

PS239T Final Project Report: Discussion on Constitution Issues in the Hong Kong LegCo

Chuyue Frances Huang

December 12, 2016

Background

As Hong Kong is about to host its election for chief executive in March 2017, the tension within the Hong Kong Legislative Council (abbreviated as “LegCo”) is growing. Recently, two legislators-elect from the Youngspiration party have been disqualified for supporting Hong Kong independence under oath. This recent development makes LeCo a key place for debate on consitutional issues.

The relationship between Hong Kong and China is governed by the ”Basic Law,” which is equivalenet to the constitution of Hong Kong. Yet it does not specify whether or not Hong Kong can hold free and fair elections, and specific provision are subject to Beijing’s interpretation. Therefore, the key here is to see if how the discussion on these key constitutional matters have progressed in the past 19 years.

Research Questions

By completing this project, I wonder to answer these following questions. First, how has the effectiveness of governance change since 1997? Is Hong Kong getting closing to become a democracy? Second, how has the discussion on key constitutional and electoral matters change in the past 19 years? If so, who are the most active legislators behind the discussions? Are members from the pan-democracy alliance really behind the discussions?

Data and Skills

To answer the first question, I collected the data from the World Bank, which includes a list of indicators for governance effectiveness. I then obtained a table with countries and their regions.

To answer the second question, I used the HK Legco open database for a list of council events on the six issues that fall under the category of "Constitutional Affairs." In particular, the more relevant sub-issues are press freedom, electoral matters and constitutional development. Using regex and extractMatches(), I extracted the names of the members and the names of the motions from the summary variable.

To get the names of the members, their parties and the affiliation of the parties (Pro-Beijing or Pan-democracy), I used XML to scrape the table from Wikipedia. Then I merged the table with the party information to the one with the council events. Lastly, I used wordcloud and ggplot to visualize the number of actions on the key policy issues and the key terms in the motions.

Result

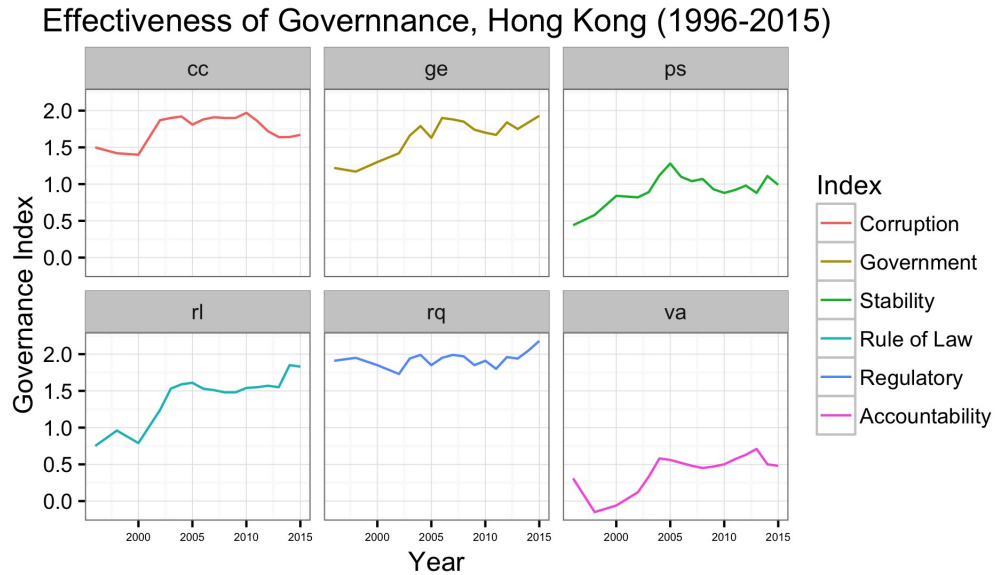


Figure 1: Effectiveness of Governance

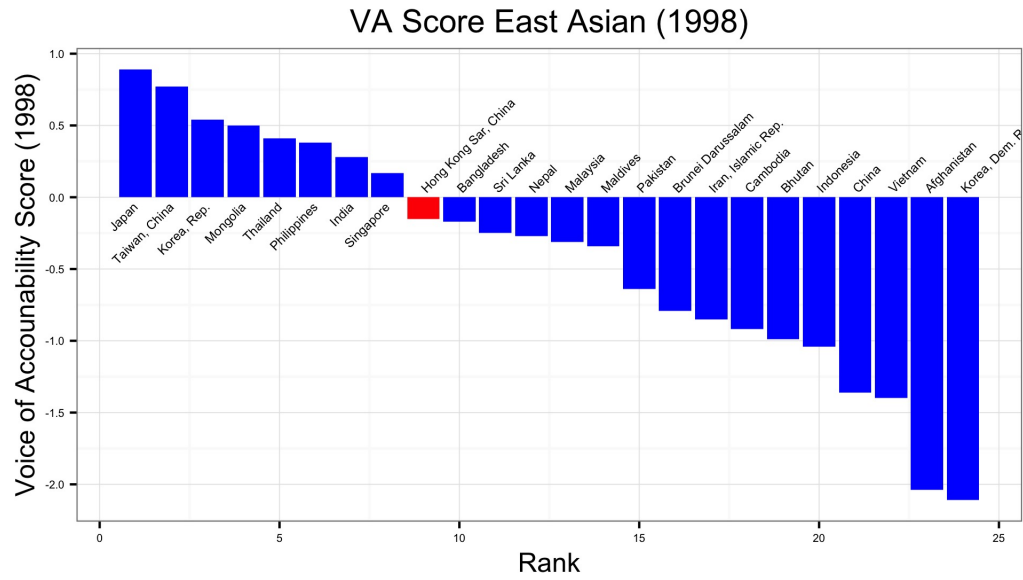


Figure 2: Accountability Score, 1998

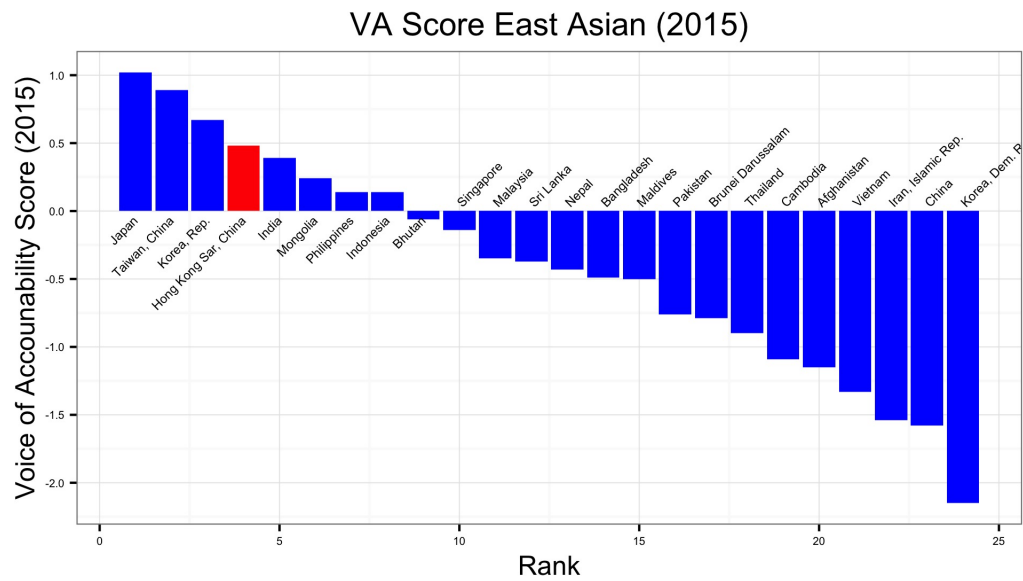


Figure 3: Accountability Score, 2015

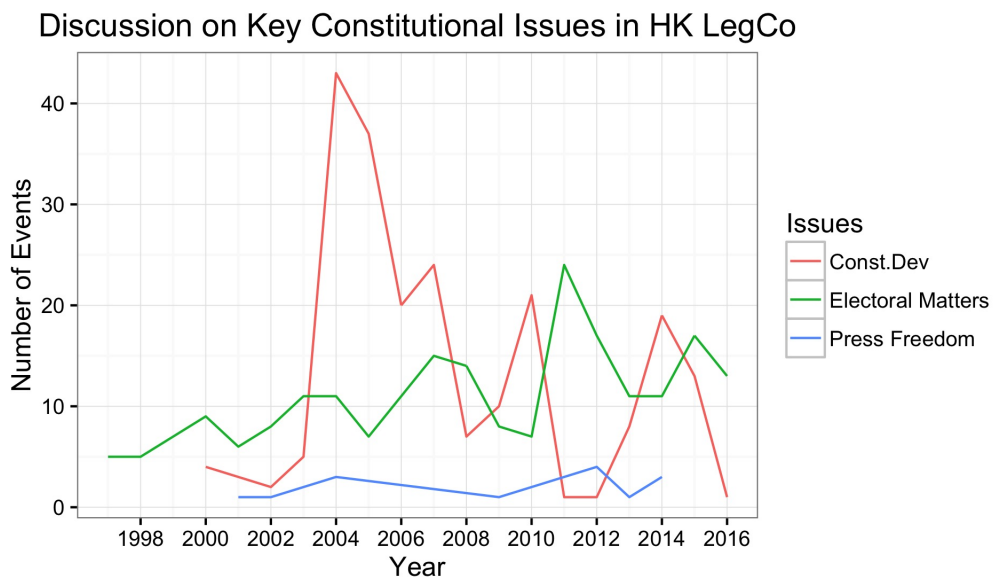


Figure 4: Numer of Discussions on Key Constitutional Issues



Figure 5: Word Cloud of Motion Topics