Hong Kong from Britain to China

Political Cleavages, Electoral Dynamics and Institutional Changes

Li Pang-Kwong

HONG KONG FROM BRITAIN TO CHINA

To my parents

who struggled to bring up their children
during the harsh and difficult years of
postwar Hong Kong

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LI PANG-KWONG
Lingnan University
Hong Kong

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List of Abbreviations

123DA	123 Democratic Alliance
BL	Basic Law
BLCC	Basic Law Consultation Committee
BLDC	Basic Law Drafting Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDO	City District Officer Scheme
CE	Chief Executive
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CRC	Cooperative Resources Centre
DAAs	District Affairs Advisors
DAB	Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong
DBs	District Boards
DP	Democratic Party
EC	Election Committee
ExCo	Executive Council
FC	Functional Constituency
FTU	Federation of Trade Unions
HKAAs	Hong Kong Affairs Advisors
HKADPL	Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood
HKAS	Hong Kong Affairs Society
HKASPDMC	Hong Kong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China
HKCA	Hong Kong Civic Association
HKCF	Hong Kong Citizen Forum
HKDF	Hong Kong Democratic Foundation
HKMAO	Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office
HKO	Hong Kong Observers
HKPA	Hong Kong Progressive Alliance
HKPTU	Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Unions
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HOS	Home Ownership Scheme
JD	Sino-British Joint Declaration
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
KMT	Kuomintang

KTMCA	Kwun Tong Man Chung Association
LDF	Liberal Democratic Federation
LegCo	Legislative Council
MP	Meeting Point
NCNA	New China News Agency
NHKA	New Hong Kong Alliance
NPC	National People's Congress
NTA	New Territories Alliance
NTAS	New Territories Association of Societies
NWSC	Neighbourhood and Workers Service Centre
OR	October Review
PE	Popular Election
PHKS	Progressive Hong Kong Society
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSPS	Private Sector Participation Scheme
PWC	Preliminary Working Committee
RCHK	Reform Club of Hong Kong
RegCo	Regional Council
SCOPG	Standing Committee on Pressure Groups
SoCO	Society for Community Organisation
TUC	Trades Union Council
UA	United Ants
UDHK	United Democrats of Hong Kong
UrbCo	Urban Council

1 Introduction

After more than 150 years of British rule, Hong Kong has become a part of China since July 1997. The transition from a British colony to a Chinese special administrative region was not only a transfer of sovereignty, but also touched upon a very important issue of political transition generated by the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed in December 1984. The Sino-British Joint Declaration had provided an impetus to reform the colonial political structure by the injection of election into the political system. Later in 1990, the Basic Law (the mini-constitution for post-1997 Hong Kong) had furthered a step by stipulating that the Chief Executive (CE) and all the LegCo members of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) be ultimately returned by popular election. The transformation of the mode of political recruitment through appointment to one through election has redefined the rule of the political game and the associated value system and norms of behaviour.

From an institutional perspective, the introduction of popular election into the District Boards (DBs) and the Legislative Council (LegCo) in 1982 and 1991, respectively, had kicked off a long process of political transformation. However, political change in Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s has its uniqueness. First of all, it is clear that Hong Kong would never have become an independent state after the "decolonization" process. Chinese government, whether under the rule of the Kuomintang (KMT) or the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), has never failed to assert its sovereignty over Hong Kong and has claimed to be able to restore it when they think fit. Unlike other British colonies, therefore, the transfer of power has not been from the colonial government to the native people but to another sovereign state--China. Thus, the normal Westminster decolonization process leading to the establishment of a parliamentary sovereign state would not happen in Hong Kong. The destiny of Hong Kong was finally fixed in 1984 when Britain agreed to return Hong Kong to China in 1997.

Second, there has been a lack of widespread nationalist movements in Hong Kong since the 1940s. Without the intense mobilization in society witnessed in the independence movements of other decolonizing colonies, Hong Kong has failed to create an integrated political force and a popular leadership to represent the people's views and interests, and to provide a vision of change. On the one hand, the traditional and economic elites have been isolated from the masses for decades and it has been very difficult to enlist support from the masses because of differences in values and interests between them. On the other hand, the newly emerging middle-class political activists have had some social support, but they have been rather loosely organized and not equipped well with the "will and might" to challenge the political status quo.

Third, the "pre-emptive" political reforms in the 1980s initiated by Britain have unleashed the "frozen" political force.[1] At the organizational level, group-building efforts attempted by the political activists were induced in the early 1980s by the expected devolution of power as stipulated in the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 and the Chinese promise of "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong" after 1997. This gave an institutional push to defrost the "frozen" political forces and eventually created a political market through which various political groups compete among themselves for the devolved political goods. At the individual level, the mass public was suddenly exposed to the still-in-the-making political market and subject to frequent political mobilization drives by the political activists. Their political horizons were, in one way or another, extended, because "politics" was no more a taboo in society. The demystification of politics had removed psychological hurdles and eventually made society prone to political mobilization. Moreover, the enfranchised public was reminded to think politically by the periodic advent of elections. More important is that the reform from above created a situation where the political power devolved in an orderly way to the local society. This development contradicted the wishes of the Chinese government. Any reforms, without the blessing of the Chinese government, would not be accepted because Beijing questions the motive behind the reform and wants as little change in political structure as possible in the transitional period. But the ball was not in the Chinese court. The British government still had the legitimate right to initiate as well as carry out its own policy in the transitional period, although consultation with China was required as stipulated in the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984. Moreover, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the democrats,[2] whose political value and orientation differed

from that of the Beijing government, especially after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, were supported by the majority of Hong Kong voters from the 1991 LegCo first-ever popular elections.[3] In the 1991 LegCo popular elections, out of the 18 popularly-elected seats, the democrats won 16. More important was the fact that none of the leftist candidates were elected (*Oriental Daily News*, 17 September 1991, p. 3; *Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 17 September 1991, p. 23). It is very strange to have such a complicated and subtle relationship between the colonial government, the colonized, and future sovereign state of the colonized.

Under such peculiar circumstances, how to comprehend the collective behaviour of the Hong Kong voters and the results of the LegCo popular elections are, thus, important topics to explore. Individuals do not live in isolation. They are social beings and, thus, cannot avoid interaction with society. So, individual behaviour has its social and contextual dimensions. In other words, the electoral choice of voters, though made individually, has something to do with the specific social configurations and conditions which prevailed at the election time. With this understanding in mind, what this book plans to study is the identification of the social cleavage lines that help shape the voters' choice and serve as the basis of mobilization during the LegCo popular elections. It also attempts to explore the following related questions: what specific social conditions in the 1980s contributed to the salience of particular cleavage lines among the political elites? How did these cleavage lines structure the development of political groups (parties) in the 1980s? Under what political conditions do these political groups establish linkage and network with the electorate? How effective are the mobilization efforts of these political groups? What implications do these cleavages have for the future political change of Hong Kong in general, and the development of the party system and electoral competition in particular?

Amid the introduction of popular election and the emergence of a particular cleavage system, the institutional arrangements and design of a political system are also important in managing the political conflicts created by the emerging political market, in which partisan alignment, de-alignment and realignment have taken place. This book therefore also explores the dynamic relationships between as well as the institutional designs of the executive and legislature in the post-1997 Hong Kong and to examine the institutional arrangements, as stipulated in the Basic Law, in terms of their capacity for conflict resolution and management.

Literature Review

Given that universal suffrage in Hong Kong was only introduced at the district level in 1982 and at the central level in 1991, it is not surprising to find that there were not many academic electoral studies in the 1980s. As one study has suggested, there were altogether 67 voting behaviour surveys in the period 1970-91, and nearly half of them (N=32) were conducted in 1991 (Louie and Wan, 1992:27, appendix 2). Furthermore, most of them were conducted by civic or community groups, or commissioned by the mass media. The objective of the former in conducting voting behaviour surveys was to mobilize the mass public's electoral awareness, while that of the latter was to attract readers' or audiences' attention by predicting the winners in the electoral "horse races". Thus, nearly all of these surveys are descriptive in nature rather than explanatory. As shown in the same study, only nine voting surveys (with reports) were conducted by academics (Louie and Wan, 1992:22-4). Nevertheless, over twenty papers on the 1991 elections and eleven papers on the 1995 elections were added to the stock of voting studies in Hong Kong in late 1992 and 1993 as well as in 1996 (Kwok, Leung and Scott, 1992; Lam and Lee, 1992a, 1992b; Lau and Louie, 1993; Kuan, Lau, Louie and Wong, 1996).

Humans do not live in isolation. They interact with each other to form a closely-knit social network and community. It is therefore believed that if one is going to understand the collective action of individuals, a possible way out is to put their actions into context and then have them analysed. Election behaviour, or more specific voters' choice, has therefore had its social foundation. This social cleavage approach has directed the researchers' attention to the electoral expression of social contradiction and its relations with electoral support.

As political conflicts are of different natures and forms in different societies, political cleavages will then be organized along the different bases of social divisions. Although there are various types of cleavage, only a few of them may find electoral expression and serve as the basis for partisan alignment. The salience of particular cleavages may depend on the availability and nature of political cleavages presented at the time of the introduction of universal franchise.

As a result, social or economic divisions that have found political (electoral) expression may serve as the basis of cleavage, cutting or cross-cutting the electorate into several slices. Party competition and electoral battles would, then, be fought along these lines of cleavage.

There have been four articles adopting the cleavage approach in analysing Hong Kong's voters' choice. Two of them were written by Leung Sai-wing (1993, 1996). Leung argues that "it was the socialization of alienation through political events, with the June 4th Incident as the climax, during the transitional period of Hong Kong that resulted in the besieging of pro-China candidates by an anti-Communist China sentiment and in the landslide victory of the democratic camp in the 1991 [LegCo] direct election" (Leung, 1992:192). Furthermore, Leung also indicates that some Hong Kong people, especially the younger generation, have evolved an "anti-Communist China syndrome". The syndrome that he refers to is "an integrated set of political attitudes, with the distrust of the Chinese government as the centrifugal force, from which other related political attitudes, or even political actions, are derived" (Leung, 1992: 219-20). Leung also predicts that "the space for development of the democratic camp is limited by this [anti-Communist China] sentiment" because "the democrats have to bear risks of many kinds by continuing to say 'no' to the Chinese government after 1997" (1996: 233 & 234).

The other two were written by this author (Li, 1993, 1996). One of them studied the urban-rural cleavage in the 1991 District Boards elections and the other advanced a dual cleavage model to account for the voters' behaviour in the 1995 LegCo popular elections. The basic argument of the latter paper is that: the effect of the Tiananmen Incident complex or the "anti-Communist China syndrome" on Hong Kong voters' choice is the function of the domestic conflicts here in Hong Kong and its linkage (interaction) with this complex. The emotional feelings attached to this complex would be sustained for a long period of time only if it finds a manifestation in the local conflict or cleavage system which is believed to have a more permanent effect on voters' choice.

The popular reason advanced to account for the landslide victory of the democrats, especially those of the United Democrats of Hong Kong (UDHK) and the Meeting Point (MP), in the 1991 first-ever LegCo popular elections was the Tiananmen Incident complex or the "anti-Communist China syndrome" among the Hong Kong voters. It is true that the events in the Tiananmen Square in 1989 had reinforced the Hong Kong people's long-term distrust of the communist Chinese government, and thus contributed to their support for the democrats' candidates. But it might not be the sole factor in shaping the voters' electoral choices. What is left untouched are the domestic political contradictions and their linkages with China. In the mid-1980s, two conflicts seem to occupy the domestic political scene. First, the political conflict between the Hong Kong

government, the conservatives[4] and the leftists[5] on the one hand, and the democrats on the other, over the political reforms in the transitional period, as well as between the conservatives and the democrats over the future political model of the HKSAR. Second, the conflict between the Hong Kong government and Hong Kong society over the privatization scheme and related measures. The picture becomes more complicated because of China's growing involvement in Hong Kong's domestic politics. It is a logical development as Hong Kong becomes part of China after 1997. The problems are: under what conditions do the two sides meet with each other, and what attitude does the Chinese government adopt to frame the new political relationship and order between itself and Hong Kong.

Theoretical Framework

It is useful to clarify a number of terms and concepts, such as democratization, political cleavage, political mobilization, partisan alignment, institutional design and conflict management, which have been the subject of academic debate, so as to provide a theoretical framework for this study.

Democratization and Elections

As advanced by Samuel P. Huntington (1991:45-106), there are several conditions contributing to the democratization of the non-democratic regimes. They are:

- declining legitimacy and the performance dilemma;
- economic development and economic crises;
- religious changes;
- new policies of external actors; and
- demonstration effects or snowballing.

Although the relative significance of the above-mentioned objective conditions may vary, Huntington has included in his analysis a subjective dimension of democratic transition, that is, the "will and skill" of political leaders throughout the democratization process. To borrow his words,

> General factors create conditions favorable to democratization. They do not make democratization necessary, and they are at one remove [*sic*] from the

factors immediately responsible for democratization. A democratic regime is installed not by trends but by people. Democracies are created not by causes but by causers. Political leaders and publics have to act. . . . (Huntington, 1991:107)

What is democratization, then? Put simply, democratization denotes the process of transition from authoritarian to democratic rule. In the process of democratization, Stein Rokkan (1970:79-96) has identified four sequential thresholds:

- legitimation: the recognition of the right of petition, criticism against the regime, and the protection of the rights of assembly, expression, etc;
- incorporation: the granting of equal right to choose representatives to the opposition and their potential supporters;
- representation: the lowering of institutional barriers for the representation of the opposition; and
- executive power: the opening of the executive organ to legislative pressure, or the direct influence of the legislature on executive decision-making.

The emergence of competitive mass politics depends on the crossing of the first two thresholds, while the institutional development of mass politics relies on the crossing of the last two thresholds. The lowering of one threshold would sooner or later generate pressure on the change of the other, but the transition to other higher thresholds would not be automatic.

Furthermore, Rokkan (1970:227) has also suggested "four steps of change" in the process of electoral mobilization:

- incorporation: the inclusion of the former disfranchised publics;
- mobilization: the mobilization of the enfranchised in electoral contests;
- activation: the encouragement of direct participation in public life; and
- politicization: the intrusion of national parties into local elections.

Although scholars and the public have different interpretations of the word "democracy" and the exact constitution of democratic rule, one thing that can be certain is the minimum institutional requirement that the top decision-makers should be elected periodically by means of an open, fair, popular and competitive election.

If we use this ideal criterion to measure Hong Kong's political reforms implemented to date, we can only describe the moves so far as "liberalization" rather than "democratization" of the political structure; for liberalization means "the partial opening of an authoritarian system short of choosing governmental leaders through freely competitive elections" (Huntington, 1991:9). In the context of Hong Kong (as of 1999), although only 20 seats, out of 60 seats, are opened for popular election and the post of chief executive is still not determined by means of popular election, the various LegCo popular elections held in 1991, 1995 and 1998 can be regarded as a competitive one because the participants, whether candidates or voters, are free to enter or exit the election. The distribution of the remaining 40 members are as follow: 30 elected members through functional constituency and 10 members returned by electoral college.

Whatever it may be, liberalization or democratization, once the competitive elections and universal franchise have been put in place in a state, the institutional threshold of political participation will be lowered. The absorption of the newly mobilized persons into the "network of electoral institutions" may have a "deinstitutionalizing effect" on the existing political order. As a result, the "decay of institutionalized patterns of behavior" has given the original, excluded politicians an opportunity of jockeying for power through the newly instituted competitive electoral system (Przeworski, 1975:49-67). Subsequently, modern mass political parties would be formed to fight the electoral battle. Through the help of political parties, the public have been, in one way or another, incorporated into the national political process. Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (1966:9) have aptly described the situation:

> Where the suffrage is greatly restricted, local electoral committees are simply not needed; where it is expanded, the need to woo the masses is strongly felt. What was once a struggle limited to an aristocratic elite or small groups of notables now becomes a major drama in which large segments of the citizenry play an active role.

The most controversial and critical issue during the transition seems to be "the production of contingent consent" on a set of election rules that the ensuing national elections will be based upon (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986:59). All the concerned parties will try to shape the election rules to their favour, "for the party that wins the transition election plays a key role in the consolidation of democracy, often writing a new constitution, deciding the fate of the old guard, and rewriting the 'rules of the game'".[6] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter (1986:59-60)

highlight three critical dimensions in finding such consent of procedural democracy:

- eligibility of participants and threshold for representation;
- electoral formula ("workable majorities" vs. "accurate representation"); and
- "the structure of offices for which national elections are held" ("parliamentarism" vs. "presidentialism").

At a "founding election", it is said that the election outcome would be highly uncertain because of the inexperience of voters in choosing candidates, weak identity of voters with parties, unclear candidates' image, and the unreliability of survey results.[7]

Nancy Bermeo (1987:213), however, has proposed three structural factors that may have "the strongest effect" on the outcome of the "transition election":

- the patterns of regime transformation: revolution or reform;
- the class configurations; and
- the critical role of semiopposition.

The term "semiopposition" is used by Juan Linz (1973:191-2) to describe groups "that are not dominant or represented in the governing group but that are willing to participate in power without fundamentally challenging the regime" and thus, can be considered as "[b]eing partly 'out' [of] and partly 'in' power".

Concept of Political Cleavages

If the statement "politics arises from the existence of cleavages" is assumed to be true (Rae and Taylor, 1970:21), then, social cleavages exist in every political community, no matter what the form of government or political system may be. The problem is by what means can we identify these cleavages. Probably, elections may provide the appropriate occasion to detect them, as elections are said to serve as "a measure of social divisions" and "provide information on the extent to which society is organized and divided by such factors as religion, class and ethnicity" (Harrop and Miller, 1987:173). This is particularly the case in "competitive" elections.

Douglas W. Rae and Michael Taylor (1970:1) have defined cleavages as:

> the criteria which divide the members of a community or subcommunity into groups, and the relevant cleavages are those which divide members into groups with important political differences at specific times and places.

Ronald Inglehart (1984:25) indicates that if a political community is divided into groups that particularly favour certain policies and parties for a period of time, political cleavages are said to be present. He described political cleavages as "relatively stable patterns of polarization" in a political system.

As political conflicts are of different natures and forms in different societies, political cleavages will then be organized along different bases of social divisions. The following scholars have put forward various types of cleavages.

Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967:14) suggest four critical cleavages:

- subject-dominant culture (centre-periphery);
- church-government (church-state);
- primary-secondary economy (land-industry); and
- workers-employers (worker-owner).

The first two and the last two cleavages are the direct products of national and industrial revolutions, respectively.

Rae and Taylor (1970:1) have differentiated three types of cleavage:

- ascriptive (race or caste);
- attitudinal ("opinion" cleavages as ideology or preference); and
- behavioural ("act" cleavage elicited through voting and organizational membership).

Huntington (1974:163-91) suggests that three major cleavages will develop when society moves from being industrial to post-industrial:

- group cleavage: that is divisions between declining and rising social forces; between declining forces; and between rising social forces in terms of social status, economic position, and numerical strength.

- institutional cleavage: that is party conflict, legislative-executive conflict, state-national conflict, executive bureaucracy-mass media conflict.
- ideological (political goals and values) cleavage: that is between modern and traditional groups; among modernizing groups of bourgeoisie, the military, and intellectuals over values of development, efficiency, and egalitarianism.

In the past decade, the literature on electoral cleavage is mainly divided over the discussion of production-based (class) and consumption-based (sectoral) cleavages. Before the late 1970s, class voting research had received wide acceptance in Western academic circles, especially in Britain. In the late 1970s, this trend was challenged by Patrick Dunleavy (1979, 1980a, 1980b), who incorporated the concept of consumption cleavages in explaining electoral behaviour. Dunleavy argues that with the expansion of state activities and state intervention into the consumption process, sectoral cleavages (collective vs. individualized consumption) would emerge and crosscut the existing class cleavages. Hence, class voting may decline and give way to accommodate sectoral voting. The sectoral cleavage model is basically developed out of the thesis of collective consumption in urban politics advanced by Manuel Castells (1978: chapter 2) in 1972.

Inglehart (1977, 1984) argues that the value-based polarization of materialist-postmaterialist issues has entered into the political arena. He suggests that when the postmaterialist issues, such as environmentalism, the women's movement, the peace movement, the consumer advocacy movement, come to the centre of political debates, the materialist reaction of much of the working class would be stimulated to reassert the traditional materialist value of economic growth, security, and law and order. This may help to neutralize the class-based cleavage and eventually pave the way for electoral and partisan change. Parties of the Left will be divided over the postmaterialist issues and, thus, suffer a net flow of support to the Right. This perspective is also known as the "new politics thesis" (Knutsen, 1986:235-63).

In a review article discussing cleavage models, Arend Lijphart (1990:143-50) has included foreign policy, regime support, participatory democracy, and ecological dimensions on the top of those types proposed by Lipset and Rokkan.

Political Mobilization, Political Party and Partisan Alignment

Although there are various types of cleavage, as mentioned above, only a few of them may find electoral expression and serve as the basis for partisan alignment (see Figure 1.1). The salience of particular cleavages may depend on the availability and nature of political cleavages presented at the time of introduction of universal franchise. Given that the election results would decide who or which party has the mandate to rule within a pre-defined period of time, and the legitimacy to allocate or distribute political goods and social resources, different political forces would align with those of similar values to form political groups or parties and mobilize people for electoral support. Thus, political parties would act as an agent to politicize the cleavages and to mobilize them for electoral support.
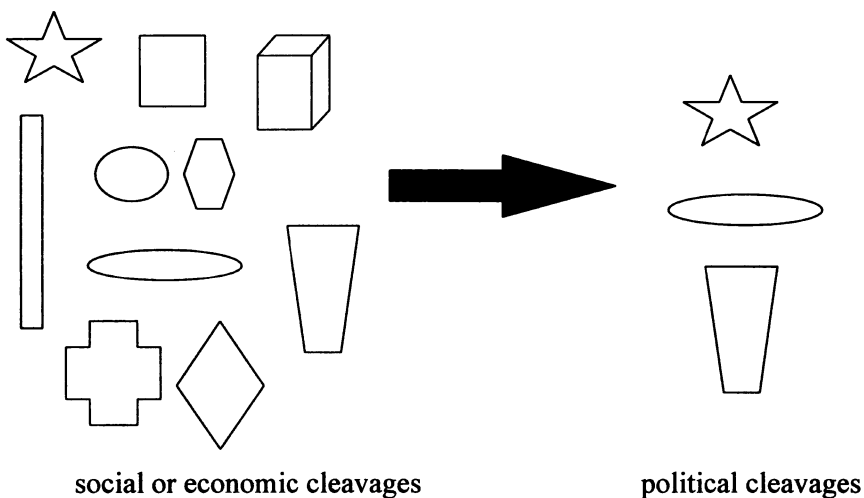

social or economic cleavages   political cleavages

Figure 1.1   Cleavage Transformation

Mobilization, here, is conceptualized as a composite process involving several stages:

(a)   the existence of values and goals requiring mobilization.

(b)   action on the part of leaders, elites or institutions seeking to mobilize individuals and groups.

(c)   the institutional and collective means of achieving this mobilization.

(d)   the symbols and references by which values, goals and norms are communicated to, and understood as well as internalized by, the individuals involved in mobilization.

(e)   the process by which mobilization takes place in terms of individual interaction, the creation and change of collectivities and structure, the crystallization of roles, the effect on subsystems and their boundaries.

(f)   estimates of the numbers of people (or proportion of a population) mobilized and the degree of such mobilization for different sectors or strata of the population (Nettl, 1967:33).

In other words, political mobilization "is to be considered as differential commitment and support for collectivities based on cleavages" (Nettl, 1967:126).

The seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967:1-64) in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* provided the theoretical linkage between cleavage structure, party systems, and voter alignment. They argued that the incorporation of rank-and-file voters into the electoral process as a result of the introduction of universal franchise in most European countries and the presence of social cleavages in the political community would help to shape the development of party systems. Political parties are said to be an "agent of conflict and instrument of integration". On the one hand, a political party is only a "part" of the political system; it needs to compete with others for power. Conflict, thus, is hard to prevent. On the other hand, when a party is engaged in the established political game, it certainly works to mobilize voters to support its own cause. As a result of such mobilization, the former, loosely knitted local community would be integrated with the national political process.

Alan S. Zuckerman (1982:137-40) argues that the nature and extent of political cleavage depends on the interplay between party leadership and the "variable strength of the social bonds". The term "social bonds" is described as "tightly knit networks of interaction" in which "most

individuals interact with others on many dimensions and exist within variably bound groups". Therefore, its meaning is different from Karl Marx's concept of class. He also argues that only politicized networks of interaction would give rise to the persistent political divisions, and political divisions would be either widespread or persistent, and vice versa.

Political parties make use of the media and the "tightly knit networks of interaction" to convey their respective value systems and policy positions to the public. In order to differentiate from other political parties, the traditional view of conducting election campaigns has been said to adopt a "direct confrontation" method and focuses on the party difference over a set of issues or policies. But Ian Budge and Dennis Farlie (1983:269-72) point out that parties actually tend to emphasize selectively their "own" issue or policy areas. That is what they call the "saliency theory" of party competition.

As a result, social or economic divisions that have found political (electoral) expression may serve as the basis of cleavage, cutting or cross-cutting the electorate into several slices. Party competition and electoral battles would, then, be fought along these lines of cleavage. Although Lipset and Rokkan (1967) have claimed that the Western party system has been frozen for nearly half-a-century, the shift of the cleavage line may actually cause the realignment of political forces. Parties that have responded adequately to the new shift and absorbed the new cleavages into their own programmes will survive. Parties that have failed to adapt will witness a significant decline of electoral support and fade away eventually. Electoral volatility may then happen and pave the way for dealignment or realignment of political forces. The study of electoral volatility (change, dealignment, realignment) therefore has received much attention from scholars in the field (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Budge, 1982; Butler and Strokes, 1974; Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale, 1990; Crewe and Denver, 1985; Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, 1984; Salisbury and MacKuen, 1981; Sundquist, 1983).

The ebb and flow of a particular social cleavage will cause a long-term change in the party system. As suggested above, the rise of postmaterialist values in Western Europe has crosscut the parties of the left. The line of reasoning is that when a party fails to respond to the emerging critical cleavages, the decline of electoral support may be expected, and those parties that can represent the new cleavage may witness a significant gain of vote.

But the same logic would not apply to the type of election that has taken place in a "non-competitive" system. Since the whole exercise of

election is devised to legitimatize the pre-determined outcome, the electoral result would not really reflect the societal cleavages. There is no such thing as partisan alignment and party system change in that kind of election. So, some scholars describe this as "state-controlled" elections (Hermet, 1978; Furtak, 1990a).

Institutional Design and Conflict Management

Elections have been regarded as an instrument to detect the presence of social conflicts and their intensity. The conflicts, or what we call cleavages for those conflicts which are durable and have political significance, that find political or electoral expression may serve as a dividing line that cuts across the electorate and a mobilising basis that helps the political groups or parties to fight the election battle.

Conflicts may take different forms and be of different natures. The minimum requirement that a political community needs to survive is the spread of "we-group" feeling among members, based upon which the sense of nationhood is built.[8] Therefore, if there is conflict over national identity, political instability would then follow. A typical example is Northern Ireland. The nationhood (statehood) crisis can be regarded as the basic challenge to the very survival of a political community.

Less critical, but it does not mean that it is not important and significant, in threatening the survival of a political community is the conflict over the kind of regime that would be constituted. Regime is defined as:

> . . . that part of the political system which determines how and under what conditions and limitations the power of the state is exercised. . . . [R]egime embody the norms and principles of the political organization of the state, which are set out in the rules and procedures within which governments operate. (Lawson, 1993:187)

The conflict over regime type is a reflection of the way members of that community diverged on the basic principles of organising the polity and of dispersing political power and social resources.

Under the broad political framework, members may further have conflicts over how to transform the accepted principles into corresponding institutional rules and decision-making procedures (institutional arrangements). That means there may be more than one way to operate the same principles. As Krasner (1983:3) rightly points out:

Principles and norms provide the basic defining characteristics of a regime. There may be many rules and decision-making procedures that are consistent with the same principles and norms. Changes in rules and decision-making procedures are changes within regimes, provided that principles and norms are unaltered.

Therefore, the conflicts over the rules and decision-making procedures can be regarded as "changes within regime" and do not necessarily relate to the conflicts over the regime type itself. The latter conflict can be regarded as "regime change" which will touch upon the fundamental principles of the regime.

Conflicts over public policy may be located at the lowest level of political conflicts. Compared with the conflicts over institutional arrangements, the policy conflicts are more narrow in scope and specific in content. As long as the conflict resolution mechanisms (decision-making procedures) are effective, the policy conflict may not transform into a higher level of political conflict.

In considering whether a cross-level, either upward or downward, transformation of conflicts would be developed, the nature of the conflicts may have a role to play. If the conflict is categorized as an "encapsulating" one, the possibility of a downward cross-level transformation of conflicts may be higher, and vice versa. Figure 1.2 illustrates those relationships graphically.

	Encapsulation	Non-encapsulation
State Regime Rule Policy	↓	↑

Figure 1.2   The Typology of Political Conflicts

The concept of "encapsulated conflicts" is borrowed from Amitai Etzioni. He describes "encapsulation" as "the process by which conflicts are modified in such a way that they become limited by rules". Etzioni indicates that encapsulation "does not require that the conflict be resolved or extinguished but only that the range of expression be curbed" and "hostile parties are more readily 'encapsulated' than pacified" (Etzioni, 1964:242-3).

One of the functions of a constitution is to provide a legitimate channel for conflict management or resolution. Although the nature and scope of conflicts varies across societies, the way these conflicts are being resolved does have a tremendous impact on the political order and stability of a society. The effectiveness of the channel to settle conflicts depends on whether the conflicting parties regard the existing institutional arrangements as just and legitimated. That kind of feeling or judgement, in turn, depends on (1) how high is the institutional threshold of allowing the political elites, groups or parties to represent their perceived social conflicts in the resolution process if they see fit (the lower the better, but not that low as this will overload the process) and (2) how effectively the conflicts are being resolved within the exiting institutional arrangements.

Organization of the Book

Following on from this introductory chapter (Chapter 1), the remainder of the book is organized as follows:

The political context under which the political reforms in the 1980s took place is examined in Chapter 2. Topics included are: the nature of the Colonial state, the social compositions and their political orientations, the reasons for no serious challenge to colonialism, and the unusual decolonization process in the early 1980s. By putting in this context, subsequent developments can be properly comprehended. Chapter 3 charts the development of centre-periphery cleavage in the 1980s, in which the contradiction between the British-Hong Kong government and the Hong Kong society was gradually transformed to that of the Chinese government and Hong Kong society. The focal point is the pace and direction of political liberalization or democratization in the transition period as well as the degree of autonomy enjoyed after 1997. Attempts are also made to examine the efforts of all the concerned parties to mobilize support for their favoured political models before and after 1997. The fourth chapter demonstrates the expanding activities of the Hong Kong state and the