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**THE NEW LANDSCAPE OF HONG KONG POLITICS:
2008 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND THE
IMPLICATIONS**

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Abstract

The 2008 Legislative Council elections have unveiled a new political landscape in Hong Kong. First, there were conflicts within the pro-Beijing camp reflected by the closely-fought contest between the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) and the Liberal Party (LP) during the election. Second, there was a split within the pro-democracy camp as well indicated by the League of Social Democrats (LSD) openly criticizing the moderate Civic Party (CP), while the pro-democracy camp refused any coordination during the electoral campaign. Third, the LP seemed to have lost the support of the Beijing government with the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong supporting the DAB and other pro-Beijing “independent” candidates rather than the LP. These contrasting political developments suggest that the pro-Beijing force in Hong Kong has been consolidated under the DAB, which helps Beijing to stabilize Hong Kong politics. In the meantime, the pro-democracy camp failed to form a unified force in the competition between numerous political parties.

The New Landscape of Hong Kong Politics: 2008 Legislative Council Elections and the Implications

Hak Yin Li and Zhengxu Wang*

Introduction

The 2008 Legislative Council (Legco) Elections of Hong Kong took place on 7 September 2008. The pro-democracy camp basically maintained their political influence as in 2004. The moderate Democratic Party (DP) and Civic Party (CP) won 7 and 4 seats respectively, while the radical League of Social Democrats (LSD) got 3 seats. Including other small pro-democracy political parties and candidates, the pro-democracy camp got 19 seats in the geographical constituencies' elections. Within the pro-Beijing camp, it was a very different picture. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) won 7 seats, the Federation of Trade Union (FTU) received 2 seats, while surprisingly the Liberal Party (LP) got none. Besides, the turnout rate of the 2008 Legco Elections was only 45.2%, a sharp decrease from 55.64% in the 2004 Legco Elections.

Political developments in Hong Kong always attract much attention since Hong Kong is regarded as a testing ground for the democratization of China.¹ The performance of Hong Kong political parties' at different levels of elections is naturally one of the important inputs of political development. The number of political parties in Hong Kong has increased since the handover in 1997, but most of them are still immature and have limited research capability in producing policy agendas.² This may be because political mobilisation in Hong Kong stems from the grassroots level, which demands that parties focus on giving immediate and substantive daily support rather than drawing up a vision or policy agenda.³ The executive-led political system in Hong Kong

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¹ Steve Tsang, "Maximum flexibility, rigid framework: China's policy towards Hong Kong and its implications", *Journal of International Affairs*, vol.49, no.2, 1996, p.427.

² Lau Siu-Kai and Kuan Hsin-Chi, "Hong Kong's stunted political party system", *The China Quarterly*, vol.172, no.4, 2002, p.1024.

³ Joseph Y S Cheng, "Elections and political parties in Hong Kong's political development", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol.31, iss.3, 2001, pp.354-355.

also undermines the influence and development of political parties.⁴ In the 2003 District Council Elections and 2004 Legco Elections, both the pro-democracy and pro-Beijing camps showed strong unity in fighting against their opponents through coordination during the elections.

The 2008 Legco Elections have unveiled a new political landscape in Hong Kong. First, there were conflicts within the pro-Beijing camp. The DAB and LP failed to coordinate during the elections, while the LP sent out electoral lists in Kowloon West and Hong Kong Island where the LP had never intensively cultivated which led to both parties fishing in the same pond. Second, there was a split within the pro-democracy camp for which the LSD openly criticized the moderate CP, and the pro-democracy camp refused to coordinate their efforts during the campaign period. Third, the LP seemed to have lost the support of the Beijing government. Two influential LP members, Selina Chow and Michael Tien complained of the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong supporting the DAB and other pro-Beijing "independent" candidates rather than the LP. Among those "independent" candidates, Leung Mei Fun in Kowloon West and Regina Ip in Hong Kong Island provided examples of coordination between the DAB and these "independent" candidates. These contrasting political scenes suggest that the pro-Beijing force in Hong Kong is consolidated under the DAB, which helps Beijing to moderate Hong Kong politics. Since Beijing regards political parties in Hong Kong as a potential threat in the mobilization of anti-communist sentiments,⁵ a unified pro-Beijing force will definitely help to create a harmonious political environment in Hong Kong.

This paper first briefly explains the electoral system in Hong Kong and suggests that the functional constituency elections and the proportional representation system are the major reasons behind the splits in the pro-Beijing camp and the pro-democracy camp respectively. Second, this paper studies some of the major coordination efforts and the competition within and between political parties during the elections which finally led to the new political landscape in Hong Kong. Lastly, this paper evaluates the 2008 Legco Elections' implications for the future of Hong Kong's political development.

Electoral System and Candidates

The Hong Kong Legco is composed of 60 legislators. Half of them are elected by a proportional representation system in five geographical constituencies -- New

⁴ Lo Shiu Hing, "Political parties, elite-mass gap and political instability in Hong Kong", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.20, no. 1, 1998, pp.72-73.

⁵ Lau Siu Kai and Kuan Hsin Chi, "Hong Kong Stunted Political Party System", *The China Quarterly*, vol.172, no.4, 2002, p.1015.

Territories East, New Territories West, Kowloon East, Kowloon West and Hong Kong Island. The remaining half are elected by functional constituencies in various sectors such as insurance, education, accountancy, health services, architectural, surveying and planning, tourism, textiles and garment, information technology, transport, legal, medical, engineering, social welfare, commercial, wholesale and retail, as well as the District Council.

Even though there is direct election in a geographical constituency, the Hong Kong's political system can hardly be regarded as fully democratic. Hong Kong is an executive-led government, which is a neither parliamentary nor presidential system. The legislators do not have much power in setting up the policy agenda or in proposing bills. The Legco can only reject bills proposed by the Chief Executive, whereas bills proposed by legislators have to get a double majority; this means it has to pass a vote by the first 30 elected representatives of the geographical constituencies and another by the remaining 30 representatives of the functional constituencies. Up till now, all bills related to universal suffrage and other political reforms have always been rejected in the second round because members in the functional constituencies are generally pro-Beijing.

Various views were held by the political parties running the Legco elections. The pro-Beijing political parties such as the DAB and the LP had taken part in both the geographical and the functional constituency elections without much hesitation. By contrast, there had been serious debates within the pro-democracy camp on whether they should join the undemocratic functional constituency elections. The moderate DP and CP had fielded some candidates in the functional constituency elections. Ronny Tong Ka Wah, a legislator of the CP believed that joining the functional constituency elections would put some pressure on the government and signal that the functional constituency was not the government's absolute last stronghold in the Legco.⁶ However, the LSD had heavily criticized the participation of the pro-democracy political parties, especially the CP, in the functional constituency elections during various electoral campaigns and public policy debates. This had led to tense relations within the pro-democracy camp.

Apart from the debate on functional constituency elections, the proportional representation system in the geographical constituency elections had also created some problems for both the pro-Beijing and pro-democracy camps. The first problem

⁶ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 16 September 2008.

was an increase in the electoral list⁷ in every district. Hong Kong political scientist Ma Ngok calculated right before the Legco Elections that roughly 10% of the votes were enough for any electoral list to get a seat in any district. In districts such as New Territories East and West, even around 8% of the votes would be enough to secure a seat.⁸ This situation naturally encouraged more electoral competition in every district. Table 1 shows that the number of electoral list increased greatly in 2008 when compared with 2000 and 2004. Except for Kowloon East, the other districts had 10 or more electoral lists. A typical case was Kowloon West whereby 13 electoral lists competed for only 5 seats. Indeed, independent electoral lists (who claimed no political affiliations) also increased from 9 in 2004 to 13 in 2008. More competition in direct elections should be theoretically be good for democratic development. But there was the question of whether voters were ready to read and understand various electoral platforms. Voters' perceptions particularly posed a challenge to both the pro-Beijing and pro-democracy camps since they needed to clarify and convince their supporters during the confusing election period.

Table 1: Number of Electoral List in Geographical Constituency Elections⁹

Year	2000 (total seat)	2004 (total seat)	2008 (total seat)
New Territories East	10 (5)	6 (7)	10 (7)
New Territories West	8 (6)	12 (8)	14 (8)
Kowloon East	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (4)
Kowloon West	3 (4)	6 (4)	13 (5)
Hong Kong Island	11 (5)	6 (6)	10 (6)

⁷ Under the proportional representation system, an electoral list should be formed by candidates with a clear ranking. The candidate on the first ranking will be elected if he or she receives abundant votes, and the candidate on the second ranking will be elected if the remaining votes on the list are higher than the other electoral lists in terms of proportional counting. However, it takes a greater proportion of votes for the candidates of second and third ranking to get elected.

⁸ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 25 July and 2 August 2008.

⁹ See the website of Hong Kong Legco Elections in 2000, 2004 and 2008
http://www.elections.gov.hk/elections/legco2000/update/result/index_c.htm
http://www.elections.gov.hk/elections/legco2004/tc_chi/results/rs_gc.html
http://www.elections.gov.hk/legco2008/chi/result/rs_gc.html

The second problem under the proportional representation system was the splits, conflicts and intense competition within the pro-Beijing and pro-democracy camps. Given that 8% to 10% of votes did not sound not as difficult to get, second-tier party members wanted to take part in the elections while coordination within political party and between political parties became more difficult. Wong Siu Yee of the DAB unexpectedly joined the Legco Elections in Kowloon West even though the party had already nominated a list there. Although Wong claimed that he would run in the Legco elections as an independent candidate, the DAB expressed that Wong should withdraw from the DAB immediately. Wong did not run in the Legco Elections finally because of non-compliance to electoral regulations. Another pro-Beijing political party, the LP, added 2 electoral lists in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon West respectively where the LP had never secured any directly elected seat. Definitely the DAB regarded the participation of the LP in the above districts as a main challenge because both parties appealed to the same source for support. Jasper Tsang Yok Sing, a DAB candidate on the electoral list of Hong Kong Island had openly said before the elections that voting for the LP in Hong Kong Island would be a waste.¹⁰ An open quarrel between the DAB and LP had seldom happened since both parties shared roughly the same interests and values in their quests for a harmonious political environment.

The pro-democracy camp had also experienced a similar situation. Joseph Lai Chi Keong, a senior DP's District Councilor, withdrew from the party and then joined the Legco Elections in Hong Kong Island. In Kowloon East, incumbent DP candidate Li Wah Ming was challenged by Wu Chi Wai, a promising DP's District Councilor. The same happened in New Territories West in that the DP's second-tier members, Cheung Yin Tung and Kwong Chun Yu, formed the third DP's electoral list which meant there were 3 DP electoral lists within the same electoral constituency.

Furthermore, when discussing the possibility of coordination within the pro-democracy camp, nearly every party said coordination was not possible, a sharp contrast to the 2004 Legco elections. In 2004, on the one hand, pro-democracy candidates in New Territories East formed a single "diamond list" which targeted more votes in order to get 4 seats. The list however got only 3 seats eventually. DP's Andrew Cheng Kar Foo, Frontier's Emily Lau Wai Hing and Article 45 Group Ronny Tong Ka Wah were elected but the DP's Wong Sing Chi was left out. On the other hand, the coordination of 2 pro-democracy electoral lists failed in Hong Kong Island. DP's Yeung Sum and Martin Lee thought that their list lagged behind Audrey Eu Yuet Mee and Cyd Ho Sau Lan's list, so they appealed to pro-democracy camp's supporters to vote for their list. The result was

¹⁰ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 9 August 2008.

disastrous in that Yeung Sum and Martin Lee got so many votes such that Cyd Ho Sau Lan lost to Choy So Yuk, who was second on the DAB' list for only 815 votes. The story of the 2004 Legco elections provided a lesson to the pro-democracy camp that coordination between parties could be very difficult under the proportional representation system and miscalculation could lead to severe defeats. Thus, there was entirely no coordination within the pro-democracy camp in the 2008 Legco elections. The DP, CP, LSD and the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) all urged their supporters not to carry out any tactical voting since they did not have sufficient information to judge or analyze which electoral list could get enough votes and which one could not.

Election Campaign: Coordination and Competition

Coordination – Within the DP

Given that coordination between political parties was difficult under the proportional representation system, the DP managed to carry out some coordination within the party itself. The DP had fielded 2 electoral lists in New Territories East and another 3 electoral lists in New Territories West. It gained 2 seats eventually in each district. Looking at the case of New Territories East as shown in table 2, we could see that the 2 DP's lists achieved their votes in quite different ways. Wong's list got more votes than Cheng's List in North District while the reverse occurred in Tai Po District. In Sai Kung and Sha Tin District, the 2 DP's lists got quite a balance of votes which led to the victories of both Wong Sing Chi and Cheng Kar Foo in New Territories East. The result reflected a division of labour between Wong's list and Cheng's list, especially in that Wong Sing Chi was a District Councilor in North District previously and Cheng Kar Foo was then a District Councilor in Tai Po District. Wong Sing Chi also expressed his gratitude to Cheng Kar Foo after the election for offering him the chance to carry out his campaigns in Sai Kung District which was Cheng's established base.¹¹

¹¹ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 9 September 2008.

Table 2: Number of Votes Received between
Wong Sing Chi's List and Cheng Kar Foo's List - New Territories East¹²

Counting Station	Wong's List	Cheng's List
N0301 (North)	1685	194
N0401 (North)	1932	351
N0501 (North)	1365	152
P0201 (Tai Po)	243	797
P0601 (Tai Po)	242	2024
P0701 (Tai Po)	303	1425
Q1101 (Sai Kung)	504	839
Q1201 (Sai Kung)	588	854
Q1701 (Sai Kung)	529	758
R0401 (Sha Tin)	785	380
R2301 (Sha Tin)	261	783
R3201 (Sha Tin)	356	860
□	□	□
Total	44174	41931

The same level of coordination within the DP could be found in New Territories West where the DP had 3 electoral lists. In Table 3, Ho Chun Yan's list received a large number of votes in Tuen Mun District where he was then a District Councilor. Cheung Yin Tung's list earned most of its votes in Yuen Long District since he had been a District Councilor there and Lee Wing Tat's list received an overwhelming proportion of the votes in Kwai Tsing as he was a District Councilor. Lee also got more votes than two other colleagues in the Islands District where he had been working the ground for some years. Cheung's list seemed to be less attractive when compared with those of Ho and Lee in Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Kwai Tsing and Islands District, which might probably be because Cheung was a second-tier member of the DP who did not have the established popularity of Ho Chun Yan and Lee Wing Tat. Although only Ho Chun Yan and Lee Wing Tat were elected finally, the division of labour among the 3 electoral

¹² There were 129 counting stations in New Territories East in four major districts, North, Tai Po, Sai Kung and Sha Tin, table 2 lists out the 3 highest votes received by Wong and Cheng in every district. See the website of Hong Kong Legco Elections 2008, http://www.elections.gov.hk/legco2008/eng/result/rs_gc.html

lists was quite clear. Coordination within the DP suggested the importance of the regional network in the District Council to the formation of a support base for the Legco elections.

Table 3: Number of Votes Received among Ho Chun Yan's List, Cheung Yin Tung's List and Lee Wing Tat's List - New Territories West¹³

Counting Station	Ho's List	Cheung's List	Lee's List
K0301 (Tsuen Wan)	272	26	629
K0601 (Tsuen Wan)	199	40	754
K0901 (Tsuen Wan)	226	22	568
L2101 (Tuen Mun)	1240	34	76
L2601 (Tuen Mun)	1191	46	142
L2801 (Tuen Mun)	1275	27	54
M0301 (Yuen Long)	147	1045	59
M0401 (Yuen Long)	126	751	68
M2001 (Yuen Long)	232	1194	99
S0701 (Kwai Tsing)	50	9	1442
S0801 (Kwai Tsing)	63	14	1670
S0901 (Kwai Tsing)	42	14	2072
T0201 (Islands)	28	8	822
T0301 (Islands)	43	5	800
T0501 (Islands)	149	14	506
□	□	□	□
Total	36764	10069	45767

¹³ There were 156 counting stations in New Territories West in five major districts, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long Kwai Tsing and Islands. Table 3 lists out the 3 highest votes received by Ho, Cheung and Lee in every district. See the website of Hong Kong Legco Elections 2008, http://www.elections.gov.hk/legco2008/eng/result/rs_gc.html

Coordination – The DAB and Independent Candidate in Kowloon West

With an increasing population in Kowloon West, one more seat was added in 2008 which added to the intense competition. There were only 6 electoral lists for 4 seats in Kowloon West in 2004, but there were 13 electoral lists for 5 seats in 2008. Among the electoral lists, the DAB's Starry Lee Wai King faced challenges from pro-Beijing colleagues, the lists of the LP's Michael Tien (the younger brother of the chairman of the LP) and Leung Mei Fun (an influential District Councilor who claimed her list was independent of any political affiliation). Although Starry Lee of the DAB mentioned repeatedly that coordination was not possible between the DAB, LP and any other independent lists, the Pro-Beijing Federation of Trade Union (FTU) did involve in the coordination between Starry Lee and Leung Mei Fun. The FTU had sent out letters to its members in Kowloon West which recommended the ideal electoral list. Of these letters, 23100 letters suggested voting for Starry Lee while the remaining 16900 letters proposed voting for Leung Mei Fun. The proportion of the above letters accounted respectively for about 5.24% and 3.84% of the total registered voters in Kowloon West.¹⁴ As mentioned above, only 8% to 10% of the votes would be likely get any electoral list a seat in the Legco election. The FTU therefore had played an important role in helping Leung Mei Fun.

Meanwhile, a Hong Kong political scientist, Choy Chi Keung, found that there was division of labour between Starry Lee and Leung Mei Fun during the election. Leung Mei Fun formed a new political organization called the Kowloon West New Dynamic (KWND) in March 2008, just a few months before the Legco election. The KWND had 32 members who were current District Councilors in Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City and Yau Tsim Mong which were sub-districts of Kowloon West. Choy believed that the current District Councilors of the KWND later became an important mobilization network of Leung Mei Fun. By studying the number of votes Starry Lee and Leung Mei Fun got in numerous counting stations, Leung earned more votes in areas where the incumbent District Councilors belonged to the KWND while Starry Lee got more votes in other areas.¹⁵ Coincidentally, the total number of votes obtained by the DAB in Kowloon West in 2004 was 61770, while the DAB received only 39013 votes in 2008, leading many to wonder where the rest of the 22757 votes went to, especially considering that the DAB had done quite well in other electoral districts. The answer might be found in Leung Mei Fun who received 19914 votes which was more or less the same number as the DAB's missing 22757 votes. Interestingly, the division of

¹⁴ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 27 August 2008.

¹⁵ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 18 September 2008.

labour between Starry Lee and Leung Mei Fun was similar to what the DP did in New Territories East and New Territories West as mentioned earlier.

Coordination – The DAB and the Independent Candidate in Hong Kong Island

The DAB had mobilized its supporters to vote for Regional Ip (a former Secretary of Security) in the 2007 Legco By-Election in Hong Kong Island in order to compete with Anson Chan (a former Chief Secretary of Administration) who was supported by the pro-democracy camp. But it was a different picture in the 2008 Legco elections. On the one hand, the DAB had a tough battle not only with the pro-democracy camp but also with Regina Ip because the DAB had aimed to gain 2 seats as they did in the 2004 Legco Elections. On the other hand, Regina also planned to get 2 seats so that her partner Louis Shih could be a new face in the Legco as well. Both the DAB and Regina claimed no coordination was possible between them. However interestingly, according to Leung Kai Chi, a Hong Kong political geographer, the DAB and Regina received votes in a different pattern. Most of the DAB's votes came from grassroots areas such as large public housing estates while Regina got most of her votes from middle class residential areas.¹⁶ Indeed, coordination between the DAB and Regina would not be surprising since the DAB had also worked successfully with Leung Mei Fun in Kowloon West as mentioned above.

Competition – The CP vs. the LSD

Both the CP and LSD were new political parties and were only founded in March and October of 2006, so they only had less than two years to prepare for the 2008 Legco elections. However, the CP had gained a better public exposure than the LSD since most of the CP members were well-known professionals in Hong Kong, and the CP had also participated in the 2007 Chief Executive Election to raise public awareness of the importance of universal suffrage. To distinguish itself as a radical democratic party from the pro-democracy camp, right from the very beginning of the electoral campaign, the LSD heavily criticized the CP's participation in the undemocratic elections of the functional constituency. Throughout the election period, the LSD attacked the CP on almost every issue and in every way which led to the CP making a serious complaint.¹⁷ The disastrous result was that the CP's Claudia Mo Man Ching list got 17259 votes in Kowloon West while the LSD chairman Wong Yuk Man's list received 37553 votes.

¹⁶ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 13 September 2008.

¹⁷ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 17 September 2008.

Finally the CP could not secure the last seat in Kowloon West which had gone to the independent candidate Leung Mei Fun with 19914 votes. Obviously the gap between the CP and Leung Mei Fun was very small (only 2655 votes), many believed that the CP could have overwhelmed Leung if the LSD had cooperated with the CP.

Competition – The LP vs. Pro-Beijing Camp

As mentioned above, the proportional representation system offers huge incentives to many political parties or individual candidates running for the elections. Even though the LP had focused on the functional constituency elections traditionally, the LP had started to shift their attention to geographical constituency elections which could gain them higher popularity as well as legitimacy. With its successful experience in the 2004 Legco elections when James Tien and Selina Chow -- Chairman and Vice Chairwoman of the LP -- were elected through direct elections in New Territories East and West respectively, the LP had adopted a more ambitious approach towards the 2008 Legco elections. James Tien and Selina Chow ran for geographical constituency elections again in New Territories East and West, while the younger brother of James Tien, Michael, stood for his first election in Kowloon West. The LP's second-tier members, Lam Chui Lin, Wong Kam Chuen and Ngan Choi Chik joined the election in Hong Kong Island.

However, the DAB was not happy with the LP's move, especially with the LP's sending out of electoral lists in Kowloon West and Hong Kong Island where the LP had not been cultivating a support base. Not only was there a lack of coordination between the LP and the DAB during the elections, the established and influential LP Legislator Lau Wong Fat who was Chairman of Heung Yee Kuk New Territories (New Territories' Rural Council) had even helped in the DAB's electoral campaign in both New Territories East and West. On Election Day, the LP's Selina Chow openly said in front of mass media that Lau Wong Fat should urge his fellows in the Heung Yee Kuk to vote for her list since the DAB's list had already got enough votes for 2 seats.¹⁸ Selina Chow lost the election finally. She together with the LP immediately made a formal complaint to Lau Wong Fat which led to Wong's withdrawal from the LP. Michael Tien in Kowloon West also complained that the LP had received no support from the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong during the election even though the LP belonged to the pro-Beijing camp; all the support had been channelled to the pro-Beijing Leung Mei Fun who had claimed to be "independent" and the DAB in Kowloon West. According to Michael Tien's knowledge, the Chinese Liaison Office did not offer any help to James Tien and Selina

¹⁸ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 8 September 2008.

Chow as well which was a sharp contrast to the support given to the DAB.¹⁹ The LP had suffered a heavy blow in the 2008 Legco Elections in that they could not get any seat in the geographical constituency elections. James Tien and Selina Chow then resigned as Chairman and Vice Chairwoman of the LP right after the election. Three other functional constituency Legislators also withdrew from the LP because of its divergent approach to whether the LP should continue to join the geographical constituency elections in the future. The total number of Legislators in the LP decreased from 10 in 2004 to only 3 in 2008.

Implications for Political Development in Hong Kong

The increase in electoral lists in the 2008 Legco Elections shows that candidates are now getting more familiar with the proportional representation system whose rules naturally encourage more candidates to run for elections. The British colonial government did not introduce direct election until 1991 in the form of a dual-seat constituency dual vote system which was later changed to a single plurality system in Hong Kong, but the electoral system changed soon again after 1997 to a proportional representation system. Ideally the proportional representation system encourages more voices to be heard in the Legco since the electoral list does not need to get a huge number of votes in order to win the first seat compared to the simple plurality system, although the electoral list needs to get its second and third seat in the same list by winning many votes. Therefore, the proportional representation system is also regarded as a means to minimize the influence of pro-democracy parties.²⁰

Clearly many political parties were not familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of the proportional representation system at the very beginning. The formation of the "diamond" list in New Territories East in 2004 Legco Elections is clearly a miscalculation of the pro-democracy camp because it is impossible to get more than 70% of the votes for 4 seats in the same electoral list unless all pro-democracy supporters cast their votes only for the "diamond" list. This is the reason why the DP was divided into 2 lists in Kowloon East and 3 lists in New Territories West while there was no joint electoral list between political parties in 2008 Legco Elections. More importantly, second-tier members of the political parties as well as ordinary citizens who are lawyers, teachers and other professionals had also taken advantage of the proportional representation system by joining the 2008 Legco elections since they did

¹⁹ See *Ming Pao Daily*, 8 September 2008.

²⁰ Jermain T.M. Lam, *The political dynamics of Hong Kong under Chinese sovereignty*, Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2000, pp.76-77.

not need many votes to get a seat. As more Hong Kong people understand the operation of the proportional representation system, more electoral lists are expected to take part in future Legco elections. However, the increase will obviously become a problem in the 2020 Legco Elections since all Legco members are supposed to be elected through direct election by then. There are currently only 5 geographical constituencies and 30 seats, so it will be confusing if there is no modification of the current electoral system to see that all 60 seats are elected through the current geographical constituencies. Besides, an increasing number of electoral lists would make it more difficult for political parties to differentiate themselves from one another, while voters would find it difficult to study, compare and analyse so many electoral platforms.

The rise and fall of the political parties in the 2008 Legco Elections has definitely reshaped the political landscape in Hong Kong. When comparing the pro-democracy and pro-Beijing camps, a sharp contrast is seen between the pro-democracy camp which is divided into different factions and the DAB which has become the remaining major force within the pro-Beijing camp after the disastrous defeat of the LP. On the one hand, the DP is the leading political party within the pro-democracy camp, but the DP's position is now being challenged by the newly-formed CP and the LSD. Although both the CP and the LSD are not yet able to compete with the DP, the pro-democracy camp has become a loose entity in that the CP's focus is on some technical agendas in the Legco such as proposing political reform and introducing green economy, while the LSD adopts a radical approach, by mobilizing people to take to the streets. This inevitably minimizes the DP's influence and possibilities of further cooperation within the pro-democracy camp.

Moreover, the LP will probably follow the path of the Hong Kong Progressive Alliance (HKPA) through integrating with the DAB. The HKPA had mainly focused on functional constituency elections before 2004. It had hesitated to go further in taking part in direct geographical constituency elections. The party eventually could not get any seats in the direct election which led to its merger with the DAB in 2005. Similarly, the LP had an intense debate on whether the party should continue to join the geographical constituency elections after the 2008 Legco Elections, and this debate had already led to the withdrawal of 3 Legislators (functional constituency) from the party. Since participation of the geographical constituency elections is the only way to increase the LP's legitimacy and popularity among Hong Kong people, in view of the fact that most of the Legco members will be elected through direct elections in 2020, the LP will probably fall apart if the party cannot convince its members on its stance

towards direct election. Nevertheless, the LP is unlikely to recover anytime soon which leaves the DAB as the only dominant pro-Beijing force at least for some years.

Last but not least, the LP's open criticism of the Chinese Liaison Office in Hong Kong not only confirmed Beijing's involvement in the Legco Elections, but also generated a rumour among the masses that the LP had been punished for not supporting the controversial legislation of the law on subversion, secession and sedition (Article 23) in 2003. The LP's accusation indeed challenged the principle of the "One Country-Two Systems" form of governance since Beijing was not supposed to manage the internal affairs of Hong Kong considering that elections were an extremely sensitive matter. While it remains to be seen whether Beijing's involvement in the Legco Elections will undermine the political trust of the Hong Kong people, the LP's case has certainly raised the attention of many pro-democracy parties, non-governmental organizations and international watchdogs. Beijing's punishment of the LP also serves as an example to other pro-Beijing political parties that they will probably lose Beijing's support in the future if they could not fulfil Beijing's expectations. Even the DAB has to bear the LP's example in mind because there has been an increase in pro-Beijing "independent" candidates such as Leung Mei Fun and Regina Ip. This means that the Beijing government can avoid putting all its eggs into one basket with its other sources of support. Therefore, we can expect that the DAB will work wholeheartedly for Beijing's interests in the coming future, which first and foremost is to stabilize Hong Kong society through supporting the current Hong Kong administration under the leadership of Donald Tsang.