

## **China's United Front Work in Civil Society: The Case of Hong Kong<sup>+</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This article unravels China's united front work in dealing with civil society, using the case of Hong Kong after the political handover since 1997. While it has been widely analyzed by scholars that state corporatism characterizes the state-society relations in China, including the state's relations with its autonomous regions, Hong Kong as a special administrative region, however, shows that the ruling strategies of China are very adaptive. Comparing with the rest of China where the united front work is partly characterized by a heavy-handed policy of assimilation, the united front work in the post-handover Hong Kong illustrates a more inclusionary version of state corporatism through five types of measures, namely, integration, cooptation, collaboration, containment, and denunciation. The strategies range from soft to hard tactics, and are adopted depending upon whether the central government regards its targets as friends, valuable potential cooptees or enemies. Nevertheless, the soft and hard tactics used in parallel in Hong Kong have resulted in further politicization and polarization of the civil society, and transformed the tension between the state and the local groups into clashes between different local groups, as seen in other autonomous regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang. Over the years, the agents for state corporatism have been ever expanding in Hong Kong. The ideologies propagated have now gone beyond consensus and harmony to also include patriotism and reinterpretation of other political ideas, including universal suffrage, conducive to cultivating obedience.

**Keywords:** *state corporatism, united front, autonomous regions, special administrative regions, Hong Kong and China*

**JEL classification:** *H70, H73, H77, Z19*

## 1. Introduction

This article seeks to unravel China's united front work in dealing with civil society, using the case of Hong Kong after the political handover since 1997. While it has been widely analyzed by scholars that state corporatism characterizes the state-society relations in China, including the state's relations with its autonomous regions such as Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, the case of Hong Kong as a special administrative region, however, shows that the ruling strategies of China, an authoritarian sovereign, are very adaptive. Comparing with the rest of China where the united front work is characterized by a parallel use of soft tactics and a heavy-handed policy of assimilation, the united front work in the post-handover Hong Kong illustrates a more inclusionary version of state corporatism. As such, the case of Hong Kong is also indicative of China's adaptable ruling strategies towards its special administrative regions (which may perhaps in the future include Taiwan) and autonomous regions, as well as the future of their democratization. Overall speaking, the article investigates China's direct and indirect influence in managing Hong Kong's civil society through five types of corporatist measures, including integration, cooptation, collaboration, containment and denunciation, and their implications.

## 2. China's State Corporatism and United Front Work

Since the 1990s, the concept of state corporatism has been widely used by scholars in analyzing the ruling strategies of China. In practice, parts of such strategies are often referred to as the united front work by Beijing. The two terms are not mutually exclusive, nevertheless. While state corporatism indicates China's overall ruling framework, its united front work is the relatively informal and soft tactics adopted to build friendship and its following, which include the work to educate, persuade, coopt and integrate people.

Corporatism is a long-established theory in the study of politics and has different variants. Based on the different degrees of state centralization and organization of corporatist institutions subject to historical and cultural differences, corporatism can be distinguished into strong, intermediate and weak types, as well as political, societal or neo-corporatism (Foweraker, 1987; Wiarda, 1996). As a general classification suggested by Schmitter, political corporatism, also called state corporatism, is distinguished from societal corporatism or neo-corporatism. In the modern world, the former refers to an authoritarian and coercive form of corporatism, while the latter represents a democratic form of corporatism. In state corporatism, the state is strong and dominates over territorial and political subunits as well as interests groups, and bureaucrats are ideologically selected. In contrast, under societal corporatism

or neo-corporatism practised today mostly in developed industrial and social welfare oriented countries, social and interest groups are incorporated into the decision making machinery on social and economic policies in particular (Schmitter, 1974; Wiarda, 1996).

In dealing with civil society, state corporatism carries the following main features. Previous analyses, for example, Foweraker's study of the Franco regime of Spain (1987) and Unger and Chan's study of China (1995), found that the role of the state in state corporatism is directive, interventive and exclusive with the aim of maintaining its hegemony and achieving high degrees of political collaboration.

Specifically, the directive role of the state on the society is evident in various aspects. At the ideological level, it is perceived as a state responsibility to define and promote national interests, and to impose such norms on the people. Though what national interests mean are rarely precisely defined in state corporatism, it is observed that these often include national integration, economic growth, stability, social harmony and consensus, and the dispelling of popular aspiration for democracy (Spalding, 1981; Foweraker, 1987).

The hierarchical relationship of the state to the society also distinguishes it from the bottom up interest cooptation processes in liberal democracy and societal corporatism (Oi, 1992; Chan, 1993; Unger and Chan, 1995; Wiarda, 1996; Unger, 2008). Under state corporatism, the state plays an important architectural role in the building of relatively cohesive and hierarchical bureaucratic institutions and structures facilitating control of different social sectors, interest groups and political parties (if any). It also acts as an active arbiter for various parochial interests organizing the relations among them.

Often, elite associations are formed whereby specific associations are selected by the state and granted the monopoly of representation within a specific sector serving as surrogates of state interests. Through the process of interest incorporation, associations are incorporated into advisory or execution bodies with little real power as appendages to the state to assist in its governance. Associations that are not approved by the state will be kept peripheral in political influence or even barred. The internal governance of organizations is closely monitored by the state, and the associations are also demanded to exercise some control over their memberships. Elite associations may still enjoy relative autonomy from the state but their role in the decision making process is usually passive and minimal (Schmitter, 1974; Spalding, 1981; Foweraker, 1987; Unger and Chan, 1995; Wiarda, 1996; Unger, 2008). Importantly, the state architecture of formal control of the society always coupled with the implementation of rigid laws containing and curbing political forces from threatening the state. Protests and demonstrations are prohibited or only nominally allowed. And the media is often state-run or heavily censored.

Other state corporatisms alike, the creeds of social stability and harmony are undeniably significant in the official discourse of the Chinese state, however, they do not stand alone. To strengthen its rule, China has actively promoted patriotism in the form of “China can say no” and rejection of foreign intervention. In addition, it has attempted to develop a set of standards different from the West, so that it would not be evaluated on the same ground as in liberal democracies. Series of attempts have been made to deny the relevance of certain Western concepts, notably human rights and democracy.

Institutionally, China has remained a one-party state ruled under the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) which executes control over all government organizations. Party committees are parallel at all levels to the government structure through which the Party exercises control over the policy process of the state. Inside the Party, the Politburo and its Standing Committee sit at the top of the power structure but are not accountable to any other institutions. The system of the government is one of people’s congresses, which hierarchically begins with the National People’s Congress (hereafter NPC) at the top, then followed by the provincial, municipal, and township people’s congresses, and so on. In theory, the NPC elects the President and Vice-President for the state, but in reality the candidates for the office are chosen by the Party. The Premier as the head of the government is formally appointed by the President with the approval of NPC, who in reality is also chosen by the Party.

With regard to the society, the United Front Department of the Central Committee of the CCP is responsible for the united front work at this level. During former Chinese leader Mao Zedong’s reign, the united front was formed to carry out its work via various corporatist structures. Structures directly led by the state, such as street committees, neighbourhood committees, communes, *danwei* 单位, and other surrogate mass organizations including the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, Chinese New Democracy Youth League (now Communist Youth League of China), and All-China Women’s Federation, were introduced and incorporated into the party-state. The media was state-run following the government’s journalistic guidelines.

A greater degree of liberalization has been witnessed in China since the economic reforms in the 1980s. Although only one single organization would be recognized by the state as the representative for each sector, gradual development in China has prompted the state to allow the formation of a variety of non-political social organizations, such as scholarly societies, charities, and professional associations. Such a growing liberal atmosphere was soon crushed during the 1989 protests in Beijing, and so was the demand for autonomous organizations for students and workers.

Since 1989, China reinstated a more comprehensive registration system for all social organizations. For instance, only one association was allowed to

register as the representative for each sector. Associations had to be registered and sponsored by a supervisory body. The state could carry out annual review of the associations and intervene into their internal governance (Unger, 2008). In the 1990s, a tripartite corporatist structure was established to deal with industrial relations, with the Labour Bureau as the representative of the state, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions as the representative of the workers, and the Chinese Enterprise Directors' Association representing the employers. While the state is active in regulating the relations of organizations, especially those in the key sectors, to maintain its influence and to ensure that the state is in control, politically non-sensitive associations such as those for sports, arts and culture, environment, and retired teachers do enjoy greater autonomy (White, 1993).

Some independent media outlets have emerged and the media has also become increasingly commercialized in China since the 1980s. Nevertheless, until today, the media continues to be closely monitored by government agencies, such as the Propaganda Department. Protesting has been a constitutional right of Chinese citizens but advance permission from the Public Security Bureau has to be obtained for actual allowance.

Similar state-corporatist strategies are also witnessed in China's autonomous regions. Although the regions were promised a high degree of autonomy upon the establishment of the People's Republic of China, measures of coercion, assimilation, persuasion and inducement have been implemented to strengthen state control. Over the past decades, massive economic development programs, such as the Great Western Development Plan, have been carried out to quicken the economic integration of the autonomous regions with the China proper and increase Han migration into the regions. Political-wise, minority ethnic groups in the autonomous regions are granted greater political representation in the NPC. Also, the Law on Regional Autonomy for the Minorities (1984) stipulates that the administrative head of the autonomous regions be a citizen of the respective ethnic group. However, no comparable stipulations are made for the party secretaries of the Communist Party committees who oversee the administrative heads. In the area of education, ethnic minorities are granted privileged access to higher education. Nevertheless, patriotic education campaigns are carried out and learning Mandarin promoted since kindergarten, while local languages and religious education repressed. In Tibet, for instance, the Tibetan language is taught only up to middle school. Likewise in Xinjiang, freedom of religion is restricted as Uyghurs under the age of eighteen are not allowed to attend mosques or receive religious education. In the area of media, Beijing enforces strict censorship on reporting ethnic minorities tension and discontent (Chou, 2012; Demirtepe and Bozbey, 2012; Hao and Liu, 2012; Smith 2009).

### 3. China's United Front Work in Hong Kong

Understanding China's united front work helps make sense of its policy on Hong Kong. Due to the principle of "one country, two systems", political acquiescence which is secured through carefully designed institutional, political and legal means in China is hardly viable in Hong Kong. Moreover, contrary to the predominance of state control in China, Hong Kong has a liberal and pluralistic political tradition rooted in its long experience with British colonial rule, capitalism and cosmopolitan thoughts. In many ways, China has to experiment with its ruling strategies on Hong Kong, not only in proclaiming sovereignty after the handover, but also in assimilating and gradually merging Hong Kong into the greater Chinese social, cultural and political system.

During the period before 1997 when China was not the sovereign, the concept of united front work had been widely employed to understand the informal influence of the formerly Xinhua News Agency in Hong Kong (now the Central People's Government Liaison Office, hereafter CPGLO) on Hong Kong's civil society. Since 1997, the CPGLO acts as the representative for Beijing, being responsible for liaison between Mainland agencies and the local community, coordinating the activities of the CCP in Hong Kong, and conducting united front work, propaganda and supervision. It also controls Beijing-affiliated publications and media in Hong Kong mobilizing support for the policies of the Beijing-appointed government (Yep, 2007).

The previous examination of China's united front work in colonial Hong Kong tended to focus mostly on how Beijing consolidated its relationship with individuals in Hong Kong through cooptation (e.g., Wan, 2003; Lee, 2006; Lo, 2008; Kwong, 2010). Different from the previous studies, this article purports that the united front measures of Beijing in Hong Kong are much systematic and adaptive in accord with the "one country, two systems" principle and the liberal-pluralist tradition in Hong Kong. As it will be analyzed, China's united front measures in Hong Kong, which include the soft tactics of integration, cooptation and collaboration, as well as the hard tactics of containment and denunciation, all seek to ultimately consolidate China's hegemony in the local society.

Integration refers to the process of merging different parties with one another based on common interests, and at the ideological and affective levels. It indicates not only the development of common instrumental interests but also that of common wills and feelings. As a way of neutralizing the differences between Hong Kong's pluralistic society and China and thus winning the support of the majority, this measure is widely visible in all walks of life in Hong Kong.

Cooptation describes the process of bringing outsiders (usually the resource-poorer) inside (usually the resource-richer) (Saward, 1992). In Hong Kong, the Chinese Communist agents actively and selectively recruit

and appoint supporters to political institutions and power positions, so that alternative views of its supporters can be put in line with those of the Chinese authorities. Since the transitional era, cooptation has been conducted via appointment to institutions such as the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (hereafter CPPCC), NPC, coopting elites to special bodies such as the Basic Law Drafting Committee, and recruitment to political groups such as the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (hereafter DAB).

Compared with cooptation, collaboration indicates a more detached relationship between the Communist agents and the political recruits, and usually targeting the wavering middle. Though the involved parties willingly work together, their cooperation is relatively informal and less institutionalized as well as short-term based. In real-life politics in Hong Kong, it is always hard to find evidence for the measure of collaboration, largely so because of the inconspicuousness of such activities. Collaborators are often those who would prefer a little distance from Beijing while not antagonizing it. Therefore, they would be keen on keeping their connection with the Chinese authorities well away from public gaze. The ultimate aim of collaboration is to ensure that the targets do not join force with the opposition, whether or not they explicitly support Beijing.

Containment characterizes particularly the Communist agents' policy on the democratic forces in Hong Kong. Through nourishing supporters' networks and creating strategic alliances with Beijing's sympathizers, this measure aims to check the expansion or influence of democrats. It also involves the fragmentation of the opposition camp in order to neutralize its influence.

Denunciation is the most exclusive form of measure used by the Chinese authorities to defeat its enemies, particularly the democrats, and control the Hong Kong society. It is characterized by public condemnation and accusation, outright rejection, verbal threats, and refusal to communicate. It aims to charge someone on their misdeeds, and halt their influence immediately and permanently, especially in situations when the authorities perceive that their sovereignty is at stake.

Loh and Lai (2007) once stated that China's united front work in Hong Kong has consistently classified the population into three groups: a supportive majority to mobilize, a wavering middle to neutralize, and an enemy to defeat. The same classification applies to understand how China has accordingly treated different political players in post-handover Hong Kong. Integration and cooptation are measures for dealing with the majority and supporters, collaboration targets the moderate middle, and containment and denunciation constrain the influence of enemies to even exclude them. Among all these, only denunciation serves a clear purpose of political exclusion. Other measures rather involve education, persuasion, threats and inducement.

### 3.1. Integration

#### 3.1.1. Integration by economic measures

After more than a decade of returning to Chinese rule, not only has Hong Kong operated simultaneously under the Chinese political shade as well as British colonial legacy as a special administrative region, and cultivated somehow a common understanding that China is the big boss behind; it also has become more economically dependent on the sovereign state. After all, not only is economic growth and wealth accumulation an essential component in China's struggle to emerge as a world power in the 21st century, it is also an effective soft tactic to achieve political control.

After the political resumption, economic interchange and activities that accelerate political assimilation between Hong Kong and China have become visible. One notable example is the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). The CEPA was a bilateral free-trade agreement signed between China and Hong Kong in 2003 against the background of both economic and political concerns. In 1998, Hong Kong was seriously hit by the Asian Financial Crisis. The economic turbulence persisted until 2003 when the Hong Kong government was at the same time troubled by the Article 23 fiasco in which the proposed national security law was seriously disputed and shelved after more than half a million people joined a protest against it. Economic measures were then adopted by Beijing to take the edge off the Hong Kong government's legitimacy crisis, which in the years followed have accelerated the city's economic integration and dependence on China.

Although Hong Kong continues to maintain independent trade relations with various countries, the significance of China in Hong Kong's trade has become incontrovertible. Regarding inward direct investment, China has maintained the largest proportion in 2011 (HK\$3,042.8 billion), while most of Hong Kong's outward direct investment also went to the Mainland (HK\$3,346.4 billion).<sup>1</sup>

Ideologically, Beijing, along with the Hong Kong government, claims that economic integration is the only way out for Hong Kong under fierce global economic competition lest Hong Kong becomes marginalized. For example, shortly after the waving of the colonial Hong Kong flag by some protestors in a protest in 2012, former Deputy Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office Chen Zuoer 陈佐洱 alleged that, practically, Hong Kong would have become a "dead city" without the assistance from the Mainland China. In his words, Hong Kong would be unable to survive without the economic gifts and water supply from Guangdong (*The Sun* 太陽報, 2nd November 2012).

For one thing, the cultivation of economic integration of Hong Kong and China has consolidated the practice of conservatism amongst Hong Kong's business class who, having vested interests in China's market, would tend



not to antagonize the central government. The influx of Chinese capital into Hong Kong further engendered conditions for such conservatism. One example is the Chinese investment in the local media, which brought about apparent changes to the contents of news programs. Asia Television (hereafter ATV) is a case in point. Wang Zheng 王征, a major investor of ATV since 2010, is a CPPCC member and a relative of the former state leader Jiang Zemin 江泽民. Though Wang describes himself as a “consultant” to his cousin, ATV Executive Director James Shing Pan-yu 盛品儒, he is believed to have directly involved in ATV’s day-to-day operations. News reports of the ATV have been moving toward a more conservative stance in general. For example, in 2012, “ATV Focus” claimed that opponents of the moral and national education curriculum in Hong Kong were actually backed by London and Washington; and labelled members of the student advocacy group Scholarism as naïve teenagers having been manipulated by politicians and risking their future by playing with politics (*Singtao Daily* 星島日報, 5th September 2012).

### 3.1.2. Cultivating patriotism

Cultivating patriotism has constituted much of the ideological reshaping process in Hong Kong. Indeed, as the term is subject to multiple interpretations, patriotism is a “two-edged sword” for Beijing. Liberal readings of patriotism which balances unconditional commitment to state interest with liberal morality may adversely affect the political order it seeks to establish in Hong Kong. Hence, over the years, endeavours have been made to setting hegemonic standards for patriotism and branding alternative views in parallel.

To start with, patriotism in official terms is very narrowly defined. Patriots should support the exercise of sovereignty of the central government in Hong Kong and fulfil duties stipulated in the Basic Law, such as the obligation to protect the national interest of China through legislating laws on national security. Though Chinese officials and pro-Beijing figures did not explicitly equate “state” with the “party-in-power”, interests of the two are conceived as highly intertwined and hence, a patriot must also support Communist rule.

Politically, patriotism is made a criterion for choosing the Chief Executive (hereafter CE) of Hong Kong and the lawmakers. Recently, the patriotism debate was rekindled over the heated debate on universal suffrage for 2017, as Chinese officials and supporters of Beijing were responding to law professor Benny Tai Yiu-ting 戴耀廷’s proposal of calling for 10,000 people to blockade Central District in 2014 to put pressure on the central government. Yu Zhengsheng 俞正声, member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee and Chairman of the CPPCC, claimed that, with the introduction of universal suffrage, only those patriotic could be allowed to lead the city (*Singtao Daily*,

7th March 2013). Though commitment to patriotism has never been specified in the Basic Law as a prerequisite for candidates running for the CE election, it is now made an extra requirement for the future CE.

Cultural nationalism is also used as a catalyst for integration, with the projection of a common ethnic origin, history and interest identified as the Chinese nation onto the people of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao. In his first speech as head of state, Xi Jinping 习近平 asserted that he would fight for a great renaissance of the Chinese nation. After his meeting with Honorary Chairman of the Kuomintang Lien Chan 連戰 from Taiwan, Xi also described compatriots from both sides of the Taiwan Strait as brothers of the same mind, who could cooperate in realizing the Chinese dream. Hence, any attempts on separating parts from the nation would be deemed immoral. In parallel, in Hong Kong, it is noticeable that in recent years, China's advancements in technologies and international status, such as the successful hosting of the 2008 Olympics, were much publicized to arouse nationalistic sentiment. The arrangement of visits of Chinese astronauts and top athletes to Hong Kong further indicates such attempts by Beijing. Nationalism is also used to mollify and neutralize the tension resulted from rapid and unchallenged integration between China and Hong Kong, with the use of family metaphor by the officials calling for tolerance on the part of the Hong Kong populace (*The Standard*, 25th February 2013)

While inspiring the people of Hong Kong to pay special attention to China by patriotic and nationalist sentiments, their expression of concern and sympathy toward political problems in China, especially those related to pro-democracy movements and rights-defending activists, are very much discouraged. The expression of “well water does not intrude into river water” has been persistently used by Chinese officials to analogize the relationships between Hong Kong and Mainland China under “one country, two systems”. At the same time, identity politics are manipulated through branding certain democrats (Wu, 2007). Democrats such as Martin Lee Chu-ming 李柱銘, who explicitly called for international attention on China and Hong Kong's human rights condition stirred backlash from Chinese officials and Beijing supporters; Lee was virtually accused of being a “traitor” and different from the patriotic majority.

## 3.2. Cooptation

### 3.2.1. Giant coopting mechanisms

Previous studies show that cooptation in the local political front can be described as a patron-client network (Lo, 2008). Beijing, as a powerful patron offers various inducements to solicit and solidify the political loyalty of its clients in Hong Kong including the CE, its biggest patron in the city. The

CE, being the surrogate of the central government, is entrusted with great powers relative to the legislature, whose political loyalty to Beijing is secured with the provision of explicit political and economic support. The members of the Executive Council, the principal officials, leaders of the pro-Beijing political parties such as the DAB are in turn the core clients of the CE. For them, inducements may include a considerable degree of power, status, policy influence, and so on.

As the CE is a position of power, it is only natural that Beijing is anxious about his/her political loyalty. The Basic Law stipulates that the CE shall be accountable to, and be appointed by, the central government. More importantly, the right to elect the CE is limited to an electoral college, the Election Committee, which consists of 1,200 members from 38 subsectors returned by an electorate of around 220,000 individuals and corporations. Besides the purpose of political control, the Election Committee is in itself a structure for cooptation of selected interests. In a similar vein, the idea of functional constituency (hereafter FC)<sup>2</sup> in the election of the Legislative Council (hereafter LegCo), with its constituencies concentrated in business and professional sectors and small electorate, serves the dual purpose of containing the democratic influence in the legislature while coopting selected interests. Both the Election Committee and FC would ensure that the influence of the selected interests prevails in the government. In other words, future elections in Hong Kong could not be genuinely democratic insofar as FCs not fully abolished and the nomination process of the CE firmly controlled by Beijing.

In addition to the above coopting mechanisms in Hong Kong, the NPC and CPPCC are the coopting mechanisms at the state level. In 2013, a broader group of representatives from Hong Kong has been named to the twelfth CPPCC National Committee than in previous years. Apart from prestigious tycoons, professionals and community leaders, these bodies are also coopting FC lawmakers and retired high officials in Hong Kong. For instance, Jeffery Lam Kin-fung 林健鋒, who was elected to the Commercial (First) FC without competition and also a member of the Executive Council, is one amongst the 124 Hong Kong Deputies to the CPPCC.

Such ceremonial gift is also bestowed on former CE Tung Chee-hwa 董建華 who was first elected the Vice-chairman of the CPPCC in 2005, two days after his resignation due to “health problems”; and re-elected in 2013. Henry Tang Ying-yen 唐英年, who lost the race in the 2012 CE election, was among the 299 newly elected Standing Committee members of the CPPCC. The former CEs were joined by former officials to be coopted into the CPPCC, including ex-Police Commissioner Tang King-shing 鄧竟成 and ex-Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Timothy Tong Hin-ming 湯顯明.

### 3.2.2. Cooptation of social bodies and the media

As a way to cultivate comradeship and identification with China as well as a supportive following, the CPGLO arranges potential cooptees to visit China. For example, in 2007, to rally support for Donald Tsang 曾蔭權 in the CE election, and to build consensus between Beijing and Hong Kong's civic associations on the matter, the CPGLO arranged various social and professional bodies to meet with Chinese officials. Moreover, starting from 2007, the CPGLO has also arranged potential cooptees to attend a course on national studies jointly offered by national level academies, such as the National Academy of Administration (*Wen Wei Po* 文匯報, 4th November 2011). Other times, potential allies are invited not only to visit China but also to meet with Chinese officials, participate in the national day celebrations, and attend high level conferences and meetings. Occasionally, targets are also invited to visit their native hometowns to arouse patriotic sentiments and to explore investment opportunities.

In addition to the more specific and important cooptees, secondary school and university students are also arranged to visit the Mainland, which serves the purpose of arousing their sense of cultural affinity to China while at the same time witnessing China's national achievements. Very often, the exchange tours are accompanied by at least one official from the CPGLO, and received by Mainland officials at various ranks, depending on the size and nature of participants (*Hong Kong Commercial Daily* 香港商報, 8th August 2009).

As the coordinator of united front work in Hong Kong, the CPGLO collaborates with civic bodies in Hong Kong or sponsors them in organizing youth activities and education projects that serve both practical and strategic purposes. For example, with its aim of catching up with the favourable opportunities created by Hong Kong's economic integration with China, the Federation of the New Territories Youth's brand-building event, "9+2" exchange tour (refers to the nine provinces and two special administrative regions in the Pan-Pearl River Delta Regional Cooperation) in 2009 was advised by the New Territories Division of the CPGLO.

Civic bodies that openly declare themselves patriotic and having frequent exchanges with Mainland China are likely to have regular contact with the CPGLO, especially its Youth Division. Structure of the CPGLO is very meticulous allowing officials to specialize in liaising and overseeing particular civic bodies (Luk, 2010). Presence of the officials could often be seen in major events of these civic bodies, particularly their inauguration and prize presentation ceremonies. Officials' appearance in these activities would be widely reported by the pro-China media in Hong Kong.

Cooptation also takes the form of political appointment, in which core members of political parties and civic groups, as well as community leaders,

are appointed to various state or party institutions or “people’s organizations” (such as the All-China Youth Federation, hereafter ACYF) at both national and local levels. For instance, the DAB, as flagship for pro-Beijing forces in Hong Kong, has most of its core members coopted into the aforementioned bodies. Currently, nine members of the DAB are serving as Hong Kong Deputies to the NPC, while 32 of them are delegates to the CPPCC. Some of the DAB’s younger members, such as Horace Cheung Kwok-kwan 張國鈞, legislators Ben Chan Han-pan 陳恆鑛 and Gary Chan Hak-kan 陳克勤, are appointed to the ACYF. In its Standing Committee (Session 2011-2013), three members, including Chairman Tam Yiu-chung 譚耀宗, Chairman of Senate Yu Sun-say and Vice-chairlady Ann Chiang Lai-wan 蔣麗芸, are appointed to the National Committee of the CPPCC. Three of its members are coopted to CPPCC at sub-national levels; they include Vice-chairman Horace Cheung Kwok-kwan, General Secretary Pang Cheung-wai and Treasurer Wong Kine-Yuen.

Apart from political parties, media owner is another front of cooptation. It is observed that after these media owners were granted medals of honour and made CPPCC delegates, the papers have turned into strong critics of the democrats (Ma, 2007). A case in point is the *Oriental Daily*. In the early years when the newspaper was founded by Ma Sik-chun 馬惜珍 and his brother Ma Sik-yu 馬惜如, it was deemed pro-Taiwan, mainly because of the owners’ cordial relationship with Kuomintang. Since the handover, the newspaper has moved toward a more pro-Beijing stance. Apart from keeping itself from reporting negative news in China, the *Oriental Daily* also fiercely and consistently attacks members of the democratic camp, especially Martin Lee Chu-ming, Anson Chan Fang On-sang 陳方安生 and its major media competitor Jimmy Lai Chee-ying 黎智英. In 2003, Chairman of its Broad of Director, Ma Ching-kwan 馬澄坤, was appointed to the National Committee of the CPPCC. Ma is also closely associated with the pro-China circle in Hong Kong. Recently, Lew Mon-hung 劉夢熊, an outspoken pro-China figure in Hong Kong who was a former ally of CE Leung Chun-ying 梁振英, revealed in an interview that he put together Ma Ching-kwan and Leung so that Ma could help Leung in launching a media war against his competitors in the CE election (*Ming Pao* 明報, 26th January 2013).

### 3.3. Collaboration

#### 3.3.1. Pragmatic collaborations in elections

Owing to the partial direct election elements in the LegCo and the District Council, Beijing is cautious building collaboration in the elections and containing the popularity of the opposite camp in Hong Kong. It has been an open secret that the CPGLO has been coordinating different pro-Beijing forces

and candidates in previous legislative and district elections, and mobilizing community support for them (Poon, 2008; Lo, 2010). The main purpose is apparently to facilitate their victory in these elections.

Prominent examples were seen in the elections of the LegCo in 2012. Candidates who declared themselves “independent” regarding political affiliation had actually worked closely with pro-Beijing organizations and received their electoral support. Paul Tse Wai-chun 謝偉俊, who was elected to the LegCo through the Tourism FC in 2008, “parachuted” to participate in Kowloon East GC election in 2012 as an independent candidate. As revealed in an election forum hosted by NOW TV, Tse lacked the slightest knowledge of district affairs in Kowloon East, but still miraculously won in the election with a very high number of votes. Later in another television program, Tse admitted that the CPGLO was actually helping him with the election campaign, yet he would not follow its directions blindly. He further commented that it is not proper for CPGLO officials to appear too often in front of the public, since it may give an impression of Hong Kong undergoing “Mainlandization” (*RTHK 香港電台*, 29th November 2011; *On the Record 香港政府新聞網 – 政府評論*, 30th December, 2012).

Another example: it was reported that the Federation of Trade Unions (hereafter FTU), a pro-Beijing union in Hong Kong, planned to compete for a seat in Kowloon West in 2012. Since Lau Chin-shek 劉千石, founding President of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, lost his seat in the LegCo election in 2008, his supporters who came from the working class would probably vote for another pro-labour candidate. Adding these votes to its existing supporters at the district level, the FTU would have a fairly high chance of winning. Nonetheless, Priscilla Leung May-fun 梁美芬, an independent candidate in Kowloon West who was “recommended” to the FTU’s members by its chairperson Cheng Yiu-tong 鄭耀棠 in 2008 LegCo election, also relied on the FTU for voter mobilization. Since the DAB had already sent its Vice-chairlady Ann Chiang to bid for a LegCo seat, the FTU’s entry would risk Leung’s chance of winning. In the end, the CPGLO persuaded the FTU out of the election in Kowloon West (*Apple Daily 蘋果日報*, 5th March 2012).

### 3.3.2. Constitutional reforms in 2010

Another example of collaboration was between Beijing and the Democratic Party over the issue of constitutional reform in 2010. In 2009, the Hong Kong government published a consultation document to broaden the scope of political participation and elements of democracy for the 2012 elections. The pro-democratic legislators and the community expressed great disappointment with the conservative proposal, which has been attacked as

a rehash of the one rejected in 2005. A campaign on “*de facto* referendum” was initiated by the Civic Party and the League of Social Democrats in which five legislators from the two parties resigned and then mobilized the Hong Kong people to vote them back into the LegCo in the by-election and demand for universal suffrage in the nearest future. The Democratic Party condemned the consultative proposal for failing to facilitate universal suffrage in 2012, yet, breaking off relations with the radical democrats in the *de facto* referendum and its assessment that Beijing would be keen to see a breakthrough in the talks over constitutional reform, it opted for deliberation with the CPGLO.

In 2010, 11 local democratic groups formed the Alliance for Universal Suffrage (hereafter the Alliance), an umbrella group of moderate democrats with Democratic Party at its core. It was reported that the CPGLO have arranged members of the Alliance to meet with Beijing; dialogue that had been ceased since the 1989 Tiananmen Incident was rehabilitated. To strive for “the maximum degree of democracy” for 2012 elections, the Alliance was prepared to accept the reservation of FC elections for eight more years, which departed from the demands of other democratic parties. It further brought up the proposal of “one person, two votes” to reform the FC election in 2012, on the condition that the FC must be scrapped in 2020. Former Deputy Director of the CPGLO, Li Gang 李刚, also spoke favourably of the Democratic Party, said the party was invited because it chose neither to participate in nor support the *de facto* referendum (*Ming Pao*, 25th May 2010).

At the early stage of the negotiation, proposal of the Alliance was bluntly rejected by the Chinese officials. Nevertheless, realizing that the democratic legislators were prepared to vote down a reform package with no substantial progress for democratic elements for the 2012 elections, the stance of the central government then softened considerably. Three days before the package was put to vote in the LegCo, Li Gang met with the representatives from the Democratic Party and opened green light for their revised constitutional reform proposal. The revised proposal was then successfully passed by LegCo with 46 votes out of 60. The Civic Party and League of Social Democrats were unable to stop the package from getting passed despite their opposition. This has triggered a split in the democratic camp as the Democratic Party sided with the Hong Kong government amidst severe public recrimination and criticisms.

In that, the strategy of collaboration not only secured the passage of the government-proposed constitutional reform package, it also had the effect of divide-and-rule. The moderate democrats’ proposal was given way, yet with controversies. The society was deeply divided as some believed that the revised proposal did not go far enough towards democratic aspirations promised in the Basic Law. The radical democrats were dismissed from any

meaningful dialogue with the central government, which not only sharpened division between the Democratic Party and its allies, but also risked future cooperation. Some of the Democratic Party's supporters were also alienated, accusing the party of reneging on its commitments and "selling out" people of Hong Kong.

### **3.4. Containment**

#### *3.4.1. Reinterpretation of the Basic Law*

As previously analyzed, state corporatist regimes can make use of the law to constitute new state control. In Hong Kong, owing to the judiciary's respectable status and the tradition of the rule of law, containment measure has taken place at the constitutional level whereby attempts were made by the NPCSC to reinterpret certain stipulations and legal concepts in the Basic Law and the Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal's (hereafter CFA) rulings. Containment works in a way that definitions of concepts and practices under the Basic Law in Hong Kong would be made in line with Beijing's understanding and judgments, affecting the autonomy of Hong Kong, its judiciary independence and democratic development.

Altogether, the NPCSC had made four attempts to interpret the Basic Law. Of relevance here, the second reinterpretation of the Basic Law by the NPCSC took place in 2004. After the massive demonstration against the Article 23 in 2003, there have been immense demands for universal suffrage for the election of the CE and the LegCo in 2007 and 2008. Amidst the controversies, the NPCSC took steps to reinterpret Article 7 of Annex I and Article III of Annex II of the Basic Law, and made decisions on issues related to the methods for selecting the CE in 2007 and for forming the LegCo in 2008. The NPCSC's statements ruled out the possibility of implementing universal suffrage for the elections of the CE in 2007 and the LegCo in 2008. In addition, it declared that any constitutional reforms in Hong Kong have to be gradual and orderly, and added a new procedural requirement on the democratization of Hong Kong's electoral system. The LegCo is barred from initiating reforms on the election law and, instead, the reform process can only be initiated by the CE and requires endorsement by the NPCSC. These requirements, however, are not found in the text of the Basic Law.<sup>3</sup>

#### *3.4.2. Redefining universal suffrage*

The meaning of universal suffrage has become much controversial in the course of the debate on Hong Kong's constitutional development. Understandably, China has attempted to restrict the prevalence of the understanding



of the concept as equal and universal voting rights as upheld by the democrats by redefining the concept as something with Chinese characteristics. Early in 2008, former Deputy Secretariat of NPCSC, Qiao Xiaoyang 乔晓阳, who has been in charge of Hong Kong's constitutional reform, together with some Chinese legal experts claimed that the meaning of universal suffrage, a term having a universal definition under the United Nations' Covenant, should be understood by studying the legislative intent of the Basic Law. This view was echoed by Hong Kong's former Chief Secretary Henry Tang who said the Basic Law does not require for the abolition of the FC seats of the LegCo, implying that the FC could be retained for universal suffrage.

In 2010, Qiao Xiaoyang outlined in his speech the future and the definition of universal suffrage in Hong Kong. He claimed that "universal suffrage" for the legislature means equal and universal voting rights but these rights could be subject to legal restrictions. Future elections should be compatible with Hong Kong's legal status, executive-led system and capitalist economy as well as the interests of various classes. Qiao's speech is evident that under China's policy on Hong Kong, the understanding of universal suffrage could be modified according to political needs.

In a similar manner, Yu Zhengsheng, member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee and Chairman of the CPPCC, in 2013, claimed that Hong Kong must be governed by people who love the country and Hong Kong, and warned against the city being used as a subversive base that would threaten national security. His view was echoed by Chan Wing-kee 陳永棋, a Standing Committee member of the CPPCC, who further suggested that in the election of the Hong Kong Chief Executive in 2017 (even if universal suffrage would be in place), a screening process or a primary poll should be introduced to ensure that the candidates would be acceptable to Beijing, and such arrangements are not undemocratic (*South China Morning Post*, 25th March 2013).

### 3.4.3. *Demoralizing the democratic camp and reinforcing counter participation*

As part of the attempts to contain the influence of the democrats in Hong Kong, Beijing has sought to demoralize and spilt the democratic camp. As analyzed above, the negotiations on the constitutional reforms for 2012 between the Chinese authorities and the Democratic Party in 2010 has deeply hurt the unity of the democratic camp. Another important example is the District Council elections in 2011 in which suspicious vote-rigging in the elections back-dropped the landslide victory of the pro-Beijing camp. Also, smear campaigns were launched to affect the election results. Near the polling date, Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, a local pro-democracy businessman, was reported

to have donated a large sum of money to local democratic parties and Cardinal Joseph Zen 陳日君, then head of the Hong Kong Catholic Church and an active supporter of the democratic movement. Though these donations were legal, Lai was accused of being a conduit for foreign money and influence (*Wall Street Journal*, 5th December 2011).

Attempts to cultivate regimented participation have also been noticeable in Hong Kong. While there is no concrete proof of the systematic mobilization of the Chinese authorities in the incidents analyzed below, it would also be counter-intuitive not to associate them together. By and large, the incidents were mobilized by pro-Beijing figures and organizations in Hong Kong to dilute the influence of the democrats on issues considered potentially subversive and harmful to stability. For instance, on the day of the massive demonstration against Article 23 in 2003, a carnival to promote health consciousness against SARS was held by the FTU in the same public park where the protesters gathered. In 2010, in response to the call for “referendum” by the Civic Party and the League of Social Democrats, 96 leading pro-establishment figures in Hong Kong formed the Alliance for Constitutional Development. They declared their support for the government proposal on political reforms that had been criticized by democrats as conservative. Since 2012, activities both for and against the CE Leung Chun-ying have become organized. For instance, on 1st January 2013, protests both for and against the CE Leung were held. Anti-Leung protest organizers claimed 130,000 people had participated in their protest, and the pro-Leung protestors were said to be paid for their attendance.

Alongside the above development is the establishment of a significant number of pro-Beijing “parallel” and new associations. Assuming the pseudo-role of “elite associations”, these parallel associations are formed with the purpose to dilute any undesirable political influence and to achieve dominance in specific sectors as far as possible. This is another salient feature of China’s united front work in Hong Kong, which has been in place even before 1997. These associations can either be umbrella or second-tier organizations affiliated or subordinated to the umbrella organizations. While some of these organizations have been established before the political handover, some others were founded during the past decade for nourishing local support, cultivating patriotism, and counteracting the influence of pro-democracy organizations. For instance, the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers was formed in 1975 to balance the influence of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union (1973) which is pro-democracy. Parallel to the Hong Kong Federation of Students (1958), which is the umbrella association of the student unions of tertiary education institutions who has heavily involved in pro-democracy political issues, the Hong Kong Youth and Tertiary Students Association was established in 1993 to unite pro-

establishment tertiary and university students. Near that time, the Hong Kong United Youth Association (1992), Hong Kong Youths Unified Association (1996), and Federation of New Territories Youth (1997), all with a pro-Beijing background, were also founded to rally support from the youngsters. In the media sector, the Hong Kong Federation of Journalists (1996) was formed to counter-balance the influence of the pro-democracy Hong Kong Journalists Association (1968).

Since the political handover and notably after 2003, Beijing has also been active in supporting new groups of the second generation of local tycoons. Important examples include Y. Elites Group (2007) and Centum Charitas Foundation (2008) (Cheung, 2012: 336-338). There has also been a proliferation of pro-Beijing new associations targeting particularly the younger generations in Hong Kong. These include, for example, the Hong Kong Youth Power Association (2001), Future Star Federation of Students (2005), and various youth exchange promotion associations with different Mainland regions, such as the Hong Kong Youth Exchange Promotion United Association (2009).

### **3.5. Denunciation**

In some cases, measures of denunciation were employed by the Chinese authorities for asserting forceful and quick political control. One notable example is the debate on the de facto referendum initiated by the Civic Party and the League of Social Democrats in 2010. The parties' announcement of referendum had precipitated severe criticisms from the Chinese authorities. The CPGLO in Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office denounced such a campaign as violating the spirit and provisions of the Basic Law, with particular emphasis that constitutional development in Hong Kong be carried out in gradual progress. Referendum, as reiterated by the Chinese authorities, carries a special constitutional meaning, and no provisions of the Basic Law have empowered Hong Kong to carry out any form of referendum. During the course of debate, potential dangers and uncertainties were exaggerated by the authorities to delegitimize the movement as a whole. For instance, the term "uprising" used by the democrats was framed by the authorities as subversive, connoting military uprising. The fight for universal suffrage was branded as attempts to seek political independence from China. At the societal level, the referendum was further boycotted by pro-Beijing elites. The pro-Beijing media staged vehement criticisms of the political parties participating in the referendum. Originally, pro-Beijing parties such as the DAB and the FTU announced their intention to send candidates for the by-election. Nevertheless, their stance changed later on, proclaiming that they were against any attempts of confrontational tactics.

Another important example is the autonomy movement emerged in Hong Kong since 2012. At present, the autonomy movement is hardly “a” movement. In terms of the background of people involved, it consists of individuals from different social strata and different social bodies such as the Hong Konger Front and the Hong Kong City-State Autonomy Movement. The goals and demands of the participants and social bodies are also varied, ranging from very crude demand that Mainlanders “get lost” from Hong Kong to relatively organized ideas about enhancing autonomy for Hong Kong. If it were not because of the movement’s anti-Communist sentiments, its general call for Hong Kong autonomy, and the waving of the colonial Hong Kong flag by some protestors during protests and public forums, prominent Chinese officials would not have reacted so sharply.

Despite the common belief in Hong Kong that “Hong Kong independence” is no more than an empty slogan, the development of the movement in 2012 has invoked sharp criticisms from Chinese officials formerly in charge of Hong Kong affairs. Chen Zuoer, for example, said that the rise of a pro-independence force in Hong Kong is spreading like a virus and should be firmly dealt with. Lu Ping 鲁平, in different occasions, denounced that those who advocate for Hong Kong independence are morons who do not know their history, that Hong Kong would become a dead city without support from China, and that those who do not recognize their Chinese identity should look at what is written on their passports or renounce altogether their Chinese nationality. Such views were echoed by pro-Beijing figures in Hong Kong such as former CPPCC member Lew Mon-hung who said that waving colonial flag is traitor behaviour and should be banned (*Oriental Daily*, 2nd January 2013).

In a similar manner, in an article published in 2013, Director of Publicity at the CPGLO Hao Tiechuan 郝铁川 commented that Hong Kong is at a low ebb yet the advocacy for Hong Kong independence is a “poison” which also violates the principle of “one country”. Hao, a controversial figure, once openly criticized the HKUPOP polls on the development of Hong Kong people’s ethnic identification led by Robert Chung 鍾庭耀 as unscientific and illogical. His controversial criticism had triggered, or was linked to, series of vicious attacks on Chung in the pro-Beijing newspapers in Hong Kong and China afterwards. Chung was denounced as inciting Hong Kong people to deny their Chinese identity, accepting dirty political bribes, and having connection with a British intelligence agency (*i-cable*, 29th December 2011). The incidents eventually prompted Hong Kong’s Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Raymond Tam 譚志源 to deny interference from Beijing on the polls and reassured that academic freedom in Hong Kong is protected by the Basic Law.

#### 4. Lessons from Hong Kong

China's united front work in Hong Kong illustrates a more inclusionary version of state corporatism adopted for political expediency consideration. The above analysis shows that the strategies it employs range from subtle to blatant moves, from soft to hard measures, and from assimilation to total rejection.

It is noticeable that, as political expedient and soft tactics, namely integration, cooptation and collaboration, have been employed by Beijing in Hong Kong inasmuch as in other autonomous regions, other ruling strategies, namely containment and denunciation, adopted in Hong Kong are not very commonly used in other autonomous regions where political coercion and heavy-handed assimilation policies might instead be perceived as more effective in curbing enemies. Classical theories of united front work of the Chinese Communist Party suggest that the scope of attack be restrained, and the number of enemies be kept to the minimal. The same principle applies to Hong Kong. From the way how Beijing antagonized the Democratic Party to how it beckoned its past enemy, it seems that its united front work in Hong Kong is to a large extent, pragmatic and versatile. Nevertheless, China's use of collaboration as a delaying strategy, notably on universal suffrage, has alienated even moderate democrats, which has made China's united front work on the 2017 and 2018 constitutional reforms even more difficult. By far, the democrats have formed a new alliance for universal suffrage which can be considered as a counter united front. Indeed, China's measures of soft tactics as well as containment and denunciation, being used in parallel, have polarized the local civil society which would run counter to Beijing's desires in its united front work. While part of the Hong Kong population are increasingly dependent on the central government for benefits and political decisions, the increasing sense of alienation of some others has provoked separatism and radical reaction much stronger than ever.

Alongside this, Beijing has actively involved in the local civil society by establishing parallel organizations, manipulating elections and organizing political activities to counteract popular participation. This has resulted in the further politicization and polarization of the civil society. In recent years, it is witnessed that the antipathy to state intervention in Hong Kong has spilled, fuelling general anger of local people towards Mainlanders and elevating to new heights conflicts between local groups who hold different views of China. As also noticed in other autonomous regions, Beijing's assimilatory policy, dedicated to cultivate state patriotism and dilute local identity of ethnic minorities, has transformed the tension between the state and the ethnic minority groups into clashes between the Chinese and the ethnic minority groups or clashes between different ethnic groups (Demirtepe and Bozbey, 2012).

Ultimately, in the framework of state corporatism, China's united front work will hardly be effective in achieving the Chinese ideal of social harmony, if, without a genuine respect for multiculturalism. The support of minority cultures, and a different cultural system such as that of Hong Kong, by the Chinese government has been utilized as a symbol of the state's endorsement of multiculturalism, the format and content of cultural diversity are however regulated. Ethnic minorities are included in official discourses in the contexts of "national unity" and "development": It is only within this overarching framework of national unity that ethnic minorities have been permitted to seek state recognition of their self-defined identity. They are also presented as groups in need of economic development. Believing that economic well-being may ease discontents amongst ethnic groups, Beijing presents itself as a benevolent patron, which unavoidably confines the groups' developmental choices to the ones formulated by the state. A similar mentality has been exhibited in Beijing's interaction with the civil society in Hong Kong, with an emphasis on Hong Kong as an economic city and the state as an important source of support and inspiration. While such cultural diversity is built upon hierarchies and formulated from top-down, united front unavoidably alienates and suppresses important aspects of ethnic and native cultures, and precludes other possibilities of development wanted by the locals from being actualized.

## 5. Conclusion

This article unravels China's united front work in the civil society of Hong Kong after the political handover since 1997. Using the case of Hong Kong, it aims to investigate China's direct and indirect influence in managing the local civil society through five types of corporatist measures, including integration, cooptation, collaboration, containment, and denunciation. While it has been widely analyzed by scholars that state corporatism characterizes the state-society relations in China, including the state's relations with its autonomous regions, the case of Hong Kong, however, shows that the ruling strategies of China are very adaptive and tend to be inclusionary.

The strategies analyzed above range from subtle to blatant moves, and from soft to hard tactics. They reflect a host of attitudes and aims of the central government in dealing with the local community, which run from assimilation to total rejection. The adoption of different strategies depends upon whether the central government regards its targets as friends, valuable potential cooptees or enemies. Nevertheless, because of Hong Kong's unique situation, China's strategies in this special administrative region appear to be more inclusionary than they are in the Mainland. The soft and hard tactics used in parallel in Hong Kong have resulted in further politicization and

polarization of the civil society, and transformed the tension between the state and the local groups into clashes between different local groups, as seen in other autonomous regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang. Over the years, the agents for state corporatism have been ever expanding in Hong Kong. The ideologies propagated have now gone beyond consensus and harmony to also include patriotism and reinterpretation of other political ideas, including universal suffrage, conducive to cultivating obedience.

## Notes

- <sup>+</sup> We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of this article, and the participants at the International Conference “China in Transition: Economic Reform and Social Change” organized by the Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya, for their useful comments on an earlier version of this article. Special thanks go to the Director of the Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya, for his kind invitation to the conference. Lastly, we would like to thank the anonymous informants for this study for their insights. We are responsible for the remaining errors.
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1. “External Direct Investment Statistics of Hong Kong 2011”. <<http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B10400032011AN11B0100.pdf>>
  2. As of 2013, the Hong Kong LegCo is composed of 70 seats. Half of the seats are returned by five geographical constituencies (GC) of around 3.4 million registered voters on universal suffrage, and the other 30 members by 28 FCs of around 230,000 registered voters. The remaining five members are nominated by elected District Councillors, and elected by all registered voters who do not have a right to vote in FC elections. FC’s eligible voters include designated individuals and legal entities such as organizations and corporations, representing predominantly business and professional interests. Over the decades, the non-uniform election methods within the FC, the unfair nature of their representation, and the institutionalized constraints FC placed on limiting the power and mitigating the

influence of the GC-returned legislators have attracted lots of criticisms and demands for their abolition.

3. <[http://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/publications/book/15anniversary\\_reunification\\_ch2\\_3.pdf](http://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/publications/book/15anniversary_reunification_ch2_3.pdf)>

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