

**HONG KONG IN CHINA:
15 YEARS AFTER THE HANDOVER**

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Executive Summary

1. This year's July 1, which marked the 15th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China, saw the third largest turnout of protestors since the landmark 2003 demonstration. This is despite the signing of a ninth supplement to the trade pact between the city and mainland China before Hu Jintao's visit to Hong Kong.
2. Although Hong Kong has become more economically integrated with the Mainland over the years, there is still an apparent political disconnect between the two societies.
3. Political integration with the Mainland is complicated by a distinct Hong Kong identity, which has prevailed more than a decade after the handover. Earlier in June, a Hong Kong University poll shows that the proportion of those who identify themselves as Hong Kongers has been the highest since 1997, more than doubling those who see themselves as Chinese.
4. This is a reversal of the trend from 2000 to 2008, during which the proportion of respondents who identified themselves as Chinese citizens was on the rise.
5. Historically, the Hong Kong identity comprises two main elements: the locals' sense of entitlement in politics and the psychological resistance to CCP's ruling. Both are at odds with the national identity.
6. In addition, the local identity is bolstered by institutional settings including the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passport solely for Hong Kongers, as well as ordinary people's perception of life becoming more difficult due to the influx of mainlanders.
7. The influx of Mainlanders to Hong Kong in 2012 became a tipping point to public anger when the local people feel they are "strangers in their homeland".

The sentiment is, in turn, fanned by politicians who make use of it to get popular support.

8. Hong Kongers also distinguish the state from the Communist Party. Hong Kong's local identity however does not wholly repudiate the notion of being "Chinese" but defines it differently through linking the affection to Hong Kong's norms and values.
9. Closer economic ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland have sparked worries over whether "one country, two systems" is still in place and the risk of "mainlandisation" of Hong Kong. Cross-boundary projects such as the Hong Kong-Guangdong high-speed rail and others triggered strong opposition and public debate in Hong Kong.
10. Tensions between the national and local identities of Hong Kongers will not be easily resolved in the long run. It depends on whether the city's norms such as freedoms and rule of law can be preserved, whether the CCP will become politically liberal and whether Hong Kong can have its own universal suffrage.