

**POST-MATERIALISM: WHAT DIVIDES
YOUTH IN HONG KONG, TAIWAN
AND MAINLAND CHINA**

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Executive Summary

1. Post-materialism is a value orientation that gives priority to freedom of expression and participation in public affairs over fulfilling material needs such as economic and physical security.
2. Youth in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China have significantly different levels of post-materialist values, with Hong Kongers scoring the highest and Mainlanders the lowest. These differences are related to their different political orientations.
3. Across the three regions post-materialism promotes a cosmopolitan attitude towards different cultures and encourages individuals to challenge the government with protests.
4. There are however differences. In Hong Kong, post-materialism facilitates a strong local identity, which is not the case in the other two regions.
5. Citizens with post-materialism is less deferential to authority. This is true for youth in Hong Kong and Taiwan, but not for the young people in the Mainland.
6. Post-materialists tend not to accept institutions that limit individual freedom of expression, a reason why Hong Kong and Taiwan youth with non-material values are advocates of democracy. In the Mainland no such effect is observed.
7. Hong Kong, Taipei and Beijing policymakers may need to realise how value gaps between their younger generations could affect their relations with each other.
8. Beijing may want to accept the fact that economic achievements could win support in the Mainland, but may not work well in the other two societies.
9. On the other hand, material affluence is the foundation for pursuing post-materialist goals such as self-expression or autonomy. Youth in Hong Kong and Taiwan may need to be made aware that one of the most important preconditions for sustaining their political ideals is to develop the economy.