

# Academics paint a darker picture

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The Governor's vision for the future was too good to be true, academics said yesterday.

Mr Patten painted a rosy picture for Hong Kong and said that the territory could become "the New York of Asia".

It could be the principal financial centre of Asia and a vital link between the West and China, he said.

Hong Kong would surge, and others would look upon the territory as a model because of its well-established systems.

"Will Hong Kong live up to these hopes? I believe passionately that it can do so and should do so, if it sticks to the formula that has served it so well until now," said Mr Patten.

But the Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at Chinese University, Professor Yeung Yue-man, said the Governor had taken the rosiest possible view of the future.

He questioned whether the territory's formula for success could be maintained after the handover.

"Our independent judiciary will inevitably be un-

dermined, as China has not yet established the practice of the rule of law," Professor Yeung said.

"The soundness of Hong Kong may be challenged, as the problems of China seep in with an influx of mainlanders," he said.

Professor Peter Lee Nanshong, of the Chinese University's Government and Public Administration Department, agreed.

He said the territory may be twisted by the mainland's political and economic systems.

On economic development, Baptist University Economics Department head Professor Tang Shu-hung said Mr Patten's views were "too optimistic" and he had not addressed hidden problems.

He said the territory was suffering from a decline in talent and the standard of services which might hamper economic development in the future.

"If Hong Kong is to become the New York of Asia, the Government must first narrow the gap between rich and poor and solve the problems of unemployment.

"These I see as beoming increasingly serious."