

A Small City with a Bigger Story: Hong Kong's Challenges in the Context of Global Economic and Political Restructuring

Tai-lok Lui
Department of Sociology
University of Hong Kong

1

Introduction

- We tend to see cases as unique and special and conclude that perhaps they are exceptions
- But no matter how unique these cases are, they also belong to a larger system
- Hong Kong's unique experience should best be interpreted as a part of the changing macro order

2

The Cold War and Modernization Theory

- Social development in Hong Kong in the post-War period has to be analyzed in the context of the Cold War
- Its economic development was structured by the global dynamics of the world system
 - Its special status in the international financial system
 - How the new international division of labour provided it with the conditions for the rise of export-oriented industrialization
 - Geo-politics within the region of East Asia

3

The Cold War and Modernization Theory

- But more often Hong Kong was studied as a case in the light of modernization theory
 - Chinese families under modernization
 - How the colonial setting redirected the Hong Kong Chinese towards entrepreneurship
- As a result, little attention has been given to the political, economic, and social impacts of the Cold War on Hong Kong
 - In fact, its social and cultural milieu (e.g., liberal but not democratic) was shaped by Cold War politics

4

The Larger Context of the 1997 Question

- Hong Kong's 1997 question was an outcome of its peculiar political history
- But its further economic and political restructuring was shaped by broader regional and global dynamics
 - The re-opening of China's economy since 1978
 - China's reintegration into the world economy
 - Emerging regional integration

5

The Larger Context of the 1997 Question

- Reshaping the agenda of Hong Kong studies
 - Hong Kong as a global city within China
 - Its changing role in a globalizing China
 - New development in a new global system
 - Unanticipated regional integration
 - Limitations of the framework assumed in the Basic Law
 - Emerging issues

6

The Larger Context of the 1997 Question

- Hong Kong recontextualized in a new regional and global environment
- The between-ness of Hong Kong
 - The changing national dynamics
 - The changing regional dynamics

7

Concluding Remarks

- The changing configuration of global and regional dynamics in East Asia
- The Hong Kong experience as part of a larger East Asian story under the Cold War
- The post-Cold War restructuring

8