

Hong Kong on the edge of a slippery path

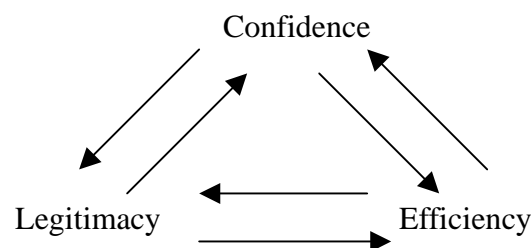
[Tsang Shu-ki](#) (1/5/2004)

There is a difference between process and outcome: the fact that one can “accept” an outcome doesn't mean that the process is agreeable. Not to say that the outcome looks so restrictive.

The decisions by the central government on the specifics of HK's democratisation are in my view high-handed, irrespective of whether parties of vested interests can “live” with the contents of those decisions. Serious and rational discussions about the details of future developments have hardly begun.

The behaviour of many of the “democrats” has no doubt been immature. But the comments made by quite a few tycoons in support of the central government, equating democracy with “welfarism” and “disorder”, are also politically amateurish, even laughable. HK seems to be witnessing a “falling rate of intelligence”.

HK's political system is clearly dysfunctional. Elections are no panacea. Of course not, as I have argued all along. But neither are they irrelevant. There is a triangle of interrelated considerations to balance: confidence by all parties involved about “one country, two systems”; the legitimacy of the local polity; and its efficiency.



While the decisions by the central government may enhance its own “confidence” about the “constitutional framework”, legitimacy and efficiency of the local system remain unsolved problems.

One can always conceive room to work with anything, and make the best out of any adversity, I guess. From the second-best, third-best, or fourth-best perspectives, we certainly have to be forward looking. But I can't help the ominous feeling that HK is on the edge of a slippery path. We can't afford any more wrong moves!