Opinion on the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive in 2017 and for Forming the Legislative Council in 2016

Submitted by:
S. M. Wong and UM-Bloggers
<http://blog.um-gallery.net>
3/5/2014

INTRODUCTION

This submission is adapted from the last two conclusive sections of an article on the myths of democracy written by us and published on our blog. The writing of this article was inspired by a private discussion on WhatsApp among a social group who are all old university graduates possessing good knowledge and rich social experience. To the astonishment of most people, an overwhelming disappointment to the pan democracy allies and tiredness of the endless political quarrels were uttered. A majority of their views were deviated from the perception of ordinary people which seems to admit that the main stream of public opinion is overwhelmingly biased to the pan democracy alliance. Obviously, it is too heavy for Hong Kong people, especially intellectuals, to discuss politics openly in a rational manner under the current political climate if they have just a little doubt over the viability or rationality of democracy as advocated by those activists who claim themselves democrats. A lot of them appear to be tough and solid; they simply do not accept deviant views. Politics is thus too hot for people who have their own belief to handle.

Pro-Democracy advocates have occupied the moral high ground all over the world since 90s. In addition to the explicit and implicit support from the world's most powerful allies which expressively and explicitly claims themselves democratic countries with their discourse power（話語權）, "democracy" is apotheosized to be an ethical icon gaining unconditional trust of people. Regrettably enough, in light of its dominant position in the grand political debate, pro-democracy advocates have become tougher, more aggressive and tend to be over confident in their belief.

It seems that the circulation of the myth of democracy is more extensive in those places without democratic culture. In the western democratic countries, people express their concern about the dilemma of democracy more than saying that it is a faultless model because people have long been living with governments claimed to be democratic. They are thus familiar with their political systems and have empirical experience in the inherent defects of the democratic government. Even ordinary people understand that there must be a trade off between the public good and private interest. Some people even query if their regime is still a democratic government or an aristocracy of "neo rich". Certainly, many of them are also convinced that democracy is still better than all other systems in spite of all its shortcomings due to their ignorance, arrogance or apathy about the outside world.

It is understood that the younger generations, or the so-called Y generation in fashionable terms, who have witnessed the corruption and failures of single party system in practical situations are driven to embrace the other side by their disappointment and resentment to the shortcomings of one side. As to the older generations, i.e. the X generation, except some hardliners who are preoccupied with prejudices or those who are assigned of political mission for their peculiar personal identity, they are relatively more reserved and skeptical of all ideologies on account of their empirical experience in the corruption of all political systems including democracy in spite of their attractiveness as theoretical models of Utopia. With no doubt, there are also or even more myths about single party system but its defects have been almost thoroughly exposed and myths busted by a lot of factual evidences in the last few decades.

RISKS ARISING FROM SOCIAL CONFLICTS AND RADICAL THOUGHTS

Democracy is not just a system of formalities and ritualities. In the absence of the prerequisites such as a long democratic tradition, comprehensive civic education and considerable quantity of sensible and responsible citizens, a democratic system may corrupt into variants of tyranny as all other regimes. In the

worst case, the social and political conflicts burst into violent confrontation or war. Moreover, the strong sentiment of the domestic democracy activists against the Chinese government can be easily associated with the separation insurrections or anti-China league. Though it seems to ordinary people that there is no solid evidence for proving that they have substantial connection with the extremists or terrorists, their behavior may be used for aiding the separation movements which are deemed to be a direct and hostile challenge to the state sovereignty and the well being of ordinary people, thus further undermining the mutual trust between the democracy activists and the central government. Fairly speaking, some of these activities have crossed the red line as prescribed in the treason or state security law of a normal country, including the western democratic countries.

Some populists, humanists, feminists and environmentalists have hijacked democracy and the "rule of law" to offer some certain social groups generous benefits or preferential rights, their activities have induced severe resentment among those good, honest and hard working people. **In short, when the majority rule overshadows all minority interest, it ends up with the <u>tyranny of majority</u>. When the protection of minority interest or the fight for fairness of the vulnerable corrupt into the pursuit of preferential rights that infringes the interest of the majority, it ends up with the <u>tyranny of hypocrite</u>. When every social groups claim that they represent justice and refuse to recognize and cooperate with the government led by administrative chief belonging to another rivalry party even though he or she is elected via a pre-agreed and legitimated process, it ends up with the <u>tyranny of barbarian.</u> When rivalry parties arbitrarily use radical means including violence to achieve their aims, it ends up with the <u>tyranny of mob</u>. All of these outcomes are featured by the dominance of violence and radicalism.**

We aware of the proposition of "**true suffrage**" and "**true democracy**" by some aggressive democracy activists who insist to allow popular involvement in the forthcoming election. Much of their believes are just groundless myths. With their radical standard for true democracy, notwithstanding the most outstanding western democratic countries are not qualified to be the genuine practitioners of democracy. Ironically, the systems prevail in some small countries in northern and Eastern Europe are even closer to the true democracy they propagate but most of them are suffering from various kinds of chaos or problems in governance for the existence of unresolvable social conflicts. We have reasons to suspect the viability of the so-called true democracy in the current context.

On the other hand, the conservative mind of the establishment and their indulgence of the rent seeking behavior of the elite class including the rich, blue blood, technical bureaucrats and professional people have created a hotbed for the growth of extremist thought among ordinary people. Rule of law and economic principles are used as the pretexts for rationalizing the unjust seizure of social resources by these privileged classes in the light that the institutional establishment including the legal and economic system are by default biased to them as free and fair competition is actually undermined by policies and legislation in favor of gigantic corporations possessing monopoly power in the market for the reasons of regulation, enhancement of service quality or else. If these "legal greed" are not contained, there will be a even bigger market place for the spreading of radical thought.

By taking advantages of the wide spreading grievances arising from the highly divided society, these rent seekers including both the privileged class and the visible and noisy social groups are maximizing their unjust interest by picking up and abusing some high sounding social, economic, political or metaphysical concepts like democracy, freedom, human rights, rule of law, free market competition, private ownership and so on arbitrarily for the satisfaction of their unrestrained desires. Our city is gradually transformed into an **M-shaped society** featured by graved polarization. The various poll tests on the public support of government which did not conform to a normal binomial distribution but were found unusually high frequency on two extreme groups have provided us a solid proof for the phenomenon of polarization reflected by the polarization of opinions. Even the benefit maximizing behavior arising from the polarization do not involve any organized political conspiracy, the objective effects on the society is disastrous. People divide into rivalry parties competing for exclusive tangible social resources and conflicted intangible rights in an irrational and unconcessional manner. The gain of one party always means the loss of others. Even worse, **the fight is not limited to a zero sum game but a total dead loss of the social well beings. The radical behavior of extremists, doctrinists and fundamentalists on the utmost ends of every social group in turn further incite their rivals to go to the other extreme in retaliation. Finally, the divergence of views and conflicts of interest among different social groups have caused the society to split into**

pieces resulting in the difficulties of governance which is unable to be resolved simply by a "true democratic system" deviced by "true referendum" as propagated. On the contrary, we are moving closer towards a chaotic state in which the society is suffering from a <u>vicious cycle of "riots against dictatorship for democracy" and "restoration of social order by authoritarian leadership against the tyranny of mob".</u>

In the last few centuries, the western countries have developed some kinds of mechanism to overcome part of the shortcomings of democracy while many problems remain unresolved. However, they reduce the whole system into a "one person one vote" universal suffrage system , export this over-simplified concept to the rest of the world, and tell all people that this system is capable of improving their current situation. Based on this information, pro-democracy advocates tend to believe that everything will be better off once democracy is adopted while evidences found in countries outside Western Europe and North America show that this is not true. The beautiful picture of democracy envisioned by many democratic movement activists is only founded on the ground of myths. As to the followers of this ideology in the rest of the world, a practical problem is that the democracy prevails in Western countries is not just so simple as what they propagate. Their genuineness is also not unquestionable. At most they are by nature some kinds of benevolent aristocracy where privileged class still dominate their societies and enjoy most of the national resources. Democracy in practical mode shares with all temporal political systems the same nature and functions which constitute a formal, nominal and institutional state machine for the facilitation of the governance of the ruling class over the rest of people. Whenever people are divided into the ruling class and the ruled class suppression, exploitation and power abuse will be inevitable. The chaos, genocide, terrorist attacks and civil wars in Africa, middle East, Latin America, South East Asia and Eastern Europe are factual evidences demonstrating the severe consequence of the implementation of such utopian principle in the absence of necessary preconditions for the proper functioning of democracy.

CONCLUSION

In spite of all the myths and shortcomings of democracy, we must admit that there may be currently no better ideologies available in the world which is so promising in the pursuit of personal freedom, dignity and equality. This conviction is best represented by the Winston Churchill's famous dictum with heavy sarcasm cited in Section 4.9 which apparently says that democracy is the worst form of government in the world but actually demeans all other political systems by saying that they are even worse (***Democracy is the worst form of government in the world, except for all those others that have been tried from time to time***). Albeit only very few democratic countries appear to be successful in practicing democracy, its demonstration effect and influence is magnificent. However, from a pragmatic and practical point of view, people are too brave and over-optimistic to tell that the whole world are ready for the migration to the current political system of a few western countries, let alone the accomplishment of the ideal type of democracy in theory.

Years of our personal experience in dealing with all walks of life is indeed very discouraging. We tend to accept that democracy is an end instead of the means to achieve itself. To our best understanding of democracy, we realize that it may recognize a good leader, endorse a right decision, or remove a bad government head from his office but very often fails to arrive at sensible solutions to practical problems. <u>**The success of democracy relies heavily on the good virtue of almost the entire population or at least a considerable portion of population whereas autocracy or aristocracy can function well with just a small fraction of benevolent and competent ruling elites. Theoretically speaking, the implementation of democracy is more difficult than other political system.**</u>

More than two thousands year ago, by expressing his admiration for the "commonwealth of great unity" (大同之治) which was a hybrid of democracy and socialism prevailing in the protohistory period of China, Confusius revealed his political ideal and explained his concession to the reality in a dialogue with his students after attending a ceremony. In the second part of his discourse, he humbly confessed that his competence was unable to realize the legendary political system. Back to the real world, he chose to accept the prevailing political order of the "peaceful and prosperous society" (小康之治）under the governance of aristocracy led by feudal princes who collectively recognized the supreme position of the king as their co-leader. The chaotic state of those countries pursuing democracy mentioned in previous paragraphs can best reflect the great wisdom of Confusious who envisaged the disaster resulted from aiming too high at an idealistic political system while neglecting the lack of necessary preconditions for accomplishing it including

the presence of eligible political leaders and a significant quantity of moral population. We have no intention to advocate a political system back to the time of Confusius but his practical or pragmatic manner towards the political reality should be valued and observed.

With democracy as one of the many goals of the social life of human beings, we should be working hard towards the establishment of democratic culture which should encompass the respect of rationality, protection of the minority interest, belief in peace and toleration of deviant views under the master rule of majority other than boundless freedom and human rights. There are already many proposals regarding the reform of the future electoral system representing the views of various social groups. We do not bother to provide any more but deem that we must keep advancing forward in a modest and prudential manner. **The representativeness of the nominees should be increased along with the enhancement of the morality and civic sense of the general public through an stepwise evolutionary process instead of a radical revolutionary reform.** The understanding and faithful adherence to all the fundamental principles (or the core values) by most of the people supported by factual evidence are the prerequisites for practicing democracy and approaching closer to its theoretical ideal type. All the radical ideas of boundless freedom, unrestrained human rights, great leap forward or shock therapy are highly risky as proven by the failures of many countries in which the democratic movements are hijacked by extremists in the last few decades. On the other hand, ignoring the public vow for fairness, justice, liberty and all other equitable human rights will add fuel to the radical democratic movement. We appeal to the public to give up both the most conservative and aggressive methods but go back to the right course featured by all the good qualities of human beings as social animal including rationality, sympathy, empathy, belief in peace and toleration of deviant views.

- END -

Encl.

S. M. Wong & UM-Bloggers, "Myths of Democracy", blog.um-gallery.net, May 1, 2014