”: one third of the votes in the LegCo to block any constitutional or political reform plan and a majority of votes in the geographical constituencies to block the passing of the bills proposed by members, as stipulated by the Basic Law. It was widely expected that the pan-democrats would lose these two “veto power”, resulting in the amendment of the rules of procedures

by the pro-establishment camp and practically ending the game of filibustering used by the pan-democrats to block unpopular bills.

However, instead, the voting results show that the third political force: that of the localist/self-determinist was emerging.⁶ The conventional dichotomy of politics was broken. In terms of seats, the pro-establishment parties, such as Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (民主建港協進聯盟), New People's Party (新民黨), Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (香港工會聯合會) and Liberal Party (自由黨), etc., grapped 40 seats, a clear majority. The conventional pan-democratic parties such as the Democratic Party (民主黨), Civic Party (公民黨), Labour Party (工黨) and League of Social Democrats (社會民主連線), etc. obtained 21 seats. Significantly, the localist parties were able to get 8 seats. The total number of seats for the localist/self-determinist and pan-democratic camp was 29. Thus, the pan-democratic camp was able to preserve the veto power (24 seats) to block any constitutional change plan initiated by the government. In the geographical constituencies, the result was 19 versus 16 against the pro-establishment camp. Consequently, the localist/pan-democratic camp were able to maintain the two "veto power" (Kaeding, 2017).

However, the 5th interpretation by the NPCSC changed the political ecology completely. With the disqualification of six LegCo members, 5 of whom from the geographical constituencies and only 1 from the functional constituencies, the number of directly elected pan-democratic legislators would be reduced from 19 to 14 and the "veto power" in the geographical constituencies would be subsequently gone. Even if the by-elections of vacant seats are to be held, it is questionable if the pan-democratic camp could get back all the seats they were stripped off. The consequences of the NPCSC's interpretation on the oath-taking ceremony are disastrous for the pan-democratic/localist camp and it

shows the determination of Beijing to stamp out the localist waves, as repeated in the speeches by Xi Jinping (习近平) in Hong Kong during the occasions of celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Handover on 1 July 2017. It must be born in mind that the waves of localism do not come from nowhere. As I would argue in the following sections of the paper, the localist sentiments already existed in the 1970s and 1980s but the June 4 crackdown planted the seeds of fear upon the minds of Hong Kongers. After 1997 and in the new millennium, localist sentiments were crystallized in the social movements associated with heritage protection and environment conservation projects, etc. The events that would finally bust the slogan of Hong Kong “independence” were the ascendance of CY Leung and the tough policies he initiated, and the imposition of the three restrictions on the CE election in 2017 by the NPC. Since Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥) became the Chief Executive, the momentum of the “independence” has lost steam; however, whether the tides of current can be turned by Beijing or the new administration remains to be seen. It is time to put the evolution of localism into proper context.

3. The Context: Hong Kong-Mainland China Relationships

When China announced the formula of 1C2S to resolve the issue of 1997 sovereignty in the midst of Sino-British negotiation, it was accepted by all sides. The agreement by the governments of PRC and Britain resulted in the Sino-British Joint Declaration concluded in 1984, and it took five years for the NPC to draft the Basic Law – mini constitution for the post-1997 Hong Kong.

The articles of the Basic Law, in fact, reflect all the features of the existing system of Hong Kong at that time but its essence could be summarized as “One Country, Two Systems, Hong Kongers ruling Hong

Kong, High Autonomy”, which China pledged to keep for “fifty years unchanged” (*Basic Law*, first chapter: General Principles).⁷ However, the key issue that remained unresolved is the issue of political system, namely the elections of the Chief Executive (CE) and the legislature after the Handover.

The Sino-British Declaration was vague on the election of the top leader. It says that the leader could be selected either by election or consultation (*Sino-British Joint Declaration*, para. 3.4), which opens the door to deception and manipulation by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials in future.⁸ Nonetheless, the Basic Law was more specific on the democratization of the legislature. It says that the Legislative Council (LegCo) members and the CE will be ultimately elected by universal suffrage (*Basic Law*, Article 45). The first CE, however, was elected by a small Election Committee of 400 in 1997, but with the electorate to be progressively enlarged, would ultimately be elected by “universal suffrage”. The democratization process would be incremental.

The Basic Law further outlines the gradual democratization process both for the CE and for the legislature within the 10 years of time frame after the Handover (*Basic Law*, Annex 1 and 2). In the past 20 years, four indirect elections of the CE have been held: Tung Chee-hwa (董建華, 1997-2002; 2002-2005); Donald Tsang (曾蔭權, 2005-2007; 2007-2012), Leung Chun-ying (2012-2017), and Carrie Lam (1 July 2017 – present).

Three periods could be delineated in assessing the relationships between Hong Kong and Mainland China (Central) since 1997: first period, non-interventionist (1997-2003); second period, increasing interventionism (2004-2011); third period, comprehensive intervention (2012 – present). The first and second periods were characterized by politics of democratization, and the third period by politics of identities.

In the first period, the PRC kept its promise. Besides changing the flag and replacing the Governor with the CE, almost the entire team of senior officials (at the Secretary level) remained intact except that the post of Attorney General was replaced by the new Secretary of Justice. However, there were two big changes in this period: the introduction of the Accountability System of the Principal Officials in 2002 (Fong, 2014) and the 1st interpretation of the Basic Law by the NPCSC in 1999 in which the Court of Final Appeal no longer becomes final. Its impact was huge because it marked the beginning of political intervention through the legal channel (Ghai, 2000: 189-230). The 1 July 2003 rallies/marches in opposition to the enactment of the Article 23 marked the end of the first period and the beginning of the second period of increasing interventionism.

4. From Politics of Democratization to Politics of Identities

The most dramatic intervention in this stage by Beijing was the 2nd interpretation of the Basic Law on the constitutional development of Hong Kong in 2004, which was exclusively concerned with the electoral methods of the CE and legislature in 2007 and 2008.⁹ In the original Basic Law, the constitutional change of the electoral methods requires only three steps, namely, the submission of the relevant bills to the LegCo and 2/3 majority consent of the LegCo members and the approval of the NPC (*Basic Law*, Annex 1). This 2nd interpretation of the Basic Law, however, brings the Central government into the center stage, three steps becoming five steps: namely, first, the CE submits a report, which outlines the necessity of the constitutional development, to the NPC (or Standing Committee) for approval; second, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government submits the relevant bills to the LegCo; third, 2/3 majority is required; fourth, the consent of the

CE; fifth, the ordinance is submitted to the NPCSC for approval. (Wong, 2014)

In 2005, the NPCSC again intervened to interpret the Basic Law for the third time regarding the term of the CE.¹⁰ In this period, it was also widely speculated, even though it has never been proven beyond doubt, that the Central Liaison Office in Hong Kong was heavily involved in lobbying activities in the District Council elections. On the one hand, increasingly larger number of pro-establishment councilors were appointed by the government to the District Councils, and on the other hand, fraudulent methods were employed – such as mainlanders came to HK and registered in address that were not intended as homes in an attempt to “sow seeds” of the eligible voters¹¹. The outcome of the elections in 2011 was that a drastic reduction of the seats for the pro-democracy councilors and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (the disguised underground party of the CCP and the largest political party in Hong Kong) grabbed the largest number of seats. Since then the pro-government parties have been dominating grassroots/district politics. Most significant of all was the high visibilities in the mass media of the Liaison Office officials, in particular its director Zhang Xiaoming (張曉明), who is a symbol of the authorities from Beijing.

The third phase of the development began with the election of CY Leung as the CE in 2012. The compromise reached in 2010 between Beijing and Hong Kong’s pro-democracy legislators enabled the elections of the CE and the LegCo to advance one step forward in 2012, from an Election Committee of 800 members expanding to 1200 members, though obviously it was still a small-circle election. The number of LegCo seats increased from 60 to 70, with 5 additional seats allotted to geographical constituency and 5 new seats to functional constituency.¹²

By a motion passed by the NPCSC, Hong Kong “may” have “universal suffrage” election of the CE in 2017 and the LegCo elected by “universal suffrage” too by 2020. As such, the Hong Kong community expected that in 2017 Hong Kong could directly elect the CE and then followed by the direct election of all LegCo members. However, it turned out the Beijing’s idea of “universal suffrage” is different that of the Hong Kong public.

As discussed previously, the Basic Law schedules only the timetable of ten years for democratization after the Handover. The pan-democracy camp and Beijing failed to reach a consensus on the elections of the CE in 2007 and LegCo in 2008, therefore old methods would prevail. However, the elections of the CE and the LegCo members in 2012 were with new methods because the pro-democracy camp stroke a compromise with Beijing on the new constitutional development in 2010. Leung was elected by 1200 members instead of 800 and the LegCo membership was expanded to 70 instead of 60.

On the electoral method to be introduced in 2017 to elect the CE, this time Beijing seemed to have no patience in negotiating a solution with the Hong Kong community as a whole in general, and the pan-democratic camp in particular. Beijing wanted to dominate the whole process. At the outset, the State Council in Beijing published a White Paper in June 2014 named *The Implementation of “One Country, Two Systems” in the HKSAR*, which practically abolished the Basic Law as the supreme constitutional document for Hong Kong but taking it, instead, as the fundamental policy paper that becomes the cornerstone of the 1C2S (Information Office of State Council of the PRC, 2014). This is certainly a blatant violation of the pledge made before. The White Paper claims that the PRC is a unitary state and the Central government in Beijing has “comprehensive governing power” over Hong Kong (*ibid.*: 7), that “all power in Hong Kong are derived from the Central

government”, and that “no residual power” exists in Hong Kong (*ibid.*: 31). It also demands that the concept of 1C2S be understood and implemented in a “comprehensive and correct way” (*ibid.*: 32). Clearly an important policy shift after the Handover, Beijing is tightening the concept of 1C2S. As expected, the White Paper was heavily criticized by the Hong Kong public, particularly the legal professionals. The White Paper has violated the spirit of Hong Kong’s legal system and 1C2S, and arbitrarily inserted the Chinese Constitution into Hong Kong’s legal system. In retrospect, the publication of the White Paper was a prelude to further intervention in the constitutional development of Hong Kong.

Since the early 1980s, the Hong Kong community has been consensual in that Hong Kong should have full democracy after the Handover as quickly as possible. The main stumbling block, however, was Beijing. In relation to the public consultation of the new electoral method of the CE in 2017, there has been wide consensus amidst society that the election must comply with the “international standard” prescribed by the United Nations Charter of Human Rights that all eligible citizens could have the rights of voting for the top leadership post. The public have long considered the small circle of 800 or 1200 member Election Committee was archaic and undemocratic and needed to be overhauled and functional constituency in the LegCo should be abolished. However, on the other hand, the Basic Law stipulated that the candidate(s) must be nominated by a Nomination Committee “elected by a broadly representatives of the public” (*Basic Law*, Annex I), a process that should be genuinely implemented.

In the meantime, during the consultation period, more than a dozen electoral reform proposals were proposed by non-partisan scholars, political parties, social groups, and professional bodies, etc. However, these proposals were all ignored by the NPCSC which, on 31 August 2014, set up three restrictions on the universal suffrage for CE election

in Hong Kong in 2017, namely 1) the candidate must be supported by 1/2 of the members of the Nomination Committee; 2) the structure of the nomination should model upon that of the Election Committee which elects the CE and the ratio of the four categories of membership and size (1200) of the Nomination Committee remained unchanged; 3) the number of final candidates would be 2-3 people. The public were furious at the restrictions and vehemently protested to Mainland authorities. Even the moderate factions were disappointed. Aside from the procedural matters, most significantly, the NPC imposed an ideological bottom line: that the elected CE must be a “patriot”, who must “love motherland and Hong Kong”.¹³

5. The Umbrella (Occupy Central) Movement

The Umbrella movement (UM) was initially called the Occupy Central with Love and Peace movement (OCM, 讓愛與和平佔領中環 / 和平佔中), which becomes the largest civil disobedience movement in the history of Hong Kong in terms of size of participants and length of time. It was started by Benny Tai (戴耀廷), a law professor of the University of Hong Kong, and Kin-man Chan (陳健民), a sociology professor of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Yiu-ming Chu (朱耀明), a pastor. The idea of launching a civil disobedience movement was raised first in January 2013 in a newspaper article by Tai as a strategy of bargaining to strive for full democracy with Beijing. After months of deliberation and planning, the three organizers planned to stage a sit-in of about 10,000 people on the streets of the Central (中環), Hong Kong’s financial district, in order to paralyze the area on 1 October 2014, the national day of the PRC. By adopting a strategy of civil disobedience and non-violence, the participants would offer no resistance if police arrest them. Because of their activism, the three

organizers received death threats from anonymous public.¹⁴

On 22 September 2014, in protest against the three restrictions on the universal suffrage for the election of the CE, the Hong Kong Federation of Students (香港專上學生聯會), the conglomerate body of Hong Kong's university students, decided to launch a class strike in all local public-funded universities, with the aim of asserting universal rights of participation and contestation of the public life, and opposing the NPC's election restrictions. In other words, students wanted a free and fair election of the CE (as well as Legislative Council in 2016) and they framed their demand in the slogan "I want a true universal suffrage" (「我要真普選」) (Au, 2014: 69-91).

On 25 September 2015¹⁵, the last day of class strike, a few hundred students who were staging sit-in nearby began to end their class strike and they marched towards the Central Government Office (CGO) building. Suddenly some students, headed by Joshua Wong (黃之鋒), convener of Scholarism, trespassed the fence outside the area (which the students called Civic Square / 公民廣場) in front of the CGO and they refused to leave on 26 September 2015. Next morning, after the forced clearance of the area by police, thousands of citizens rushed to support the students in Admiralty (金鐘), the protest area. Some students including Joshua Wong were arrested. About 50,000 protesters encircled the CGO and Benny Tai and Kin-man Chan came to support the students. In the morning of 28 September at about 1.30 a.m., Benny Tai, urged by the protestors, and 3 days before his scheduled date, declared the OCM started. The news spread and thousands of citizens came to Admiralty to show support. The area was so crowded that people began to spill over to the street (Harcourt Road / 夏慤道, the main road connecting the East and West part of Hong Kong Island). The police strengthened their force and attacked the protestors with pepper spray and threw 87 tear gas canisters to disperse the protestors. The tear gas

did not deter the protestors, who had practically taken over Admiralty and who had only umbrellas to protect themselves from the police's tear gas.

Thus, the OCM was transformed into UM. The UM had not restricted itself to Admiralty but swiftly spread to Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣, another part of Hong Kong Island) and Mong Kok (旺角, the most crowded area of the Kowloon Peninsula / 九龍半島) in days. The UM lasted for 79 days. Luckily, despite frequent scuffles between police and protestors, the UM ended without serious bloodshed.

For years, before and after 1997, Hong Kong police has been relatively mild in dealing with protestors and respected as effective and professional throughout Asian countries but this time the police exhibited unprecedented violence.¹⁶

The movement was conspicuous in its defiance of the Beijing authorities, a strong will to be in command of Hong Kong's own destiny and strong sense of Hong Kong identities shown by the participants, in particular the youngsters. Despite the size of the movement, Beijing did not back down, but neither did the younger generation. On the surface, they seemed to have achieved none of the goals but the UM certainly galvanized forces that empower the younger generation who were determined to master their own future. In fact, "mastering our own destiny" is one of the most popular slogans during the OCM.

A whole generation of youngsters seems to be emerging and they are deeply rooted in the core values of Hong Kong. Here is a new generation which is entirely different from the previous generations. Looking at the demography of Hong Kong, the population changes generally followed the shifting political situation in Mainland China. Most Hong Kongers came from the mainland, as refugees, in particular after 1949 when the CCP established a Marxist-Leninist one-party dictatorship. In the three decades of Maoism (1949-1979), the PRC was

plagued by internal factional struggles and political purges. Millions died of starvation. The refugees came to Hong Kong to search for a piece of land where they could live and work peacefully and hopefully through hard works, they could raise their living standard. In fact, many of them took Hong Kong as a temporary shelter and their ultimate end destinations were the developed industrialized countries, e.g. United States of America (USA), Canada and Australia. They lived in a “borrowed time, borrowed place” (Hughes, 1976).

Governor Crawford Murray MacLehose (1971-1982) in 1971 heralded in a new era in Hong Kong. He implemented a series of progressive social and economic policies that enabled Hong Kong to become one of the four “Asian Tigers” by the end of the 1970s – one of the most advanced economies in Asia. The outstanding socioeconomic achievements paved the way for the emergence of what now called “localism” – the people’s strong sense of a Hong Kong identity and consciousness – how they identify with the place where they live and were born (Kong, 2015: 185-190). It was not surprised that, being frustrated with the PRC’s implementation of 1C2S, the young protestors hoisted British colonial flag in the 1 July rallies and marches in 2011, for the first time, as a gesture of nostalgia for the past when the British ruled over Hong Kong.¹⁷

The Chinese Party/state socialist regime evolved in another developmental path. The regime was a total disaster in Mao Zedong (毛澤東)’s three decades of rule. More than 30 million people died of starvation in the late 1950s. Furthermore, more than 200 million people were persecuted and victimized and millions of people died of factional fighting and persecution during the Cultural Revolution.

Even after the reform and opening up era has set in, China’s authoritarian political system remained unchanged. It has imprisoned hundreds of dissidents, including the Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波) who died of cancer in July 2017. The rampant corruption was appalling and its cronyism have degraded the land and more than 70% of the rivers have been poisoned. Its so-called “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, in fact, is a bracket ideology that embodies the worst features of market economy and Chinese authoritarianism. In contrast to the Chinese crony statism, Hong Kong was its exact opposites, a vibrant international city where east meets west, with the rule of law and also a strong civil society, a free city though with only partial democracy. That is why the concept of 1C2S was created by Deng Xiaoping to enable these two contradictory systems to co-exist.

Hong Kong’s developmental model is based on the model of liberal democracy: societal pluralism, rule of law, separation of powers, emphasis on human rights, the growth of civil society, etc. On the contrary, China adopts a totalitarian model in the Maoist era and an authoritarian model in the reform era: monopoly of political power by an oligarchy of party elite, state-dominated market economy, a large machinery of coercive apparatus, hegemonic state ideology, judiciary as a tool for the oppression of dissidents, etc.

In hindsight, however, the crucial event that divides the two societies is the 4 June 1989 massacre in Beijing. It may be seen as the defining moment in Hong Kong for the rise of localism. Bordering Mainland China, Hong Kong people then watched the brutal slaughtering of the students and common folks by tanks and military armoured vehicles. Two one-million-people marches were launched in Hong Kong (on 21 May and 28 May 1989) to protest vociferously against the PRC government. The massacre was in full display before the eyes of Hong Kong people through television broadcast. Hong Kongers have never been able to forget and forgive what transpired in and around the Tiananmen Square (天安門廣場) that night. Since then

candle vigil night has been held on 4 June every year in the Victoria Park, Hong Kong, in commemoration of the victims of the 1989 massacre.

I would argue that the June 4 1989 massacre is the defining moment for the birth of Hong Kong localism: that Hong Kongers began to be aware of the significant differences in values between Hong Kong and Mainland systems. They saw how brutal the Chinese regime could be and strong sense of alienation pushed them away from their “motherland”.

In tandem with Hong Kong’s socioeconomic development, infant localist sentiments were already manifested in some form in the Cantonese pop songs and martial arts films in the 1970s.¹⁸ In the 1980s, localist sentiments were further uplifted by the outcome of Sino-British negotiation in which the PRC formulated its lenient policies towards Hong Kong with China’s own promise of high autonomy for Hong Kong and “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong” (港人治港). Riding on the wave of formation/proliferation of local political parties, localism grew (Li, 2013: 13-16, 208-213). The dominant voice in the Hong Kong political scene then was “democratization against communism (authoritarianism)” (「民主抗共」). Then came the June 4 massacre – and the first identity crisis for Hong Kongers.

Hong Kongers have always considered themselves ethnically Chinese; even now, as localism grows, most of them would consider themselves ethnic Chinese. However, the pro-independence youngsters do not think so. Localism now reaches to the extreme that not only these younger Hong Kongers negate their Chinese national identity (associated with the state PRC) but also their ethnic Chinese identity. More importantly, the younger Hong Kongers, aside from the sociopolitical values, consider Hong Kong to possess unique character and civility that contrast with that of the Mainland Chinese or regime. As a colony of the

United Kingdom (UK), Hong Kong society had always been influenced by Anglo-American (modern) values and systems. However, at present, the PRC takes USA as the greatest threat to its regime security. Young Hong Kongers see increasingly the incompatibilities of the “two systems” (Chan, 2013: 247-250, 254-259).

In spite of Hong Kong’s status as a British colony for 155 years, very small percentage of the residents in Hong Kong choose to accept themselves as British, though many of them may have British passports. The bulk of the population choose “Hong Kong local identity” or “Chinese Hong Konger identity”. The rise of localism could be seen from the percentage of Hong Konger identity in the surveys shown in Table 1.

As shown in the table, those accepting their identities as “Chinese” never exceeded 40%, and the fact that they exceeded 30% for three years could be explained by the economic and medical assistance sent by Beijing during the SARS-affected years. Since CY Leung became the CE, the ratio declined to 10 plus %, the record low percentage. Most of the years since the Handover, the combined number of those identifying themselves as Hong Kongers and Hong Konger in China exceeded 60%, with the percentage reaching a new high in recent years.

From the second half of 1997 to the first half of 2008, the percentage of those claiming to be Hong Kongers and Chinese Hong Kongers decreased gradually, and those claiming to be Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese increased to a new high, at times almost to half. However, it is apparent that 2008 – the year of the Olympics held in Beijing – was the landmark year and thereafter the percentage declined. The relatively high acceptance of the Chinese identity in these periods was due to, on the one hand, the absence of intervention on the part of Beijing, such as the successful withdrawal of the Article 23 and, on the other hand, the increasing vibrant activities of civil society.

Table 1 The survey on the question: You would identify yourself as a Hongkonger / Chinese in Hong Kong / Hong Konger in China / Chinese (per poll)

調查日期	樣本人數	次樣本人數
Date of survey	Total Sample	Sub-sample
15-18/6/2015	1003	678
10-16/12/2014	1016	660
6-12/6/2014	1026	660
9-12/12/2013	1015	628
10-13/6/2013	1055	677
14-17/12/2012	1019	687
13-20/6/2012	1001	560
12-20/12/2011	1016	541
21-22/6/2011	520	520
13-16/12/2010	1013	1013
9-13/6/2010	1004	1004
8-11/12/2009	1007	1007
8-13/6/2009	1002	1002
9-12/12/2008	1016	1016
11-13/6/2008	1012	1012
11-14/12/2007	1011	1011
8-12/6/2007	1016	1016
6-12/12/2006*	1011	1011
13-15/6/2006*	1018	1018
9-14/12/2005	1017	1017
6-8/6/2005	1029	1029
6-9/12/2004	1007	1007
7-11/6/2004	1027	1027
10-14/12/2003	1059	1059

調查日期	樣本人數	次樣本人數
Date of survey	Total Sample	Sub-sample
13-18/6/2003	1043	1043
1-4/3/2003	1035	1035
13-18/12/2002	1026	1026
2-5/9/2002	1017	1017
4-5/6/2002	1067	1067
12-13/3/2002	1024	1024
7-9/12/2001	1052	1052
13-21/9/2001	1025	1025
1-5/6/2001	1053	1053
22/3-2/4/2001	1014	1014
4-12/12/2000	1040	1040
21-25/9/2000	1087	1087
7-8/6/2000	1074	1074
6-7/4/2000	570	570
1-2/2/2000	566	566
13-15/12/1999	529	529
26-27/10/1999	535	535
6/8/1999	596	596
8/6/1999	538	538
15/4/1999	527	527
8-9/2/1999	513	513
21/12/1998	544	544
29/9/1998	517	517
14/8/1998	526	526
22-24/6/1998	1042	1042
3-4/6/1998	544	544
8-9/12/1997	500	500

調查日期	樣本人數	次樣本人數
Date of survey	Total Sample	Sub-sample
28-29/10/1997	536	536
23-24/9/1997	512	512
26-27/8/1997	532	532

Table 1 (continued)

調查日期	香港人	中國的香港	香港的中國人	中國人
Date of survey	Hongkonger	Hongkonger in China	Chinese in Hong Kong	Chinese
15-18/6/2015	36.3%	27.4%	13.1%	22.1%
10-16/12/2014	42.3%	24.3%	15.0%	17.8%
6-12/6/2014	40.2%	27.1%	11.6%	19.5%
9-12/12/2013	34.8%	27.6%	15.0%	21.8%
10-13/6/2013	38.2%	24.3%	12.0%	23.0%
14-17/12/2012	27.2%	33.1%	16.1%	21.3%
13-20/6/2012	45.6%	22.8%	11.5%	18.3%
12-20/12/2011	37.7%	25.3%	17.8%	16.6%
21-22/6/2011	43.8%	21.3%	10.3%	23.5%
13-16/12/2010	35.5%	27.6%	13.8%	21.1%
9-13/6/2010	25.3%	31.3%	14.8%	27.8%
8-11/12/2009	37.6%	23.9%	13.1%	24.2%
8-13/6/2009	24.7%	32.0%	13.3%	29.3%
9-12/12/2008	21.8%	29.6%	13.0%	34.4%
11-13/6/2008	18.1%	29.2%	13.3%	38.6%
11-14/12/2007	23.5%	31.5%	16.0%	27.2%
8-12/6/2007	23.4%	31.8%	16.7%	26.4%
6-12/12/2006*	22.4%	24.3%	20.1%	31.8%

調查日期	香港人	中國的香港人	香港的中國人	中國人
Date of survey	Hongkonger	Hongkonger in China	Chinese in Hong Kong	Chinese
13-15/6/2006*	24.8%	25.1%	14.9%	34.6%
9-14/12/2005	24.8%	26.5%	16.9%	30.7%
6-8/6/2005	24.0%	21.2%	14.7%	36.4%
6-9/12/2004	25.9%	23.1%	16.2%	31.6%
7-11/6/2004	28.0%	21.2%	14.3%	33.0%
10-14/12/2003	24.9%	23.4%	15.6%	32.5%
13-18/6/2003	36.7%	19.2%	11.9%	29.0%
1-4/3/2003	28.5%	22.3%	15.0%	32.3%
13-18/12/2002	31.1%	21.3%	14.3%	29.7%
2-5/9/2002	28.9%	22.0%	15.0%	32.5%
4-5/6/2002	32.2%	18.1%	13.0%	32.5%
12-13/3/2002	27.5%	23.3%	17.9%	28.3%
7-9/12/2001	31.9%	20.5%	10.4%	31.5%
13-21/9/2001	26.1%	27.9%	17.6%	25.8%
1-5/6/2001	36.1%	18.3%	13.3%	28.4%
22/3-2/4/2001	31.4%	21.7%	16.0%	28.2%
4-12/12/2000	35.6%	19.1%	13.8%	25.2%
21-25/9/2000	37.0%	26.8%	14.5%	17.4%
7-8/6/2000	35.5%	22.9%	14.0%	22.8%
6-7/4/2000	38.7%	21.4%	14.2%	20.4%
1-2/2/2000	38.3%	23.2%	19.5%	13.8%
13-15/12/1999	39.0%	20.9%	17.2%	19.9%
26-27/10/1999	31.2%	23.7%	16.2%	25.5%
6/8/1999	30.3%	23.3%	17.5%	25.3%
8/6/1999	39.9%	25.0%	11.2%	17.0%
15/4/1999	43.4%	20.0%	13.1%	18.0%
8-9/2/1999	41.0%	20.9%	15.3%	17.6%

調查日期	香港人	中國的香港人	香港的中國人	中國人
Date of survey	Hongkonger	Hongkonger in China	Chinese in Hong Kong	Chinese
21/12/1998	40.7%	22.3%	15.1%	17.2%
29/9/1998	39.4%	22.9%	15.5%	20.6%
14/8/1998	29.7%	25.2%	19.6%	22.0%
22-24/6/1998	30.2%	18.0%	16.1%	31.6%
3-4/6/1998	34.2%	18.6%	18.7%	24.8%
8-9/12/1997	35.8%	22.9%	18.9%	18.2%
28-29/10/1997	36.6%	22.6%	20.1%	17.5%
23-24/9/1997	36.2%	24.2%	20.3%	17.5%
26-27/8/1997	34.9%	24.8%	20.1%	18.6%

Table 1 (continued)

調查日期	混合身分	其他 (請列明)	唔知 / 難講
Date of survey	Mixed Identity	Other	Don't know / hard to say
15-18/6/2015	40.5%	0.3%	0.8%
10-16/12/2014	39.3%	0.6%	0.0%
6-12/6/2014	38.7%	0.2%	1.3%
9-12/12/2013	42.6%	0.8%	0.1%
10-13/6/2013	36.3%	1.1%	1.6%
14-17/12/2012	49.2%	0.6%	1.7%
13-20/6/2012	34.3%	1.1%	0.7%
12-20/12/2011	43.1%	0.6%	2.1%
21-22/6/2011	31.7%	0.4%	0.6%
13-16/12/2010	41.4%	0.4%	1.5%
9-13/6/2010	46.0%	0.4%	0.5%
8-11/12/2009	37.0%	0.2%	1.0%

調查日期	混合身分	其他 (請列明)	唔知 / 難講
Date of survey	Mixed Identity	Other	Don't know / hard to say
8-13/6/2009	45.3%	0.2%	0.4%
9-12/12/2008	42.6%	0.5%	0.7%
11-13/6/2008	42.5%	0.1%	0.7%
11-14/12/2007	47.5%	0.7%	1.1%
8-12/6/2007	48.5%	0.3%	1.4%
6-12/12/2006*	44.4%	0.6%	0.7%
13-15/6/2006*	40.0%	0.3%	0.3%
9-14/12/2005	43.4%	0.0%	1.1%
6-8/6/2005	35.9%	0.5%	3.3%
6-9/12/2004	39.3%	0.4%	2.8%
7-11/6/2004	35.5%	0.4%	3.1%
10-14/12/2003	39.0%	0.3%	3.3%
13-18/6/2003	31.1%	0.7%	2.5%
1-4/3/2003	37.3%	0.3%	1.6%
13-18/12/2002	35.6%	0.6%	3.0%
2-5/9/2002	37.0%	0.4%	1.2%
4-5/6/2002	31.1%	0.4%	3.9%
12-13/3/2002	41.2%	0.0%	3.0%
7-9/12/2001	30.9%	0.3%	5.4%
13-21/9/2001	45.5%	0.4%	2.1%
1-5/6/2001	31.6%	0.0%	3.8%
22/3-2/4/2001	37.7%	0.4%	2.3%
4-12/12/2000	32.9%	0.9%	5.5%
21-25/9/2000	41.3%	0.4%	3.9%
7-8/6/2000	36.9%	0.7%	4.1%
6-7/4/2000	35.6%	0.2%	5.1%
1-2/2/2000	42.7%	0.5%	4.6%

調查日期	混合身分	其他 (請列明)	唔知 / 難講
Date of survey	Mixed Identity	Other	Don't know / hard to say
13-15/12/1999	38.1%	0.2%	2.8%
26-27/10/1999	39.9%	0.7%	2.6%
6/8/1999	40.8%	0.3%	3.2%
8/6/1999	36.2%	0.6%	6.3%
15/4/1999	33.1%	0.4%	5.1%
8-9/2/1999	36.2%	1.2%	3.9%
21/12/1998	37.4%	0.6%	4.2%
29/9/1998	38.4%	0.4%	1.2%
14/8/1998	44.8%	0.2%	3.2%
22-24/6/1998	34.1%	0.4%	3.8%
3-4/6/1998	37.3%	0.2%	3.4%
8-9/12/1997	41.8%	0.2%	3.9%
28-29/10/1997	42.7%	0.2%	3.0%
23-24/9/1997	44.5%	0.2%	1.6%
26-27/8/1997	44.9%	0.4%	1.3%

Source: The University of Hong Kong, public polling <<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html>> (accessed on 16 June 2015).

More stunningly, in a survey conducted by the undergraduate publication (*Undergrad / 學苑*) by the University of Hong Kong Student Union, on the item of political nationalism (on the political system that Hong Kong should adopt), 68% accepted “One Country, Two Systems” but 15% accepted “Hong Kong should become independent”. On the question of referendum on whether Hong Kong should become independent, 37% said that Hong Kong should become independent even if Beijing rejects the result; 42% would accept if

Beijing accepts the result (*Undergrad*, HKUSU, 2014: 78). Besides, 48% accepted as “localists” and 15% as “pan-Chinese nationalists”. (*Undergrad*, HKUSU, 2014: 20-21). In a more recent survey about the ethnicity of Hong Kongers, 48% admitted themselves as Hong Kongers, and among those aged between 18 and 29, 65% claimed themselves as Hong Kongers. More stunning is that only 3% of this group of young Hong Kongers admitted that they are Chinese.¹⁹

After 2003, civil society became more vibrant and developed to have organized social movements that were associated with the development and wakening of localism or nativism: e.g. 2004-2006, environmental groups protesting the demolition of the Lee Tung Street (利東街) in Wan Chai (灣仔); 2003, against Article 23; 2003, protecting Victoria Harbour movement; 2006, against demolition of Star Ferry Pier (天星碼頭); 2007, protecting Queen Mary Pier; 2008/9, against High Speed Railway; 2012, anti-National Education curriculum campaign; 2013/14, against Northeastern Territories movement; early 2015, against anti-parallel traders (反水貨客示威) in areas such as Sheung Shui (上水), Fanling (粉嶺), Yuen Long (元朗), etc. At the same time, they were nostalgic about the colonial past: hoisting of the British flag. The so-called post-80s generation has played an increasingly prominent role in the local social movements. As one scholar remarked, “Post-80s are young people who doubt the rationality of the existing institutional design ... They are not satisfied with the existing political order and demand the government to tackle issues such as rising property prices, the gap between rich and poor, cultural heritage and road map of democracy development.” (Lau, 2014: 386)

However, after the successful hosting of the Olympics in 2008, China began to tighten its grip on dissenting voices internally. In May 2008, strong earthquake shook Sichuan Province and thousands of high and primary school students died because of collapsed school buildings

and this attracted large amount of donation from the Hong Kong public. Bribery and embezzlements of officials dealing with the building construction materials were revealed but the investigators probing into these cases were prosecuted and found guilty of subversion of the State and were imprisoned by the PRC (Li, 2013: 214-215). Furthermore, in 2010, it was found that poisoned milk product endangered thousands of lives of children and corruption was involved through the collusion of businessmen and officials again. Zhao Lianhai (趙連海), a Beijing resident whose child suffered the same fate tried to organize groups to investigate the case but he was arrested and imprisoned. He was finally released due to the intervention of the Hong Kong NPC deputies. Another case was that of Li Wangyang (李旺陽) who was imprisoned for his pro-democracy activities during the June 4 crackdown. In May 2012, he was released after 22 years in jail. The next day, he received interview by a journalist from Cable TV Hong Kong (香港有線電視) and was broadcast. However, the next day he was found dead in suspicious conditions. The official source proclaimed the cause of his death as “suicide”. The imprisonment of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo in fact stunned the world in 2010. These cases angered the Hong Kong public and yet they felt desperate and frustrated because they were powerless to stop such cases of injustice. The death of Liu in July 2017 and the PRC’s subsequent arrangement of his funeral certainly alienated the Hong Kong public from the regime. The PRC was perceived to be a completely corrupted and arrogant party/state without any sense of justice. The negative images of the PRC have contributed to the alienation of the great bulk of the young population and the severing of their identities from being “Chinese”. Among them, the “independence” views of Hong Kong emerged (Li, 2013: 52-77), e.g. Hong Kong Indigenous, Youngspiration, etc. that advocate total independence of Hong Kong (*Undergrad*, HKUSU, 2014).

6. Theoretical Discourse: Independence vs Self-Determination

The Chinese official view of the present status of Hong Kong is as an inalienable part of China, that 1C2S has been implemented successfully and that the Basic Law should be correctly understood and implemented.²⁰ Official view aside, there are two prevalent theoretical discourses on the political status of Hong Kong, one “self-determination” and the other “independence”, both criticized by the PRC officials as the “independence” school of thought. The “self-determination” approach champions the view that the concept of the 1C2S should be defined as clearly as possible and the genuine implementation of the 1C2S faithfully should be able to guarantee the real high autonomy of Hong Kong. The Chinese official narrative is a distortion of the Basic Law. The CCP Party/state would not and should not meddle with the internal affairs of Hong Kong. Hong Kong has a lot of competitive edge in the global competition, as evidenced by the fact that Hong Kong was one of the “Little Asian Tigers” from early 1970s to mid-1990s. Even now, Hong Kong is still one of the world’s financial centres and hubs, which provides important bargaining powers in handling mutual relationship. The relations between 1C and 2S is that the two systems are really equal and one-sided integration by Mainland of Hong Kong will in fact kill the goose that lays the golden egg and harm both sides. Hong Kong and Mainland are reciprocally benefited. By using the simplified Chinese characters, the CCP has destroyed totally Chinese traditional culture. China has become a nation of deception. Moral degradation pervades the society. With the high arena of autonomy, Hong Kong should have independent financial, fiscal, social and education policies, which should enable Hong Kong to develop a new kind of Chinese culture, social values and norms which have been intoxicated by the Party/state’s crony statism. Left alone,

Hong Kong should be able to develop a self-sufficient political/economic/social entity (e.g., see: Chin, 2015: 166-174, 196-200, 228-254). In fact, this view accepts that a “Federal Republic of China” could be established (*ibid.*: 224).

The “independence” narrative, however, wants to have total separation from Mainland China. They want complete independence and the Basic Law to be abolished and Hong Kong to have its own constitution. Ethnically, Hong Kongers are part of Chinese but this does not mean that Hong Kong could not become an independent country. Singapore is a good example. As a sovereign nation-state, Singapore has 85% of ethnic Chinese. The importance of the 155-year rule by the British could hardly be understated, which has transformed the colony and shaped a new “Hong Kong nation” which may be historically linked to China ethnically and culturally, but has developed a new distinctive culture of its own under the British rule. To safeguard and preserve these values and norms, political independence is a guarantee. Modern Chinese authoritarianism, in fact, is a mixed product of the collusion of Marxism/Leninism and traditional despotic feudalism. This narrative is attempting to construct a history of a distinctive Hong Kong “nation” (Tsui, 2015).

However, what both schools lack in discussion is a strategy of disentanglement by Hong Kong from the Chinese mainland, since the economic and social integration between the two places have been going on for so long and they have now almost become inseparable. Hong Kong comes to be so dependent on mainland China that probably its survival would be at stake if it were to be separated from China. Most significant of all, will the PRC politically tolerate such separation? With Chinese media repeatedly express critically towards the “independence” views, could the CCP party/state simply stand and watch the drama unfold? Certainly not. On 30 July 2015, the PLA for the first time

conducted a military exercise fighting against the separatists/terrorists in the urban area and invited more than 500 guests to watch the drill, including the Vice-Chancellor Joseph Jao-Yiu Sung (沈祖堯) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.²¹ Recently, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Handover, the visit by *Liaoning* (遼寧艦), China's only aircraft carrier, to Hong Kong and Xi Jinping's inspecting the Hong Kong garrison of the People's Liberation Army at the biggest military parade in Hong Kong since the Handover both aim to show the Hong Kongers the presence of strong military force. I believe that China has no hesitation in cracking down on the separatist movement in Hong Kong if they become uncontrollable.

7. The Prospect

Amidst the struggles fighting for the realization of “universal suffrage” in Hong Kong, the politics of democratization unavoidably become tainted with a touch of the politics of identities. Theoretically, it is easy to define the concept of nation-state which is composed of four elements: land, people (nation), government and sovereignty. National identity can be defined as collective consciousness or psychological state of mind which shows affinities with the land where the residents live or were born. It could be created, shaped and reinforced objectively by a variety of factors, such as culture (pattern of living), religion, language, history, geographical location, social norms and mores, etc. Nowadays, it is difficult to find nation-states with only one homogenous nation. However, empirically, whether a nation could evolve into an independent nation-state depends on many factors, particularly political situations/conditions, and very often geopolitics. For example, Jews spread all over Europe until the state of Israel was founded in the Middle East after the World War II. Scotland has joined the United Kingdom for

more than two centuries but the Scottish still want to become an independent nation-state.²² Tibet is a distinctive nation and the Tibetan ethnicity is different from the Han nation in coastal China but Tibet is denied independence by the PRC. On the contrary, a nation-state could become a “melting pot” of many nations, notably USA. Australian and British governments have also been implementing “policies of multiculturalism”.

I would argue that, in an interconnected world, the establishment of an independent nation-state or the success of the nation-building movements depends not so much on adequate theoretical exposition of the components concerned but rather on the political power involved. It is power manoeuvring of the various parties that would ultimately pave the way for the emergence of an independent nation-state.

Take Taiwan as an example. It is an outlying island outside southern China. The more than 150 km wide Taiwan Strait (臺灣海峽) separates the island of Taiwan from continental China. In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the island was repeatedly occupied by the Portuguese, Spanish and Japanese. In 1894, the Qing (清朝) government ceded the island to Japan after its defeat by Japan which colonized the island for 50 years until the end of the World War II in 1945, when Japan surrendered the island to China (Republic of China under Kuomintang / 國民黨). The Taiwanese people were happy to be back to China. However, the independence movement began to emerge in 1947, when the 2.28 (28 February) massacre was committed by the Kuomintang (KMT) army in Taiwan on Taiwanese elites and public.²³ Since then the movement has never subsided and in the past three decades, because of the democratization of the political system, the views of “independence” were articulated openly and even gained popularity. During the tenure of President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁, 2000-2008) from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨 / 民進黨), in fact, an

“independence” line of policies was pursued but it was fiercely opposed by the PRC. It is still part of the political platform of the DPP, formerly opposition but currently the majority ruling party in Taiwan.²⁴ Is it possible to establish a “Republic of Taiwan”? The textbook four components of a nation-state are all available. If not for the strong objections of the PRC, given Taiwan’s large population (24 million), land area (more than 34, 000 sq. km), democratic politics, legitimate government and standing armed forces, it could have evolved into an independent nation-state. Similar argument can be made for Tibet as well.

The CCP has labelled Hong Kong’s “independence” movement as one of the four independence movements in contemporary China, the others being the Tibetan, Taiwanese and Xinjiang independence movements. Evidently, Hong Kong’s movement is in essence different from the other three independence movements.²⁵ In terms of geographical size, Hong Kong is the smallest among the four areas, though in terms of demography Hong Kong is the second – with 7.5 million of population, it is second to Taiwan with a population at 23 million. Comparatively Tibet and Xinjiang have small populations. More significantly, there are differences in terms of the ethnicity of the people. While the Hong Kongers and Taiwanese mainly belong to the Han (漢) ethnic groups, living in the central/eastern coastal provinces, Tibet and Xinjiang are ethnically distinct. With regard to foreign influence, the four areas have different degrees of involvement with foreign countries. The exiled Tibetan government led by the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was supported by most of the Western countries, and Xinjiang’s independence movement has links with radical Islamic movement in Central Asia. Hong Kong and Taiwan were once colonies of the United Kingdom and Japan but now maintain little contact with the former colonial masters; nevertheless, culturally the two former colonies

inherited most of the latter's civic value systems. It would not be wide of the mark to say that the two places have spiritual affinity with the former masters. As one of the global financial centers, Hong Kong has the deepest foreign contact among the four places. The USA, the only superpower in the world, supports the existing systems in Hong Kong and Taiwan, while having relatively little influence in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The weakness of Hong Kong's so-called "independence" movement is obvious. It lacks organized power and, furthermore, it does not have strong social basis. Organizationally, it is doubtful if it can even be called a movement; rather it represents scattered voices expressed in the academic venue and articulated by a number of social groups with "independence" leanings, and shared by the younger generation. The lack of theoretical narratives is not important when compared to the lack of strong social basis. After all, 95% of the population in Hong Kong are Han Chinese. Since the Handover, more than 1 million mainlanders have moved into Hong Kong (formal daily quota for immigrants from the mainland is 150), excluding informal immigration with different visas and direct entry to Hong Kong by the personnel sent by Beijing. There are also traditional "leftist" (pro-Maoist/pro-PRC) supporters and they account for about 40% of the whole population, which are the "iron votes" of the pro-government legislators. The "leftist" traditional roots were too strong with Mainland China.

More significantly, it is doubtful how many conventional pan-democracy political parties will support the "independence" views. Many pro-democracy parties were attacked by younger proponents of independence as "pan-ethnic Chinese chauvinism". On the other hand, Beijing will do everything possible to counterattack the trend. The 5th interpretation of the Basic Law is one of the measures. Hong Kong government could legislate legitimately, as required by the Basic Law,

the national security laws which include anti-secession and treason laws and could subsequently outlaw all “secession” activities. The lack of international institutional support is another weakness. Officially, both the USA and UK governments support the policy of 1C2S, therefore it is hardly possible to intervene in Hong Kong’s internal affairs institutionally. Although there are still a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Hong Kong and Hong Kong’s links with international organizations are still strong, considering the close connections economically such as the imports of foodstuffs from the mainland, the water and electricity supply from Guangdong Province etc., it is unrealistic to support the option of “independence”. The prospect for success of the “independence” movement is dire. However, I firmly believe that liberal values have been embedded in the structure of the Hong Kong society. The CCP Party/state might wish to reshape Hong Kong but, in essence, Hong Kong will be different from China’s other cities in terms of civic sense, openness of mindset, degrees of social and economic freedom, and vibrancy of the civil society.

Notes

- * Dr Yiu-chung Wong (王耀宗, BA, MPhil (CUHK); MA (SUNY Binghamton); PhD (Queensland)) is currently a professor at the Department of Political Science of Lingnan University, Hong Kong. He is also associate vice-president (Academic Affairs) of Lingnan University and the director of Core Curriculum and General Education. He has published about ten books mainly on Chinese and Hong Kong politics as well as current affairs. His teaching responsibilities include Introduction to Political Science, Hong Kong Politics, Hong Kong-Central relationships, Taiwan: Society and Politics, Political Ideologies, etc. and his research interests include China’s political reform, cross-strait relations, democratic

transition in Hong Kong, and the concept and implementation of “One Country, Two Systems”. <Email: wongyc@ln.edu.hk>

1. The other three lawmakers were Nathan Law Kwun-chung (羅冠聰), Lau Siu-lai (劉小麗) and Edward Yiu Chung-yim (姚松炎). Edward Yiu was elected in the functional constituency, while the other three elected in the geographical constituencies.
2. The Basic Law stipulates that for the bills proposed by legislators in order to become laws, the bills need to be passed by a majority of votes in both chambers: chamber of members elected by functional constituencies (indirect elections) and chamber of members elected by geographical constituencies (direct elections). After the LegCo election in September 2016, the pan-democratic/localist camp has a majority of 19 versus 16 in the chamber of direct elections. For the bills proposed by the government, a majority of votes for the whole LegCo is required.
3. A term to describe young people who were involved in the UM and who organized various “post-UM” organizations. The civic activism displayed by these organizations energized social climate and galvanized other groups to participate in the District Council elections in November 2015.
4. 《亞洲週刊》 [Asia weekly], 6th December 2016, pp. 22-28.
5. Edward Leung, who was a philosophy student in the University of Hong Kong, was going to play a prominent role in the Mongkok riots in early 2016 and later he was charged with “rioting” by the police. He repented after he was charged and admitted he made mistakes, ever since he disappeared from the public scene.
6. For the details of the election outcome, see <http://www.elections.gov.hk/legco2016/eng/rs_gc.html?1500851696209>.
7. To ensure his sincerity, Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) once said in public that if “fifty years were not sufficient, it could be additional fifty years ...” and “We want to create several Hong Kongs in mainland” etc.

8. The document said that “The Chief Executive will be appointed by the Central government on the basis of elections or consultations to be held locally”.
9. The late Lu Ping (魯平), former director of Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council (國務院港澳事務辦公室), once said that the development of the electoral system in Hong Kong would be purely an internal matter for the HKSAR government in the early 1990s, when Britain and the PRC were negotiating the electoral arrangement in post-handover HK. Historical development has proved that Beijing government lied at that time.
10. Tung Chee-hwa resigned in the second term with two years left and was succeeded by Donald Tsang. It was argued in legal professional whether the remaining two years of Tung’s second term is a full term or not. The NPCSC interpretation is that the two years should be counted as a full term. Consequently, Donald Tsang served seven years until 2012.
11. *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報), 21st November 2011; *Ming Pao* (明報), 24th November 2011. *Apple Daily* reported that in the district of Mei Foo (美孚), in one unit, there were 7 families and 13 voters. *Ming Pao* reported that the registered voter in fact did not live in the district registered as residence.
12. This functional constituency, in fact, is partially a kind of direct elections”, for the members were nominated by the District Councilors who were returned directly by the eligible voters territory-wide.
13. *Apple Daily*, 1 September 2014.
14. *Apple Daily*, 31 July 2014.
15. For the full display of the events of the 79 days, see: Au Ka-lun (2014). *Under the umbrella* (in Chinese). Hong Kong: Enrich Publishing Ltd. For comments and feelings of the participants, see: Lam Man-wing (2015). *The 79 days that disappeared*. Hong Kong: Isiaash Publisher.

16. The unprecedented violence was exhibited by the police in one of the placards during the demonstration, which says that “if you don’t disperse, we’ll open fire”. The police did plan to fire; somehow they did not because, according to insiders’ story, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CCP, gave the HKSAR government the bottom line, “no concessions, no bloodshed”.
17. I have talked to three young social activists who unanimously reckoned that the first time that the “dragon lion flag” was hoisted in public was in the 1 July 2011 street marches. The “dragon lion flag” was not exactly like British colonial flag, with little changes and it was first designed by a group called Hong Kong Autonomy Movement (香港自治運動).
18. Some would argue that localism could be dated back to the end of the 19th century (Kong, 2015: 173-174); see also Tsui (2015: 133-134).
19. <<https://www.hkpop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/>> (accessed on 10 July 2017).
20. Xi Jinping’s recent speeches in Hong Kong in the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of unification of Hong Kong with Mainland (《亞洲週刊》 [Asia weekly], 16 July 2017, pp.24-30).
21. *Ming Pao*, 31/30 July 2015.
22. On 18 September 2014, Scottish residents cast vote in a referendum on whether Scotland would be independent. The result was that 55.3% voted no, 44.7% said yes.
23. The massacre nearly eliminated the entire elite of more than 20,000 people. The 2.28 events were rehabilitated by the Taiwanese government in the mid-1990s and the KMT apologized to the Taiwanese people, but the wounds never healed.
24. A detailed history of Taiwan Independence movement is provided by Chen (2015).
25. *Ming Pao*, 30 September 2015.

References

- 《蘋果日報》 (*Apple Daily*), newspaper published in Hong Kong.
- Au Ka-lun (區家麟) (2014). 《傘聚》 (*Under the umbrella*). Hong Kong: 天窗出版社有限公司 (Enrich Publishing Ltd).
- Chan C.K. (陳智傑) (2013). 香港身份與中國論述的互動：曾蔭權年代的香港本土意識 [Hong Kong identities and its interaction with the Chinese narratives], in Law Kam-ye (羅金義) and Joseph Yu-shek Cheng (鄭宇碩) (eds), 《留給梁振英的棋局 — 通析曾蔭權時代》 (*On the chessboard: Donald Tsang's legacy for CY Leung*). Hong Kong: 香港城市大學出版社 (City University of Hong Kong Press).
- Chen Fupian (陳佳宏) (2015). 《台灣獨立運動史》 [a history of the Taiwan independence movement] (初版 2006/8). Taipei / 台北市：玉山社 (Taiwan Interminds Publishing Inc.).
- Chin Wan (陳雲) (2015). 《香港城邦論》 [The city state of Hong Kong] (初版 2011). Hong Kong: 天窗出版社有限公司 (Enrich Publishing Ltd).
- Fong, Brian C.H. (2014). Ten years of political appointments in Hong Kong – The challenges and prospects of developing a political appointment system under a semi-democratic regime, 2002-12. In: Joseph Y.S. Cheng (ed.), *New trends of political participation in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.
- Ghai, Yash (2000). The NPC interpretation and its consequences. In: Johannes M.M. Chan, H.L. Fu and Yash Ghai (eds), *Hong Kong's constitutional debate: Conflict over interpretation*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 199-215.
- Hughes, Richard (1976). *Borrowed place, borrowed time: Hong Kong and its many faces*. London: Andre Deutsch Ltd.
- Information Office of the State Council (IOSC) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (2014). 「一國兩制」在香港特別行政區的實踐 (*The practice of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*) (White Paper). Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe

(人民出版社).

- Kaeding, Malte Philipp (2017). The rise of “localism” in Hong Kong. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 28, Issue 1 (January), pp. 157-171.
- Kong, K.M. (鄭健銘) (2015). 《港英時代 英國殖民管治術》 [Britain’s governance in Hong Kong]. Hong Kong: 天窗出版社有限公司 (Enrich Publishing Ltd).
- Lau, Calvin H.M. (2014). Political participation of the post-80s generation – Their protest activities and social movements in recent years in Hong Kong. In: Joseph Y.S. Cheng (ed.), *New trends of political participation in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 385-416.
- Lam Man-wing (2015). *The 79 days that disappeared*. Hong Kong: Isiaash Publisher.
- Li, Y. (2013). *Hong Kong social thoughts: The rise and controversies of localism*. Hong Kong: Kwong Yu Publishers.
- 《明報》 (*Ming Pao*), newspaper published in Hong Kong.
- Tsui, S.Y. (徐承恩) (2015). 《鬱躁的城邦：香港民族源流史》 (*A National History of Hong Kong*). Hong Kong: 紅出版 (圓桌文化) (Roundtable Publishing).
- Undergrad*, HKUSU (香港大學學生會《學苑》) (ed.) (2014). 《香港民族論》 [a narrative on Hong Kongers as a nation]. Hong Kong: 香港大學學生會 (The Hong Kong University Students’ Union), September 2014.
- Wong, Yiu-chung (2014). Absorption into a Leninist polity – A study of the interpretations by the National People’s Congress of the Basic Law in post-Handover Hong Kong. In: Joseph Y.S. Cheng (ed.), *New trends of political participation in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.
- 《亞洲週刊》 [*Yazhou Zhoukan*, i.e. “Asia weekly”], published in Hong Kong.

