
Revolution—the system had also stopped. The Chinese political system was exposed for its phony superficial changes. It may have shifted in its form during then, but underneath, its essence was still the same. The Communist Party still controlled everything. The stopped clock is a symbol of a frozen Chinese political system that has not changed.

Yet, although China may currently be transitioning from a totalitarian society to a post-totalitarian society, the authorities' rule still depends upon their interpretation of history, and this interpretation is built upon lies. They have covered up China's historical and present problems with falsehoods. And just like the child in the Hans Christian Andersen story "The Emperor's New Clothes," the masses do not dare to expose the lies because they live in a climate of fear. What really struck me was the fact that the anonymous letter-writer in the documentary risked persecution in writing the letter that year, but still cannot stand up publicly and talk about it 40 years on. The Revolution ate its own children and created a tragedy, but there is not enough reflection about it. We can't forget the human cost.

During the Velvet Revolution, Vaclav Havel exhorted the Czech people to follow their consciences, speak the truth, and refuse to forget, saying that this was the "power of the powerless." In the documentary, Wang Jingyao took the bloody clothes of his wife and put them in a leather suitcase. He has slept with this suitcase under his bed for 40 years. This is his refusal to forget.

The power that the ordinary people have is, as Havel said, to resist lies, refuse amnesia and tell the truth. If each person adhered to this philosophy, we could influence our families, our friends, and our society. We could tear down the lies that have preserved this totalitarian system. The day we all vanquish the fear inside our hearts is the day that the Communist regime will collapse.

In Search of a Breath of Fresh Air

A Review of *Reflections of Leadership: Tung Chee Hwa and Donald Tsang 1997–2007*

**By Christine Loh and Carine Lai
Civic Exchange Hong Kong, June 2007
303 pages**

By Jonathan Mirsky



This well-documented and convincing deconstruction of the two men who have ruled Hong Kong on behalf of Beijing since July 1997 reminds us how a city of remarkable citizens can survive and even thrive despite leadership worse than it deserves.

I state immediately that I know the principal author, Christine Loh, as well as Tung Chee Hwa and Donald Tsang. Ms. Loh and Mr. Tsang are also both good friends.

Ms. Loh, one of the most admired women in Hong Kong and at one time a star of its Legislative Council, is the founder of the non-profit think tank Civic Exchange, which lobbies on public issues such as Hong Kong's environment and its need for representative government. Carine Lai works for Civic Exchange and is a well-known political cartoonist.

The essence of this admirably expressed book (Ms. Loh's best-written to date) is that while Mr. Tung and Mr. Tsang could not be more different in background and personality, both distrust democracy and are out of touch with the convictions and hopes of Hong Kong people. The book relies on copious quotations from speeches and policy statements of both men. Since both they and their speechwriters command clear English, there can be no doubt about what was on their minds.

The authors underscore that for both Mr. Tung and Mr. Tsang, the demands of their masters in Beijing were and remain paramount. From the time of Deng Xiaoping, Beijing's leaders have suspected Hong Kong people of disloyalty. This suspicion arose when Hong Kong residents demonstrated in huge numbers against the Tiananmen killings in 1989, and again in 2003 when

hundreds of thousands marched in protest against a public order law championed by Beijing and Mr. Tung. That second march—which unfortunately the authors fail to fully explain—also signaled the public’s rejection of Mr. Tung, and became a major factor in his resignation in 2005 before his term expired.

One of the book’s most interesting analyses is of what the authors call “state corporatism” in which society is organized along the “functional constituencies” that constitute Hong Kong’s lines of occupation. Organized first by Britain, functional constituencies “appear superficially representative of society while being fairly politically homogeneous and avoided subjecting candidates [for the Legislative Council or for the position of Chief Executive] to broad popular approval.” In China, as the authors rightly observe, this is called the “United Front strategy”; it aims to “co-opt the friendly and neutral minority in order to better isolate and attack the hostile minority.” In Hong Kong, this united front strategy is carried out by the Beijing State Council’s Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, which aims to “build support for the Chief Executive of Hong Kong and to galvanize nominations and the vote for the selection of the Chief Executive.” The only caveat I have here is that in Hong Kong the excluded “hostile” group is unquestionably the majority.

The authors ask if Hong Kong people should reject functional elections altogether because they see them as a hindrance to creating a fair society. “Surely there is a danger in sustaining an electoral system that pitches the interests of the people against the interest of Beijing.”

This exclusion of the majority, the authors argue, explains why democratization remains “the key tussle between the people of Hong Kong and Beijing ten years on from 1997.” It explains, too, why “the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is squeezed between Beijing and the people of the city.”

While describing the common challenges of the two Chief Executives, the authors compare and contrast their political personalities. Mr. Tung admirably suited Beijing’s definition of a “patriotic capitalist.” Heir to a tottering shipping empire, he was bailed out of virtual bankruptcy by Henry Fok, another tycoon who was

close to Beijing. An American-educated businessman from a rich Shanghai family, Mr. Tung was close to the Shanghai clique that elevated Jiang Zemin to high office—the very same Jiang whose televised handshake with Mr. Tung long before his “election” revealed to everyone in the city what the future held.

As the authors note, Mr. Tung based his policies on appeals to the “Chinese identity” of Hong Kong’s people, and therefore to their patriotism. This is a complex issue; the people of Hong Kong are indeed patriotic, but their Hong Kong identity is a core characteristic. (On more than one occasion, Mr. Tung said to the foreign press, “you can’t understand my policies because you are not Chinese.” I asked him how he would have felt if British governors had said to Chinese reporters that they couldn’t understand because they were Chinese. As usual, he looked amiable and blank.)

Mr. Tung also rang the changes on “Chinese values” of trust, love and respect for family, integrity, honesty and a commitment to education (though he offered no reply to comments that these were also Western values). He contrasted these values with “the deterioration of social order” he had observed in the West. However, when it came to actual social order, to be enforced by Article 23 (the bill to control dissent), and what to do about the SARS epidemic, Mr. Tung faltered and failed.

Donald Tsang’s background, as the authors correctly say, couldn’t have been more different. The son of a police station sergeant, Mr. Tsang performed brilliantly as a graduate student at Harvard without having been to college, and worked his way up the civil service ladder on merit. He was knighted by Hong Kong’s last governor, Chris Patten, but never uses his title. Hong Kong welcomed his succession to Mr. Tung as a local boy made good, a tune that Mr. Tsang has often, and justifiably, played. He has said more than once that while he personally favors universal suffrage, “the development of our political system is not up to me alone, I must also operate within certain parameters.”

It is far from clear, however, that Mr. Tsang genuinely favors universal suffrage. The authors note that he has “never bothered to explain why many democracies are also vibrant economies. Indeed, the freest democracies

are often the best economies on a sustained basis.” Ms. Loh and Ms. Lai sum up his “naked desire to be a ‘strong leader’” (his words), heading a “strong government.” They see a “steam-rolling streak in him” and quote his dislike of organized opposition, which he terms a “horrible animal.” He calls the city’s democrats “bloody-minded politicians” and freely admits to dealing differently with “friendly and hostile camps,” demonstrated by his tendency to ignore hostile members of the legislature. On one occasion, he told Ms. Loh that he would discuss a policy question with her “only if she agreed with him” in advance. Mr. Tsang still enjoys favor in public opinion, but when asked whom they would prefer to be Chief Executive, most Hong Kong people do not name him.

Christine Loh’s determination and productivity (her books are published in Chinese as well as English) provide an excellent opportunity for Hong Kong people and the wider world to inform themselves about the

current situation in the richest city in China, and the interests and hopes of its people. Another book authored by Ms. Loh, *From Nowhere to Nowhere: A Review of Constitutional Development 1997–2007*, expands on the themes in *Reflections of Leadership*. The cleverly titled *Still Holding Our Breath: A Review of Air Quality in Hong Kong 1997–2007*, and *Idling Engine: Hong Kong’s Environmental Policy in a Ten Year Stall 1997–2007*, coolly and comprehensively survey problems that Donald Tsang still refuses to take seriously. China is now the most polluted country on the planet, and Hong Kong, a city whose inhabitants are literally gasping, could provide important lessons for the whole country. Even if he cannot bear the notion of genuine democracy, Mr. Tsang, a local boy, could really make good if he turned his excellent mind and devotion to his native city, in particular to an environment that chokes its inhabitants. If he does, he could become a breath of fresh air.