

China's Uprising: the Democratization Process in Hong Kong

PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In the very beginning, Hong Kong was ruled by China. However, after Opium War, Hong Kong was ruled over by the British. Opium war is a clash between the West's traders, led by Britain, and an inward-looking Qing dynasty which was inevitable. When it came, China's forces were humbled. However, the subsequent opium war of 1839-1842 was about more than opium. At the end of this sequel war, there was the five agreements that were signed by China. One of the agreements is Hong Kong ceded in 1898 under a 99-year lease. After that, in 1997 Hong Kong was handover to China.

After being ruled over for 156 years by Britain, Hong Kong finally returned to Chinese government on July 1st, 1997. Basically, Hong Kong is a special case, as it has a highly developed civil society without culmination in a democratic political regime. Since the 1970s, Hong Kong has had a high level of freedom of speech and association and an active civil society, that is largely free to organize itself and stage social protests. It also has a sizeable middle class, well-respected civil liberties, independent courts, and adopted the Western-style rule of law.¹ The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984, a bilateral agreement to

¹Ngok, M. (December 2008). Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong: Paradox and Duality. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 155-158

return Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in 1997, began a process of decolonization and democratization.²

After Hong Kong was handed over to Chinese government, they are under the "one country, two system" policy. It means China and Hong Kong is one country but in two systems; democracy-capitalist and socialism-communist. China promised will give democracy to Hong Kong, such as freedom of the press, the electoral system, the rule of law, and human rights.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949 after the Communist Party defeated the previously dominant nationalist Kuomintang in a civil war.³ The People's Republic of China (Tiongkok) is the people's democratic dictatorship of a socialist state under the leadership of the working class with the alliance of workers and peasants as the basis. Socialist system is the basic system of the People's Republic of China.

Hong Kong (HK) is a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China. The total area of Hong Kong is 1.104 km² with the population of 7 million inhabitants, and Hong Kong's population consists of Chinese (95%) and other ethnicities (5%).⁴ The majority is Han's ethnic that has origin of Guangzhou and Taishan, two neighbors cities in Guangdong province.

Under the "one country, two systems" principle, political system and economic in Hong Kong are different from Chinese government. "One country,

²Ibid (Ngok,M)

³BBC. (2014, 3 December). *Hong Kong Territory Profile*. Retrieved on October 17, 2014, from BBC news: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16517764>

⁴Other ethnicities such as Indian Filipino, Nepalese, Indonesian, Pakistani, Vietnamese or British descent. Ibid (BBC, 2014).

two systems” is a special political policies from Deng Xiaoping for solving the status of Hong Kong returning from British sovereignty to the People’s Republic of China. It essentially emphasizes that in the shadow of the state, the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong is entitled to a different system of governance and high autonomy degrees from the Beijing government, including in term of defense and foreign affairs, and called as “special administrative region”.⁵ It means they get “a high degree of autonomy” guaranteed with freedom by the People’s Republic of China for 50 years since Hong Kong was handed over.⁶ However, in practice, there are still a lot of freedoms and aspirations of the people of Hong Kong were mixed and restrained by the central government in Beijing.⁷

There were so many people in unrest situation intensified in Hong Kong since 2003 until 2014. In 2003, the situation in Hong Kong was in riots every year. Moreover on the anniversary of Hong Kong when handed over to China. The pro-democracy returned. People could take a look on what happened in 2004. Around 200.000 people took part in a demonstration protesting Beijing’s ruling against electing the next chief executive by universal suffrage at the seventh anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover to Chinese rule.⁸

In 2005, tens of thousands of people marked the date of the sixteenth anniversary of a crackdown on pro-democracy demonstration in Tiananmen Square. After that, the demonstration was decreasing in August, 2005 until June,

⁵Euan, M. (2014, 30 September). *‘One country, two systems’: How Hong Kong remains distinct from China*. Retrieved on February 5, 2015, from CNN news: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/29/world/asia/hong-kong-protest-background/>

⁶Ibid (BBC, 2014).

⁷Ibid (BBC, 2014).

⁸Ibid (BBC, 2014).

2006. Tens of thousands of people that rallied in support of full democracy came up again in July, 2006. They came again in July, 2007, when Hong Kong marked the tenth anniversary of being handed over to China. New government under Chief Executive Donald Tsang was sworn in. Plans for full democracy unveiled.⁹ In December, Beijing said it would be allow the people of Hong Kong to directly elect their own leader in 2017 and their legislators by 2020. However, people of Hong Kong became furious again, and they had a massive rally.

The demonstration in Hong Kong had cooled down in 2008 until 2010. However, in 2011, more than 1000 protesters, including pregnant women, marched to oppose the growing number of Chinese women coming to the city to give birth. Women from China were enthusiastic to have babies in Hong Kong because it entitled their children to rights of abode and education.¹⁰

In 2014, the demonstration in Hong Kong was more tense because it was followed by huge protesters than in previous years. It was because Chinese government said that voters would only be able to vote for their chief executive in 2017 from a list of pre-approved candidates. More than 90% of the nearly 800,000 people took part in an unofficial referendum vote in favor of giving the public a say in short-listing candidates for future elections of the territory's chief executive.¹¹

⁹Ibid (NYTimes, 2011).

¹⁰AFP. (2011, October 24). *Mothers rally against mainland births in Hong Kong*. Retrieved on February 10, 2015, from The China Post: <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/china/local-news/hong-kong/2011/10/24/320733/Mothers-rally.htm>

¹¹BBC. (2014, June 20). *Hong Kong Votes in Unofficial Democracy Referendum*. Retrieved on February 10, 2015, from BBC news: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27936340>

Tens of thousands of protesters took part in what organizers said could be Hong Kong's largest pro-democracy rally in a decade. In August, 2014, China said it would allow direct elections in 2017, but voters would only be able to choose from a list of pre-approved candidates. Activists stage protested.¹² After that on September-November, 2014, the Pro-democracy demonstrators occupied the city center for weeks in protest at the Chinese government's decision to limit voter's choices in the 2017 Hong Kong leadership election. More than 100,000 people took part to the streets at the height of the Occupy Central protests who were against the totalitarianism. At the end of 2014, several hundred demonstrations were divided into camps in Admiralty and Causeway Bay.¹³

The failure to carry out a true promise made to Hong Kong resulted in a serious lack of trust in the central government. The Occupy Central protests and civil disobedience, as well as demonstrators waving the British colonial flag, could be traced to this betrayal by the central government of the promise made by one of its senior officials.

This topic is very interesting because since 1997 when Hong Kong was handed over to China and became a communist country, in 2003 they wanted for democracy and Hong Kong unrests intensified from 2003 until 2014. it was followed by the huge number of people through increasing every year until now. The writer sees, in 2003 the protesters took to the street around 500.000 people in

¹²BBC. (2014, September 27). *Thousands at HongKong protest as Occupy Central is launched*. Retrieved on February 10, 2015, from BBC news: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29397738>

¹³Ibid (BBC, 2014).

the very beginning. Moreover, in 2014 the protesters was increased into tens of thousands people and it became Hong Kong's biggest demonstration in a decade. They also have staged sit-ins in the centre of the shopping district for more than 2 (two) months, which began in late September, and had caused serious loss to the local economy and damaged the rule of law in Hong Kong and the demonstrations has become an annual events since 2003. That is why this topic is very interesting to discuss on international relations studies.

B. Research Question

From the background that is already explained above, the question generated by this undergraduate thesis is why Hong Kong unrests intensified from 2003 until 2014?

C. Theoretical Framework

Every international relation researcher needs and must use the theoretical framework in order to short out the available data and facts which are significant and which ones are not. The theory will help this undergraduate thesis to do analysis critically, logically, and coherently by managing the analysis into certain categories so that this undergraduate thesis has its focus on its units and level of analysis. Moreover, theoretical frameworks also become the tools in order to

identify the connection and pattern of behavior so that misunderstanding will be avoided.

In this thesis the researcher will use a theory as the basic answer to her main question, as follows:

Relative Deprivation

Ted Robert Gurr is an authority on political conflict and instability. His book *Why Men Rebel* (1970)¹⁴ emphasizes the importance of social-psychological factors or “relative deprivation” which results directly in the phenomenon known to us all as “discontent”.¹⁵ According to social scientists, particularly political scientists and sociologists, relative deprivation is as a potential cause of social movements and deviance, leading in extreme situations to political violence such as rioting, terrorism, civil wars and other instances of social deviance such as crime.¹⁶ People become discontented, according to his book, not because they are living in misery, but because their expectations for their conditions of life exceed their present possibilities.¹⁷ Relative deprivation is also known as the social movement theory.

Gurr identifies three types of relative deprivation. They are the precise decremental, aspirational and progressive deprivation. It is important to note that

¹⁴Gurr, T. R. (2010). *Revised edition: Why Men Rebel*. Princeton University Press:Paradigm Publishers.

¹⁵James, L.A. (1970, July 1). *Why Men Rebel by Ted Robert Gurr: Patterns of Discontented*. Retrieved on February 12, 2015, from Commentary Magazine article:

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/why-men-rebel-by-ted-robert-gurr/>

¹⁶Ibid (James, L.A.).

¹⁷Ibid (James, L. A.).

value expectations are a little higher than value capabilities. As the gap between the two values is wide, there is a greater chance for violence to erupt.¹⁸

Firstly, decremental deprivation occurs when the value expectations and value capabilities of social movement are constant in the beginning, but then the value capabilities of the social movement decrease over time.¹⁹ Secondly, aspirational deprivation, the opposite, occurs when the value capabilities do not change (stagnant), but the value expectations of social movement increase.²⁰ The last one, progressive deprivation occurs when value expectations and value capabilities are changed. It means that the value capabilities of social movement decrease, while the value expectations of social movement increase.²¹ This theoretical framework can be used to analyze the reasons for Hong Kong demands of democracy, and what the triggers of the huge rally are that Hong Kong protesters do.

Hong Kong is a special case, as it has a highly developed civil society without culmination in a democratic political regime.²² Since the 1970s, Hong Kong has had a high level of freedom for speech and association and an active civil society, that is largely free to organize itself and stage social protests. It also has a sizeable middle class, well-respected civil liberties, independent courts, and the Western-style rule of law.

¹⁸Ibid (Gurr, T. R.).

¹⁹Ibid (Gurr, T. R.).

²⁰Ibid (Gurr, T. R.).

²¹Ibid (Gurr, T. R.).

²²Ngok, M. (December 2008). Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong: Paradox and Duality. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 155-158

The situation that happened in Hong Kong now is on the transition era. That is why Hong Kong people do some rally as tools to demand democracy, based on “relative deprivation” theory. We can describe how the condition in Hong Kong using a relative deprivation types such as the progressive deprivation. They make so many massive demonstrations with huge protesters because the Chinese government does not fulfill their promises and there are several interest of Pro-democracy movement then make Hong Kong unrests intensified from 2003 until 2014.

Since the handover, Hong Kong was dissatisfied because when they were still under Britain’s leadership, Hong Kong was formed on democracy and liberalism foundation. However, after they were handed over to Chinese government, they were under the socialism and communist system. Thus, what they expected before is different from what they got in reality.

Their expectations toward government, when the handover in terms of economic, social and politics increased. Firstly, they expected that, in economic prosperity, government would gave “wealth equality” within a population. Secondly, in social aspect, they expected human rights, freedom of press and their rights to be a democratic country as the agreement in the handover. The third, in politics aspect, they expects will implement the electoral systems.

Meanwhile, the capabilities of people in Hong Kong in term of economic, social and politics decreased since the handover in 1997 until 2012. Firstly, economically, in 1997 until the end of 1990s, Hong Kong buffeted the Asian

financial crisis and recovery and gave way to insignificant growth in 2001.²³ Secondly, social aspect in terms of human rights issues between 2002 and 2007 decreased, because in 2002 the new rules of basic law in article 23 were officially launched. Moreover, in 2007, the new rule about the growing number of Chinese women coming to Hong Kong to give birth was created. The third, in political aspect, universal suffrage in Hong Kong was declined by the government in 2012. Those capabilities were in high level when they were under the British rule. That is why, relative deprivation can describe the research question as a symptom of democratization in Hong Kong.

D. Hypothesis

This undergraduate thesis draws two hypotheses in answering the research question of this undergraduate thesis. Hong Kong unrests were intensive between 2003 and 2014 because firstly, Hong Kong did not get the privilege as promised by China when it was transferred from Britain in 1997 which is there must be several interest come from the Pro-Democracy movements in Hong Kong. Secondly, there were dissatisfaction over the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

²³ Tanzer, C. (August, 1999). *The Asian Crisis*. Retrieved April 4, 2015, from GPF article: <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/216/45903.html>

E. Purpose of Writing

1. As the requirements of the thesis writing for achieving the Bachelor degree of International Relations from the University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.
2. This is a new issue, and it is the right time to analyze and raise this issue for undergraduate thesis of international relations studies.

F. Research Method

The method being used in this undergraduate thesis was by the library research with the help of the printed materials such as book, newspaper, journal and report. It was also helped by the electronic media such as the television news and online media retrieved from the internet. Therefore, data from non-printed media collected for this analysis were the secondary data. The data being analyzed used the theory that was already explained before. Despite the data collected in this undergraduate thesis was the secondary data, the data come from the reliable sources. Therefore, this undergraduate thesis is trustworthy research.

G. Scope of Research

This undergraduate thesis discussed the democratization process in Hong Kong since 2003 until 2014. In 2003, the demonstration in Hong Kong toward Chinese government was started. In addition until 2014, the demonstration in Hong Kong was the tensest because it was followed by huge protesters than previous years.

H. System of Writing

In order to create understandable analysis, the system of writing was really important. This undergraduate thesis provided the analysis in systematic order by separating the analysis into several chapters. Every single chapter was a coherent body of analysis in order to answer the question generated before. These would be as follows:

Chapter I: This chapter consists of seven sub-titles: background, research question, theoretical framework, hypothesis, method of research, scope of research, and system of writing. Introduction is the brief opening about what would the case be that the thesis analyzes.

Chapter II: This chapter would explain about the historical background of Hong Kong and People Republic of China's relations.

Chapter III: This chapter would explain about the rise of pro-democracy movement, especially "occupy central" movement and the emergences of democracy in Hong Kong.

Chapter IV: This chapter would analyze about the democratization process in Hong Kong, when it started and for what reasons that the democratization has been uprising

Chapter V: This chapter would conclude the democratization process in Hong Kong.