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Migrants and Democratization: The Political Economy of Chinese Immigrants in Hong Kong[+]

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Abstract

In this article, we argue that immigrants can serve as staunch support of the conservative incumbents of a regime, due to a self-selection effect; immigrants are more likely to accept the political status quo and be less sympathetic to the opposition who might demand progressive changes. Based on Asian Barometer survey data in Hong Kong, we showed that Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong are more pro-establishment and supportive of pro-government parties. With China's huge population, this implies a strategic importance of Chinese migrants, whose inflow to other Asian states can significantly skew the politics of neighbouring states in destined directions.

Keywords: *Hong Kong politics, Chinese immigrants, internal migration, democratization*

1. Introduction

As a key political power in East Asia, China has been well noted for its impact and influence because of its economic, military, and diplomatic strength. A lot of that strength of course lies in China being the most populous country in the world, with a formidable population of 1.3 billion people. For the most part, this gigantic population is considered as a resource when it is used as a market to entice investors, a basis for labor power, and a source of military strength. Yet a country with an enormous population can also make major geopolitical impacts in the region, in more than one way, if the people in that country migrate to other neighboring states.

In the age of globalization, migration is a sensitive political and diplomatic issue. Because of this, if possible, sovereign states try to impose controls on immigrants. In the case of an inability of preventing the entry of illegal immigrants (ranging from war, famines, unrests, or just the physical inability to control all the borders), governments would try to impose tight limitations on immigrants getting citizen rights, including voting rights and all the other entitled social benefits. Much has been made of the social impacts of immigrants on the social and economic resources of the host countries. Studies on the political impacts of immigrants as voters on the host countries receive far fewer scholarly attention.

This paper discusses the case of the political impact of Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong. The central argument is that by self-selection, the Chinese immigrants are politically more conservative, more content with the status quo, and less supportive of progressive

political change (i.e. fast democratization) than the native population in Hong Kong. Survey results show that immigrants from China have become reliable supporters of the pro-Beijing coalition in the elections in Hong Kong. This means that a continual influx of immigrants from China after 1997 will help to strengthen electoral support for the conservative ruling coalition in Hong Kong. Immigrants, and hence the immense population base of China, can become a very powerful tool by which China can influence or manipulate the politics of her neighbors.

2. Literature: Political Orientations of Immigrants

A common finding of the literature on the political role of immigrants is that immigrants tend to have lower political participation than natives (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; W. K. Cho, 1999; Junn, 1999). The level of participation varies with personal characteristics and the external environment of immigrants. For example, Leal (2002) showed that political participation of Latino immigrants in the United States would increase when they become more informed about politics. Black *et al.* (1987) showed that the older Canadian immigrants tend to be more politically active than the younger ones. Finifter and Finifter (1989) studied American migrants in Australia, and found that immigrants who are less ideologically committed to a US party tended to relinquish former party identification more easily.

Recent studies on immigrants' attitudes focus on the political effects of migration on the sending countries. By analyzing election data from Mexico, Pfutze (2012) shows that migration promotes democratization by increasing the electoral support for opposition parties. Careja and Emmenegger (2012) showed that in Central and Eastern Europe, people who had experience of migration to the West tend to have more positive attitudes towards democracy.

Historically, many people migrated out of economic incentives. The improvement of material well-being after migration can make migrants more resourceful and politically active. The improvement of status can also bring about expression of more liberal views and other political aspirations (Mishler and Rose, 2001; Careja and Emmenegger, 2012). The political ideology of the migrants prior to migration should be an important factor for determining the urge to participate after migration. Those who came from an autocratic regime have less exposure to democratic ideas. As a result, some argue that immigrants from non-democracies are less capable of participating in politics even if they move to democratic countries (White *et al.*, 2008; Black *et al.*, 1987). Others contend that migrants socialized in a politically repressive environment tend to distrust politicians and government officials (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Bueker, 2005; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Fennema and Tillie, 1999), which may hinder their political integration in the host society. In contrast, DeSipio (1996) and De la Garza *et al.* (1996) believe that migrants from authoritarian states would have a stronger urge to participate in politics because they lacked such opportunities prior to migration.

The above studies discussed the relations between migrant status and propensity of political participation. There is less attention on the impact or orientations of migrants, after they acquire voting rights in host countries. Malaysia's experience was instructive. In the 2013 elections, Barisan Nasional (BN), the ruling coalition in Malaysia, had its worst electoral performance in history, but managed to keep the parliamentary majority. The opposition had complained of numerous reported electoral malpractices. One was, as accused by the opposition campaign, to mobilize tens of thousands of foreign workers from less developed countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Myanmar to vote with faked identity cards (*The New York Times*, 2013). Sadiq (2005)

also argues that the influx of immigrants from the Philippines has strengthened BN's electoral support. There are cases where authoritarian regimes such as Singapore can allow foreign workers, with a certain salary level, to get citizen status and voting rights as soon as residing for two years. It shows that regime incumbents can manipulate the voter base by including or excluding immigrants. The key question is: is the political orientation of the immigrants always beneficial to the regime incumbents?

We argue that immigrants can be inherently more supportive of the host government, which means a conservative or competitive authoritarian government has an incentive to include more immigrants into the voter base. The first reason is that immigrants often lack political knowledge about the past performance of the ruling elite in the host country. As a result, they are less likely to be dissatisfied with the regime and supportive of the opposition. Immigrants as new comers also need extra information to make an informed choice during the elections. This information requirement may pose a difficulty for them to become "critical citizens". Secondly, the fact that these immigrants choose to come to the host country in the first place suggests that they find its political status quo acceptable. Political information may play a far less important role in determining the political choice of immigrants in authoritarian regimes, because those who have self-selected to migrate to an authoritarian host country at least should find the regime form acceptable.

3. Chinese Immigrants in Hong Kong

We picked post-1997 Hong Kong as a case analysis for the above thesis. Since post-WWII years, Hong Kong has been a "refugee society" (Lau, 1984; Hughes, 1968). Since 1949, hundreds of thousands fled the

economic hardship and political turmoil in mainland China to come to Hong Kong. Before 1980, the Hong Kong government adopted the so-called "touch base policy": Chinese and British soldiers on both sides of the border would try to stop illegal immigrants, sending them back to China upon arrest. If the illegal immigrants managed to get past the border without getting caught, they would be given identity cards and allowed to stay for good as legal residents.

These immigrants risked arrest and/or death to come to Hong Kong for both political and economic reasons. Before 1980s Hong Kong had no democracy, but personal freedom was largely respected, and had much better living standards than mainland China. The "touch-base" policy, however, was scrapped in 1980. From then on even if illegal immigrants managed to get to the city center, they would not be allowed to stay but would be sent back to China. This largely stopped the regular influx of Chinese migrants after 1980. The Hong-Kong-born took up a larger and larger portion of the Hong Kong population. A separate Hong Kong identity began to develop since the 1970s, as Hong Kong has a culture quite distinct from that of the mainland. Decolonization since the 1980s brought gradual democratization and the rise of a domestic democracy movement. Repeated opinion polls showed that the Hong Kong people were largely supportive of a faster transition to full democracy. The pro-democracy parties steadily obtained 55 to 64 percent of the popular vote share since 1991.

The 1989 Tiananmen crackdown shocked many Hong Kong people and firmly pit the Hong Kong democrats against the Beijing government. Since many of the Hong Kong democrats were actively in support of the democracy movement in China, the Chinese government was wary that full democracy would allow these "anti-China" elements take control of Hong Kong after 1997. The Basic Law (基本法), or the mini-constitution of Hong Kong after 1997, promised election of the

Chief Executive and the whole legislature by universal suffrage, but did not specify when this would be delivered. By 2016, only half of the legislature is elected by universal suffrage. The other half is elected from "functional constituencies" with a very narrow franchise, largely controlled by conservative and pro-Beijing business and professional groups. The Chief Executive has never been popularly elected, but was elected from an Election Committee representing largely the same groups as in the functional constituencies.

For studying the impact of immigrants on domestic elections, post-1997 Hong Kong is special in several respects. Post-1997 Hong Kong is a hybrid regime and a Special Administrative Region with a certain degree of autonomy. There are partial elections, and the popular elections for half of the legislature have been conducted in largely a free and fair manner. Civil liberties and rule of law in Hong Kong are constitutionally protected and maintains at a high level after 1997. This means that although Beijing wanted to control politics in Hong Kong, they have a few constraints. Basic freedom, including freedom to criticize the Hong Kong and Chinese governments, must be respected. The limited elections, as a venue to channel public opinion, need to be conducted in a free and fair manner, or regime legitimacy will be further damaged. Yet Beijing wants to guarantee that the democrats cannot extend or seize power through these limited elections.

Beijing used various means to influence electoral politics in Hong Kong, including subsidizing pro-Beijing parties and groups by monetary and other resources. For decades, pro-democracy supporters in Hong Kong knew that they were voting against Beijing, as the latter claimed unequivocally that the democrats were anti-China. However, the democrats managed to hold a majority vote share in the popular election part of the Legislative Council (立法會). In recent years, there were more discussions that new immigrants from China were more

conservative and were solid supporters of the government and the pro-Beijing parties. In this light, Beijing could weaken the democrats by inundating Hong Kong with immigrants from mainland China, gradually transforming the composition of the voter population of Hong Kong. Brought up and socialized in mainland China, the political knowledge and ideology of the mainland immigrants were different from that of the Hong Kongers'. They could be more "nationalistic" or "patriotic", and less supportive of the westernized values of democracy and rule of law.

As far as immigration from mainland China is concerned, Hong Kong is special in more than one way. Unlike most sovereign states, Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region cannot totally decide on its own to allow or disallow immigration. On the other hand, although Hong Kong is under Chinese sovereignty, migration from other parts of China to Hong Kong is not as easy as movement between cities in the mainland. Under Article 22 of the Basic Law, mainland Chinese who wish to migrate to Hong Kong have to apply through the mainland authorities. After 1997, on each day 150 mainland residents got the "one-way permit" and get the right to come to Hong Kong, but the power of selection lies with the mainland authorities and not the Hong Kong government. This adds up to about 55,000 mainlanders immigrating to Hong Kong each year. From 1997 to 2014, 800,000 mainland citizens have obtained the One-way Permits to settle in Hong Kong. They would get permanent residence after seven years, which means they can enjoy voting rights and other welfare benefits. This is a sizeable mass of immigrants in a city with population of seven million, with the proportion likely to increase over time.

After 1997, there are other routes by which mainlanders can come and get residence in Hong Kong. Mainland students who studied in Hong Kong universities can work after graduation to stay long enough (usually seven years) to qualify for permanent residence. Since 2006, the

Hong Kong government has introduced the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme to attract mainland Chinese with high technical or professional skills. In the first half of 2013, there were about 2,500 successful applications, of which about 80 percent were mainland Chinese. The Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, implemented since 2003, include owners of companies based in Hong Kong. Between 2003 and 2013, about 67,000 mainlanders migrated to Hong Kong through this scheme. During the same period, around 19,000 entered Hong Kong through the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme, which attracts people with considerable investment assets, with 87 percent of the successful applicants being mainland Chinese.

Despite all these channels of immigration, the influx of mainland Chinese immigrants would not have occurred had these mainland Chinese not wanted to migrate into Hong Kong. There were multiple reasons for their interest in coming to Hong Kong. First and foremost, the standard of living of Hong Kong is still significantly higher than most parts of mainland China. It is not surprising that many mainland Chinese would see the cosmopolitan city as a land of opportunity. Second, Hong Kong citizens under the "one country, two systems" principle enjoy far more civil liberties and political rights than residents on the mainland. Facebook and YouTube are not censored, while "one child policy" has never been applied. Hong Kong should appeal to those who value political and social freedoms. Third, many mainland Chinese immigrants are actually spouses of Hong Kong citizens. Family reunion provides them with a strong incentive to settle in Hong Kong.

4. Empirical Analysis

Based on the above discussion, one can see that self-selection plays a crucial role in the migration decision of mainland Chinese. They self-

select to come to Hong Kong because the city provides an environment that helps them achieve different goals in life. We argue that this self-selection mechanism has important political repercussions. Precisely because these immigrants value Hong Kong's status quo, which motivated them to settle in the city, they have little incentive to support political forces that attempt to disrupt this status quo. In the context of Hong Kong's democratization, we would expect to see the mainland Chinese immigrants are less likely to be sympathetic with the cause of pro-democracy parties, who have struggled for years to dismantle the existing political order.

In this section, we make an empirical investigation into the political attitudes of these mainland Chinese immigrants. In particular, we are primarily interested in three questions:

(1) Does the selection effect matter?
(2) If the selection effect matters, what kind of selection is it, political or economic?
(3) Do mainland Chinese immigrants identify themselves less with pro-democracy parties?

To answer these questions, we use data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) Wave III, a survey of about 1,200 household interviews, where respondents were asked an extensive set of questions concerning their political values, party identification, and attitude toward democracy and political institutions. The respondents were selected using a stratified random sampling design. The survey was conducted between August and November of 2012. There were 1,207 individuals successfully interviewed. The Asian Barometer Survey provides important information to answer the above questions. For a list of ABS questions we used in the following empirical analysis, see the Appendix Table.

4.1. Hypotheses

We derive several testable hypotheses related to the above questions. As discussed, there are two potentially crucial factors that motivate mainland Chinese to seek migration into Hong Kong. The first is that the Chinese immigrants were mainly driven by economic concerns. Compared with most regions in the mainland, the living standard of Hong Kong, especially the wage level, is significantly higher. The Chinese immigrants may choose to move to Hong Kong in search for a better living and more economic opportunities.

The second reason is political consideration. Although the political system of Hong Kong is not fully democratic, Hong Kong people do enjoy substantially greater political freedom than mainland citizens. In fact, Hong Kong people are able to elect at least half of the legislative seats every four years. In this respect, the political system of Hong Kong is more democratic than that of other mainland cities. Hong Kong, therefore, may appeal to those who despise the stifling political climate of the mainland and those who value greater political freedom.

To find out whether the economic or political concerns play a more important role in shaping the Chinese immigrants' decision of migration, we derive three testable hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Immigrants would view the economic situation of Hong Kong more favorably than natives.

If the Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong are mainly economic migrants, they would naturally view Hong Kong's economic situation in a more positive light. This is not to say that all Chinese immigrants are able to improve their lot in the city. Some may become disillusioned after arriving in Hong Kong. However, those who failed to improve their relative economic status may well return to their hometown. Suffice it to

say, those who continue to stay – hence entering the survey sample – are probably the ones who could not have achieved the same economic standing back home. To these people, their background has conditioned their evaluation of Hong Kong's economic situation. In contrast, if their migration motive is not economic, we would then not be able to see any systematic difference between immigrants and natives with respect to their economic evaluation, as many immigrants who fail to improve their economic status would still choose to stay in Hong Kong for other reason.

Hypothesis 2. Immigrants show a lower degree of trust in the Chinese government than natives.

If the Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong are driven by a desire for political freedom, their view of the Chinese government is likely negative. To put it another way, had they approved of the political status quo of the Chinese authoritarian state, they would not have had an incentive to emigrate in search for greater political freedom.

Hypothesis 3. Immigrants are less proud of their identity as Chinese nationals than natives.

Mainland Chinese have been socialized in a political environment, where information controls and state propaganda have a ubiquitous presence. The official media in China tend to discourage the discussion of ideas such as political freedom and Western-style liberal democracy. In contrast, concepts such as patriotism, national pride, or a more recent variant, the China Dream, are given more emphasis. If the political selection is at work, this suggests that these immigrants hold political freedom in high regard. For these people, who are willing to venture into

uncharted territory in pursuit of political freedom, the political indoctrination of the Chinese government seems to have little impact on them. We, therefore, have reason to believe that these immigrants would have a lower level of national pride.

Regardless of whether mainland Chinese immigrants are motivated by economic or political concerns, our theory predicts that they would be more inclined to identify themselves with the pro-establishment camp than the pro-democracy camp due to their satisfaction with the status quo compared with the natives. Hence, we have the next hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. Immigrants are more likely to identify themselves with the pro-establishment camp.

4.2. Results

Our key variable of interest in the regression specifications is *Immigrant*, a dummy variable that takes a value of "1" if a respondent was not born in Hong Kong, and "0" otherwise. Because only Chinese immigrants were sampled in the survey, all immigrants in the data refer to Chinese immigrants.

As mentioned, mainland Chinese immigrants came to Hong Kong in different waves. Earlier settlers may share greater attitudinal similarities with the natives due to socialization over a longer period of time. For this reason, we include a variable *Years after Immigration* to control for this socialization effect.

We also add a number of control variables to reduce omitted variable biases. These variables include gender, education, income level, age, and age squared. The squared term of age is intended to capture potential non-linearity effect between age and the attitudinal constructs. All specifications contain religion and district fixed effects.

4.2.1. Economic or political selection?

The dependent variables for *Trust in Chinese Government* and *National Pride* are ordinal variables on a 4-point scale (Strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree). We dichotomize these dependent variables, with the value "0" indicating disagreement and "1" agreement. The variable for *Economic Evaluation* is on a 5-point scale. For each of these dependent variables, we run two specifications using different estimation strategies. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Mainland Chinese Immigrants: Political or Economic Selection?

Dependent Variable	Economic Evaluation		Trust in Chinese Government		National Pride	
Estimation Strategy	OLS	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit
Immigrant	0.311***	0.743***	0.735***	0.933***	1.166***	1.509***
	(0.086)	(0.223)	(0.215)	(0.266)	(0.239)	(0.340)
Years after Immigration	-0.007***	-0.014**	-0.018***	-0.021***	-0.017**	-0.024**
	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.010)
Female	-0.164***	-0.445***	-0.055	-0.079	-0.564***	-0.407*
	(0.054)	(0.138)	(0.148)	(0.175)	(0.156)	(0.212)
Primary School	0.028	0.099	-0.048	0.111	0.156	0.383
	(0.078)	(0.189)	(0.219)	(0.260)	(0.218)	(0.321)
Secondary School	0.098	0.263	0.144	0.377	0.172	0.403
	(0.082)	(0.202)	(0.230)	(0.282)	(0.234)	(0.342)
College	0.183*	0.484*	-0.261	0.067	0.185	0.455
	(0.106)	(0.261)	(0.308)	(0.353)	(0.305)	(0.403)
Married	0.092	0.255	0.349*	0.461**	-0.351*	-0.640***
	(0.069)	(0.176)	(0.181)	(0.209)	(0.189)	(0.244)

Table 1 (continued)

Dependent Variable	Economic Evaluation		Trust in Chinese Government		National Pride	
Estimation Strategy	OLS	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit
Income 8 - 15 K	-0.116 (0.088)	-0.337 (0.221)	-0.065 (0.233)	-0.302 (0.276)	0.024 (0.243)	0.091 (0.339)
Income 15 - 25 K	0.010 (0.089)	-0.026 (0.223)	0.158 (0.243)	-0.079 (0.289)	0.099 (0.243)	0.143 (0.339)
Income 25 - 40 K	0.089 (0.100)	0.132 (0.246)	0.001 (0.279)	-0.141 (0.324)	0.101 (0.268)	0.257 (0.382)
Income above 40 K	-0.100 (0.135)	-0.317 (0.333)	-0.076 (0.390)	-0.169 (0.441)	-0.333 (0.385)	-0.308 (0.473)
Age	-0.022** (0.010)	-0.042 (0.026)	0.021 (0.025)	0.034 (0.030)	0.106*** (0.024)	0.151*** (0.033)
Age Squared	0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)
Constant	3.329*** (0.359)			-0.028 (1.597)		-2.910** (1.457)
Cut-off 1		-1.786* (0.929)	-2.062 (1.575)		0.622 (1.078)	
Cut-off 2		0.527 (0.926)	-0.066 (1.559)		1.808* (1.088)	
Cut-off 3			3.109** (1.556)		5.176*** (1.112)	
Number of Observations	983	983	916	915	906	904

As may be seen from Table 1, our variable of interest is statistically significant in all specifications, suggesting that they hold attitudes fairly different from the natives, the baseline group. First, consider economic evaluation. The coefficient on the variable of interest, *Immigrant*, is statistically significant regardless of the estimation strategy, indicating that the Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong view the city's economy more favorably than natives. The results suggest that many immigrants are able to improve their economic well-being after migrating to Hong Kong. The substantive significance of the variable of interest is modest. The OLS estimate is 0.311, which is about 40 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable.

Next, consider the possibility of political selection. Contrary to our expectation, these immigrants actually have more trust in the Chinese government and greater national pride than the natives. The coefficient on Immigrant is statistically significant in all specifications related to national pride and trust in Chinese government, suggesting that the difference between the immigrants and the natives is unlikely due to chance alone.

It is also important to note that the variable *Years after Immigration* is also statistically significant across specifications. The sign of this variable is negative, suggesting that the differences between immigrants and natives will gradually narrow. The rate of convergence, however, seems quite low. Take *Trust in Chinese Government* as an example. It takes roughly 40 years for an immigrant's trust to decrease to the level of a native. The weak substantive significance suggests the limits of socialization.

As for other control variables, we only report those with statistically significant coefficients. Female respondents tend to have less positive evaluation of Hong Kong's economic situation and lower national pride.

Married people tend to have greater trust in the Chinese government. Interestingly, they also have lower national pride. Respondents with a college degree tend to view the economic situation more positively than those without any education. Age also matters when it comes to national pride. Older respondents are more likely to feel proud of their national identity.

The results of Table 1 show strong support for the economic-selection thesis. The mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong seem to be motivated by economic concerns, rather than political ones, when they choose to settle in the city.

4.2.2. Party identification: Natives vs immigrants

A cursory examination of the data reveals that immigrants and natives differ significantly with respect to their party identification. The most important political cleavage in Hong Kong is that between the pro-democracy groups and the pro-Beijing groups. As can be seen from Table 2, two-thirds of the self-identified pan-democratic supporters are native Hong Kong people. On the other hand, of the pro-Beijing supporters, 56 percent are immigrants. The division is quite clear: natives tend to support the pro-democracy opposition, while immigrants the pro-Beijing camp.

Not everyone has a clear party identification. It is noteworthy that immigrants are 28 percent more likely to be unsure about which camp to support. For those who identify themselves as politically neutral, there is no significant difference between natives and immigrants.

The data shown in Table 2 are aggregate statistics that take no account of individual differences in characteristics. To ensure that the divergent political preferences are not driven by other personal qualities than immigrant status, we regress political identification on immigrant status and a set of control variables, including gender, education,

Table 2 Political Identification: Natives v. Immigrants

Political Identification	Natives	Immigrants
Pro-establishment	0.445 (0.043)	0.555 (0.043)
Pan-democrat	0.665 (0.035)	0.335 (0.035)
Neutral	0.499 (0.022)	0.501 (0.022)
Unsure	0.363 (0.036)	0.637 (0.036)

Notes: Row proportions are reported.
Standard errors of row proportions are in parentheses.

income, marital status, age, age squared, religion, and district fixed effects. We include age squared to capture the potential nonlinear effect of age on political identification. Table 3 contains the result of the multinomial logistic regression.

The dependent variable, political identification, has four categories: pan-democrat, pro-establishment, neutral, and unsure. We use "pan-democrat" as the baseline comparison group. As can be seen from Table 3, immigrants are more likely to identify as pro-establishment. Concretely, being an immigrant is associated with a 0.62 decrease in the relative log odds of identifying oneself as pro-establishment versus as pan-democrat. Expressing the effect in probability, immigrants are about 6 percent more likely than natives to identify with the pro-establishment camp than with the pan-democratic one. The difference is statistically significant at 5 percent.

Table 3 Effect of Immigration Status on Political Identification: Multinomial Logistic Regression

	Pro-establishment	Neutral	Unsure
Immigrant	0.621**	0.282	0.690***
	(0.278)	(0.216)	(0.256)
Female	0.214	0.296	0.518**
	(0.261)	(0.209)	(0.253)
Primary School	0.491	0.149	-0.476
	(0.472)	(0.370)	(0.410)
Middle School	0.531	-0.189	-0.930**
	(0.502)	(0.402)	(0.463)
College	1.170**	-0.099	-0.999*
	(0.567)	(0.465)	(0.576)
Married	0.178	0.273	-0.053
	(0.329)	(0.249)	(0.290)
Income (8 - 15K)	0.316	0.484	0.015
	(0.449)	(0.357)	(0.416)
Income (15 - 25K)	0.110	0.119	-0.401
	(0.429)	(0.347)	(0.404)
Income (25 - 40K)	-0.369	0.127	-0.775*
	(0.484)	(0.381)	(0.469)
Income above 40K	-0.905	-1.060**	-1.223**
	(0.556)	(0.458)	(0.575)

Table 3 (continued)

	Pro-establishment	Neutral	Unsure
Age	0.127*** (0.049)	0.068* (0.035)	0.001 (0.039)
Age Squared	-0.001** (0.000)	-0.001* (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Constant	-4.079* (2.149)	-0.380 (1.631)	-13.603*** (1.724)
Number of Observations	993		

As for the control variables, only college degrees and age have significant effects on one's identification with the pro-establishment camp. One is more likely to identify oneself as a pro-establishment supporter, as one grows older. But the rate of decline also decreases over time, as shown by the negative and significant coefficient on age squared. Compared with respondents with no formal education, those with a college degree are more likely to identify themselves as pro-establishment.

4.2.3. Robustness checks

Our argument is concerned mainly with the immigration policies of post-colonial Hong Kong. Yet, as mentioned in the previous section, Hong Kong experienced multiple waves of a massive influx of Chinese immigrants in the postwar period. Early Chinese immigrants may differ

from those who arrived in Hong Kong after 1997 in two important respects. First, many of the early comers fled China to escape political unrest such as the Cultural Revolution, whereas the latecomers may be too young to have any memory of such upheaval. Second, those who came to Hong Kong after 1997 have never encountered many draconian colonial policies that the early comers endured before the 1980s. These experiences are likely to leave mixed impacts on the early comers; while the political unrest in the mainland may undermine their trust in the CCP, the oppressive colonial rule may increase their nationalism. To ensure that the effect of economic selection is robust to the inclusion of the early comers, who have life experiences markedly different from the latecomers, we reran the regressions by excluding all the early comers. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Robustness Checks: Excluding Early Comers

Dependent Variable	Economic Evaluation		Trust in Chinese Government		National Pride	
Estimation Strategy	OLS	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit
Post 1997 Immigrant	0.358***	0.834***	0.613***	0.767***	1.146***	1.279***
	(0.084)	(0.232)	(0.216)	(0.262)	(0.237)	(0.341)
Years After Immigration	-0.184***	-0.501***	-0.001	-0.066	-0.762***	-0.667***
	(0.069)	(0.184)	(0.194)	(0.219)	(0.201)	(0.252)
Female	0.014	0.027	-0.442	-0.300	-0.253	0.156
	(0.112)	(0.281)	(0.335)	(0.375)	(0.313)	(0.413)
Primary School	0.162	0.361	-0.054	0.064	-0.050	0.171
	(0.112)	(0.289)	(0.337)	(0.383)	(0.334)	(0.419)

Table 4 (continued)

Dependent Variable	Economic Evaluation		Trust in Chinese Government		National Pride	
Estimation Strategy	OLS	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit
Secondary School	0.237*	0.526	-0.685*	-0.430	-0.151	0.125
	(0.130)	(0.335)	(0.406)	(0.461)	(0.409)	(0.485)
College	0.153*	0.384	0.360	0.451*	-0.670***	-0.857***
	(0.091)	(0.239)	(0.251)	(0.265)	(0.247)	(0.286)
Married	-0.176	-0.521	0.007	-0.275	-0.443	-0.341
	(0.125)	(0.325)	(0.362)	(0.375)	(0.345)	(0.464)
Income 8 - 15 K	-0.021	-0.165	0.078	-0.164	-0.167	-0.342
	(0.131)	(0.348)	(0.384)	(0.402)	(0.368)	(0.474)
Income 15 - 25 K	0.068	0.055	0.203	0.005	-0.268	-0.266
	(0.136)	(0.349)	(0.410)	(0.425)	(0.381)	(0.511)
Income 25 - 40 K	-0.232	-0.564	0.434	0.337	-0.268	-0.328
	(0.174)	(0.447)	(0.536)	(0.575)	(0.504)	(0.612)
Income above 40 K	-0.010	-0.022	0.022	0.053	0.160***	0.203***
	(0.014)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.034)	(0.043)
Age	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.001***	-0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Age Squared	3.414***			13.630***		10.104***
	(0.379)			(1.120)		(1.072)
Constant		-2.310**	-4.332***		-0.722	
		(1.034)	(1.506)		(1.473)	
Cut-off 1						

Table 4 (continued)

Dependent Variable	Economic Evaluation		Trust in Chinese Government		National Pride	
Estimation Strategy	OLS	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit
Cut-off 2		0.038 (1.037)	-2.106 (1.498)		0.483 (1.476)	
Cut-off 3			1.084 (1.504)		3.925*** (1.493)	
Number of Observations	592	592	552	541	545	527

As may be seen from Table 4, the main results are nearly identical to those in Table 1. The latecomers view the economic situation more positively than the natives, and have a higher level of trust in the Chinese government and stronger national pride. As for the support for democracy, there is no significant difference between the latecomers and the natives. The results suggest that the results of Table 1 are not driven solely by the early comers.

Given the importance of economic selection, it is instructive to put it through a more severe test. Central to economic selection is the idea that migrating into Hong Kong can improve one's economic well-being. "Improvement" is a dynamic process that involves changes, whereas the variable *Economic Evaluation* that we examine in Table 1 is essentially a static measurement. Fortunately, the Asian Barometer Survey contains additional questions that help us explore the concept of "improvement" more rigorously.

Theoretically, "improvement" may refer to two distinctive processes. The first is *realized* improvement; immigrants decide to stay in Hong Kong because their economic conditions have actually improved. The second is *prospective* improvement; immigrants decide to stay because they expect that their economic conditions will eventually improve. We operationalize the concepts of realized and prospective improvement by using two questions in the Asian Barometer Survey. The first question asks the respondents to evaluate the current economic situation of their family compared with five years ago, while the second question asks the respondents to predict the economic conditions of their family five years later. We compare the average scores of these questions between natives and immigrants. To precisely identify the effect of realized improvement, we confine our immigration sample only to those who arrived in Hong Kong in less than five years. For these immigrants, their answers to the realized improvement question would give us a clear-cut comparison between their life in Hong Kong and the one back in the mainland.

As may be seen from Table 5, immigrants give a higher rating than natives on average, no matter whether we examine realized improvement or prospective improvement. For realized improvement, the difference between the two groups is statistically significant at about 10 percent. But for prospective improvement, the difference is significantly different from zero, suggesting that immigrants' outlook for their family economic conditions is far more positive than natives'. The results of Table 5 provide strong support for the argument of economic selection: the Chinese immigrants come to Hong Kong in anticipation of an improvement of their economic standing.

Table 5 Robustness Checks: Economic Selection for Immigrants with Length of Residence < 5 years

	(a) Immigrant Average	(b) Native Average	(a) - (b)	P-value
Family economic conditions compared with 5 years ago	3.133 (0.142) [30]	2.903 (0.033) [535]	0.231	0.1061
Expected family economic conditions 5 years later	3.548 (0.121) [31]	3.084 (0.028) [533]	0.464	0.0001

5. Conclusion

This study postulates that immigrants may be in general more supportive of the government in a hybrid regime, because of a self-selection process. Migrants usually find it easier to accept the political status quo of the host country and have less urge for progressive change, hence less likely to support the opposition. The case of Hong Kong shows that the immigrants from China are in general more politically conservative and more supportive of the pro-Beijing ruling coalition in elections. Our study shows a strong selection effect in the case of Hong Kong. In particular, the migration decision of the Chinese immigrants is based more on economic, rather than political, considerations. In the presence of these pro-establishment immigrants, also with their rising numbers, the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong is likely to meet resistance in years to come. As Wong (2015) points out, post-colonial Hong Kong experiences two concurrent, yet seemingly contradictory, political

trends. On the one hand, the civil society has become more vocal in its demand for democratization, as witnessed in the 2014 Occupy Movement. On the other hand, the pro-establishment camp has received an increasing electoral support. The pro-establishment camp's aggressive cultivation of grassroots political machine may have contributed to their electoral success (Wong, 2014). Yet, the findings in this paper provide another explanation for these anomalous political developments: the establishment may take advantage of the influx of mainland Chinese immigrants, who are pro-status quo, to increase its electoral support to counter-balance the rising democratization demands of the natives.

Our findings have profound implications in the analysis of the geopolitics and strategy of the Asian region, in particular concerning the role of the huge population of China. If China is able to "export" its population to its neighboring (democratic) states, as its people are politically more conservative and have more sympathy to the "China model", it can have substantial impact on the electoral politics of other Asian states. With investors and labor from China making their marks all over the world, and with China's huge population, this political impact cannot be overlooked. Hong Kong is special in that it is not an autonomous state capable of resisting this trend. The democrats in Hong Kong suspected that the Hong Kong government collaborated with Beijing to let in more immigrants in order to consolidate its rule. Other states in the region should take into account the possible strategic implications and political impacts of Chinese immigrants in their domestic politics.

Notes

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Appendix Table

Hypothesis	Concept	Question Number	Question Asked	Answers
4	Political Identification	48	Many people think that Hong Kong politics is competition between the "pan-democratic" and the "pro-establishment" camps. Some feel that they support the former camp, while others think they support the latter. In your case, do you support the "pan-democratic" or the "pro-establishment" camp?	1. Pan-democrat 2. Pro-establishment 3. Neutral/ Neither 8. Unsure 9. Decline to answer

Appendix Table (continued)

Hypothesis	Concept	Question Number	Question Asked	Answers
1	Economic Evaluation	1	How would you rate the overall economic condition of our city today? Is it ...?	1. Very good 2. Good 3. So so (not good nor bad) 4. Bad 5. Very bad 8. Can't choose 9. Decline to answer
2	Trust in Chinese Government	9	Please tell me how much trust do you have in the National Government? Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?	1. A great deal of trust 2. Quite a lot of trust 3. Not very much trust 4. None at all 8. Can't choose 9. Decline to answer
3	National Pride	153	How proud are you to be a citizen of China? Are you ...?	1. Very proud 2. Somewhat proud 3. Not very proud 4. Not proud at all 8. Can't choose 9. Decline to answer

Appendix Table (continued)

Hypothesis	Concept	Question Number	Question Asked	Answers
	Family Economic Conditions Compared with Five Years Ago	5	How would you compare the current economic condition of your family with what it was a few years ago? Is it ...?	1. Much better now 2. A little better now 3. About the same 4. A little worse now 5. Much worse now 8. Can't choose 9. Decline to answer
	Expected Family Economic Conditions Five Years Later	6	What do you think the economic situation of your family will be a few years from now? Will it be ...?	1. Much better 2. A little better 3. About the same 4. A little worse 5. Much worse 8. Can't choose 9. Decline to answer