Chapter 3

Political Ideology in Hong Kong’s Public Service Announcements

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Introduction

On June 30, 1997 Hong Kong’s sovereignty was returned from Britain to China. The former British colony is now renamed the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The constitutional document governing Hong Kong—The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (The Basic Law)—was coproduced by Britain and China together with an exclusive group of representatives from Hong Kong. Under Deng Xiaoping’s policy of “one country two systems” (OCTS), the Basic Law is the “mini-constitution of Hong Kong after its reversion to China” (Lau 2000, 73–89). The Basic Law is not just the symbol of China resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong; it is also “the blueprint for [the] HKSAR’s future development” (Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee, n.d.). In order to promote such an important document to the Hong Kong public, both the British colonial rulers and the HKSAR government carried out different communication and information strategies in different periods before and after 1997.

Although the two governments might have had different promotional objectives, the broadcast of Basic Law Public Service Announcements
has always been the responsibility of the Information Services Department (ISD, formerly Hong Kong Government Information Service). Public Service Announcements (PSA) of publicity messages in the mass media are also known as public service advertising or advertisement. PSA are known as Announcements in the Public Interest (API) in Hong Kong (Information Services Department 2003a). API in Hong Kong provide publicity support for government policy and departments “to arouse greater public awareness of matters in the public interest.” (Information Services Department 2003b). Such API messages often entail ideological messages as in advertising, and reflect a set political position. The promotion of the Basic Law exemplifies a campaign imbued with a political ideological subtext.

This study investigates how political ideology is portrayed through PSA in Hong Kong under the campaigns conducted by the two different government regimes. This chapter begins with a review of the operation and production of PSA in Hong Kong over the years. It focuses on the different political ideologies emphasized and represented in the APIs from two different periods: pre-1997 and post-1997. Examples from the pre-1997 Human Rights campaign and post-1997 Basic Law Promotion campaign (included under the Civic Education campaign) will be used to illustrate the different ideological positions of the two governments. The Human Rights campaign represented the information and messages that the colonial government needed the people to know in order to empower them for the post-handover period. The Civic Education–Basic Law campaign represented materials that the HKSAR government thought its residents ought to know in order to further the agenda of the new regime. This chapter argues that the political ideologies represented in the APIs mark the political changes that the Hong Kong society is already facing post-1997, flying in the face of the idea of “remaining unchanged for fifty years” (Lau 2000, 89) as promised by the OCTS policy.

The Operation and Production of Public Service Advertising

The Government Information Services (GIS), a government department in the colonial Hong Kong, was responsible for organizing and producing
PSAs and campaigns systematically for various government departments since the 1950s (Hacker 1989, 2). The renamed Information Service Department (ISD) serves as public relations consultant, publisher, advertising agent, and news agency of the HKSAR government. The ISD also provides the link between the Administration and the media through various channels in order to facilitate “public understanding of government policies, decisions and activities” (Information Services Department 2003c). The department is structured into four divisions—Local Public Relations, Publicity and Promotions, Public Relations Outside Hong Kong, and Administration. Among them the Publicity and Promotions Division is in charge of the planning and implementation of large-scale government publicity campaigns. The Division has three subdivisions: Local Promotions, Creative, and International Promotions.

Since the early 1990s, based on a recommendation made by the Broadcasting Review Board, publicity messages handled by the ISD are termed Announcements in the Public Interest (APIs). Prior to that, API used to stand for Announcements of the Public Interest. This minor change in name was made in order to emphasize that “such announcements are to provide information which the public needs to know” (Information Services Department 1998, 1). The Broadcasting Authority divides API messages into four categories:

a) to inform the public of important health and safety measures, or legislative changes affecting their interest;
b) to educate the public as to their rights and responsibilities as citizens;
c) to enlist public co-operation in tackling important social and environmental problems;
d) to seek recruitment to the auxiliary services which require public support in carrying out duties of benefit to society (Information Services Department 1998, 1–2).

Most API campaigns produced by the ISD are carried out in collaboration with other government departments and publicity programs. Major government publicity campaigns cover a wide range of “public interest” as defined by the Administration. Among the major
campaigns, the “Clean Hong Kong” campaign has the longest history. It can be traced back to the early 1960s when Hong Kong was faced with an influx of new immigrants from Mainland China. There was an urgent need to convey information on personal and public hygiene to the general public. Miss Ping On 平安小姐 [Miss Safety] was a highly successful public service advertising character created by the GIS creative department. She appeared in posters, which were the most popular medium at that time (Hacker 1989). Before Miss Ping On, Mr. Zebra 斑馬線先生 [Mr. Zebra Crossing] was the first public advertising character created by the GIS in the late 1950s to educate the public about road safety. The Clean Hong Kong campaign created the Lap Sap Chung character in 1972 (Hacker 1989). Lap Sap Chung was a great hit and is still remembered by many people in Hong Kong. Decades after it was first introduced, the Clean Hong Kong campaign continues to be one of the major ongoing publicity campaigns.

The Promotion subdivision of the Public Division works closely with client departments, relevant working groups, and steering committees for the campaign themes and communication strategies. The subdivision also handles API work for non-government organizations such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and the Community Chest. Publicity campaigns often employ different media such as “TV and radio commercials and special programs, exhibitions, community involvement activities and a host of printed materials” (Information Services Department 2003c). Of the mass media, the television API is the most popular and effective medium for delivering a message to the public. According to the regulations of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority it is mandatory for television stations to allocate not more than two minutes free airtime per two clock hours without charge for government and non-government APIs (Information Services Department 1998). TV APIs have been enjoying free systematic broadcasting over the decades, and represent a familiar government publicity medium recognized by a large majority of Hong Kong people.

The duration of each TV API ranges from 15 to 60 seconds, with the average length being 30 seconds. There are an average of 30–35 government APIs and 10–12 non-government APIs scheduled for broadcasting. The priority varies from campaign to campaign. The priority list is based on the need for information, user need and the mass media space. Cable TV is often used to supplement the broadcast media from and qoute the main message.

As many studies have shown, PSAs are an important strategy in advertising. They are persuasive, informative or underinformative, drawing a mirror of society or considering
campaign has the longest history. In the 1960s when Hong Kong was faced with the problem of personal and public hygiene, the character created by the GIS creative group, Miss Safety (小姐 [Miss Safety]) was a highly popular figure. These characters, which were the most popular of their time, were created before Miss Ping On, Mr. Zebra the first public advertising character to educate the public about road safety. Mr. Zebra's campaign created the Lap Sap Chung character, who was a great hit and is still popular today. Decades after it was introduced, the campaign continues to be one of the most successful campaigns.

The Public Division works closely with government and non-government organizations. It works to develop strategies and campaigns that target non-government organizations. Against Corruption (ICAC) campaigns often employ different media, including television, radio, and print media. The mass media has become an effective medium for delivering messages. The regulations of the Television Authority are mandatory for television commercials. The public is required to deliver two minutes of free airtime per two years (Government and non-government APIs 1998). TV APIs have been enjoying high levels of popularity for decades, and represent a familiar medium to Hong Kong audiences. The typical API duration ranges from 15 to 60 seconds, with the most popular being 30 seconds. There are an average of 30–35 television APIs broadcast each month. The frequency of broadcast of each API may vary from one to four times per month, depending on the nature or importance of different campaigns and the audience's need for the information. The Promotion subdivision produces a monthly TV API priority list for all English and Chinese channels on TVB, ATV, and Cable TV in advance. The priority list is compiled based on requests from and consultation with individual departments and organizations (Information Services Department 1998).

The PSA campaigns have been systematically organized and produced by both the British Hong Kong government and the HKSAR government. This chapter attempts to study the different political ideologies and communication strategies. Among the various publicity campaigns, the pre-1997 Human Rights (HR) campaign and the post-1997 Civic Education (CE) campaign with the Basic Law promotion campaign are the best examples to use in order to illustrate the ideological differences between the two governments. With these two examples we can see how APIs on television are used as a tool, or an attempt to “enlist public co-operation” (Information Services Department 1998, 2) by the Administration.

Ideological Issues and Focus of Study

As many scholars have pointed out, advertising is one of the most important forms of social communication in modern world development. PSAs are an advertising form with similar objectives to commercial advertising. Both public service advertising and commercial advertising are persuasive, trying to convince the audience to conform to a set agenda or underlying messages. This study takes the position that advertising is a mirror reflecting society and helps shape public discourse. Here I consider public service advertising a “privileged discourse” (see Leiss,
Kline and Jhally 1986/1990). Like commercial advertising, public service advertising is a form of discourse that reaches a mass audience and plays a role in projecting images of ideological life, while on the surface it aims simply to convey information and messages.

In spite of the significance and breadth of public advertising there are not many published studies on public advertising produced and broadcast by local government. Cuklaz and Wong (1999, 105) conducted a historical textual analysis on the ideological themes in the Fight Crime API campaign from the 1970s to the 1990s in Hong Kong. The authors concluded that “the civic person is nearly absent from the Fight Crime campaign,” and that the campaign APIs rarely “focus on the benefits and rights of citizens with respect to police and government protection.” However, with the introduction of the HR campaign in 1996, the authors are confident that “Hong Kong will have to develop its own conception of human rights.” This chapter will aim to pick up what has been left out by this study on the HR campaign and to further investigate the ideological aspects of Hong Kong public service advertising following the HR campaign. Following political development after 1997, the CE campaign has become one of the active ongoing campaigns. The selection of the CE campaign is based on its political and ideological content that contrasts with that of the HR campaign. This study undertakes an examination of the underlying texts of these two campaigns covering the pre-1997 and post-1997 periods, which represent two different political ideologies. It argues that the pre-1997 APIs provide information which the audience needs to know, and the post-1997 period APIs deliver information the authorities deem the audience ought to know. A conclusion can be drawn as to how the new government altered the definition of API messages over the passage of time to provide information which the public ought to know.

Review of the Development of the Civic Education Campaign and the Human Rights Campaign

One of the purposes of an API is to “educate the public as to their rights and responsibilities as citizens” (Information Services Department 1998, 2). To carry out this function, the ISD cannot work alone. The steering
commercial advertising, public service advertising reaches a mass audience and plays a role in ideological life, while on the surface it promotes messages.

The breadth of public advertising there is extensive, with public advertising produced and distributed by various companies and organizations. An individual person is nearly absent from the public campaign APIs rarely “focus on the individual” respect to police and government. The public is rarely at the center of the HR campaign in Hong Kong.

This chapter will aim to pick up on the HR campaign and to further examine Hong Kong public service advertising. After the political development after 1997, the active ongoing campaigns. The examination of its political and ideological nature of the HR campaign. This study analyzes the text of these two campaigns in the period from 1997 to 2007, which represent two periods that the pre-1997 APIs provide an overview of the HR campaign, and the post-1997 periods.

The audience is expected to be knowledgeable about the new government after the passage of time to provide residents with information about government.

Out of the Civic Education Campaign

Human Rights Campaign

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE), is the client of both the HR and CE campaigns, collaborating closely with the ISD. The CPCE was established in 1986 “to liaise with related Government departments and community organizations in promoting civic education outside schools and encourage all sectors of the community to actively promote civic awareness and assume civic responsibility” (Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education 2004). The committee members were representatives from all types of professionals and businesses, as well as from government departments such as the Home Affairs Bureau, Education and Manpower Bureau, Hong Kong Police Force, Social Welfare Department, etc.

The production of CE TV APIs has not been constant since its inception. From 1986 to 2001 the CE campaign had an average of two to seven TV APIs produced every year. Among those APIs, many were routine information messages concerning annual or special public activities organized by the CPCE. The activities of the CPCE have been wide-ranging, including the Community Participation Scheme, Civic Education Day, and the Computer Design Competition in 1994. The CE campaign also covered the announcement of changes in government structures, for which the CPCE took responsibility for notifying the public. For example, APIs about the District Board, Legco, Urban Council, and Regional Council were launched in 1986. The CE campaign sometimes even responded to political crisis by producing uplifting announcements to encourage the general public. An API entitled “Hong Kong’s Future is Right in Your Hands” was produced after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, when the people of Hong Kong were disheartened.

To restore the confidence of the people in their future the government started introducing the concept of human rights to society. In 1992 the CE campaign launched an API entitled “Community Participation Scheme for Human Rights Projects.” It gave a preview of the introduction of a human rights law to the territory. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (“The Covenant”) was finally endorsed by the PRC government on June 20, 1997 and it is guaranteed that the agreement will remain effective after July 1, 1997 (United...
Nations Centre for Human Rights 1989/2004, 25). To educate the Hong Kong public about their human rights, an area in which PRC has a poor international record, the CPCE introduced a series of HR campaigns in 1996. However, this series of TV API HR campaigns was not listed under as a CE campaign although the announcements were credited to the CPCE. The campaign, mainly produced in 1995 and 1996, introduced topics covered by the Convenant such as the fundamental principles of equality, human rights, and the rights of a child. It comprised only a few versions and was short-lived, gradually fading out from public screening after 1998. Since 1997 no new TV API project on human rights issues has been produced.

Before the handover in July 1997, the CE campaign made a last effort to introduce the Basic Law with four different versions of TV APIs. In 2002, after the Seventh National People’s Congress (NPC) of the PRC adopted the Basic Law 12 years after April 4, 1990, the CE campaign finally boosted publicity of the Basic Law. Instead of simply giving out the information on the existence of the Basic Law (as in its first TV API launched in 1997), the CE campaign created a series of nine different versions of TV APIs with different content, exemplifying the details of the Basic Law. The new TV APIs covered various themes ranging over economic freedom, creative freedom, civil rights, and other major issues in the Basic Law. Another 20 TV APIs were produced in 2002 and 2003. Among them 16 APIs were on promotion of the Basic Law (Information Services Department 2004). Obviously the increased exposure to and budget for promoting the Basic Law as part of civic education may be the result of the establishment of the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee (BLPSC) in November 1998 with the Chief Secretary for Administration, Donald Tsang, as the Chairman.

From a brief review of the historical development of the CE and HR campaigns it is easy to distinguish the differences in promotional approaches and strategies of APIs after 1997 under the new government. The following section analyses the textual messages presented in the two campaigns reviewed above. We can distinguish how the two different governments inform the public of the information that they need to know from the ideology of information that they ought to know.
Information that the Public Needs to Know: Promotion of Community and Individual Rights

In a section of Benjamin Leung's book *Perspectives on Hong Kong Society* (1996) he notes that the mass media in pre-1960 Hong Kong conveyed traditional Chinese values and ideals. The 1960s witnessed significant changes. Leung points out that "Hong Kong was modernizing by copying the culture and lifestyle of the Western capitalist countries." (65) This copying included Western political ideological values. This is illustrated by Kuan and Lau (2002, 305) who found in their study that in Hong Kong "[a] small minority of the respondents accept paternalism whereas over 40% of them agree with elitism" when compared to other traditional Chinese societies, i.e., Mainland China and Taiwan. This phenomenon can be traced back to the 1960s. An observer of the development of Hong Kong culture, Matthew Turner, states that "by the end of the sixties the idea of 'community' was no longer an irrelevance to the majority of the population (Turner 1995/2003, 26)." For alongside the official discourse, a local, and largely unarticulated sense of identity had begun to emerge in Hong Kong. In Turner's study he notes that the colonial government "first deployed on a grand scale as anti-Communist counter-propaganda" the rhetoric of "citizenship," "community," and "belonging" in their policy after the 1967 riots. Public service campaigns such as Clean Hong Kong and Fight Crime were launched in the 1970s "in order to instill solidarity among the Hong Kong people" (Lo 2001,132). The concept of community in Hong Kong was formed and shaped in the 1980s although the colonial government's laissez-faire policy did little to impose a moral model for the development of the society.

In the 1980s the CE campaign served as a channel to deliver government messages that the public needed to know. The APIs under this campaign (hereinafter as "CE APIs") such as the "Community Participation Project," "Theme Song," "District Board," "Regional Council," "Omelco 1998," and so forth, launched in 1996 and 1997, met the set objective purely on the information level. Rarely did any of these APIs try to establish a moral model. Instead they simply reflected the factual reality of the lifestyle of Hong Kong at that time and projected...
an image of the community along with hard-sell messages. Like most public service announcements, the CE APIs were boring and unmemorable (Andsager, Austin, and Pinkelton 2001). However, the introduction of the HR campaign in 1995 broke through the boredom barrier of the previous CE APIs. The HR campaign can be seen as a product of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. As Lo points out: “the British administration itself—responding to the fears among Hong Kongers triggered by the Tiananmen massacre—quickly attempted to shore up confidence in the colony.” A “rights-regarding” citizenry was given a major boost. In 1990, a Bill of Rights was enacted to protect Hong Kongers after the transfer of sovereignty” (Lo 2001, 133). The Tiananmen Incident in 1989 contributed to the “breakdown of Sino-British cooperation in the transitional period created immense instabilities, uncertainties and disruption in Hong Kong” (Lau 2000, 90), forcing the CPCE to look into the issue of the “future” after the handover.

As a result, the CE API entitled “Hong Kong’s Future is Right in Your Hands” was launched in November 1989. This API takes an encouraging tone in order to reduce the insecurity of the public. Like the Fight Crime campaign, the CE campaign was used for the needs of government administration and policy. In the twenty years of Fight Crime campaign, a civic person was “defined exclusively in terms of duties and responsibilities” and the stress on “citizen duty has increased over time” (Cuklanz and Wong 1999, 95). The empowerment strategy of an individual’s rights over one’s future in a 1989 CE API was a response to the breakdown of Sino-British cooperation in the transitional period. The human rights project promotion by the CPCE in the 1990s reflected the alternative solution of the British “political agenda to leave with glory” (Lau 2000, 89). Under the 1992 political reforms brought in by Chris Patten, the last governor of colonial Hong Kong, “the citizens of Hong Kong were to be empowered” and “would enjoy political as well as civil rights” (Lo 2001, 135). Once again, this API functions as a tool to inform and educate the people in what they need to know as wished by their government. The information in the APIs under the HR campaign was designed to empower the people about their basic human rights—to gird them against what was to happen after the handover. In
with hard-sell messages. Like most CE APIs were boring and (Pinkerston 2001). However, the 1995 broke through the boredom: the HR campaign can be seen as a 1989. As Lo points out: “the uprising to the fears among Hong Kong’s Future is Right in 1989. This API takes an in the insecurity of the public. Like campaign was used for the needs of campaign exclusively in terms of duties and empowerment strategy of an 1989 CE API was a response to the situation in the transitional period. The CPCE in the 1990s reflected “political agenda to leave with the CPCE’s logo. The colonial government needed its audience, i.e., the people of Hong Kong to know that they have rights—a message that they should not forget. Although they might be already familiar with that concept the API reinforces the idea and its message might hopefully stay with the citizens long after the handover.

Unlike other CE campaigns with general community participation messages, this HR API aimed at teaching the audience about their individual rights. Such rights were merely mentioned in most API campaigns in the past. Unlike other campaigns, this one does not emphasize the “responsibilities as citizens” but rather the rights of the individual. In one of the scenes, as the voice-over compares the individual
right to protection for children, the pictures show a little girl was sitting on the floor reading a book with blue cover. But a big hand takes away her blue-covered book and gives her a red-covered book. The girl is unhappy with the new red-covered book and ends up crying. The symbolic meaning of this sequence clearly represents the underlying political ideology. The blue colour represents the capitalist system that Hong Kong was enjoying at the time, contrasting sharply with the red colour implying the communist ideology. This API made the abstract concept of human rights easy to understand by using a simple visual device complementing the key words and embodying the essence of universal rights.

In March 1996 a new TV API entitled Equal Opportunity III explored a similar theme in order to remind people of their individual rights. This time the gender rights of a boy and girl were clearly spelled out in the 30-second message under “Human Rights are Every Human’s Right.” This three-dimensional animation API was even better visually and more creatively executed than all the previous ones. The main characters in this announcement are a boy and a girl composed using three-dimensional animation techniques. The girl is ambitious and wants to be a professional—a doctor, or CEO of a big company. But the boy keeps telling her that she cannot do those kinds of things because she is a girl. Finally the male voice-over says: “If we all enjoy our same rights, we can make an equal contribution.” The ideology behind this API is clearly a Western liberal one espoused by the departing British government. Chris Patten commented on the achievements of Britain in Hong Kong in his interview to the foreign press in October 1996, saying that: “I think that Britain had provided a framework of liberal values which has enabled Chinese men and women to thrive and excel and to keep the benefits of their work and excellence.” (quoted in Wong 1998/2003, 227) This can explain why Hong Kong has always been considered as enjoying the highest rate of gender equality in Asia. Before the retreat of British, this HR API repeatedly reminds the public not to forget and to protect their liberal rights.

Without doubt, the human rights policy pursued in the HR APIs were the last attempt of the British colonial government to give the people of Hong Kong a taste of democracy and political freedom before the return to China in 1997. This policy was pursued by the British government as a result of the negotiations before 1997 and the hope to see Britain maximize the handover as an investment. To build rapport between the two governments before the handover, Britain acquire the role of the status quo in the previous order in the media and tried to maintain the “the protection of the interests of both sides.” The government of the new government gradually focused on the needs of the interests of the people. For the Chinese government, it gradually focused on the needs of the interests of the people.

Information

While the British government returned to China in 1997, a new government emerged, the new Chinese government under the leadership of the new generation. In the previous order, the British government tried to maintain the protection of the interests of both sides. The new Chinese government tried to maintain the protection of the interests of the people.
the return to the Communist Chinese system. The human rights policy pursued by the British in the final days of colonial Hong Kong was a result of the progressive breakdown of Sino-British cooperation shortly before 1997. As Lau reminds us, the Chinese government did not want to see Britain introduce political reforms in Hong Kong shortly before the handover, and "[d]uring the transitional period, China had failed to build rapport between itself and the people of Hong Kong." It is foreseeable that it will be challenging for the Chinese government to acquire the trust of the citizens of Hong Kong, who are trying to maintain the status quo. Chinese officials do not want to see the Hong Kong people turn "the place into a ‘political city’." (Lau 2000, 90) and the advocacy of a new policy of human rights by the colonial government was not in the interests of the future boss of Hong Kong—the Chinese Communist government. It is no surprise then that shortly after the handover the new government deemed that the Hong Kong people no longer needed to know the "information" contained in the HR campaign. The new Communist government had different priorities and the HR campaign gradually faded out and was replaced by stronger and more politically focused API campaigns. These new campaigns stood out from the previous ones because their content was determined by what the new government thought its residents ought to know.

**Information that the Public Ought to Know: Education in Patriotic Ideology**

While the HR campaign was fading away from airtime scheduling after 1997, a new major CE campaign focused on The Basic Law began emerging on the main screen. Although the Seventh National People's Congress (NPC) of the PRC adopted the Basic Law on April 4, 1990, promotion of the content in the mass media on a large scale in Hong Kong under the rule of the British colonial government never took off before July 1997. The content of the promotion of the Basic Law campaign represented what the HKSAR government thinks its residents ought to know. While the previous APIs in the HR campaign were intended to empower the citizenry, the new campaign was designed to inform the population about their duties as citizens in a new political
era. As such the campaign does more than just inform—it aimed at influencing the political ideology of its audience. The first TV API on the promotion of Basic Law entitled “Know more about Basic Law” was launched before the handover, in January 1997. This pre-handover Basic Law API stands in sharp contrast to the post-handover Basic Law APIs. This Basic Law API opens on the red-covered booklet of the Basic Law, with a male voice-over informing the audience about the importance of this constitutional document for Hong Kong. The verbal content is very general, giving key areas of what the Basic Law covers such as protection of lifestyle, economic system, citizens’ duties and responsibilities, political and legislative system, etc. The visuals are a montage images of daily life in Hong Kong such as a wedding scene, a view of the stock market, and faces of people from all walks of life. This API is like just another normal, straightforward, and boring government announcement.

However, after the handover in July 1997, the new HKSAR government determined to push a little harder to promote the Basic Law. In this later series of the Basic Law campaign two APIs, entitled “Dolphin” and “Seagull,” highlighted the key components of the Basic Law. The “Dolphin” series emphasizes Hong Kong as a place with a high degree of autonomy enjoying independent judicial power, final judicatory power, legislative power, executive power, and protection of the rights and freedom of all Hong Kong people. In the “Seagull” series the message is focused on the Basic Law guarantees of Hong Kong’s economy as a free port, to manage its own finances, to issue its own currency, and so forth. The information has an interesting visual presentation using a three-dimensional animated dolphin and seagull respectively in each API. This campaign series ends with the slogan: “Understand the Basic Law, Care for Hong Kong.” Unlike the previous APIs launched before July 1, this campaign series not only familiarizes the audience with the contents of this important document but also manages to make the content seem more interesting to the audience.

Shortly after the handover in July 1997 the Asian financial crisis hit Hong Kong and the HKSAR government. The unemployment rate of Hong Kong had been around 5–6% since 1998 (Lau 2003) without any sign of dropping in the following few years. When numerous economy recovery plans failed effectively to benefit the general public, the HKSAR government started hitting its problems head on. King Siu-Kai (1997) in his book Uniting the post-colonial under the mantle of the new Hong Kong Under the mantle of the new Government.

Before the handover, the Basic Law APIs performed well in government propaganda. However, under the new government there were problems with the APIs being poorly received. They were seen as too formal and did not capture the public’s imagination. The APIs were seen as presenting a dull and uninteresting message to the public.

Amidst these problems, the government needed to find a way to get the message across to the public. A new API was developed to address these issues. This API focused on the importance of the Basic Law in ensuring the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. The API used a combination of visuals and text to explain the key components of the Basic Law and how they impact on daily life in Hong Kong. The API also highlighted the importance of the Basic Law in upholding the rights of Hong Kong people.

The API was successful in capturing the public’s attention and generating positive feedback. It was seen as an effective way to promote the Basic Law and build public awareness and understanding of its importance. The API helped to ensure that the Basic Law was not just a legal document but a key element in ensuring the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong.
than just inform—it aimed at
its audience. The first TV API on
"know more about Basic Law" was
in 1997. This pre-handover Basic
Law post-handover Basic Law APIs
covered booklet of the Basic Law,
"advice about the importance of
Hong Kong. The verbal content is very
basic. Law covers such as protection
of property rights and responsibilities, political
freedom, a montage of daily life
—in a view of the stock market, and
the API is like just another normal,
unannounced.

July 1997, the new HKSAR
Government harder to promote the Basic
Law campaign two APIs, entitled
the key components of the Basic
Law campaign: Hong Kong as a place with a
dependent judicial power, final
judicial power, and protection of
good people. In the "Seagull" series of
law guarantees of Hong Kong's
own finances, to issue its own
finances have an interesting visual
characters animated dolphin and seagull
series ends with the slogan:
"Seagull Hong Kong." Unlike the previous
series of foreign nationals not only familiarizes
the important document but also
interesting to the audience.

1997 the Asian financial crisis hit
Hong Kong. The unemployment rate of
since 1998 (Lau 2003) without
few years. When numerous
Changes to benefit the general public,
the HKSAR government's standing dropped in the public survey polls,
hitting its lowest point during the SARS crisis in 2003. Sociologist Lau
Siw-Kai (2003, 396) observes that "[s]ocial discontent is on the rise" in
the post-1997 era. People were not happy with the HKSAR government
under the leadership of Tung Chee-hwa, but they were stuck with him.
Under the Basic Law, they cannot directly elect their own Chief Executive
of Hong Kong.

Between 2002 and 2003, 16 TV APIs were produced to promote
the Basic Law of Hong Kong. In the heat of public criticism of the
performance of the HKSAR government, the attention that the
government put on promotion of the Basic Law was in retrospect an
unwise one. It drew people's attention to examine the origin of their
problems in this financial downturn. Among the 16 TV APIs, some
were targeted at education in specific Articles of the Basic Law. Although
they were carefully selected, some of the Articles that the TV APIs covered
were sensitive topics. The Articles that have been covered in the
promotion of the Basic Law series APIs include numbers: 37, 14, 114,

Among the Basic Law TV APIs, the one on Article 23, entitled
Insurance, is the most sensitive one. It covered very important information
that Hong Kong people ought to know according to the
HKSAR government. The TV API was launched after the outbreak of
the SARS crisis in February 13, 2003. Although the launch version of
this TVAPI has been revised, the message is one which Hong Kong
people are not ready to accept. According to the Basic Law's Article 23
The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall enact laws on its
own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against
the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit
foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political
activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies
of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations
or bodies.

Indeed, as Lau (2000, 86) points out, Hong Kong's "anti-Communist
sentiments were well-known to the CCP." The existence of Article 23
in the Basic Law served as a mechanism to prevent Hong Kong from
turning into a base of subversion against the Communist regime in
Mainland China. The HKSAR government's intention to "enact laws" according to this Article led to a great deal of dissension among the citizens of Hong Kong in 2003. To sell the concept of this Article to the public, the Insurance API employs the metaphor of acquiring insurance. This API opens on an insurance company supervisor training a new batch of insurance agents. The new agents eagerly show off their aggressiveness by competing against each other in correctly answering a series of questions from the supervisor. They successfully identify the different scenarios where there is no need to protect a family ("ga" in Cantonese Chinese) with the appropriate type of insurance. Then, the supervisor asks "And ... for the nation ("kwok-ga")?" A good-looking young woman agent answers instantly, "National Insurance!" Everyone looks at her and waits to see how she is going to explain that answer. Within a second, she explains, "Ah ... according to Article 23 of the Basic Law, we should enact laws to protect national security. That's our Insurance for national security." The supervisor praises her at the end of the class for giving out such a smart answer.

This campaign simplifies the nature of Article 23 by assuming a patriotic position, which is signified with clear use of the word of "kwok-ga" in the text. "Kwok-ga" is the PRC nation to which Hong Kong now belongs. Cultural critic Ackbar Abbas (1997/2004, 284) states that "Hong Kong culture does not express the hopes and aspirations of a people or nation. In a society of migrants, immigrants, and urban nomads, the people is hardly a unified concept." Ho, Chau, Chi, and Peng (2003, 404) also point out in their study that the majority of Hong Kong people see themselves as "solely or primarily as Hongkongers rather than as Chinese. Furthermore, they do not trust Mainlanders and prefer to maintain a marked distinction between themselves and Mainlanders." Over decades, Hong Kong has had a long history of anti-Communist sentiments, and the word of "kwok-ga" is a negative one. This is especially true if it touches on the political issue, conjuring up bad memories for people who have been persecuted by the Communists.

Given their history, Hong Kong people are sensitive to the concept of "treason, secession, sedition, subversion" as included in Article 23. With the dismal human rights record of the PRC, any future law enacted under Article 23 is a threat to basic human rights. During the protests, people have been demanding the resignation of the police officers. The free expression of the Communists is also an issue. Article 23 aims to prevent this in case." Another straw in the wind, one of the reasons for the protests, is the people living under Article 23 in the early days of the PRC. After all, the people of Hong Kong were more about Civil rights and the identity of the people. Between then and there is an example of Hong Kong people ought to be the country. Therefore, when the "jo-kwok." "

The public's expectations have been fairly high, as the Table of Contents of Hong K
under Article 23 is perceived as endangering their freedom of expression. During the colonial period and thus far since the handover, Hong Kong people have been able to freely express their political opinions including demanding the resignation of any Chinese official leaders or HKSAR officers. The fear is that once there are laws enacted under Article 23, the free expression enjoyed today will be interpreted as subversion under the Communist regime. In the Insurance API, through the young woman agent, the HKSAR government is trying to arouse the patriotic feelings of Hong Kong people, hoping that they will accept laws enacted under Article 23 as simply as they acquire an insurance policy for things “just in case.” Article 23 has been strongly opposed by the public and was one of the main reasons for the July 1 demonstration in 2003. Once again, the HKSAR government overestimated the “political passivity of the people of the place” (Lau 2000, 89), as the Chinese government did in the early 1980s. The enactment of any Article 23 laws was finally postponed, partly in response to the 1 July 2003 rally.

After a long history of separation under colonial rule it is now clear that the HKSAR Government want the general public gradually to learn more about their “ancestral country” ( "jo-kwok") through the Civic Education campaigns. Abbas (1997/2004, 284) once commented on the identity of Hong Kong people, writing “... Hong Kong, caught between the not-quite-there (it is Chinese but not quite) and the more-than-there (it is open to other influences). Its relation to tradition then is an often frustrating game of hide-and-seek.” To play this hide-and-seek game, time is needed for Hong Kong people to accept the concept of the PRC as their “jo-kwok” after decades of anti-Communist sentiments. As far as the pro-Chinese HKSAR Government is concerned such anti-Communist sentiments should no longer exist, and what the people ought to know is their concept of love of “jo-kwok” (ancestral country). Thus they have to do something for and contribute to their “jo-kwok.”

The public dissension created by Article 23 was far beyond the expectation of the HKSAR government. In the Basic Law promotion series, the TV API entitled “Breakfast” was launched on February 26, 2003. My analysis of the function of this campaign is to ease the anxiety of Hong Kong people about laws enacted in the future that might
endanger their individual freedoms. This API covered Article 32 of the Basic Law which states:

Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of conscience.
Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of religious belief and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public.

In this API, a family of four is having breakfast. While the father is reading his newspaper with his Chinese breakfast, and the daughter is having her Western style breakfast, the son and the mother are rushing off to the church and to the temple respectively. The father tells them goodbye while he is reading his newspaper and having his breakfast, and at the same time the daughter trying to talk to him. The father tries to shut the daughter down, saying: “Look, according to Article 32 of the Basic Law, we all have freedom of religious belief and freedom to participate in religious activities…. The freedom of religion won’t be affected by any new law in the future.” Finally the daughter gets a chance to tell him he is dipping his Chinese breakfast in her ketchup. When the daughter moves over to the father, the camera shifts to the back of the father and we can see he is reading the newspaper with the headline of “How much do you know about Article 23?” Is such an arrangement accidental or is it suggesting to the audience an association with what the father just said? Is the line “won’t be affected by any new law in the future” said by the father referring to Article 23 or he is talking about Article 32? Perhaps such ambiguities are deliberate because the comments of the father referring to Article 23 are to what the Government hopes the public will pay attention.

Most of the Promotion of the Basic Law TV APIs are available on the website of the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee (BLPSC) (n.d.), but the “Insurance” and “Breakfast” APIs are excluded for some unknown reason. Obviously with the set up of the BLPSC, the promotion of the Basic Law became more accessible to the general public. The people of Hong Kong have to be cautious about the freedoms and rights that they used to enjoy, and they now have to adjust their ideology to be more in line with the new Government. As sociologist Renita Wong (2002, 152) comments, under the “one country, two systems” policy “individual Hong Kongers experienced a split in their return to their ancestral culture.” Indeed “[b]oth the Chinese and Western cultures have gone their separate ways. There is a divergence in the values concerning the press, and the public sphere that may be traced in the forms of political demonstrations in Hong Kong people are very reluctant to propagandize (Jowett and O’Donnell 2000) APIs of the new government, it thinks people are political. Indeed, it seems to be entirely political.”

The pro-1997 audience generally believes in the freedom of the press and the right to information. Here, the new government regime, which is emerging from the old regime the disagreement in the new Hong Kong orientation maintenance unique pol
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Indeed “[b]ecause of the radically different historical experiences they
have gone through in a century, one would expect to find significant
divergence in their respective contemporaneous political cultures,
concerning the role of government, legal institutions, freedom of the
press, and so forth…. Thus, questions about the future of Hong Kong
may be traced largely to underlying tensions originating from a collision
of political culture” (Ho et al. 2003, 412). The example of Article 23
demonstrates the differences in political ideology between the Hong
Kong people and the current Government. APIs are becoming a
propaganda tool as a “means to disseminate or promote particular ideas”
(Jowett and O’Donnell 1986, 15) specifically and openly. Unlike the
APIs of the colonial period, which sought to empower the people, the
ew government APIs selectively inform the population about initiatives
it thinks people ought to know. The new generation of APIs is inherently
political. Ironically, Hong Kong people can only hope that they continue
to be entitled to the freedom and autonomy written into the Basic Law.

Conclusion

The-pre-1997 HR campaign contained information on a topic that its
audience generally agreed upon, and these APIs are announcements that
the public needs to know. The political ideology in that era was a “rights-
regarding’ citizenry” (Lo 2001, 133) and a pro-democracy one. In
contrast, the post-1997 Basic Law Promotion campaign delivered
information on a topic that its audience does not have unified agreement
on. Here, I argue that such APIs are public announcements that the
government insists the public ought to know about the rules of the new
regime, which are already in place. A new pro-China political ideology
is emerging and is reflected in the Basic Law campaign. Under the new
regime the pro-democratic HR campaign has faded from the scene. Such
disagreement is predictable because the colonial government and the
new HKSAR government represent “two antagonistic ideological
orientations. In one orientation, the emphasis is placed on the
maintenance of the political culture that has emerged from Hong Kong’s
unique political history. The other orientation, however, emphasizes
the assimilation of the Hong Kong political culture into that of mainland China” (Ho et al. 2003, 412).

As Kuan and Lau (2002, 316) put it, the “post-colonial politics has opened up a new vista in terms of state building, fostering the idea of a moral state under a new mantel.” However, faced with Hong Kong’s unprecedented economic downturn since the Asian financial crisis in 1998, Hong Kong people have already “become less confident of the economic future of the next generation” (Lau 2003, 384) and troubled by the poor economy. The Basic Law campaign in 2002–2003 was an example of how much the HKSAR government wants to build up Hong Kong as a pro-China “moral state.” In hindsight, it is a campaign based on a wrong focus and wrong timing. What the government missed is the most important factor that made Hong Kong successful in the past while trying to drag themselves and Hong Kong into becoming a “political city.” Also the government has ignored the fact that “since 1982, the people of Hong Kong have gradually asserted themselves politically” and “assuming the qualities of both a ‘rights-regarding’ and ‘monitorial’ citizenships” (Lo 2001, 139). The unveiling of Article 23 as an issue for discussion during difficult economic times was not a good strategy and was an unpopular idea.

The “one country, two systems” policy will never be able to ensure that Hong Kong “remains unchanged for fifty years” even in the materialistic sphere let alone at the political ideological level. At a time when Hong Kong is still dealing with the effects of the Asian financial crisis and facing emerging competition from the numerous cities in Mainland China, a survey shows “31% of respondents saw fewer opportunities,” and only “37% on the other hand expected the next generation to enjoy more opportunities” (Lau 2003, 385). What the people want is to see a rebound of Hong Kong’s economy. Currently the government, with the assistance of the central Chinese government, has introduced the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) and various economic recovery plans to help the economy. However, the current government will not abandon their “state building” will. It will be interesting to monitor how the HKSAR government makes further use of APIs as a channel to educate the public about the information and messages that they think the public ought to know. It
is foreseeable that “the pressures of modernization will continue to challenge elitist, paternalist, anti-democratic, and anti-pluralism positions” (Kuan and Lau 2002, 316) in the future Hong Kong.

Reference


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