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New Bottle, Old Wine: China's Governance of Hong Kong in View of Its Policies in the Restive Borderlands

Bill CHOU

Abstract: This paper reviews Beijing's Hong Kong policy, arguing that the policy mirrors China's policy towards its restive borderlands represented by Tibet and Xinjiang. The rule of Hong Kong and other borderlands in China will be understood in an analytical framework that highlights four broad policies of governing borderlands: promises of a high degree of local autonomy; extension of politico-administrative control; cultural assimilation; and economic integration and domination. These policies may be conceptualised within the term "coercion." It is argued that before Hong Kong's retrocession to China in 1997, the PRC's approach to the territory, in comparison to its approaches to Tibet and Xinjiang, was the least coercive – that is, China initially promised Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy over domestic affairs. The degree of coercion was stepped up when Hongkongers were perceived as becoming increasingly alienated from the new regime.

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Keywords: China, Hong Kong policy, borderlands, coercion

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Introduction

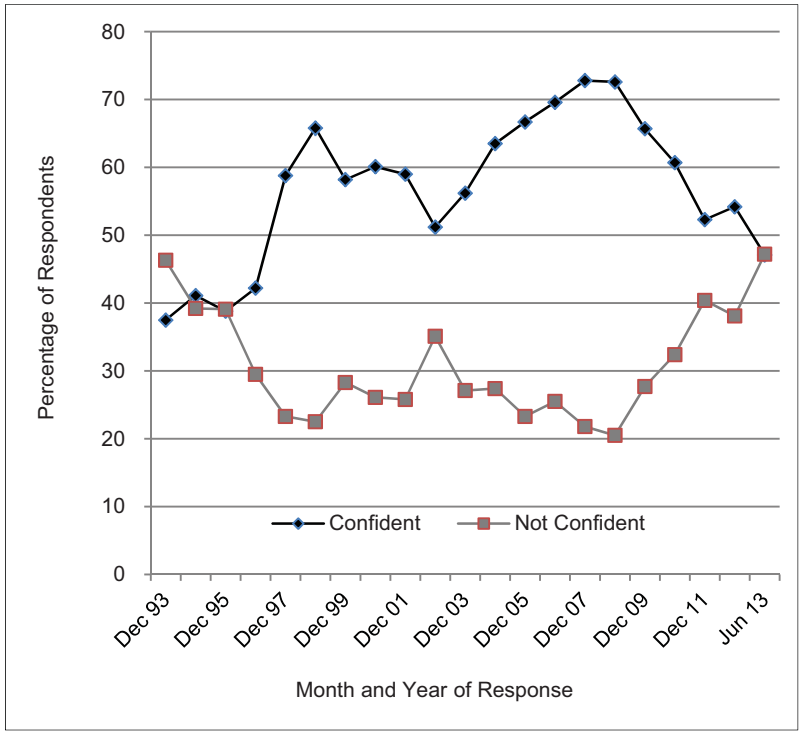
The tensions between Beijing and Hong Kong culminated in the 2014 Umbrella Movement. The decisions made by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (SCNPC) on 31 August 2014 (known as the August 31 Decision) over the electoral method of the chief executive in 2017 frustrated many Hongkongers' aspirations for "genuine" universal suffrage of the chief executive. Beginning on 26 September 2014, hundreds of thousands people occupied the major roads in Admiralty, Mongkok, and Causeway Bay for 79 days to protest the decision. Meanwhile, the confidence of the people of Hong Kong in the one-country, two-system policy – the guiding policy regulating Beijing–Hong Kong relations – has dropped substantially since 2009. A University of Hong Kong public opinion poll revealed in June 2013 that public confidence in the policy was at its lowest point after the retrocession (see Figure 1).

The lack of confidence manifests in public disapproval of Beijing's Hong Kong policy, which is characterised by increasingly interventionist forays into Hong Kong's domestic affairs through economic integration, cultural assimilation, and extension of its politico-administrative control into Hong Kong's elections and public policy-making. The policy conflicts with Hong Kong's cultural identity and its colonial legacy, underscored by its cosmopolitan outlook, respect for the rule of law, and desire for democracy, civil liberties, and local autonomy. The Hong Kong policy mirrors Beijing's philosophy and policies in governing restive Tibet and Xinjiang, the two autonomous, bordering regions in the West and Northwest.

This paper offers a conceptual framework of China's policy of governing its borderlands. It reviews the literature of policy studies, then analyses China's policy towards its borderlands within the conceptual framework. Beijing habitually promises a high degree of autonomy to ethnic minorities residing in borderlands before its rule is secure. After its rule becomes secure, coercion is stepped up. Occasionally, the borderlands demonstrate various degree of resistance to Beijing's rule, assert their cultural heritage, or are reluctant to carry out central policies. Beijing responds by imposing a higher degree of coercion and restricting the autonomy of the borderlands to ensure local compliance. Even though Hong Kong has a tradition of rule of law which prevents the administration from abusing power and vio-

lating human rights, Beijing can rely on the Hong Kong police to carry out violence when it feels its national security is threatened.

Figure 1. Hongkongers' Confidence in One Country, Two Systems



Source: *HKU POP Site* 2015a and 2015b.

Governing Borderlands and Policy Instruments: A Conceptual Analysis

Governing borderlands may be considered selecting a series of actions from a "toolbox" of a set of policy instruments. Policy analysts have widely studied what policy instruments are inside the toolbox, and which policy instruments are selected and why. Most of the Western theories about policy studies are context-specific. The theories and principles are developed in the Western liberal democracies, whose governments are informed by democracy and rule of law.

These governments are under the scrutiny of the public and the mass media, and are therefore cautious in using coercion. On the contrary, Chinese leadership is able to shape public opinion through ideological control. Without the constraints of democracy, rule of law, and a vigilant civil society, the political leaders in China are freer to use coercion than are their Western counterparts.

Meanwhile, the Western theories have identified so many explanatory variables that it is impossible to put all the variables into a single conceptual framework. This paper singles out the variable of state coercion for the analysis of the policy instrument. According to Linder and Peters (1990), state coercion is a most common dimension of policy tools. The continuum model of instrument choice by Doern and Phidd (1983: 111) used the degree of coerciveness to classify policy instruments. Salamon (2002) grouped 14 policy instruments into three categories according to the degree of coerciveness.

Based on the concept of coercion, Potter (2007) identified three sets of policy instruments in the governance of China's borderlands: military/police presence, cultural assimilation, and economic dominance. The military/police presence is the most coercive policy instrument, given the association with bloodshed, arrests, long jail terms, and death penalties. Cultural assimilation involves mild coercion: Assimilatory policies include direct prohibition and subtle discouragement of the use of local customs, languages, religion, and ways of dispute arbitration. The public are indoctrinated with state-sanctioned ideologies and ways of thinking. Han Chinese are either encouraged or directed to migrate to the borderlands, which may dilute local culture and identity. Economic integration makes the borderlands economically dependent on China proper, increasing the economic costs while reducing the benefits of political opposition, and weakens the will of ethnic minorities to resist Beijing. Although economic integration is the least coercive policy, its effects should not be neglected: Economic integration of the borderlands with inland provinces introduces "modern" economic production such as oil exploration, infrastructure construction, and tourism, which are not within the traditional economic sphere of the ethnic minorities in the borderlands. Ethnic minorities cannot benefit much from the economic boom driven by these economic activities, but are subject to being displaced from their historical farmlands and grasslands.

Hong Kong is definitely different from the restive Tibet and Xinjiang. It enjoys a higher degree of autonomy. There have never been serious attempts to seek independence, although such ideas are floated among a small circle of intellectuals and young activists. The rule of Beijing is never violently opposed. Hong Kong has extensive connections with both national and global financial markets, and foreign and mainland Chinese capital has a strong presence. Hong Kong's political development is under close scrutiny by international organisations, news agencies, and foreign consulates. All of this not only substantially raises the costs for Beijing to use coercion in Hong Kong, but also makes China dependent on Hong Kong for internationalising renminbi, raising funds for both state-owned and private enterprises listed in Hong Kong's stock exchange, and laundering secretive funds held by senior officials. Since the retrocession of Hong Kong to China, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) garrison has remained "behind the barracks," playing the symbolic role of asserting China's sovereignty over Hong Kong rather than being deployed to intimidate the political opposition. The economic dominance of Chinese capital in Hong Kong is difficult if not impossible to achieve in the face of competition from multinational corporations (Lee et al. 2013).

Despite all of this, Beijing's Hong Kong policy mirrors its own philosophy and approaches in governing Tibet and Xinjiang: At the beginning, a high degree of autonomy over domestic affairs was promised to these regions. Once the regions fell under Beijing's control, measures varying in their levels of coerciveness were imposed – for instance, political and administrative institutions were established to control the decision-making process and political opposition. Also, through economic integration with the mainland, material inducements were provided for the elites in the borderlands. Additionally, ideological indoctrination and cultural assimilation were stepped up to weaken the distinct local culture.

A conceptual framework for governing China's borderlands can be developed from the above analysis (see Figure 2). The framework underscores the two variables of local autonomy and state coercion. In comparison to Xinjiang and Tibet, Hong Kong enjoys a higher degree of local autonomy and faces less state coercion. Under the unitary political system, Beijing's supreme power in interpreting both the state Constitution and all kinds of laws, along with its control

over myriad aspects of administrative, military, and financial power have translated into China's having free reign to determine the degree of local autonomy and state coercion. The following sections will examine the latter two broad variables, which are further itemised into four policy instruments: promises of high autonomy, extension of politico-administrative control, cultural assimilation, and economic integration and domination.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Governing China's Borderlands

		Local Autonomy	
		Low	High
State Coercion	Strong	Xinjiang, Tibet	
	Weak		Hong Kong

Promises of High Autonomy

Central leaders reiterated their promises of political and cultural autonomy when their rule in borderlands where ethnic minorities reside was not secure. In 1929 Mao Zedong advocated that ethnic minorities be allowed to determine their own affairs. In 1938 Mao proposed the idea of ethnic regional autonomy to unite various ethnic minorities in the Anti-Japanese War. Ethnic minorities were able to set up their own committees to develop their culture and education (Bai 2004).

"Autonomy" in the context of China is actually a tautology subject to the arbitrary interpretation of Chinese leaders. In 1951 Chinese leaders signed the "Seventeen Points Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" with the Dalai Lama's representatives to settle their military conflicts. Under the agreement, Tibet's political system along with the functions and power of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama were to remain unchanged until the consent of the Tibetans was given. The Tibetan government had the freedom to collect tax, use its own currency, and settle civilian disputes. Socialist reforms would not be implemented in Tibet. Tibetans enjoyed the freedom to practise religion, run their monasteries, and use their language. In

return, the Tibetan army was required to be absorbed into the PLA. The Tibetan government had to sever its relations with the Kuomintang (KMT, Guomindang) and other Western powers and give up its authority over foreign relations, military affairs, and border control. After the 1959 Uprising, the Dalai Lama and his followers fled to India. The promised autonomy was rescinded (Hung and Kuo 2010; Goldstein 2007: 98–99).

Before and after the negotiation with the United Kingdom on Hong Kong's future after 1997, Chinese leaders promised Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy framed by the one-country, two-system formula proposed by Deng Xiaoping: The socialist system would be restricted to mainland China after Hong Kong's retrocession. Hong Kong would be governed by Hong Kong, not mainland officials. The Chinese central government would be responsible for Hong Kong's foreign relations and defence, while Hong Kong would be vested with the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of final appeal on domestic affairs. The policies would remain unchanged for 50 years, until 2047. The formula may be traced back to China's policy towards Hong Kong and Macau since 1949: Mao decided not to take over Hong Kong and Macau under the policy of "long-term planning and fully utilising" (长期打算, 充分利用, *changqi dasuan chongfen liyong*). By leaving the two colonies at China's doorstep alone, Hong Kong and Macau could be used by China to undertake foreign trade, earn foreign currency, and spy on the Western World (Vogel 2011: 487–511; Chan 2003; Deng 1993; Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region 1984).

Nevertheless, how much autonomy would actually be conferred to Hong Kong has never been clearly defined. In June 2014, the State Council issued the "White Paper on the Practice of the 'One Country, Two Systems' Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" (hereafter, "the White Paper"). The White Paper defined the one-country, two-system principle as such that "the 'one country' is the premise and basis of the 'two systems,' and the 'two systems' is subordinate to and derived from 'one country.'" It stated, "the high degree of autonomy of HKSAR is subject to the level of the central leadership's authorisation. There is no such thing called 'residual power.'" Hong Kong's autonomy has no institutionalised guarantee, but is subject to Beijing's own arbitrary interpretation (The State

Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2014). In addition, the White Paper stated,

> We should respect and uphold the power of interpretation and amendment of the Basic Law vested in the NPC and its Standing Committee. […] The fact that the Standing Committee of the NPC exercises the power of interpretation of the Basic Law in accordance with the law is aimed at maintaining the rule of law in Hong Kong as it oversees HKSAR's implementation of the Basic Law and protects the high degree of autonomy of the Region.

The 2014 White Paper may be considered a coercive measure, imposing Beijing's view of the one-country, two-system policy on Hong Kong without consulting the people of Hong Kong. It stirred up a flurry of alarm among many in Hong Kong who believe that Hong Kong was vested with the power of self-rule. In response to the White Paper, the Hong Kong Bar Association stated that the interpretative power of the NPC and its committee should rarely be exercised if Hong Kong's judicial independence is to be protected (Hong Kong Bar Association 2014). The association further elaborated its stance from the perspective of the rule of law:

> The HKBA repeats that respect for the rule of law (as understood in Hong Kong and the community of civilised nations) means far more than merely "doing things according to law" (依法辦事, *yifa banshi*) or "governing according to law" (依法施政, *yifa shizheng*). It includes proper self-restraint in the exercise of power in a manner which gives proper weight and regard to the importance of the independence of the judiciary. (Hong Kong Bar Association 2014)

In the White Paper, judges of the courts at different levels and other judicial personnel were considered Hong Kong's administrators, which also included the chief executive, principal officials, and members of Executive Council and Legislative Council (LegCo). All the administrators had the responsibility of correctly understanding and implementing the Basic Law. The association refuted this perspective, arguing that if judges and judicial officers were administrators, the international community might think that the judges' rule is based on political considerations rather than legal reasoning. The association pointed out that the judges and judicial officers could not and need not learn the correct meaning of the Basic Law. Instead, they should interpret the Basic Law based on well-established and long-developed constitutional practices, and make decisions upon hearing adversarial

arguments between the parties and considering the evidence in court hearings (Hong Kong Bar Association 2014).

Extension of Politico-Administrative Control

Politico-administrative apparatuses and measures have been extended to the borderlands to secure Beijing's control. One of the major legal documents formalising this control is the 1984 Law of Regional National Autonomy. Revised in 2001, the law is applied to five ethnic autonomous regions: Xinjiang and Ningxia in the Northwest, Tibet in the West, Inner Mongolia in the North, Guangxi in the Southwest, as well as hundreds of autonomous areas at the prefecture, county, and township levels. Under this law, all legislation passed by the People's Congresses of autonomous regions can be adopted only after the SCNPC approves. The party secretaries and the chairpersons of the autonomous region governments are appointed by Beijing. Party secretaries down to the county levels are almost always occupied by members of the Han majority, who are considered politically more reliable than ethnic minorities. In other words, Beijing may reject any legislation passed by the autonomous regions.

Similarly, Chinese leaders have maintained tight control of Hong Kong's executive branch and granted it much political power. In the 1980s, Chinese leaders attributed Hong Kong's political stability and economic prosperity to the executive-led political system. They thought regime change in 1997 should only entail a change in the governors and national flag (Scott 2000: 30). In the post-handover political system, the post of governor has been replaced by the chief executive. The chief executives are elected by the Election Committee, formed by 1,200 members, many of whom represent the business and professional sectors co-opted by both the central and Hong Kong governments. Through its protégés in the Committee, the central government can fully control who can get elected to chief executive. In the 2012 chief executive election, "secret reports" against one of the candidates, Tang Ying Yen, were released to the media to undermine his popularity. The secret reports concerning another candidate, C. Y. Leung – Beijing's protégé, were held back until after the election. After the election, the victor, C. Y. Leung, immediately paid a visit to Peng Qinghua, the director of the Central Liaison Office in Hong Kong. The unusual visit stirred speculation that Leung's cam-

paign had been run under the auspices of the Central Liaison Office in the election (Kan 2012).

The semi-democratic LegCo was institutionally weak as a check and balance on the executive branch. According to the Basic Law, the chief executive was empowered not to sign the bills passed by LegCo. S/he could dissolve the LegCo if it twice passed a bill of which the chief executive disapproved (Articles 49 and 50). The legislative and supervisory functions of the LegCo were watered down by Article 74: LegCo members could not introduce any bills related to public expenditure, political structure, or the operation of the government. Written consent from the chief executive must be obtained before the members introduce bills on government policies.

Despite the LegCo's intrinsic weaknesses, Beijing is reluctant to relinquish its control over it. Half of the 70 members of the LegCo are elected by functional constituencies. The number of voters (approximately 7 per cent of the total voters) in most of the functional constituencies is small. They were primarily leaders of business communities, professional bodies, and NGOs co-opted by Beijing (Wong 2012). The other half of the members were returned by relatively fair elections. Many pro-government social groups and businesspeople provided the pro-government candidates with voter mobilisation, vote planting, and political donations. The pan-democracy camp had a weak hand in terms of logistics and manpower support (Lo 2010: 61–91; Sing 2009; Kuan and Lau 2002). The electoral systems of the chief executive and LegCo have corresponded to China's model of "managed participation," in which the agendas, channels, and outcome of participatory and electoral politics were micro-managed by the Chinese government (Cai 2004).

Moreover, the practice of constitutional interpretation in mainland China and its legal concepts have been gradually extended to Hong Kong. The legal systems with long traditions of rule of law vest the final power of interpreting the Constitution and laws in the Court of Final Appeal. In China, the SCNPC is responsible for constitutional interpretation. The Basic Law states that the courts in Hong Kong are authorised to interpret the Basic Law. If the Basic Law must be interpreted in order to make judgements on issues under the jurisdiction of the central government or concerning the relationship between Beijing and Hong Kong, the courts have to seek interpretation from the SCNPC through the Court of Final Appeal.

After the retrocession, the SCNPC interpreted the Basic Law four times, including the right of abode (1999), the applicability of universal suffrage of the chief executive in 2007 and of the full house of the LegCo in 2008 (2004), the terms of office of chief executive (2005), and the "Congo Case" – a legal dispute between the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a private corporation over a debt of USD 100 million (2011). The interpretation of the Basic Law in 2004 may be regarded as Beijing's usurping the power of Hong Kong in political and electoral design. The Basic Law has been silent on the electoral methods of the chief executive and the LegCo since 2007 and 2008, respectively. According to Article 7, Annex I of the Basic Law, the power to amend the electoral method of the chief executive after 2007 is vested in Hong Kong. Article 7 reads as follows:

> If there is a need to amend the method for selecting the Chief Executives for the terms subsequent to the year 2007, such amendments must be made with the endorsement of a two-thirds majority of all the members of the Legislative Council and the consent of the Chief Executive, and they shall be reported to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for approval. (The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China 1990)

In its interpretation of the Basic Law in April 2004, the SCNPC conferred to itself the power of initiating political reforms in Hong Kong. The interpretation stated,

> The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall make a report to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress as regards whether there is a need to make an amendment; and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress shall […] make a determination in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The bills on the amendments to the method for selecting the Chief Executive and the method for forming the Legislative Council and its procedures for voting on bills and motions and the proposed amendments to such bills shall be introduced by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region into the Legislative Council. (Department of Justice, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region 2004)

Beijing can stretch its power to interpret the Basic Law and interfere with Hong Kong's domestic affairs by loosely defining the issues under its jurisdiction. In December 2007, Beijing announced that the chief executive and the entire LegCo may be elected by universal suffrage by dates no earlier than 2017 (for the former) and 2020 (for the latter) (Sing 2009). In fact, no constitutional documents grant Beijing the power to set the date of universal suffrage.

In addition to politico-administrative control, Beijing has extended its disrespect for the rule of law and human rights to Hong Kong. The civil liberties of Hongkongers are largely protected by the tradition of rule of law. The Independent Police Complaints Council was set up to receive complaints about the police's abuse of power. Nevertheless, police violence can be exercised with little constraint when Beijing feels its rule is threatened. At the beginning of the Umbrella Movement in September 2014, the police arrested three students on charges of unlawful assembly. Soon afterwards, the court ordered the police to release them, claiming their detention was unreasonably long. During and after the protests, approximately 1,000 people were arrested for crimes such as "unlawful assembly," "obstructing police," "assaulting officers," and/or "contempt of court." However, only approximately 160 of them have been charged, indicating the abuse of the power to arrest. In a number of cases, magistrates dropped the charges based on their doubts that the testimonies of the police officers were reliable. What's more, the police were accused of colluding with triad members to attack the protestors by letting the assailants leave the scene but not arresting them. The Independent Police Complaints Council has been far from effective in holding the police responsible for abuses of power. Of the 150 reports it received about the police's abuse of power in the protest, only six were investigated (Human Rights Watch 2015).

Cultural Assimilation

The ethnic minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang and the people in Hong Kong each have their own distinctive cultural identities. Tibet and Xinjiang have experienced immigration from inland on a large scale – especially Xinjiang, where Han immigrants and their descendants account for over 30 per cent of the population (see Table 1). While the Chinese government said the internal migration was voluntary

and motivated by business and career opportunities in these regions, some critics accused the Chinese government of internal colonisation.

Table 1. Demography of Xinjiang and Tibet

Year	Xinjiang Total Population (10,000 persons)	Xinjiang Han Population (10,000 persons)	Percentage of Han Population in Xinjiang
1990	1529.16	574.66	37.58
1995	1661.35	631.81	38.03
1996	1689.29	643.28	38.08
1997	1718.08	660.13	38.42
1998	1747.35	674.11	38.58
1999	1775.00	687.15	38.71
2000	1849.41	725.08	39.21
2001	1876.19	742.20	39.56
2002	1905.19	759.57	39.87
2003	1933.95	771.1	39.87
2004	1963.11	780.25	39.75
2005	2010.35	795.66	39.58
2006	2050.00	812.16	39.62
2007	2095.19	823.93	39.32
2008	2130.81	836.33	39.25
2009	2158.63	841.69	38.99
2010	2181.58	832.29	38.15
2011	2208.71	844.42	38.23
2012	2232.78	847.29	37.95
Year	**Tibet Total Population (10,000 persons)**	**Tibet Non-Minority Population (10,000 persons)**	**Percentage of Non-Minority Ethnic persons in Tibet (10,000 persons)**
1990	221.47	10.26	4.63
1995	239.84	11.06	4.61
1996	243.7	7.32	3.00
1997	247.6	11.80	4.77
1998	251.54	13.54	5.38
1999	255.51	14.79	5.79
2000	259.83	13.83	5.32
2001	263.55	17.55	6.66

Year	Tibet Total Population (10,000 persons)	Tibet Non-Minority Population (10,000 persons)	Percentage of Non-Minority Ethnic persons in Tibet (10,000 persons)
2002	268.24	21.35	7.96
2003	272.16	25.29	9.29
2004	276.35	27.68	10.02
2005	280.31	11.41	4.07
2006	285.08	25.01	8.77
2007	288.83	26.28	9.10
2008	292.33	25.46	8.71
2009	295.84	N.A.	N.A.
2010	300.22	24.53	8.17
2011	303.30	16.30	5.37
2012	307.62	24.78	8.06

Source: Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu di fang zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui 2014: 94; Economic Department of State Ethnic Affairs Commission et al. (various years).

The cultural autonomy in the two autonomous regions was gradually curtailed. During the Cultural Revolution, Red Guards destroyed monasteries, trashed works of art, and persecuted the monks and nuns. In the face of the ethnic minorities' political alienation from the communist regime, Chinese leaders became more tolerant of the cultural autonomy of Tibet and Xinjiang for a brief period. In 1980 former General Secretary Hu Yaobang called for granting Tibet autonomous rule. Tibetan cadres were to protect the interests of their own ethnic group; Tibetan culture was to be preserved and promoted. Many destroyed monasteries were restored. Han cadres should step aside; many Tibetan cadres were promoted to party secretaries at prefecture and county levels (Vogel 2011: 512–520; Wang and Shakya 2009: 68).

The policy of tolerance was reversed after Hu Yaobang was forced to step down in 1986. Riots and ethnic tensions, such as the 1987 Lhasa riot in Tibet and the 1990 Barren riot in Xinjiang, justified the more interventionist policies towards the two autonomous regions. In 1994 Beijing held the Third National Forum on Work in Tibet, marking a change in Tibet policy. In May 1996, "Opinions of the CCP Committee of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region on the Implementation of the Party Centre's No. 7 Document and Fur-

ther Safeguarding Social Stability" was issued to tighten political and social control in Xinjiang. Religions were believed to be the driving force behind the riots; religious leaders were placed under close scrutiny. Ideological education was stepped up to instil a sense of patriotism, stop the spread of secessionist ideas, and denounce such religious leaders as the Dalai Lama who were unacceptable to the Chinese government (Barnett 1996; *Chinese Law and Government* 1996). The expression of Tibetan cultural identity was treated as separatism and subject to violent suppression (Wang and Shakya 2009).

Language autonomy is an integral element of cultural autonomy. According to the Law of Regional National Autonomy, various ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their own languages. The local governments in autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties may use one or several minority languages as official languages. Having reviewed the policy of language education for ethnic minorities since the Maoist era, Beckett and Postiglione (2012) described the language policy as assimilationist. Ethnic minorities have to learn Mandarin for their academic and career success. However, Han officials in autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties need not learn the minorities' languages. For better economic opportunities, many children of minority origins are sent to Han-language schools at early ages (Zhou 2012). In Xinjiang, Uyghur language education at the university level has been scaled back since 2000. Mandarin is the only classroom language except in courses such as Xinjiang history which require a high proficiency in the Uyghur language (Wayne 2009: 259). In 2000 "Xinjiang inland senior high school classes" (新疆内地高中班, *Xinjiang neidi gaozhongban*) were introduced to enrol junior high school graduates of minority origin in high schools in inland provinces for immersion in Han culture and better mastery of Mandarin (Li 2010). In May 2010, Beijing decided that bilingual education had to be implemented in all the schools for ethnic minorities in Xinjiang by 2015; all students were expected to speak fluent Mandarin by 2020. The Uyghur language was taught as an individual course, and Mandarin was used as the sole medium of instruction in all other courses (Wong 2010).

In Hong Kong, a high degree of cultural autonomy is still allowed. No restrictions are imposed on religious freedom. The local language of Cantonese, not Mandarin, is used as a de facto official language. Despite this, a state-defined national identity and ideology

have been promoted in Hong Kong. Tung Chee-hwa (Dong Jianhua), a former chief executive, has repeatedly called for more emphasis on national education to cultivate a sense of belonging and pride surrounding Chinese history and culture. Schools were to deepen students' understanding of contemporary China, teach the national anthem, and raise the national flag to cultivate students' allegiance to China. Mandarin education was made mandatory. Government subsidies were offered to schools and non-governmental organisations to organise China exchange tours for students. Cantonese and Mandarin were promoted as classroom languages (Leung and Lee 2006; Ku and Pun 2004; Chan 2002; Morris, Kan, and Morris 2000).

Aside from that, the curricula of history-related subjects have been revised to increase the components on contemporary China and China–Hong Kong relations. The new syllabus of local history at the level of junior high school highlights China's contribution to Hong Kong's development. Hong Kong is described as being dependent on China for its economic prosperity: Hong Kong is portrayed as relying on China's benevolence for its supply of food and fresh water, even though the trade relationship is actually bilateral and mutually beneficial (Vickers and Kan 2005: 189–191).

Some measures intended to foster state-sanctioned national identity and ideology have been strongly opposed. In 2012 the government prepared to implement the *Moral and National Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 to Secondary 6)* (hereafter, "the Curriculum Guide"). A major problem with the Curriculum Guide was its underemphasis on students' critical and analytical thinking but overemphasis on cultivating a sense of responsibility towards and identification with China (Curriculum Development Council 2012). In effect, the Curriculum Guide was no different from propaganda. In 2012 a government-commissioned teaching manual, the *China Model National Conditions Teaching Manual*, was published by the government-funded National Education Services Centre in order to implement the Curriculum Guide. The teaching manual glorified the CCP as an "advanced, selfless, and united ruling group." It highlighted China's achievements but downplayed its policy failures, political turmoil, and human rights record (*Mingpao* 2012). Scholarism, a civic group formed by high school students, successfully whipped up public opposition against the implementation of the Curriculum Guide. It launched several territory-wide protests; the largest one drew over 100,000

participants. In the face of staunch opposition, the Hong Kong government backed down from the Curriculum Guide in the end. But various other government-sponsored activities continued to perpetuate state-sanctioned ideology among school students.

Evidence of cultural assimilation through the increasing presence of mainland capital, personnel, and other influences can be demonstrated in the media industry and major think tanks. In 2002 Liu Changle, a large shareholder of Phoenix Television, acquired 46 per cent of Asia Television Limited (ATV), the much weaker of the two terrestrial television broadcast channels in the territory. Phoenix Television was said to have connections with China's PLA. After the acquisition, the editorial line of ATV's news reports became more pro-government. Such a change in editorial line was also found in another broadcast channel, Television Broadcast Limited (TVB). During the 2014 Umbrella Movement, TVB was alleged to have partially censored video recordings of the event by omitting the narration that described seven police officers assaulting a demonstrator (Reporters without Borders 2014).

Major stakes of several media outlets were sold to businesspeople with political or business connections to Beijing (Lai 2007). The most noteworthy case was that of TVB's holding company, Young Lion, which in 2015 sold a stake to Li Ruigang, the chairman of Shanghai Media Group (Frater 2015). Li was believed to be a CCP member overseeing several media outlets. The media freedom was further assaulted by the knife attack on Kevin Lau, a senior journalist who had led an investigative team and reported on the secret assets held by relatives of Chinese leaders (Mullany 2014). News reports in general were far from balanced and diversified. Pro-government ideology was widely prevalent, whereas pro-democracy reports were limited to a handful of press and social media outlets.

In addition, major think tanks are manned by pro-government elements. The most important think tank affiliated with the Hong Kong government was the Central Policy Unit. Its first head was Shiu Sin-por (Shao Shanpo), a former member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) (Hong Kong SAR Government 2012). Shiu was also a former executive director of the pro-Beijing One Country Two Systems Research Institute, which was set up in 1990 by a group of pro-Beijing politicians, including Ann Tse-kai (An Zijie) (former vice chairman of the

CPPCC) and Leung Chun-ying (Liang Zhenying), the current chief executive of the Hong Kong SAR government. The Central Policy Unit's current executive director, Cheung Chi-kong (Zhang Zhigang), was concurrently a member of the Executive Council of the Hong Kong SAR government. Many research outputs of the institute were closely related to the integrative and developmental projects pursued by both Beijing and Hong Kong, such as the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge, the development of Pan–Pearl River Delta region, improvement in the hardware and management of the border crossings with the mainland, and the further development of Hong Kong International Airport (One Country Two Systems Research Institute 2015). Examining to what extent these think tanks affect policy merits further investigation. What is more certain is that Hong Kong think tanks have become closely connected with Beijing's Hong Kong policy.

The trend of increasing cross-border marriages between Hong Kong and mainland China is arguably a kind of cultural assimilation. Cross-border marriages are becoming more common amidst rising cross-border social interactions and career pursuits (see Table 2). While the marriages were voluntary, conspiracy theorists suggested their implications for sinicising Hong Kong. Most of these new Chinese immigrants come from a working-class background. After they arrive in Hong Kong, they are more likely to have contact with pro-Beijing political parties and other social organisations than the political parties in the pan-democracy camp because pro-Beijing political parties and social organisations are very resourceful and are able to provide the Chinese immigrants with a list of community services essential for them to integrate into life in Hong Kong. After the new immigrants become eligible voters, they are believed to return the favour by casting votes for the candidates fielded by pro-Beijing political parties and social organisations in the elections of Legislative and District Councils.[1]

1 The author wishes to express his gratitude to the anonymous reviewer for sharpening the arguments of this paragraph.

Table 2. Number of Marriages Registered in Hong Kong (HK)

Year	Both grooms and brides are HK residents	Grooms are HK residents and brides from mainland China			Brides are HK residents and grooms from mainland China		
	Marriages registered in HK	Marriages registered in HK	Issue of CAMR	Total	Marriages registered in HK	Issue of CAMR	Total
1991	36,126	590	20,630	21,220	90	1,300	1,390
1996	31,143	2,215	22,349	24,564	269	1,552	1,821
2001	24,176	5,169	13,211	18,380	723	1,636	2,359
2002	20,713	7,724	10,127	17,851	977	1,394	2,371
2003	21,441	10,185	7,501	17,686	1,324	1,083	2,407
2004	23,853	13,126	7,842	20,968	1,888	1,504	3,392
2005	21,102	16,775	8,094	24,869	2,726	2,193	4,919
2006	25,682	18,182	9,963	28,145	3,406	3,077	6,483
2007	25,280	15,978	5,910	21,888	2,490	1,825	4,315
2008	26,697	14,206	4,797	19,003	2,409	1,539	3,948
2009	31,227	13,751	4,394	18,145	2,599	1,595	4,194
2010	27,534	15,400	3,791	19,191	3,259	1,577	4,836
2011	30,903	16,506	3,806	20,312	4,129	1,738	5,867
2012	32,523	16,930	3,691	20,621	4,930	1,987	6,917
2013	28,837	15,737	3,429	19,166	5,293	2,151	7,444

Source: Census and Statistics Department 2015.

Note: A Certificate of Absence of Marriage Records (CAMR) is required by mainland Chinese authorities when non-mainland citizens prepare to register their marriages in mainland China.

Economic Integration and Domination

Economic integration and domination may provide the ethnic minorities, especially the elites, with economic benefits in return for their subservience to Beijing. The economic benefits can also increase the economic costs of rebelling against China and build up popular opposition against territorial secession. After 2005, over 250,000 Tibetan villagers were resettled by the government from traditional settlement to new houses located along major roads. Villagers could take advantage of better housing and easier access to job opportunities in

towns and cities. The problem of overgrazing was also alleviated (Barnett 2010). Land transportation was substantially improved by the Qinghai–Tibet Railway and the railway link between Tibet's two biggest cities, Lhasa and Shigatse. In the wake of the 2010 Fifth National Symposium on Work in Tibet, Beijing directed 17 well-off coastal provinces and cities to earmark 0.1 per cent of their annual fiscal revenues for Tibet. Between 1952 and 2013, the central government provided Tibet with financial subsidies of over CNY 544 billion, or 95 per cent of Tibet's total public expenditure (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2015).

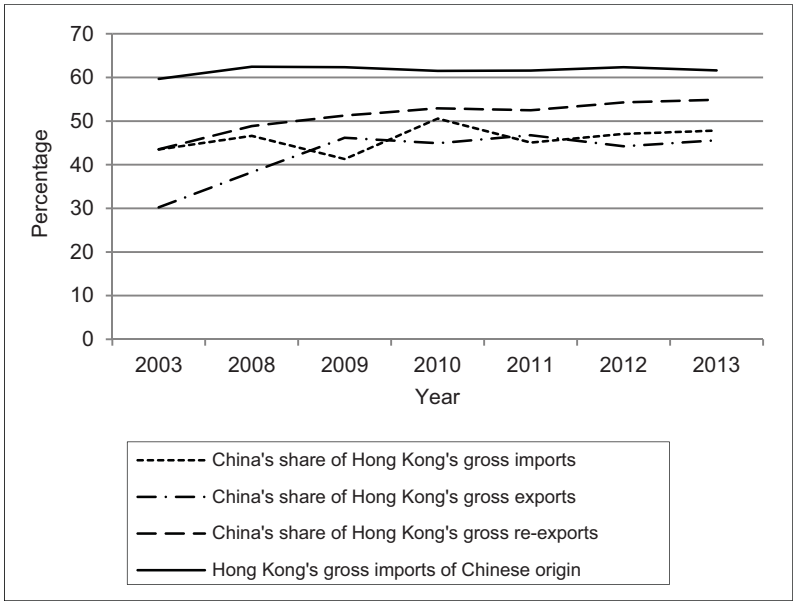
Similarly, Xinjiang had to rely on Beijing to cover the budget shortfall. In 2013 the provincial budgetary revenue (CNY 113 billion) was only about one-third of the budgetary expenditure (CNY 307 billion) (Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu di fang zhi bian zuan wei yuan hui 2014). Additionally, Beijing had set up the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) in 1954 to develop the local economy and defend the borders. The land under the management of XPCC accounts for 4.47 per cent of all the territories of Xinjiang. The XPCC controls two-fifths of Xinjiang's arable land, and produces one-third of the region's sugar, cotton, cloth, and yarn (Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps 2007, 2008). The Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has a monopoly on oil exploration in Xinjiang. In 2009 the XPCC and CNPC contributed 65.2 per cent of Xinjiang's GDP (Chen 2010).

The economically integrative measures have made Tibet and Xinjiang financially dependent on Beijing. The investment from Beijing and state-owned enterprises has created numerous business and career opportunities for migrants all over China. The migrants, mostly Han, are in constant conflict with the ethnic minorities over land use, job opportunities, and customs. Their conflicts culminated in the July Fifth Incident in 2009, a violent clash between Han immigrants and indigenous Uyghur in which 184 people died and 1,680 were injured (Mao and Zhou 2009).

The economy of Hong Kong has been gradually integrated with China's since the start of Reform Era and the displacement of Hong Kong's manufacturing industries to China. Nowadays, mainland China is Hong Kong's most significant import and export partner, accounting for almost half of Hong Kong's gross imports and exports (see Figure 3). After Hong Kong's retrocession to China, the latter

fostered closer economic ties with the former partly out of the intention to alleviate the legitimacy crisis faced by the Hong Kong government caused by the financial crisis, government malfeasances, and misrule (Cheng 2009). Starting from 28 July 2003, the permanent residents of four Chinese cities were allowed to travel to Hong Kong on tourist visas. Better known as the Individual Visitor Scheme, the relaxation of outbound tourism substantially increased the number of tourists and benefitted the retail and hospitality industries (see Table 3). Later on, the number of cities covered by the scheme was extended to 32, covering a population totalling 200 million.

Figure 3. China's Share of Hong Kong's Imports, Exports, and Re-Exports



Source: Census and Statistics Department 2014: 65, Table 3.3.

Meanwhile, cross-border infrastructure was also improved. In June 2004, it was announced that the land transport capacity of the Pearl River Delta would be increased by 30 per cent and that the possibility of building a superhighway connecting both sides of Pearl River Delta region with Hong Kong would be investigated (Chow 2004).

Table 3. Mainland Visitors to Hong Kong

Year	Mainland Visitors to Hong Kong	% of Mainland Visitors among all Visitors to Hong Kong
2012	34,911,395	71.8
2011	28,100,129	67.0
2010	22,684,338	63.0
2009	17,956,731	60.7
2008	16,862,003	57.1
2007	15,485,789	55.0
2006	13,591,342	53.8
2005	12,541,400	53.7
2004	12,245,862	56.1
2003	8,467,211	54.5
2002	6,825,199	41.2

Source: Census and Statistics Department 2014: 65, Table 3.3.

Nevertheless, many Hongkongers were unable to benefit from these economically integrative measures. As Table 3 suggests, the relaxation of outbound tourism from China has substantially increased the number of mainland visitors to Hong Kong. The visitors have driven up Hong Kong's business and living costs. Small businesses serving local customers were displaced by chain stores selling daily necessities sought after by mainlanders. Between 2004 and 2013, mainland tourists' consumption as a percentage of gross consumption in Hong Kong rose from 4.5 per cent to 22.2 per cent. The number of shops selling cosmetics and personal care products increased by 1,500 per cent, clothing and shoes by 40 per cent, and jewellery by 30 per cent. Retail shop rents in Hong Kong were driven up by 70 per cent. On the contrary, the number of shops supplying products for local needs, such as groceries, stationery, and newspapers reduced by up to 30 per cent (Mai 2014).

Many of the mainland visitors are grey-product traders. They enter Hong Kong on multi-entry visas to shop and bring the goods back to mainland China for resale. Many shops and public transportation vehicles, especially those close to the borders or heading to mainland China, have become so crowded with people that local residents are significantly inconvenienced. With no confidence in mainland China's food safety measures, many Chinese shoppers flock

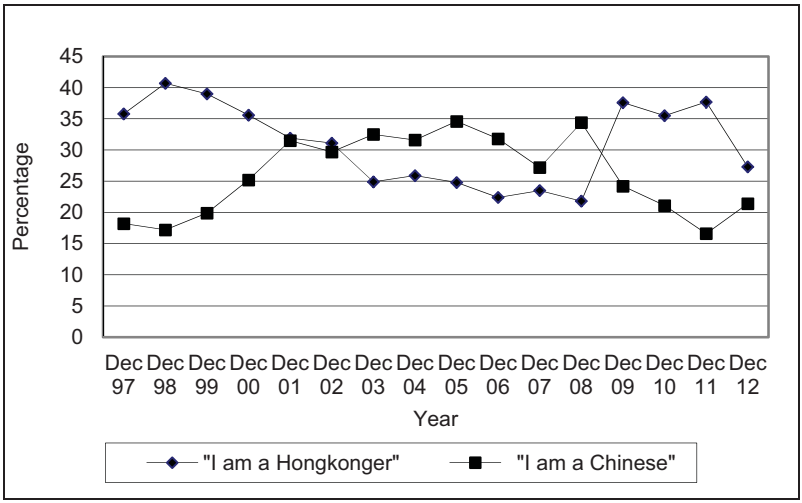
to the two SARs and compete with local residents for even such basic necessities as food and milk powder (*The Economist* 2012). The conflicts have escalated into street protests, mobilised through social media. Since 2013, these protests have been organised in the districts of Tsim Sha Tsui, Sheung Shui, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, and Shatin, which have heavy concentrations of mainland shoppers (*Pingguo Ribao* 2013; *Taiyang Bao* 2014).

Other integrative measures were criticised for serving the consumption and investment needs of mainland visitors at the expense of the well-being of Hongkongers. The example of the North East New Territories New Development Areas illustrates this well. Proposed in the colonial era, the purpose of the New Development Areas was to fully utilise the under-developed rural land in the North East New Territories. In 2007 the government issued a development plan, "Hong Kong 2030," which proposed opening up a new land-border crossing. Mainland visitors were permitted to enter the region visa-free. Luxury residential housing, hospitals, and schools were developed to target mainland Chinese investors, patients, and students. The plan was widely opposed. Some critics were dissatisfied with the plan's failure to acknowledge the rising demand for low-cost public housing. The plan fuelled their resentment, given the social costs of economic integration such as rising property prices and rents, overcrowded hospitals and streets, and competition for food and other daily necessities. Conservationists pointed out that the plan destroyed lots of farmland and substantially damaged rural life. Facing great public pressure, the Hong Kong government was forced to scale back the plan, dropping the idea of a new cross-border pass and reducing the size of the territory set aside for development. In addition, more land was reserved for public housing (*Xingdao Ribao* 2013a, 2013b; Zheng 2012; Lai 2012; *The Economist* 2012).

Figure 4 shows the shift in national and local self-identification among people in Hong Kong after the handover of sovereignty. The figure demonstrates the results of an opinion poll on the statements "I am a Chinese" and "I am a Hongkonger." The respondents who claimed they were Chinese are assumed to identify with China and embrace the national identity more strongly than the local identity, while those identifying themselves as Hongkongers seem to show a stronger sense of local identity. Since the retrocession in 1997, the sense of national identity had grown but local identity weakened, but

that trend began to reverse after 2008. More research is required in order to understand the reasons for this shift in Hong Kong's political identification. What we can conclude at this stage is that the decline in self-identification with China coincides with Beijing's increasing influence over Hong Kong's domestic affairs.

Figure 4. The Shift in Hongkongers' Self-Identification



Source: *HKU POP Site* 2015c.

Concluding Remarks

Lo (2008: 42–68) coined the terms "mainlandisation" and "recolonisation" to refer to the trend of Hong Kong's convergence with China after retrocession. It is a soft process of political, economic, societal, and legal transformations: Politically, the political development and elite politics of Hong Kong are under the looming influence of Chinese leadership. Economically, Hong Kong is increasingly dependent on China's capital, market, and professionals. Socially, Hongkongers are criticised by Chinese officials of culturally and politically alienating themselves from China (*Mingpao* 2015). The influx of many mainland Chinese for shopping, marriages, and job-seeking has deepened mainlandisation. Legally, Hong Kong is reliant on the SCNPC's interpretation of the Basic Law. Understanding the extent to which the trend

of mainlandisation is directed by Beijing's policy, driven by market force, rationally chosen by Hong Kong's political and business elites, or defined by a mix of the three forces requires further investigation. It cannot be denied that on top of foreign relations and national defence, the central government's influence on various domestic affairs in Hong Kong is increasingly salient. Hong Kong is converging with the mainland much faster and more intensely than ever before.

Beijing's Hong Kong policy mirrors its rule of other newly integrated borderlands – namely, Tibet and Xinjiang. During the colonial era, when Hongkongers generally had little confidence in the Chinese government, the Chinese government reiterated it would uphold the one-country, two-system policy. Hong Kong would be granted a high degree of autonomy; the Chinese government would control only Hong Kong's foreign relations and national defence. After the retrocession, various degrees of coercion were applied to Hong Kong: The central government intervened extensively in the development of political system and electoral politics. Violence can be exercised through the Hong Kong police when Beijing feels its national security is threatened. The central government's view on important policies can be imposed on Hong Kong without consulting the people, as evidenced by the "White Paper on the Practice of the 'One Country, Two Systems' Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" and the "August 31 Decision" made by the SCNPC. Cultural assimilation has been stepped up to cultivate a sense of national identity defined by the state. Cross-border marriages and the acquisition of major stakes in important media outlets have sped up the process of mainlandisation. Owing to the perceived material benefits, economic integration had been the least resisted among the policy tools until the consequential rise in property prices, increase in the number of mainland visitors, and competition between mainlanders and Hongkongers for university spots, hospital beds, and products for daily consumption began to occur.

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