

# BEHIND the HEADLINES

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**Hong Kong, 1 July 2003—  
Half a million protestors**

**The Security Law, Identity  
Politics, Democracy, and China**

**SONNY LO**

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# Hong Kong, 1 July 2003— Half a million protestors

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SONNY LO

**T**wenty years ago, on 19 December 1984, the UK and Chinese governments signed the Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong, affirming that Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong would take effect on 1 July 1997. On that day in 1997 the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) was established under the Basic Law, a "mini constitution" which enshrined the concept of "one country, two systems." It reserved to the People's Republic of China (PRC) responsibility for defence and foreign affairs but otherwise provided the HKSAR with a high degree of independent authority and for the maintenance of Hong Kong's established legal structures and for protection of private property and basic freedoms. These and other matters were clearly covered in the Basic Law, but one particularly sensitive area was left for future action by the HKSAR.

Article 23 of the Basic Law reads: "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies."

From 1997 until 2002 there was no move to enact the legislation referred to in Article 23. A process then launched under pressure from the PRC led up to a dramatic event on 1 July 2003, when the largest protest demonstration in Hong Kong's history resulted in the withdrawal of a bill respecting Article 23.

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The debate over Article 23 was not simply concerned with outlawing subversion, sedition, treason and secession but was also connected to the broader issues of identity politics, patriotism and the prospects for democratization in both Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China. This article delineates the background to the debate, its development after the protests, its underlying implications concerning identity and patriotism, and the debate's consequences for the democratic development of both Hong Kong and China. Finally, this article suggests that the Canadian government may have to devise new ways of coping with Hong Kong's political development, especially because the post-colonial enclave has a large population of Canadians; if their future in the territory were endangered, the situation would demand an immediate response from Ottawa.

#### BACKGROUND TO THE DEBATE AND THE JULY PROTESTS

In September 2002, PRC officials suddenly raised the issue of the HKSAR's obligation to implement Article 23. Rumours had been rife since the PRC president, Jiang Zemin, had visited Hong Kong in July 2002 and been confronted by a group of Falun Gong protestors. Jiang demanded that the Hong Kong government under the leadership of Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa speed up the process of bringing in legislation under Article 23. The mainland security apparatuses, such as the national security agency, were mandated to press the Hong Kong government to fulfill the mission set out in the Basic Law. According to this author's informant close to the top level of the HKSAR government, the Tung administration was originally given a deadline of January 2003 for the legislation to be approved by the Legislative Council (LegCo). (Refer to the Appendix for a glossary of the main government agencies and institutions mentioned in this article.) This demand from the PRC did not recognize the difficulties and realities of Hong Kong politics, whose pluralistic nature and opposing political forces mean that any legislation must be carefully prepared, lobbied and presented. The Tung administration in turn floated the idea that legislation pursuant to Article 23 should be passed by the LegCo and enacted by the summer of 2003. As a result, a timetable was decided between the PRC and the HKSAR, with the public remaining ignorant of these confidential arrangements and decisions.

The Hong Kong government mishandled the Article 23 issue in several ways. First, the fact that the secretary for justice, Elsie Leung,

shied away from selling the proposed legislation in public, as did the chief secretary, Donald Tsang, pointed to a political disaster. The secretary for security, Regina Ip, together with a civil servant, Tong Hin-Ming, was left to shoulder the responsibility of promoting the Article 23 bill. This was a recipe for chaos. Ip had been a popular appointed official. However, her hardline and determined attitude was unhelpful in a situation that called for political finesse to sell legislation under Article 23 to the public. Arguably, Ip was largely a victim in the entire debate, although her obstinate attitude in public, especially her claim that Hitler's Germany proved that universal suffrage could produce dictators, added fuel to the fire.

Second, as Ip and Tong shouldered the burden of explaining the Article 23 legislation to the public, none of the principal officials offered them a helping hand. They were politically isolated by their own colleagues—a fact acknowledged and admitted by the pro-Beijing elites themselves. The pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) was the group most supportive of implementing Article 23 from the beginning of the saga until the political earthquake on 1 July 2003, when half a million Hong Kong people protested on the streets against not only Article 23 but also the Tung regime's performance.

Third, Chief Executive Tung failed to balance the competing interests of the DAB, led by chairman Jasper Tsang, and the pro-business Liberal Party (LP), led by James Tien. Tsang was a diehard pro-Beijing supporter, but his increasingly arrogant attitude in public, perhaps reflecting his own opinion of his powers and political influence, alienated many people in Hong Kong. James Tien originally fully supported the Article 23 bill, but from this author's observations, he seldom attended the LegCo's subcommittee on Article 23, leaving the task to other party members like Miriam Lau Kin-ye and Selina Chow. On the eve of 1 July 2003, Tien even appealed to the people of Hong Kong not to protest on the streets.

#### AFTER THE PROTESTS

After the 1 July protests, Chief Executive Tung held emergency meetings of the ExCo in which he failed to balance the interests of the DAB and the LP. While the DAB was keen to see the bill concerning Article 23 rammed through the LegCo on July 9, the LP had reservations. Tien himself was shaken by the protests, afraid of the likelihood of a violent confrontation between protestors and police outside the LegCo on July 9, and he was influenced by a party elder,

Allen Lee, and other heavyweights like Chow and Lau who shared these concerns. When the ExCo led by Tung decided that the bill would be slightly amended but would still be tabled in the LegCo for consideration and approval on July 9, Tien felt that the LP had been totally ignored. He also believed, persuaded by Allen Lee, Miriam Lau and Selina Chow, that the LP would be able to play the role of kingmaker in Hong Kong politics. In the event, soon after Tung made the decision that the amended bill would still be discussed in the LegCo, Tien announced that he was quitting the ExCo. His resignation isolated Chief Executive Tung and forced his administration to delay the enactment of the bill indefinitely. Tien's political move, most media reports notwithstanding, was by no means an act of leadership, but simply an opportunistic act undercutting Tung and the DAB. Tien's withdrawal from the ExCo shocked the government and Beijing.

With the benefit of hindsight, one can see that the Tung administration failed yet again. It could still have tried to win the support of other independents and also a few pro-government LP members, such as Lau Wong-fat and Howard Young. That the government failed to secure enough votes in the LegCo despite its abandonment by the LP was a reflection of the weakness of the Tung regime. Its poor record of securing votes in the legislature stands in sharp contrast to the abilities of the last governor, Chris Patten, who personally and with civil servants lobbied each legislator and whose political reform blueprint in 1993 was approved only by a narrow margin of one vote. By July 2003 the entire Tung administration had been severely discredited for its controversial policies since the handover, such as civil service reform; the mother-tongue-language education issue; the cyberport development, which favoured some rich business tycoons; and the poor handling of such crises as the outbreaks of bird flu and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Because of the public outbursts in reaction to the Article 23 legislation and the long-standing unpopularity of the Tung regime, two of its principal officials decided to resign, perhaps in hopes of restoring the fragile legitimacy of the government. Regina Ip decided to quit the government on the grounds that she wanted to join her daughter in the United States—a good excuse that relieved her of a huge political burden. Once she decided to step down, the pro-Beijing media and the mainland officials praised her. On the other hand, Financial Secretary Antony Leung, who was embarrassed by his car scandal (he bought a luxurious car at a time when he knew that the vehicle licence tax would soon be increased), also opted for

departure from the government. Although both Ip and Leung left the administration, this did not resolve the crisis because the administration had been so discredited since 1997.

### *The early months: Uncertainty and confusion*

PRC leaders were totally shocked by the political earthquake in Hong Kong. When Premier Wen Jiabao had visited Hong Kong in late June 2003, he appealed to the Tung administration to listen to the views of people in Hong Kong and to improve its governance—a sign that the new Chinese leader had adopted a more open-minded attitude toward public criticisms of Tung. He did not fully support Tung, as had former president Jiang, who had hand-picked Tung to be the first HKSAR chief executive. Wen returned to Shenzhen on June 30. It was reported that he was angered by the extent of the protests as he watched the television news about Hong Kong in Shenzhen. In particular, he was surprised by the number of protesters, because both the Liaison Office and the Hong Kong government's Central Policy Unit had totally underestimated the scale of the opposition.

The Liaison Office was under fire for misunderstanding the situation in Hong Kong and reporting good news to Beijing. The crux of the Liaison Office's problem was that it was too close to the Hong Kong government's ruling elites and the Central Policy Unit. In a sense, the Liaison Office was so preoccupied with justifying its own positive views on Hong Kong that it became blind to the objective reality: that the Tung administration was deeply unpopular and that public grievances had become a time bomb. Although the central government reshuffled the leadership of the Liaison Office by replacing a number of deputy directors, it was plagued by internal mismanagement (some were accused by Beijing of being spies for Britain) and blindness to the Tung regime's governing problems.

Another PRC agency under criticism was the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, led by Liao Hui. Liao and the deputy chief of the Propaganda Department met in Beijing with James Tien of the Liberal Party in early July. Tien returned to Hong Kong claiming that mainland China had no deadline or timetable for the enactment of legislation pursuant to Article 23. Neither Liao nor the Propaganda Department denied Tien's remarks. This silence was interpreted as endorsement of Tien's report. Liao's low-key posture was certainly a blemish on the PRC's policy toward Hong Kong. Meanwhile the Liaison Office led by Gao Siren was keen to see the bill passed by the legislature.

Thus differing messages and impressions were being conveyed both from Hong Kong to Beijing, and back from Beijing to Hong Kong. There was understandable confusion about the intentions of the PRC. While Beijing was not slow to respond to the Hong Kong crisis, the responses of its numerous agencies were different and their intelligence and understanding of the situation were so diverse that outsiders did not get a sense of who was really in command. From July to November 2003, various delegations from the mainland were sent to Hong Kong at both the central level and various provincial levels, discussing the way forward with Hong Kong democrats. Beijing appeared to be more liberal or open-minded as it listened to the views of the Hong Kong people.

### *Beijing asserts control*

In order to bring the situation under control, the central government set up shortly after July 1st a committee led by Zeng Qinghong, a protégé of Jiang, with a mandate to hammer out policy toward Hong Kong. This committee included representatives from the Liaison Office (Gao Siren), the People's Liberation Army, the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, the Ministry of National Security and the External and Foreign Trade Department. Judging from the composition of the committee, Beijing was keen to apply economic as well as political measures, such as the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement and the relaxation of mainland Chinese visits to Hong Kong, to rescue the extremely unpopular Tung administration. It also appeared that when the HKSAR government made its decisions to amend the bill and later to postpone tabling the bill in the LegCo, these were all communicated to the central government for approval. The central government, in turn, relied on Zeng's committee to delineate the steps that should be taken by its agencies responsible for Hong Kong affairs.

Because Zeng was a protégé of Jiang, he was inhibited from implementing new policy on Hong Kong, and certainly from removing Tung from office. As President Hu Jiantao and Premier Wen were new to their positions, the committee led by Zeng had a substantial say on Beijing's policy toward Hong Kong. And given that the hard-liners from the Liaison Office and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office were appointed to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) committee on Hong Kong affairs, the overall CCP policy toward Hong Kong was bound to be conservative.

This conservatism turned Beijing's policy toward Hong Kong from fragmentation and confusion between July and November

2003 to activism from December 2003 onwards. Beijing's policy appeared to become more united, more conservative and more hard-line than conventional wisdom assumed immediately after 1 July 2003. Beijing began to assert its influence on Hong Kong affairs when Tung went to Beijing in December to discuss the issue of political reform with President Hu. The president, who had obviously been briefed by the Zeng committee, took a more hardline position, saying that any move toward political reform would have to conform with the Basic Law, and that the central government was very concerned about it. Tung, a cautious political leader and one who often protects the interest of the "one country" over that of the "two systems," decided to discuss with his subordinates how to handle the issue of political reform in the HKSAR.

After consulting with his advisers, Tung set up a task force led by Stephen Lam, Donald Tsang and Elsie Leung. Critics said that Stephen Lam, as the secretary for constitutional affairs, had been ill prepared for Tung's visit to Beijing in December, having had more than a year to prepare a blueprint of the principles of political reform in Hong Kong. Lam, who had been the head of Hong Kong's trade office in Canada, was a political newcomer unfamiliar with the intricacies of Hong Kong-Beijing relations. The mass media in the HKSAR were deeply dissatisfied with the evasive manner in which he tackled media questions. Lam's ascent of the political ladder owed much to Tung's patronage rather than his own acumen, foresight and sharpness.

Beijing was determined to wipe out the apparent fragmentation of different agencies dealing with Hong Kong affairs and began to opt for a well-organized propaganda campaign on Hong Kong's political reform. This propaganda coincided with the Taiwan presidential elections in March 2004. The strategies of Beijing's policy toward Hong Kong were (1) to use semi-government officials as mouthpieces to give Beijing's perspectives, (2) to mobilize the official Chinese mass media to emphasize the need for Hong Kong people to attach importance to patriotism and (3) to isolate a few pro-democracy elites in the HKSAR for criticism so that voters would refrain, Beijing hoped, from voting for the democrats in the September 2004 Legislative Council elections.

### ***Beijing targets Hong Kong democrats***

The arrival of Beijing's legal expert Xiao Weiyun in Hong Kong in January 2004 marked the beginning of the CCP's crusade against the democrats, who had organized the escape of mainland democrats

from China after the Tiananmen incident in 1989 and who played a crucial role in mobilizing the public protests on 1 July 2003. Xiao's arguments were blunt and direct: namely, that the people of Hong Kong did not understand the Basic Law, and that their behaviour since the handover had been problematic, including the action of some legislators in tabling a vote of non-confidence in some principal officials. Xiao also reminded the Hong Kong people of the need to understand that "one country" is often more important than "two systems," that the Basic Law drafters had not really thought about direct election of the chief executive in 2007 or direct elections of the entire legislature in 2008, and that political reform in the HKSAR does not necessitate revisions to the entire Basic Law except for its appendixes. Xiao's comments were a political shock to the democrats, who believed that democratization in Hong Kong would have a rosy future after 1 July 2003.

Xiao's comments highlighted the different political cultures of the democrats and the PRC. While the democrats want a western-style political system where the chief executive is directly elected by the citizens, Beijing supports a more "moderate" system. Beijing does not believe that universal suffrage would be able to produce "patriots" who can govern Hong Kong with Beijing's interests in mind. The democrats identify themselves as citizens of Hong Kong; they do not identify with the ruling CCP in the mainland. As a CCP member, Xiao had clear views and positions. In his perspective and that of the PRC, identification with China culturally entails identification with the CCP politically—a point unacceptable to many Hong Kong democrats.

Xiao's remarks were echoed by Hong Kong's pro-Beijing elites such as the Hong Kong member of the National People's Congress, Tsang Hin-chi, and the Basic Law Committee members Raymond Wu and Maria Tam. Tsang and Wu blasted the democrats as unpatriotic. Tam reminded the people of Hong Kong that the HKSAR's source of political power was Beijing, not Hong Kongers. The message was clear: Beijing would have the final say or veto power over the direction of Hong Kong's political reform.

In February and March 2004, the official Chinese mass media began a campaign directed against the democrats in Hong Kong. The official Xinhua news agency, together with the People's Daily and provincial newspapers, emphasized that Hong Kong's political reform would have to proceed in a gradual and orderly process, and that the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping had stressed the need for Hong Kong to be governed by patriots. In March 2004, Xu

Chongde, another of Beijing's legal experts and a drafter of the Basic Law, explicitly outlined three categories of unpatriotic Hong Kong people: (1) those who forge close links with foreign countries like the United States (implying former Democratic Party chairman Martin Lee); (2) those who organized the Hong Kong Alliance for the Promotion of Democracy in China (led by the Democratic Party member Szeto Wah); and (3) those democrats who appear to support Taiwan's independence movement (implying Frontier leader Emily Lau Wai-hing, although Lau insisted that she merely supported the right of Taiwanese to decide their future, a stance not necessarily equivalent to favouring independence for Taiwan). Obviously, Xiao's and Xu's remarks, together with the pronouncements of official PRC mouthpieces, were aimed at isolating specific democrats in the HKSAR.

### *Broader dimensions of the PRC reaction*

There were several reasons for the PRC's united front against democrats in the HKSAR from January to March 2004. First and foremost, Zeng's committee was not simply taking a hard line toward the organizers of the July 2003 protests and of the pro-democracy alliance back in 1989, but also sending a message to Taiwan that any political leader elected by universal suffrage might not be patriotic in the eyes of Beijing. In other words, Zeng's committee on HKSAR affairs adopted a dual-purpose position that targeted not just the Hong Kong democrats but also the Taiwan pro-independence movement in general. As a protégé of Jiang, Zeng clearly regarded the Alliance as unpatriotic. The committee's hardline position toward the July 2003 protests was by no means a new one, for Beijing's mouthpiece *Ta Kung Pao* in July 2003 carried a number of commentaries characterizing the protests as a plot by "political, academic, media and foreign troublemakers" who mobilized Hong Kong people on the streets of Hong Kong. Very few observers took the commentaries of *Ta Kung Pao* seriously at that time, but they did reflect the mentality of the Zeng committee, whose official line could be seen clearly in February and March 2004.

Second, the campaign against the democrats was aimed at consolidating the pro-Beijing votes for the DAB and its allies, such as the Hong Kong Progressive Alliance, in the elections to be held for the Legislative Council in September 2004. Previous studies of voting behaviour in the HKSAR showed that those Hong Kong people who identified themselves as Chinese were more likely to vote for the DAB, whereas those who identified themselves as Hong Kongers

tended to vote for the Democratic Party. If this analysis remains accurate going into the September elections, Beijing's united front campaign against the democrats will consolidate the pro-Beijing votes, but whether this tactic will drive the pro-democracy voters away from the democrats remains very doubtful. More recent polls conducted by the mass media have shown that the swing in support of the democrats is more prominent than any sign of increase in the public support of the DAB. If so, Beijing's united front campaign may soften toward the critical September elections for the third term of the LegCo, thus allowing the DAB to recuperate. However, if Beijing continues the strategy of discrediting the democrats by playing the patriotic card, its effectiveness will be seriously questioned because many Hong Kong people remain relatively "unpatriotic" in that they strongly identify themselves culturally as Chinese, but they distance themselves politically from the CCP and its agent in the HKSAR, the DAB.

Third, the PRC's united front campaign against the democrats also sent a message to foreign states like the United States that democratization in the HKSAR remains Beijing's internal affair: that any attempt by foreign states to shape the process and scope of democratic reform in Hong Kong is bound to fail. The dichotomy between "patriots" and "traitors" was illustrative of the way in which Beijing views the question of democratic development in the HKSAR. Those who cooperate with foreigners to push for democracy in Hong Kong—such as Martin Lee, who in the past visited foreign states to "bad-mouth" the HKSAR, in Beijing's view—will be treated as traitors, and the foreign states that attempt to exert pressure on mainland China to democratize Hong Kong will suffer Beijing's displeasure.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE HKSAR AND POLITICAL MODERNIZATION OF THE PRC

The whole debate over Article 23 of the Basic Law and the row over patriotism and identity have a significant bearing on Hong Kong's democratic development and mainland China's long path to political modernization. First and foremost, Hong Kong's democratization has become a battleground and a tug-of-war between the PRC and the west. As long as the PRC ruling elites believe that mainland China can modernize by borrowing from western technology but not from western values such as democracy, democratization in Hong Kong will be on a tortuous path, torn between Chinese civilization and western civilization. Samuel Huntington has argued that

Sinic or Chinese civilization is characterized by political authoritarianism, subordination to authority, hierarchy and conformity. This characterization remains applicable to the PRC, where the ruling elites hang on to these Chinese traditional values for the sake of maintaining political power. Western-style democracy, or Taiwanese-style universal suffrage, remain a threat to the ruling elites in the PRC.

Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city where many citizens and intellectuals tend to accept the western values of pluralism, individualism, autonomy and equality. Leading individuals among this group are Martin Lee, Emily Lau and other democrats such as Margaret Ng and Audrey Ue, who orchestrated the July 2003 protests. These pro-western intellectuals and elites clash culturally with the ruling elites in the PRC. In the eyes of these ruling elites, especially members of Zeng's committee on Hong Kong, these democrats have tried to topple the Tung administration and Chief Executive Tung, Beijing's and Jiang's designated and unquestionable leader in Hong Kong.

Hence, while Hong Kong's democratization is fraught with tremendous difficulties and opposition from the PRC, Beijing will surely encounter more cultural obstacles than conventional wisdom may assume. The PRC ruling elites remain wedded to the ideas that mainland China can have its own unique path of modernization, that economic modernization does not entail total westernization, and that the Taiwanese style of democracy is unacceptable to the mainland. So long as the Beijing ruling elites hold these views, democratization in the PRC remains very difficult. Compounding the difficulty of democratization in Hong Kong is that foreign states such as the United States, Australia, Britain and Canada have been contributing varying degrees of support. The PRC ruling elites remain inherently politically xenophobic, believing that the west cannot and should not attempt to impose a political model on Hong Kong, to say nothing of mainland China itself.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Because a large number of Canadians are residing in Hong Kong, the Canadian government may have to devise emergency measures to cope with any possible social and political unrest. The possible scenarios in both the short run and the medium term will be as follows.

In the short run, it is likely that the democrats will garner sufficient seats in the LegCo elections in September to provoke a more hardline Chinese policy toward Hong Kong. If so, the government would have to yield to the pressure from the democrats in the LegCo, thus leading to a scenario in which either the government

would lose all authority or, in the event of an uncontrollable confrontation, the chief executive would have to exercise his power to dissolve the legislature. Another possibility is that the HKSAR government may have to appoint some moderate democrats to the Executive Council, thus narrowing the communication gap between the legislature and the executive branch. The final scenario is that the chief executive may consider an earlier retirement from politics, thus leading to the election of a new chief executive, whose legitimacy will give him or her added power to tackle the increasingly aggressive and assertive legislature.

Regardless of which scenario follows the September elections, political reform in the HKSAR will be indefinitely stunted and postponed. The direct election of the chief executive and the direct election of the entire legislature in 2008 will be distant possibilities, at least several decades after 2007 and 2008 respectively. The scope and pace of political reform will be dominated by Beijing, whose final say will override the task force led by Tsang, Leung and Lam. Above all, Beijing has already emphasized that the negotiation between Beijing and the HKSAR is a matter of the central government having discussions with a local government. Given the unequal status and uneven power in this political equation, the HKSAR's bargaining power is bound to be curbed.

In the medium term, as long as the economy remains robust and there is no major political disturbance, there will not be a sudden outflow of emigrants or a massive evacuation of residents who also hold foreign passports. However, in the event that the HKSAR government encounters a public health crisis, like SARS, or any political upheaval in the form of violent confrontation between the democrats and the police on the streets, political uncertainties and chaos may be possible. The HKSAR administration is ill equipped to deal with any such political crisis. With the benefit of hindsight, the July 2003 protests appear to be a miracle for Hong Kong, as the protests by half a million people did not lead to any riot or violent confrontation between them and the police. However, with the passage of time, the cultural and identity clash between the democrats and the conservative-minded ruling elites in the HKSAR will most probably generate more confrontations on the streets than ever before. Compounding the uncertainties for Hong Kong is the possibility at some stage of an economic slowdown in mainland China.

Thus, politically and economically, Hong Kong will face daunting and sudden challenges, which will demand not only political wisdom from the ruling elites (whose political learning appears to

improve only slowly) but also swift responses from foreign states. Canada in particular will be required to address any critical situation in Hong Kong swiftly. Hence, the Canadian government should set up a task force on Hong Kong to follow all the possible scenarios that will affect the Canadians living there and that will lead to chaos if these Canadians suddenly opt for a return to Canada. This scenario is by no means a doomsday one, because Hong Kong will survive economically and politically, but the crux of the problem is that in the event of crises, there could be a massive breakdown of the confidence of citizens and residents in the government. This could lead to a chaotic situation not now envisaged by foreign states. Before the July 2003 protests, many observers in Hong Kong, including this author, had warned the Hong Kong government of the possibility of a time bomb in the form of social unrest. Unfortunately, all these warnings were either unheeded or dismissed as foreign attempts at bad-mouthing the Hong Kong administration. What the foreign states cannot ignore is that Hong Kong is an international city-state populated by many western-oriented citizens and political activists, whose political outlook really clashes with the ruling elites in both Hong Kong and mainland China. This clash of civilizations could lead to political turbulence, uncertainties and violent confrontations if mishandled by the ruling elites in Hong Kong and by Beijing.

#### CONCLUSION

The debate over the national security issue in Hong Kong has much wider implications. It concerns the difficulty of translating the cultural identity of Hong Kong people from Chinese into a political identification with the CCP—a difficult task for both the HKSAR and the PRC governments in the short run, given the long period of colonial rule in Hong Kong when patriotism and Chinese nationalism were shunned. The debate over Article 23 of the Basic Law also demonstrates the clash of Chinese and western civilizations, the conflict between Chinese and western values and the persistent belief of the Chinese ruling elites that economic modernization does not entail total westernization. After all, the old Chinese belief from the Qing dynasty that mainland China can learn technology but not values from the west remains a defining feature of the debate over political reform in Hong Kong. If the western states recognize the clashes of cultures, civilizations and values in the debate over national security, patriotism and political reform in Hong Kong, they should perhaps devise appropriate strategies to deal with any crisis in the post-colonial enclave, where the political activism of the citizens is

bound to clash with the conservatism of the ruling elites in both Hong Kong and the PRC.

#### APPENDIX: Government Institutions and Agencies

**Executive Committee (ExCo)** The top policy-making body in Hong Kong. All members are appointed by the chief executive.

**Legislative Council (LegCo)** The law-making body in Hong Kong. Election to the current second term of LegCo since 1997 was only partly on the basis of open democratic voting in geographic constituencies. The elections to come in September 2004 will increase the proportion of members who are elected in this way.

**Liaison Office** Formerly the New China News Agency in Hong Kong, it is essentially a propaganda office of the PRC in Hong Kong. Also involved in mobilizing support in elections for candidates favoured by the PRC.

**The State Council** The PRC's senior executive office. Its most important agency dealing with Hong Kong is the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office.

**The Central Policy Unit** was established by the Hong Kong government some 20 years ago to advise the government on policy matters

**The Basic Law Committee**, composed of five people from Hong Kong and five from the mainland, is to advise and if possible arbitrate any disputes between Hong Kong and China on the interpretation of the Basic Law.







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