

### Democracy, Asian Values, and Hong Kong: Evaluating Political Elite Beliefs

**Bob Beatty** 

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On July 1, 1997, China took control over Hong Kong, where Britain had begun a process of introducing democracy. Beatty examines the process of democratization in Hong Kong, with the argument that democratic development will continue, despite being under Chinese rule. Through a series of 128 interviews with 89 Hong Kong elites from 1997-2002, including legislators and party leaders as well as participant and direct observation of 15 campaigns for the Legislative Council in 1998, Beatty analyzed political leaders beliefs and commitment towards democratic development and institutions and put them into the context of the post-handover environment.

Evidence from the interviews is used to test the proposition that adherence to Asian values undermines democracy and Beatty probed Hong Kong elites about their beliefs regarding the rule of law, freedom of the press, civil liberties, and the possible trade-offs between economic development and democratization. A major finding from the in-depth interviews is that while Hong Kong political elites reject the Sinapore model and the Asian Values argument, many do believe in trade-offs between economic development and democratization. Beatty also offers sharp insight into the thinking of Hong Kong political elites and transcends the particular politics of Hong Kong and delves in the broader subject of elite beliefs and attitudes. An important analysis for scholars, students, and other researchers involved with China, Hong Kong, Asian politics and political values, and political development in general.

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