Carfax Publishing
Taylor & Francis Group

Traditional Orientations and Political Participation in Three Chinese Societies

KUAN HSIN-CHI AND LAU SIU-KAI*

Based on three large-scale sample surveys in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, this study purports to delineate the relation between traditional political orientations and political participation. It is found that among all three societies, Chinese in the Mainland are most traditional. In general, the negative impact of traditional political orientations on political participation is small once education is controlled for. In particular, political participation in Hong Kong is more individually based, facilitated primarily by modernization pressures. In Taiwan, institutional factors such as democracy, elections and civic associations are paramount and are buttressed by a rising white-collar class. In Mainland China, traditional political orientations have a positive impact on participation and this impact stays much the same even after controlling for education. The positive impact can be explained by institutional interference whereby traditional political orientations exert influence differently on different modes of participation: negative on adversary and protest activities but positive on voting, campaign and appeal activities. The findings of this paper imply that the argument that Confucian political culture makes a democratic China impossible is incomplete and will become irrelevant.

Introduction

In the course of the last century, Chinese societies have experimented with a wide array of political systems. Taiwan's successful transition to democracy in the late 1980s, Hong Kong's move from colonialism to incomplete democracy in the late 1990s and Mainland China's ardent defense of authoritarianism in the past decade have revived the debate on the prospect of democracy for the Chinese people. At the heart of the debate, two major arguments dominate. One sees socio-economic modernization as the motor of change driving China toward a liberal political order. Proponents of this argument believe that as a market economy takes hold and social

pluralism evolves, Mainland China will eventually become democratic. The other argument, however, regards the traditional Chinese culture as a curse condemning the Chinese to an authoritarian political system. However, when we examine the development of these three Chinese societies, we confront the paradox that despite the common heritage of cultural traditions, their political experiences differ. These differences seem to suggest that modernization, culture and political institutions affect political development in complex ways. Understanding the dynamics behind such forces is central to any plausible speculation about the future direction of change. We submit that such an understanding can be obtained by comparing the different experiences of the three Chinese societies, especially during the formative years when they were searching for a new political order. The configuration of cultural commonality, variation in socio-economic development and difference in political regime offers an opportunity to ascertain the relative role of modernization, culture and institution in political development. The present article represents an initial effort toward that end, using citizen participation in the political process as a case study.[1] The central hypothesis of this article is that traditional political orientations (commonly called the Chinese culture) adversely affect political participation. To anticipate the results, we find some, albeit small, effects of these orientations on both the level and mode of participation. Furthermore, they differ across the three Chinese societies, as mediated differently by the forces of socio-economic modernization and political institutions.

The relation between political culture and participation

Political culture refers to pre-dispositions that help political actors to understand and interpret objective situations, to develop emotions that move them to act and to provide goals for their actions.[2] Political culture affects political action because the former mediates between the actor and the situation that confronts her.[3] To twist Jon Elster's model of rational action for the present purpose, political orientations (not institutions as Elster proposed) work like a filter through which desirable

---

1. Data for this article are drawn from three separate national random samples of the adult population over age 18 living in family households in Mainland China (excluding Tibet), Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Hong Kong survey was carried out during June–August 1993; 892 interviews were completed. The Taiwan survey was carried out in July–August, 1993, with 1,402 completed interviews. The Mainland survey extended from September 1993 through to May 1994 and obtained 3,360 completed interviews. In each of the three territories, households were selected by random sampling procedures. Precise procedures varied among the three places due to the different state of demographic data in the three locations. Households were approached by interviewers (students in Hong Kong and Taiwan, retired school teachers in Mainland China) who used a Kish grid to identify the member of the household who should be interviewed according to our sampling procedure.

2. For a general discussion on this topic, see Lester Milbrath and M. L. Goel, *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics*? (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1977).

3. In the words of Harry Eckstein, actors do not respond directly to 'situations' but through mediating 'orientations'. If actors do not have general dispositions or if orientations are ill-formed or inconsistent, actions will be erratic, i.e. patternless, anomic. See Chapter 7 'A culturalist theory of political change', in his *Regarding Politics: Essays on Political Theory, Stability, and Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). For Ronald Inglehart, culture is an intervening variable. For instance, the impact of economic development on stable democracy works mainly through its tendency to bring cultural and (to a lesser degree) social changes. See Chapter 6 'Economic development, political culture, and democracy: bringing the people back in', in his *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

options are defined in the first place. The actor then proceeds with utility calculations of action alternatives within the defined set. Thus, we postulate that actions are culturally patterned in a less observable yet a deep-rooted sense.

The argument that a democratic China is impossible comes in the form of cultural determinism. According to Lucian W. Pye, a pioneer in the study of Chinese political culture, '… political power is extraordinarily sensitive to cultural nuances, and that, therefore, cultural variations *are decisive in determining* the course of political development'.[4] In the eyes of many other Western scholars too, the Confucian tradition as handed down from generation to generation, tends to nurture paternalistic, authoritarian government, because of its emphasis on the centrality of hierarchy and an imperative of conformity.[5]

It seems obvious that traditional orientations based on political hierarchy are incompatible with the goals of democratic participation that presuppose an active role of citizens as political equals.[6] However, our equation does not assume that participation has to be 'democratic' and that participants have to be political equals. Political participation to us simply means activities by private citizens aimed at influencing the action of government. This definition is indeed very broad. It is not confined to either legal actions or the policy formulation stage. Therefore, non-electoral participation at the policy output stage may be as important as electoral participation at the policy input stage, as long as it shapes the actual results of policy when implemented. Though not as political equals, citizens may still seek to alter the hierarchical relationship between themselves and government officials in order to articulate or defend their interests.[7] Such a broad definition is necessary because we are studying a complex phenomenon in transitional politics. For dealing with the state, citizens can still use a participatory act as an available strategy in a 'situation of political opportunity', whether or not its mode conforms to the prescriptions of democratic theories. The aggregate of citizen participation is thus complex and full of meanings.[8] To do justice to this complexity, our definition of

---

4. Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. vii. Emphasis is mine. A recent argument in the same vein can be found in Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Knopf, 1997). Instead of treating Confucianism as incompatible with democracy, the debate may turn into a radical argument that it represents a better alternative to the Western idea of democracy and human rights. See the two chapters on Singapore in Wei-ming Tu, ed., *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). The incompatibility between Confucianism and democracy is widely believed in the Mainland. Yet there is no scholarly treatise there on the subject.
5. See for example Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). Please also consult footnote 11.
6. Democratic theory requires a kind of civic culture as depicted by Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).
7. Tianjian Shi has convincingly argued for a broader definition of political participation to cover activities undertaken by ordinary citizens in the face of their superiors. He has documented many successful attempts to overcome the hierarchical hurdle by borrowing 'normative power' from either existing government policies or someone else's power to change the balance of power between themselves and bureaucrats. See his *Political Participation in Beijing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
8. Voting in China exhibits such a complexity. In some instances, a high participation rate actually belies an underlying apathy. See Shi Weimin and Lei Jingxuan (Kin-sheun Louie) *zhijie xuanju: zhidu yu guocheng* [*Direct Election: System and Process*] (Beijing: zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe [Chinese Social Sciences Publishers], 1999), pp. 292–296. In others, resourceful persons do vote to pursue their political interests. See Tianjian Shi, 'Voting and nonvoting in China: voting behavior in plebiscitary and limited-choice elections', *The Journal of Politics* 61(4), (1999), pp. 1115–1139.

participation allows cultural orientations to have different impacts on different modes of participation.

The idea of a 'situation of political opportunity' also begets the proposition that political institutions also matter in the business of participation. In their seminal work *Political Participation and Political Equality*, Verba, Kim and Nie concluded that the socio-economic resources of individuals are the most important factor affecting political participation. However, political participation can also be modified by political institutions in many ways. The extent to which institutions interfere with individual propensities to be politically active is in turn related to the patterns of social conflict in each society. The impact is felt most strongly where there is well-structured conflict among social groups.[9] In this light, there is either a direct or indirect impact of institutions on participation. The direct impact can be quite mechanical. Institution can set the rules of the game, determining both the opportunity and the parameters for participation. For instance, if election is withheld, no voting can take place. However, with compulsory voting, a high level of participation is instead guaranteed. Institutions also work indirectly by affecting other factors of participation; for example, the conversion of socio-economic resources controlled by citizens into political resources. The degree of difficulty citizens encounter in order to participate in the political process varies from one mode of participation to another. Some require more individual initiative, others less; some incur great political risks, others none. The strategies used by citizens to deal with the state thus correspond to the constraints and incentives structured by political institutions. In other words, modernization, culture and institution have either different, independent, or joint effects on different modes of participation. Thus, it is useful to brief the readers about the institutional differences among the three regimes.

Institutions in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong at the time of the study differ in three main aspects: (a) the boundary between governmental and non-governmental activities; (b) the level of freedoms and rule of law; and (c) the structures of participation/mobilization. The regime in the Mainland is post-totalitarian. It is experiencing economic reforms and political liberalization. Despite having an emerging market poised to take on some importance, what the Mainland government does or refrains from doing affects to the largest extent the daily life of all citizens. The Chinese Communist Party still monopolizes political power, determining who gets what, when and how. Freedoms to articulate and aggregate interests in the public are rather limited and policy-making and implementation are based on the rule of men rather than law. The Party is also the most important agent of political mobilization. Elections in the countryside are a novelty, and as yet an ineffective arena for political influence. In the cities, *Danwei,* or *work unit*, is the most important level of the political system where policy benefits and burdens are practically allocated, while village committees are to a less extent most important in rural areas. Together, they comprise the main avenues for political participation in Mainland China.

---

9. Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie and Jao-on Kim, *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

The regime in Hong Kong finds itself in an agonizing trajectory of partial democratization. The structure of government remains elitist and paternalist despite the recent injection of a small dose of election. Luckily enough, it follows a policy of positive non-interventionism, leaving much initiative to the market and society to cater for the needs of the citizens. The system of freedoms and the rule of law have been well established, providing a favorable environment for private pursuits and if needed, political participation too. The latter is, however, constrained by a deficit of participatory structures. Election by universal suffrage has not yet been fully introduced, most social associations are yet to be politicized and political parties are young and too weak. This leaves the vibrant mass media to play a role of cognitive mobilization, occasionally assisting citizens as they engage in spontaneous mass actions.

The state in Taiwan is much less interventionist than that in the Mainland but more so when compared with Hong Kong. Taiwan is the most advanced in the project of democratization, abated by many newly won freedoms, but still lags behind Hong Kong in terms of the rule of law. The participatory needs of the Taiwanese people are readily supported by the new electoral arena, the political parties both new and old, and an increasing number of active voluntary associations.

Several findings about the level, mode and strategy of political participation in our three regimes are surprising, given the above synopsis of institutions. In the most liberal society, people in Hong Kong participate the least and when they do, protest is the most prevalent mode of action. Such protest is more expressive than instrumental. In contrast, people in the Mainland under the most authoritarian regime are the most active, particularly at the grassroots level. Their participation has a distinctly instrumental purpose of solving the problems of daily life through appeal and *guanxi* or personal relations. Comparatively speaking, voting and voting-related participation, especially at the national level, is strongest in Taiwan, followed by communal actions or social movements. This is not the place to offer any explanation for the differences.[10] The objective of this article is confined largely to the overall level of political participation and its relation with political culture. Assuming cultural commonality, the different patterns of participation beg the question of alternative explanations or explications. This task is performed below.

An interpretation of traditional political orientations

The three Chinese societies share a common cultural heritage dating back to the time of Confucius. This heritage is very rich in meaning. The political cultural

---

10. With the risk of over-simplification, the following explanation may be offered. The Hong Kong pattern has to do with the inadequate level of political institutionalization. A long history with an opposition movement and the honeymoon of electoral democracy go a long way to explain the pattern in Taiwan. As for the Mainland, the pattern of particularized contact with local level cadres is determined by the institutions of incentives.

dimension of this heritage can be succinctly interpreted as follows.[11] The political teachings of Confucius and his contemporaries were mostly informed by their obsession with order which was conspicuously lacking in their time. The ideal of a political order is sometimes justified by their conception of cosmic harmony and peace. An important characteristic of the traditional teachings is that the political order begins with the moral cultivation of individuals and their families. Thus, the lofty pursuit of a just world and the cultural nourishment of an individual are just two sides of the same coin. In the ideal political order, the private and the public spheres are closely intertwined and the fate of the individual and that of the collective are inseparable. The state is just a large family, as aptly suggested by the term *guojia* or state which is formed by joining the two characters 'country' and 'family' in Chinese. The governance of a state is based on the same principles that govern the running of a family. One of the most important principles is that of an ascriptive hierarchy of roles. Harmony is achieved if everyone loyally performs their role as prescribed in the given hierarchy. The major role for the ruler at the top of the hierarchy is to maintain peace and justice in his realm. To do this, he relies on neither coercion nor law, but rather on moral persuasion by setting his behavior as an example for the people. In today's jargons, the political orientations of traditional China consist of precepts of collectivism (statism), paternalism, elitism and conservatism. Yet, they are above all precepts of a moral state that is entrusted with the active task of seeking the advancement of both its subjects and the world.

It is obvious that these precepts run counter to modern ideals of civil society and democracy. Civil society is suspicious of the state and treasures privacy and moral autonomy. Democracy is first of all based on the idea of political equality. In the final analysis, the realization of democracy and civil society depends on active citizens in public affairs. To put it in the context of the present study, democratic participation is hardly possible when traditional political orientations reign supreme. Whether this is true can be empirically tested, as the following sections will report.

---

11. Our understanding of the Chinese cultural heritage has been informed, *inter alias* by the following works. Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Zhang Desheng (Cheung Tak-Sing), *rujia lunli yu zhixu qingjie: zhongguo xixiang de shehuixue quanxi* [*Confucian Ethics and the Ethos of Order: A Sociological Interpretation of Chinese Thought*] (Taipei: guliu tushu gongsi [Great Currents Books], 1989); W.T. De Bary, *The Trouble with Confucianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) and *The Unfolding of New-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Lucian W. Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics*, new edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) and *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988); Andrew J. Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Tu Wei-ming, ed., 'The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today', special issue of *Daedalus* (Spring 1991) and *The Confucian World Observed* (Hawaii: East West Centre, University of Hawaii, 1992). These works are dominated by the hermeneutic approach to the study of Chinese culture.

Positivistic measures of traditional political orientations

It is admittedly difficult to translate such hermeneutic insights about the traditional political culture of China into measurable variables in a survey instrument.[12] In our surveys, we used nine statements to capture what we think are the most salient dimensions of the political orientations of traditional China. They include the moral state, statism, elitism and an obsession with order.

The meanings of the moral state were tapped by the following statements: '(T)he profusion of moral problems in society is the fault of the government' and '(W)hen political leaders are morally upright, we can leave everything to them'. In this paper, we refer to the moral state as 'moral government' and 'moral leaders'. The antithesis of the moral state is moral autonomy for private citizens. The statement '(P)eople's private morality is no concern of the government' represents the concept 'moral autonomy'. This moral state–moral autonomy construct is similar but not identical to the 'culture theme' of liberty–coercion stressed by Lucian W. Pye,[13] since the former carries a heavy moral overtone.

Regarding the issue of statism, two statements were used in the surveys. They are '(T)he individual has both priority over and is more important than the state' (henceforth: 'state takes precedence over the individual') and '(D)o not ask what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country' (henceforth: 'me for the state'). The statements on statism are supposed to correspond to Pye's 'culture theme' of collectivism versus individualism or parochial–national identifications. In Talcott Parson's terms, those persons who are collectivity-oriented forego certain interests of their own in deference to interests of the collective.

The moral state entails rule by the elite as well as a paternalistic style of governance. 'Elitism' is represented by the statement '(P)eople with better education should have more influence in politics'; 'Paternalism' by '(T)he leader of the government is like the head of a big family. His decisions on public affairs should be obeyed'. Elitism and paternalism touch on the broad 'culture theme' of hierarchy–equality distinguished by Lucian W. Pye.

As alluded to above, an obsession with order dominates traditional Chinese political orientations toward politics. This obsession can easily provide rulers with an excuse to stall pluralism and democratic political reforms. The 'obsession with order' is represented by the following statements: '(T)he establishment of all kinds of different associations has a bad effect on a country's stability and harmony' and '(I)f the scope of democracy in [the respective research site] broadens, stability will be affected'. The construct of obsession with order resembles the general 'culture theme' of conflict–harmony as emphasized by R. B. Putnam.[14]

---

12. For a discussion of the merits and demerits of both the hermeneutic and the positivistic approach to the study of political culture see Andrew J. Nathan, 'Is Chinese culture distinctive?' and 'Cultural requisites for democracy in China', both collected in Andrew J. Nathan with contributions by Tianjian Shi and Helena V. S. Ho, *China's Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 136–174. For an example of the positivistic approach to the study of Chinese culture, see Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1988).

13. Lucian W. Pye, 'Introduction: political culture and political development', in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds, *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 2–26.

14. Robert B. Putnam, *The Beliefs of Politicians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

Table 1. Traditional orientations in three Chinese societies (% of respondents agreeing with the statements)

	ML	TW	HK
The profusion of moral problems in society is the fault of the government (moral government)	82.2	52.7	23.9
When political leaders are morally upright, we can leave everything to them (moral leader)	71.3	48.0	27.2
People's private morality is no concern of the government[a] (moral autonomy)	37.4	56.1	48.8
The individual has priority over the state, and is more important[a] (state precedes over individual)	81.7	30.5	24.9
Do not ask what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country (me for the state)	86.7	60.7	57.5
People with better education should have more influence in politics (elitism)	66.9	31.3	44.5
The government leader is like the head of a big family. His decisions on public affairs should be obeyed (paternalism)	73.6	30.1	24.0
The establishment of all kinds of associations has a bad effect on a country's stability and harmony (stability above pluralism)	42.6	54.3	41.6
If the scope of democracy in [our country/Hong Kong] broadens, stability will be affected (stability above democracy)	31.6	21.7	26.1

Note: The acronyms of ML, TW, and HK stand for Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, respectively.
[a] Responses to this statement are re-coded in the reverse order to signify a traditional orientation.

Finding 1. How politically traditional are the Chinese today?

The responses to the nine statements about traditional political orientations are closely and significantly related to each other in statistical terms (not presented here). Table 1 summarizes the different patterns of distribution of attitudes across the three research sites. It dichotomizes the responses into two groups: that agree or very much agree with the traditional statements or that disagree or very much disagree.

As revealed by Table 1, a strong consensus[15] exists in Mainland China on the precepts of 'moral government' and 'moral leaders'. By comparison, Taiwan and Hong Kong cannot be described as having a traditional orientation in these two aspects; in addition, the idea of 'moral autonomy' seems to have taken hold among the majority of people in these two places.[16] These findings should not be surprising. The concept of a moral state has survived the revolution in China. Indeed, under communism the state has assumed an equally strong, if not a stronger, function of moral exhortation. In sharp contrast, the 'state' in Hong Kong because of its colonial nature could not, even if it wanted to, make any moral claim vis-à-vis its subjects before 1997. In Taiwan, people were exposed to the moralizing rule of the Kuomingtang before the mid-1980s. Yet over a decade of

15. A consensus exists if there is agreement among at least 70% of all respondents.
16. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, individualism has been on the rise, boosting the demand for moral autonomy. It is puzzling though that the people of Hong Kong, where the influences of the West seem to have been stronger, have lagged behind Taiwan in the issue of moral autonomy.

democratization has apparently led to a more instrumental view of the state in Taiwan.

On statism, expressed as 'state takes precedence over the individual' and 'me for the state', there is again a positive consensus among our respondents in the Mainland, but no consensus exists in the other two places. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, individualism can be assumed to have left no room for a concept such as 'state takes precedence over the individual'. In a similar vein, the same individualism can be assumed to have suppressed the idea of 'me for the state'. Instead, we find it to enjoy majority support. One may speculate that the tension between these two 'statism' ideas may be related to the fuzziness of the concept of the state in Hong Kong where the target can be Britain, China, Taiwan or none of them,[17] and in Taiwan where the issue of nation-state building is controversial.[18]

Elitism and paternalism register near consensus among respondents in the Mainland. In Taiwan, less than one-third of the respondents believe in elitism or paternalism. In Hong Kong only a small minority of the respondents accept paternalism whereas over 40% of them agree with elitism.

The findings on the issue of order suggest that most people in all three societies are not worried at all about the de-stabilizing effects of democratization. The picture is clearest in Taiwan where democracy has been peacefully at work for sometime. Even in the Mainland where the rulers have stressed 'stability above all', those who are worried constitute less than a third. Concern with the harmful effects of social pluralism is more evident in all three societies. In the Mainland where there is not much pluralism to begin with, about 40% of respondents are against the spread of associations for fear of instability. While Hong Kong has been quite a pluralistic society for several decades, figures here suggest that its immigrants' mentality expressed as 'don't rock the boat' has survived despite decades of

---

17. For a discussion of the political identity of Hong Kong Chinese see Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*, pp. 178–185; Leung Sai-wing, 'Social construction of Hong Kong identity: a partial account', in Lau Siu-kai, Lee Ming-kwan, Wan Po-san and Wong Siu-lun, eds, *Indicators of Social Development: Hong Kong 1997* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia–Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999); Helen F. Siu, 'Remade in Hong Kong: weaving into the Chinese cultural tapestry', in Tao Tao Liu and David Faure, eds, *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), pp. 177–196; Liu Zhaojia, '"xianggangren" huo "zhongguoren": xianggang huaren de shenfen rentong 1985–1995', ['Lau Siu-kai, "Hongkongese" or "Chinese": identity of Hong Kong Chinese', in Liu Qingfeng and Guan Xiaochun, eds, *zhuanhuazhong de xianggang: shenfen yu zhixu de zaixuenqiu* [*Hong Kong in Transformation: The Search for Identity and Order*] (Hong Kong: Institute of Chinese Culture, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1998), pp. 3–30.

18. See Zhang Maogui, eds, *zuqun guanxi yu guojia rentong* [*Ethnic Group Relations and National Identity*] (Taipei: ye qiang publishers, 1993); John F. Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); Lynn White and Li Cheng, 'China coast identities: regional, national, and global', in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, eds, *China's Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 154–193; Allen Chun, 'From nationalism to nationalizing: cultural imagination and state formation in postwar Taiwan', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 31, (1994), pp. 49–69; Thomas B. Gold, 'Taiwan's quest for identity in the shadow of China', in Steve Tsang, ed., *In the Shadow of China: Political Developments in Taiwan since 1949* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1993), pp. 169–192; Melissa Brown, ed., *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1996); Timothy Ka-ying Wong, 'Dissolution and reconstruction of national identity: the experience of subjectivity in Taiwan', *Nations and Nationalism* 7(19), (1998), pp. 383–403. For a recent comparative study of collective identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan, see Xiao Xinhuang (Michael H.H. Hsiao) and Yin Baoshan (Shirley B.S. Wan), *Taiwan yu xianggang de jiti rentong: yijiujiuqi qian de bijiao* [*Collective Identities in Taiwan and Hong Kong: A Pre-1997 Comparison*] Occasional Paper #5 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Research Centre on the Cross-Straits Relations, 1998).

socio-economic progress. It is rather strange to note that in democratic Taiwan over 50% of respondents expressed worry about expansion of social pluralism.

On the basis of Table 1, we may conclude that Hong Kong is the least traditional society, while Mainland China is the most traditional,[19] and with Taiwan in-between. This picture corresponds with the stratification of the three societies in terms of socio-economic modernization at the time of the surveys.[20]

The same table also reveals that statism as compared with other aspects of the traditional orientations is the most prevalent belief in all three societies. However, a factor analysis of the elements of traditional orientations in all three societies yields a different interpretation, i.e. statism is second to something else.

The beauty of factor analysis is that it reveals unobservable dimensions that make new insights possible. In plain language, while complex phenomena such as traditional political culture can be described by a huge number of variables, they can best be understood when simplified into a few underlying dimensions. Factor analysis is such a statistical technique. We use it to sort out whether and how our respondents' responses to our nine survey statements are interrelated. It is found that our traditional orientations can be summarized into three dimensions or factors: 'apolitical self', 'moral state' and 'obsession with order' (see Table 2). The third factor is most clear-cut, since the two statements on stability cohere. The two statements on statism and the one related to moral government form the second dimension, implying that the moral state and statism/collectivism have a symbiotic relationship. Unexpectedly, the idea of the moral leader does not belong to this dimension. Instead, the idea is clustered with moral autonomy, elitism and paternalism under the first dimension. This is where the true discovery lies. If we examine the

---

19. In a recent article on the 1989 Beijing student movement, Dingxin Zhao stressed that the people were more receptive to culturally and morally charged movement activities, thereby furthering the domination of traditionalism in the movement. Specifically, he finds that the rhetoric and activity patterns of the 1989 movement are more traditional than those of its forerunners. The reasons are mostly cultural. First, to avoid immediate repression, students hid their real demands behind culturally congenial forms of action. Secondly, people's acceptance of particular activities depended on the perception of state legitimation and this perception focused mostly on the state's moral performance. See his 'State-society relations and the discourses and activities of the 1989 Beijing student movement', *The American Journal of Sociology* 105(6), (May 2000), pp. 1592–1632.

20. The level of development in the three societies can be represented by the following key socio-economic indicators (all as of 1993 except otherwise indicated).

	China	Taiwan	Hong Kong
Adult literacy	80.0%	…	90.0%
Fertility rate (per woman)[a]	2.0	1.8	1.2
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 pop.)[a]	17.3	15.5	9.8
Crude death rate (per 1,000 pop.)[a]	7.1	5.3	6.3
Human development index	64	…	88
GDP per capita (US$)	494	10,404	17,842
Origins of GDP:			
Agriculture	29.2	3.6	0.2
Industry	49.4	40.6	21.0
Services	21.4	55.8	78.8

Source: *The Economist Pocket World in Figures*, 1996 edition (London: Penguin Books, 1995).
[a] Fertility, crude birth and death rates are based on 1995–2000 averages.

Table 2. Dimensions of traditional political orientations (factor analysis of the three samples combined)

	Component 1 Apolitical self	Component 2 Moral state	Component 3 Obsession with order
Moral autonomy	− 0.691		
Elitism	0.617		
Moral leader	0.581		
Paternalism	0.566		
Me for the state		0.699	
State precedes over individual		0.649	
Moral government		0.502	
Stability above pluralism			0.831
Stability above democracy	0.450		0.480
Eigenvalue	2.29	1.17	1.02
% of variance explained	25.42	12.96	11.39

Notes: Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: oblimin with Kaiser normalization. KMO measure of sampling adequacy = 0.750. Bartlett's test of sphericity: approx. chi-square = 4179.738, df = 36, p = 0.000.

statements more closely, we find a common underlying implication that has to do with the role of the self in the political process. Moral autonomy requires the state to leave the individual alone. The availability of moral leaders justifies the political withdrawal of the common people. When elitism is practiced in a country, there is no political role for individual citizens. In the same vein, if people accept paternalism as a style of governance, they need not play an active political role. It seems therefore that a dimension of the apolitical self is common to these four aspects of the traditional orientations. This dimension emerges as the strongest of all, accounting for 25% of the difference in attitudes among our respondents, whereas the second and the third dimension are able to explain only 13 and 11% of the variance, respectively. As we shall see, this interpretation goes a long way to explain the impact of traditional political orientations on political participation. But before we proceed, let us look at the socio-economic profiles of the traditional-ists in our samples.

Finding 2. Who holds traditional political orientations?

To provide an answer, we first construct three value types based on the total counts of our respondents' survey answers to the nine statements on traditional political orientations. We then relate these value types to five socio-economic attributes of the respondents.[21] As indicated in Table 3, people with traditional political orientations tend to be less educated, older, living in villages and towns, and

21. The construction of the three value types takes three steps. First, original scores of responses to the nine statements are re-coded to ensure that positive values represent agreement with traditional orientations. Thus, the responses to the statements are scored –1.5 = very much disagreed, –0.5 = disagreed, 0.5 = agreed, and 1.5 = very much agreed. Secondly, these scores are summed up to yield the overall scale of traditional orientations. Finally, respondents with a zero score or below on this scale are classified into the 'modern' value type. Those with 1.51 or above belong to the 'traditional' value type. The rest fall into the 'transitional' value type.

employed in blue-collar jobs. This pattern is fairly consistent across the three societies. Education is the most important factor in the suppression of traditional political orientations, followed by age, residence and occupation. Looking at the figures associated with age, we may indirectly observe a cohort effect in the trends of value change. The same age cohort can reasonably be expected to have the same socialization experiences. In our findings, the younger generation is more likely to hold modern orientations. The theory of modernization is thus corroborated by our study: as a society modernizes, a more secure socio-economic environment as well as a higher level of educational achievement tend to imbue people with more modern orientations. At the same time, it is important to stress that the forces of modernization move the three societies differently. Hong Kong is most significantly affected by socio-economic modernization, and Mainland China least affected. Take education for example: the Gamma value for Hong Kong is three times higher than for the Mainland. For one reason or another, education in the Mainland has failed to contribute as much as it should to the cultural modernization of its citizens.[22]

Finding 3. Do traditional political orientations affect participation and if so, how?

The traditional political orientations as conceived are in themselves action-oriented. The 'moral state' dimension of our traditional political orientations endorses a collectivist and morally interventionist state. It implies a submissive and non-participant self. Hence, it must have an inhibiting effect on political participation. The desire on the part of the political actor for 'moral autonomy' may also affect the practical implication of the 'moral state'. For such an actor, the moral state may have nothing to do with herself, since the state exists only to ensure the moral standards of the other people. The 'obsession with order' dimension must have some inhibiting effect on unconventional modes of political participation, such as demonstrations and protests. This dimension is especially relevant for the people in Mainland China where memory of the chaos created and the damage inflicted by the Great Cultural Revolution is surely still fresh. It is also relevant for Hong Kong people whose 'don't rock the boat' mentality has not faded away. Last but not least, the 'apolitical self' dimension of the traditional orientations is almost synonymous with political apathy. People feel they are excused from political responsibility since public affairs can prudently be left to the leaders with high education, moral integrity, and fatherly prestige.

In sum, the traditional political orientations in all three dimensions are supposed to have a negative impact on the overall level of political participation. Is this the case? Yes, more or less, but with a big surprise. Findings from the correlation analysis, as revealed by the figures without parentheses in Part IV of Table 4, support our central hypothesis that traditional political orientations affect overall

---

22. Our quantitative measure of education says nothing about the quality, content and pedagogy of education. These qualitative elements may have more to do with cultural modernization than the total number of schooling years.

Table 3. Response distribution of traditional political orientations (in percentage)

	Traditional			Transitional			Modern			Number of cases		
	ML	TW	HK	ML	TW	HK	ML	TW	HK	ML	TW	HK
EDUCATION												
No schooling	52.0	13.9	17.3	41.1	50.2	38.7	7.0	35.9	43.9	1,047	223	173
Primary	53.7	20.9	10.5	39.2	42.4	40.0	7.1	36.7	49.5	899	335	190
Secondary	43.2	11.7	4.3	41.8	32.1	17.9	15.0	56.1	77.7	1,251	588	368
Tertiary	24.2	6.9	1.3	46.7	19.4	6.3	29.1	73.8	92.5	86	248	159
(Gamma & significance level: ML = −0.178***, TW = −0.341***, HK = −0.566***)												
AGE												
18–30	42.1	8.2	2.6	42.9	27.0	14.0	15.0	64.8	83.3	1,378	341	228
31–40	52.8	9.6	5.6	39.0	31.3	24.3	8.2	59.2	70.1	686	387	284
41–50	52.2	14.7	8.8	40.2	40.0	25.3	7.7	45.3	65.9	479	225	182
51–60	56.9	19.6	14.6	36.7	40.2	33.7	6.4	40.2	51.7	368	189	89
60 & above	49.9	20.1	15.9	42.8	44.0	39.3	7.3	35.9	44.9	374	259	107
(Gamma & significance level: ML = 0.153***, TW = 0.284***, HK = 0.374***)												
RESIDENCE												
Village	51.0	14.0	—	39.7	42.5	—	9.3	43.5	—	2,288	515	—
Town	32.4	15.7	—	54.7	40.2	—	13.0	44.1	—	136	127	—
Small city[a]	42.6	12.1	—	44.8	32.6	—	12.6	55.3	—	489	463	—
Big city[a]	45.4	13.3	7.6	38.9	24.6	24.6	15.8	62.1	67.8	372	293	890
(Gamma & significance level: ML = −0.142***, TW = −0.174***, HK = not applicable)												
OCCUPATION												
White collar	36.4	12.8	3.1	45.9	27.8	16.8	17.7	59.4	80.1	2,909	468	351
Others	49.9	13.6	10.6	40.4	38.9	29.7	9.8	47.5	59.7	376	933	539
(Eta & significance level: ML = 0.102***, TW = 0.085***, HK = 0.037)												
SEX												
Male	48.5	13.2	7.0	39.6	32.9	22.3	11.9	53.9	70.7	1,682	709	460
Female	48.1	13.5	8.3	42.5	37.4	26.7	9.4	49.1	65.0	1,602	692	430
(Eta & significance level: ML = 0.015*, TW = 0.037, HK = 0.056)												

Notes: 1. The acronyms of ML, TW, and HK stand for Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong respectively.

2. Gamma values are given for ordinal variables, while Eta values for nominal variables.

3. For significance levels, *** denotes p < 0.001 and * denotes p < 0.05.

4. The figures across the rows under each research site should add up to 100 (or around 100 allowing for rounding errors). For instance, the figures under HK for 'Big city', 7.6, 24.6, 67.8 add up to 100.

[a] Small cities are those with less than one million residents, while big cities contain one million or more.

participation in all three societies, albeit that the magnitude of their impact is small. Yet in Hong Kong, the most modern society in our sample, traditional political orientations have the greatest adverse impact on overall political participation, with a Pearson's coefficient of -0.17 at a significance level below 0.001. The same negative effect is observed in the case of Taiwan, though much less strongly and less significantly (coefficient $= -0.06$ and $p < 0.05$ only). In Mainland China where the proportion of traditionalists is largest among the three samples, the magnitude of effect (coefficient $= 0.04$) is the smallest, the level of statistical significance is low ($p < 0.05$), and most interesting of all, the direction of the relationship differs from that in the other two societies. Mainland Chinese people with traditional political orientations participate more frequently than those with more modern orientations. Why did traditional political orientations have a negative impact on overall political participation in Taiwan and Hong Kong but a positive one in Mainland China? We shall presently solve this puzzle. But first let us turn to the issue of whether traditional political orientations have an *independent* effect on political participation and whether there are other alternative explanations.[23]

To ascertain the independent effect of traditional political orientations, we conduct a partial correlation analysis of the four sets of variables that were hypothesized to have an effect on political participation, with education serving as the control variable.[24] The first set includes socio-economic variables such as education (Part I of Table 4). They should represent forces of modernization that, according to the literature, tend to exert a positive impact on the level of political participation. The second set of variables deals with cognitive-psychological resources that have elsewhere been found to have positively affected the level of political participation (Part II of Table 4). A prime candidate in this category is the sense of political efficacy. The third set of variables is meant to gauge the effect of institutional factors (Part III of Table 4). This is the most complex set of all. Some institutions may provide a group-based incentive to boost participation, such as membership in a political party or social organizations. Others may provide a general disincentive to political participation, for instance, fear of revenge by the government. Still others may affect the individual-based incentive to participate. Here, we have in mind the scope of government activities that may constitute the

---

23. The ideal way to find out why traditional political orientations have an independent influence affecting political participation and why they have staying power in the Mainland but not in the other two societies would be to construct several regression models on the relative contributions of each and every potential factor of influence. It is, however, impossible in the present study, not only because the factors involved are all more or less related to each other, but also because many of them, including the factor of traditional orientations, exhibit in scatterplot analysis a non-linear relationship with overall participation. The problem of non-linearity cannot be removed even after transformation of the original values of the variables by logging or squaring has been attempted. This means that one of the most fundamental assumptions of regression analysis is violated. Its use here can therefore not be justified and therefore we turn ourselves to correlation analysis instead.

24. Education is used as a control variable in our partial correlation analysis because it represents a summary measure of socio-economic modernization. As already reported in Table 3, education is closely related to traditional political orientations. It is also closely related to the variables in the set of psychological resources, meaning that people with more education are likely to be more exposed to the mass media, more interested and knowledgeable in politics, and have a stronger sense of political efficacy. On the other hand, education is poorly related to the institutional factors. Thus, knowing one's level of educational achievement does not predict the perceived impact of government, political fear, party membership, or social participation. Such a design may therefore simplify the picture of the complex pattern of influences over political participation, leaving cultural and institutional effects more discernable and interpretable.

material basis for citizens to try to influence the government in the first place. The scope of government activities is measured by the perceived impact of government on people's living. The final set of variables refers to our traditional political orientations (Part IV of Table 4).

The results of our analysis are summarized in Table 4. The findings are rather complex and we will confine our discussion to its basic similarities and differences across the three regimes. What do Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong have in common? First, all variables except a few[25] have more or less an influence on overall political participation. This means that political participation is subject to a great variety of influences. Secondly, education is a very, if not the most important factor affecting political participation. Once education is controlled for, the influence of practically all other variables[26] either disappears or becomes attenuated. This finding attests to the significant impact of socio-economic modernization as represented by education on political participation. Thirdly, among all four sets of variables, the cognitive-psychological ones are the most important, followed by institutional and modernization forces. Traditional political orientations can claim the least influence of all factors.

The pattern of differences among our three regimes can be better discerned by looking at those variables whose partial correlation coefficients are at least 0.18 (marked in bold type in Table 4). Based on the bold-faced partial coefficients in Table 4, we can draw the following conclusions. First of all, while political interest exerts the most influence on the level of political participation, its impact is far more pronounced in Taiwan and Hong Kong than in the Mainland. Secondly, setting aside the impact of political interest, we can clearly see the distinctly different roles of causal factors in the three societies. Political participation in Mainland China is distinct because of its heavy dependence on the factor of party membership. Taiwan excels in terms of occupation and social participation. Together, these factors indicate that white-collar employees who are members of voluntary associations tend to be more active political participants. Hong Kong is susceptible to more influences. While social participation is equally as important as in Taiwan, Hong Kong political participation also heavily depends on people's sense of political efficacy and exposure to mass media. This suggests that

---

25. The exceptions are age, income, party membership and political fear. Income is a poor predictor of political participation in many other societies too, so there is no need for explanation. Party membership has no effect at all in Hong Kong, since political parties are brand new and weak. It is quite surprising that age and political fear do not affect participation in the Mainland, for which we have no fool-proof answer. Anyway, age has an impact once education has been controlled for. A possible explanation for the lack of effect of political risk may have to do with the locus of citizen participation. The institutional set-ups in Mainland China push most participatory activities to the level of the work units where practically all resources that citizens need for their living are allocated. As a result, they do not have to deal with the provincial or central level of government. As interest satisfaction is possible in situations where local units devise ingenious ways to defy central directives and participants sometimes play different units of government against each other, there may be less need to take the greater risk by challenging the legitimacy of the regime.

26. Exceptions include age for the Mainland and Taiwan, interest for Hong Kong, social participation for Taiwan and traditional political orientations for the Mainland. The influence of the first three factors even increases in the societies concerned once education is controlled for. The last factor experiences no change whatsoever in its effect in the Mainland even after control for education.

participation in Hong Kong is more individually based than in the other two societies.

Returning to our theme on the effect of traditional political orientations on political participation, three points deserve special attention. First, as alluded to above, the *independent* role of traditional political orientations turns out to be minimal, both in terms of statistical significance and magnitude of influence after education has been held constant. Secondly, Hong Kong's loss of traditional cultural influence on participation is much more radical when compared with the other two societies. The lesson is that where modernization forces (as epitomized here by education) are strong, as in the case of Hong Kong, traditional political orientations have no staying power. This was true even though their original effect, before controlling for education (i.e. $-0.17***$), was strongest there. Thirdly, in light of the above, it is paradoxical that in more traditional Mainland China, traditional political orientations had a positive, rather than a negative impact on participation and that this impact was substantially the same even after education is controlled for. This is the puzzle we have to solve below.

Finding 4. How have the traditionalists in Mainland China been mobilized?

Here we return to our original question. Why do traditional political orientations have a positive effect on political participation in Mainland China but not in Taiwan and Hong Kong, even after controlling for forces of modernization as represented by education? The clue may lie in institutional interference. If we consult Table 4 again, we can observe that the influence of institutional factors on overall participation is not as significantly reduced as the impact of psychological resources after education has been held constant. Theoretically, we can imagine a situation wherein traditionalists are more susceptible to institutional mobilization even though they remain politically inactive if left alone. When and where this situation applies depends, of course, on the modes of participation. People with traditional political orientations will simply participate much less in those activities that require more initiatives or that entail greater political risks. Such activities involve 'adversary' or 'protest' modes, as compared with those easier-to-undertake activities such as 'voting', 'campaign', 'appeal' and 'cronyism'. Together with the issue of institutional interference, the modes of participation have two contrasting implications for our traditionalist actors. On the one hand, these actors are constrained because institutions such as political parties and social organizations conform to the regime in the Mainland and because there is no freedom of assembly and association. These limitations mean that there are simply no alternative institutions available to mobilize traditional actors to take part in adversary or protest activities that are directly or indirectly regime-challenging. On the other hand, these actors can be mobilized by regime-supporting institutions to participate in voting and campaign activities beyond the level that their traditional orientations would normally allow.

We can test the above arguments statistically by observing the differential effects of traditional political orientations on the different modes of political participation,

Table 4. Correlates of political participation

	Mainland	Taiwan	Hong Kong
PART I			
Education	0.18***	0.23***	0.20***
Age	− 0.01	0.06*	− 0.10**
	(− 0.11***)	(− 0.13***)	(0.03)
Sex	− 0.13***	− 0.17***	− 0.07*
	(− 0.09***)	(− 0.15***)	(0.00)
Income	0.02	− 0.09**	0.02
	(0.00)	(− 0.05)	(− 0.02)
Occupation	0.14***	− 0.26***	0.11**
	(0.07***)	(**0.18***)	(− 0.00)
Place of residence	0.11***	0.07**	—
	(0.06**)	(− 0.01)	(−)
PART II			
Efficacy	0.13***	0.24***	0.24***
	(0.11***)	(0.17***)	(**0.20***)
Interest	0.30***	0.37***	0.32***
	(**0.25***)	(**0.35***)	(**0.33***)
Knowledge	0.15***	0.23***	0.17***
	(0.04**)	(0.10**)	(0.07)
Media exposure	0.20***	0.25***	0.23***
	(0.15***)	(0.14***)	(**0.18***)
PART III			
Impact of gov't	0.09***	0.18***	0.20***
	(0.06**)	(0.01**)	(0.17***)
Fear	− 0.02	0.07*	− 0.17***
	(0.01)	(0.07*)	(− 0.13**)
Party membership	0.23***	0.20***	0.00
	(**0.21***)	(0.16***)	(− 0.02)
Social participation	0.16***	0.20***	0.24***
	(0.11***)	(**0.21***)	(**0.20***)
PART IV			
Traditional political orientations	0.04*	− 0.06*	− 0.17***
	(0.04*)	(0.02)	− (0.08)

Notes: 1. The statistic is Pearson's r or (in parentheses) partial correlation coefficient, with education controlled. The dependent variable is the overall political participation scale. It is the sum of the six modes of participation as described in Appendix 1.
2. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

and particularly by proving that when traditionalists vote, they are more likely mobilized voters rather than voluntary voters.

Table 5 summarizes the patterns of relations between traditional political orientations and the modes of political participation, controlling for education but without taking into account the other variables included in Table 4. The general finding for the Mainland remains almost the same, only with a twist: the positive impact of traditional orientations on overall participation stays after education has been

Table 5. Traditional political orientations and modes of political participation (Mainland China)

Voting	0.04*	(0.04*)
Campaign	0.04*	(0.06**)
Appeal	0.03	(0.05**)
Cronyism	0.00	(0.02)
Adversary	− 0.01	(0.00)
Protest	− 0.02	(− 0.01)
OVERALL	0.04*	(0.06**)

Notes: 1. The statistic is Pearson's r or (in parentheses) partial correlation coefficient, with years of education controlled. The independent variable is the traditional political orientation scale; dependent variables are the modes of political participation and the overall participation scale (see Table 4 for details). 2. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 6. Types of voters and mobilization

	Voluntary voting		Mobilized voting	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Traditionalists who voted	89.9	(1,108)	10.1	(125)
Non-traditionalists who voted	95.7	(1,973)	4.3	(90)

$R^2 = 42.7$, df = 1, $p < 0.001$.

controlled for, and is even slightly stronger than before. This is normal, as a small number of variables have been entered into the analysis. Another more important message is also conveyed by the table, and it is this. As hypothesized, traditional political orientations inhibit adversary and protest activities (though statistically insignificant), however they facilitate voting, campaign, and appeal activities (statistically significant). In the case of mobilization, the positive impact of traditional political orientations on participation remains the same or grows stronger after education has been controlled for. There is therefore statistical support for the suspicion that the otherwise restraining influence of traditional political orientations on those less demanding modes of participation is compensated by the enabling interference of certain institutional factors.

Given the limitations of our question design, it is impossible to test the hypothesis of institutional interference with respect to campaigns and appeals. However, it is possible to test this hypothesis with respect to with voting, because our respondents were asked why they voted as they did. We can distinguish between mobilized and voluntary voting on the basis of whether a voter 'had no choice, since the leadership told me to vote', a statement administered in our survey. The two types of voters, i.e. those with or without traditional political orientations, can then be related to the two types of voting. A crosstabs analysis as

reported in Table 6 confirms that voters with a traditional political orientation are most likely to be mobilized into voting. In other words, institutions that are designed to mobilize political participation work best in a traditional political culture.

Conclusion

Our results can be summarized in a few points. First, Chinese in the Mainland have the most traditional political orientations when compared with their counterparts in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Secondly, the influence of traditional political orientations on political participation is complex. In general, these orientations discourage people from participating in the political process. However, their impact is small or becomes null once education is held constant. Therefore, in the long term, socio-economic modernization is likely to produce the cultural requisite for democracy in China. Thirdly, the effect of traditional political orientations varies from society to society and from one mode of participation to another. In particular, political participation in Hong Kong is individually based, because there is a deficit of institutions for participation/mobilization. Modernization forces, e.g. education and the prosperous mass media, are more important than cultural attributes. In Taiwan, institutional factors such as democratic election and civil groups are paramount, in addition to modernization forces. However, in Mainland China, unlike the other two societies, traditional political orientations have a positive impact on participation, and this impact stays much the same even after controlling for education. This positive impact can be explained by institutional interference whereby traditional political orientations exert influence differently on different modes of participation: negative on adversary and protest activities but positive on voting, campaign and appeal activities.

To return to the broader debate about culture and democracy posed in the introduction of this article, based on the findings of this paper, we conclude that the argument 'Confucian political culture makes a democratic China impossible' is incomplete and will become increasingly irrelevant. It is incomplete because the impact of political culture can be strengthened or suppressed by political institutions. The cultural argument is also incomplete for its neglect of possibility of cultural changes in response to environmental changes.[27] For instance, civil culture can be the consequence, rather than the condition for democratic development.[28] When democratization is arrested in a country, an immature political culture is often held responsible. However, the power elite are also culpable because they manipulate the institutions to retard cultural modernization. At the end of the day, political leadership is also important in pushing through democratic reforms under unfavorable circumstances. In this regard, the real thriving democracy in Taiwan should prove cultural pessimists wrong. If a Taiwanese democracy can grow there out of Chinese cultural roots and authoritarian institutions, one must wonder why it has not done so to date in Mainland China and Hong Kong. The cultural

---

27. See Eckstein, 'A culturalist theory of political change'.
28. For a similar argument see Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980).

argument should become increasingly irrelevant, because in the long run, traditional political orientations in the three societies will share a common fate. They will eventually disappear. In the short term, however, their evolution seems to depend on the varying interplay of forces in the different societies. In Mainland China, institutional forces appear to be stronger relative to modernization pressures and political–cultural factors. To the extent that traditional political orientations are helpful to the government in its attempt to arrest demands for political reforms, the government has an incentive to maintain those institutions of socialization that help to postpone the modernization of political orientations. It makes sense then that the government has been reluctant to undertake any reform in the media and school systems, despite the remarkable socio-economic changes in the past two decades. In Hong Kong, de-colonialization without independence has ushered in a controlled 50 year process of political transformation under the 'one country, two systems' principle. The implications for Hong Kong's traditional political orientations are rather open-ended. An educated guess can submit that the pressures of moderniza-tion will continue to challenge elitist, paternalist, anti-democratic, and anti-pluralism positions. However, post-colonial politics has opened up a new vista in terms of state building, fostering the idea of a moral state under a new mantel. The Chief Executive of Hong Kong sees himself as a father figure, with a strong vision and a distaste for public opinion. Compared with the Mainland and Hong Kong, Taiwan seems to be a simple case of traditional political orientations in decline. The thriving process of democratization leaves no room for the apolitical self. The traditional obsession with order can hardly survive under the encouraging prospect of democratic consolidation. On one fundamental aspect though, the past must compromise with the future. That is the issue of the state. The moral state is subject to challenges by the cross pressures of national unification and Taiwanese independence. After all, a state cannot be defined by democracy alone. Therefore, the future of the Chinese political order still awaits further tinkering.

Appendix 1. The measurement of variables in Table 4

Education: in years.

Sex: 0 if female, 1 if male.

Income: square of family average annual income.

Occupation: 0 if not 'white collar', 1 if 'white collar'.

Residence: 1 for village, 2 for town, 3 for small city with population less than one million, 4 for big city with population equal to or above one million.

Efficacy: sum of responses to the following four statements (range from–4 to 4):
'I think I am able to participate in politics.'
'I think I understand the major political issues in [the research site].'
'People like me don't have any say about what the government does.'
'Government officials don't care about my opinions.'

Interest: sum of responses to the following three statements (range from–3 to 3):
'Do you often discuss politics with others?'
'How interested would you say you are in politics?'
'When you get together with your close friends, how often do you discuss political affairs?'

Knowledge: sum of correct responses (range from–3 to 3) to the question:
'Please tell me the name of the following figures: A. for ML, TW, & HK: 1. The US President; 2. The Russian President; [B. for ML only, 3. The Premier of PRC; C. for TW only, 3. The Taiwan Prime Minister; D. for HK only, 3. The Hong Kong Chief Secretary].'

Media exposure: sum of responses to the following three questions (range from–9 to 9):
'How often did you listen to the news on the radio last week?'
'How often did you watch the news on TV last week?'
'How often did you read the news in the newspaper last week?'

Impact of gov't: sum of responses to the following two questions (range from–4 to 4):
'How much influence on your daily life do you think is exerted by the [for ML: local government; for TW: county/municipal government; for HK: Municipal Councils?'
'How much influence on your daily life do you think is exerted by the [for ML & TW: central government; for HK: Hong Kong government?'

Fear: responses to either of the following questions (range from − 1 to 1):
For ML & TW: 'In your living and working environment, if you criticize the government, do you worry that somebody may file a report against you?'
For HK: 'It's better not to talk loosely about politics, because you might get into trouble.'

Party membership: 0 if no membership at all, 1 if any membership. The question is:
For ML: 'What is your political affiliation?'
For TW: 'Have you joined any political parties?'
For HK: 'Have you joined any political parties or organizations?'

Social participation: 0 if no, 1 if yes. The questions are:
For ML: 'Have you joined the Union or the Federation of Women?' and 'Have you joined any other social organizations?'
For TW & HK: 'Have you joined any social organizations?'

Six modes of political participation:

Voting: For ML: unit/village and the 1992 local People's Congress elections.
For TW: the 1992 Second Legislative Yuan elections.
For HK: the 1991 Legislative Council direct elections.

Campaign: sum of the following activities at either the unit/village or the local People's Congress level:
A. Nominate a candidate
B. Mobilize somebody else to nominate a candidate
C. Persuade others to vote or not to vote for a candidate

	D. Express dissatisfaction with, criticize or make a proposal on the election
	E. Mobilize others to take part in meetings to familiarize themselves with candidates
Appeal:	sum of the following activities (each coded 0 if no, 1 for the rest):
	A. Ask other leaders of the unit to solve a problem
	B. Express an opinion directly to the leadership/government
	C. Express an opinion to a superior unit through one's organization
	D. Write a letter to the government bureau concerned
	E. Negotiate directly with the supervisor of the person-in-charge (applicable to Taiwan only)
Cronyism:	sum of the following activities (each coded 0 if no, 1 for the rest):
	A. Seek help from someone who has influence on the leadership/government
	B. Ask a friend or an acquaintance of the person-in-charge to intercede
	C. Offer a meal or gift to the person-in-charge
	D. Ask an acquaintance in the government department to intercede
Adversary:	sum of the following activities (each coded 0 if no, 1 for the rest):
	A. Express an opinion through political organizations
	B. Express an opinion through a parliamentary representative
	C. Express an opinion through the union/farmers' association
	D. Write a letter to the newspaper
	E. Take a case to the complaint bureau
	F. File suit in a court
	G. Harass a leader at his home (applicable to Mainland only)
	H. Seek help from the Opposition Party (applicable to Taiwan only)
Protest:	sum of the following activities (each coded 0 if no, 1 for the rest):
	A. Organize colleagues to protest
	B. Demonstrate, protest, or sit-in
	C. Participate in a work slowdown