

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **In Beijing's Tightening Grip: Changing Mainland-Hong Kong Relations amid Integration and Confrontation**

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#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines Beijing's policy toward Hong Kong and the increasingly conflictual relations between the Mainland and Hong Kong in the midst of socio-economic integration since 2012. This chapter first overviews the major features of Beijing's strategy since the political crisis triggered by the protests against the national security legislation in 2003 and the changing socio-economic links between the Mainland and Hong Kong. Then it will analyze several key issues in this relationship since the rise of Xi Jinping as China's paramount leader since late 2012, namely (a) Beijing's new framework in governing Hong Kong, (b) the growing involvement of the Mainland in Hong Kong's governance, (c) the rise of tensions between the two places arising from cross-boundary flows, and (d) the politics over universal suffrage and the Occupy Central (OC) protests. This chapter concludes with some observations on the prospect of Hong Kong under "One Country, Two Systems" (OCTS).

#### AN OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT FOR MAINLAND-HONG KONG RELATIONS

##### ***Beijing's Strategy toward Hong Kong since 2003***

During the first term of the former Chief Executive (CE), Tung Chee-hwa (CH Tung), the Central People's Government (CPG) adopted a more hands-off approach in dealing with Hong Kong. However, Beijing changed its strategy after the outbreak of the anti-Article 23 legislation protests by half a million people in the aftermath of the economic downturn triggered by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).<sup>1</sup> Its strategy since 2003 has emphasized: (a) the central government's constitutional authority and its steering of Hong Kong's political reform, (c) active shaping of Hong Kong's governance through various control mechanisms, (c) the adoption of a pragmatic approach in dealing with the pro-democracy forces over constitutional reform which expedited the fragmentation of the pan-democratic camp in Hong Kong, (d) the expansion of the United Front network in support of the Mainland, (e) the prompting of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government to promote national education and patriotism, and (f) the continual support for Hong Kong's economic integration with the Mainland in order to sustain its prosperity and alleviate socio-economic discontents when the Chinese economy was experiencing rapid growth (Cheung 2012).

##### ***Growing Socio-economic Interactions***

The socio-economic integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland has accelerated rapidly since 1997. Hong Kong has become increasingly dependent on the rising Chinese economy and sought to become its premier financial, shipping and trading center. The number of cross-boundary passenger flows through land control points

peaked in 2015—a 22 percent increase compared to 2010 (HK Census and Statistics Department 2016). Cross-border marriages registered in Hong Kong between a Hong Kong person and a Mainlander have trebled from 5,892 in 2001 (18 percent of total marriages) to 20,698 in 2014 (36.7 percent of the total) (HK Census and Statistics Department 2015a). The number of babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women peaked at 43,982 in 2011, accounting for 46 percent of total births in Hong Kong (HK Census and Statistics Department 2015b), although the number has dropped significantly since the ‘zero quota’ policy in 2012 banning any Mainland woman who is not married to a Hong Kong husband from giving birth in Hong Kong’s hospitals. Almost 46 million visitors from the Mainland came to Hong Kong in 2015 (accounting for two thirds of the total tourists), but the figure has slightly dropped after the multiple-entry individual visit endorsement for Shenzhen residents was restricted to one visit per week in April 2015 (HK Census and Statistics Department 2016). These interactions also engendered a variety of tensions between Hongkongers and Mainlanders which will be analyzed later in this chapter.

While Hong Kong still performs useful functions for China’s development, especially as an international financial center, its growing economic dependence on the Mainland is increasingly evident. With China’s rise, Hong Kong’s relative share in the national gross domestic product (GDP) had shrunk from 15.6 percent in 1997 to 2.9 percent by 2013 (Lu 2014). China continues to be the largest market for Hong Kong in trade and investment. About 44 percent of Hong Kong’s domestic exports of goods and 54 percent of re-exports of goods went to China in 2015. Both figures have grown gradually since 2007, despite a slight decrease in 2014 and 2015 (HK Census and Statistics Department 2016). Excluding the tax haven British Virgin Islands, Mainland China contributed the largest portion of Hong Kong’s inward direct investment (IDI)—30.1 percent of the total—in 2014, after it peaked in 2007 with 41 percent of the total (HK Census and Statistics Department 2014). Further, China’s market has become critical to Hong Kong’s exports of services, an increasingly significant driver of its economy in the past decade. Over 40 percent of Hong Kong’s exports of services went to China in 2013, a huge increase if compared to the 24 percent in 2008 (HK Census and Statistics Department 2015c).

Hong Kong still plays a useful role in China’s financial reform and foreign economic relations. Hong Kong overtook Japan as the second largest trading partner of the Mainland after the U.S. in 2012, and accounted for 8.7 percent of China’s total trade in 2015 (Ma 2016). Hong Kong is the largest source of outward direct investment (ODI) in the Mainland, with a cumulative utilized capital inflow of HK\$4,560 billion from Hong Kong (Ma 2016). Hong Kong has also been striving to become China’s leading offshore RMB center. Both the offshore RMB liquidity pool and the offshore hub in RMB trade settlement are the largest in the world. During 2010-2014, Hong Kong’s RMB deposits increased by 2.6 times to RMB 1,158 billion, and the RMB trade settlement surged around 16 times to RMB 6,258 billion (Legislative Council 2016). By 2015, 951 Mainland enterprises were listed on Hong Kong’s stock exchange—more than double the 2008 figure especially due to a surge in the number of private enterprises listed. They already accounted for 62 percent of total market capitalization and 73 percent of total annual equity turnover (Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited 2015). Moreover, the launching of the Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect in November 2014 (and the expected Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect) facilitated the opening of China’s capital market. In short, Hong Kong still plays a useful role in China’s strategies of “Going Global (*zouchuqu*)” and “Attracting Foreign Investment (*yinjinglai*)” (Lau 2014).

The HKSAR government and its Mainland counterparts have also established a variety of intergovernmental coordination mechanisms to facilitate policy coordination and trade liberalization such as the conclusion of Ten Supplements of the Mainland-Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) since 2004. Similar to the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (FYP), the latest 13<sup>th</sup> FYP (2016-2020) has dedicated a separate chapter for Hong Kong and Macau, although the two Special Administrative Regions (SAR) are not formally part of China's planning process. The 13<sup>th</sup> FYP pledged to support Hong Kong in consolidating and enhancing its role as an international financial, shipping and trading center, without mentioning the strengthening of the global influence of its role as a financial center as in the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP. The 13<sup>th</sup> FYP continued to support cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland in various fronts including education, environmental protection, and innovation and technology, and in the development of Qianhai, Nansha and Hengqin free trade districts. Nonetheless, there was no longer elaboration of Hong Kong-Guangdong cooperation in building a world-class city cluster and Hong Kong's key role in the financial cooperation with the Pearl River Delta (PRD) as in the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP. The specific cross-boundary infrastructural and logistics cooperation projects were only endorsed in a guiding opinion from the State Council on Pan-PRD development issued in mid-March 2016, rather than in the more authoritative 13<sup>th</sup> FYP.

As the economies of Hong Kong and the Mainland have become inextricably intertwined, the city has become more susceptible to its risks. On March 12, 2016, the credit rating agency Moody's changed the outlook of Hong Kong's economy from stable to negative, which linked the city to "the risks to China's economic and financial stability" (Moody's Investors Service 2016). Another rating agency Standard & Poor's also moved Hong Kong's credit outlook from stable to negative on March 31, 2016 due to "economic imbalances in China" (Pomfret 2016). While many Hong Kong officials disputed the lowering of Hong Kong's ratings, they serve as a clear reminder of the overseas perception of Mainland's influence on the city.

According to the 13<sup>th</sup> FYP, China will further open up and develop new strategies to promote new growth regions, such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and the Yangtze Delta Economic Zone, and formulate strategies for existing and emerging industries. China will also jumpstart its tourism and producer services, which have long been major pillars of Hong Kong's economy. Hong Kong will inevitably face severe competition with other regions in the Mainland. In short, while Hong Kong is still a major international financial center and trading partner for the Mainland, its overall economic significance has receded over time as other cities and regions have forged ahead. Hong Kong's GDP has already been surpassed by Shanghai and Beijing city since 2009 and 2011 respectively (Bloomberg 2016), and will be overtaken by Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Tianjin in the foreseeable future (Lu 2014).

## FORMULATING A NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK A NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK IN GOVERNING HONG KONG

### ***Preparing the Groundwork: Changing Personnel and Strengthening Research***

A series of reshuffles of senior personnel on Hong Kong affairs occurred since Xi Jinping took power. On December 19, 2012, the former Deputy Director of State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) and the former secretary for the ex-Director Liao Hui, Zhang Xiaoming, replaced Peng Qinghua—who was posted out to Guangxi hastily—as the Director of the Liaison Office of the CPG in the HKSAR (LO). Zhang is widely regarded as a hardliner on Hong Kong matters, so his

appointment reflects Beijing's stringent approach. In March 2013, Zhang Dejiang, chair of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC), took over the leadership of the Central Coordination Group on Hong Kong and Macau Affairs while Vice-president Li Yuanchao became his deputy. Moreover, in order to strengthen research capacity and policy research on Hong Kong, a high-level think tank, the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies, comprised of senior officials like Chen Zuo'er (former deputy director of the HKMAO), and well-known pro-Beijing scholars such as Lau Siu-kai, former head of Hong Kong's Central Policy Unit, and key advisors like Professors Rao Geping, Basic Law Committee member, and Wang Zhenmin, later appointed Head of the legal department of LO, was established in December 2014 as well (Wan 2013).

### *Setting out New Policy Parameters*

State sovereignty (*guojia zhuquan*), national security (*guojia anquan*) and development interests (*fazhan liyi*) are adopted by Beijing's top leadership as China's core interests (the three core interests) to be upheld in dealing with domestic and international affairs. Although "development interests" has never been authoritatively elaborated, it can probably be interpreted as the pursuit of China's national development under the current political system led by the Communist Party of China (CPC).<sup>2</sup> These interests were first used by former General Secretary Hu Jintao in his speech at the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007 as an underlying principle for China's foreign policy and its peaceful development (Hu 2007). At the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in November 2012, Hu's speech mentioned the three core interests in relation to Hong Kong and Macau affairs for the first time: "The underlying goal of the principles and policies adopted by the central government concerning Hong Kong and Macau is to uphold China's sovereignty, security and development interests and maintain long-term prosperity and stability of the two regions (Hu 2012)". That security and development interests are given equal significance as sovereignty reflects the broaden scope of concern of the Chinese leadership.

The three core interests were soon highlighted in all key documents on Hong Kong, such as the *Decision of the Standing Committee of the NPCSC on Issues Relating to the Selection of the CE of the HKSAR by Universal Suffrage and on the Method for Forming the Legislative Council (LegCo) of the HKSAR in the Year 2016* announced on August 31, 2014 (the 8.31 Decision), among others. For instance, the 8.31 Decision mentioned that the CE election process has to proceed in a prudent and steady manner, as "the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and the sovereignty, security and development interests of the country are at stake." Further, the Decision of the Fourth Plenum of the CPC's 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee held in October 2014 not only reiterated the supremacy of the Chinese constitution and the need to accurately implement OCTS in accordance with the constitution and the BL, but also pledged to "prevent and oppose interference by foreign powers in Hong Kong and Macau affairs" (CPC 2014). The three core interests and the prevention of interference by foreign countries are further formalized in several national legislations. The National Security Law, passed on July 1, 2015, stated that the HKSAR and Macau SAR "shall fulfill responsibilities for the preservation of national security,"<sup>3</sup> which concerns the legislation of Article 23 of the BL.

In short, the Chinese authorities began to recast its strategy toward Hong Kong in accordance with a broader set of policy parameters, showing its growing concern over what it considered as unwelcome developments in the HKSAR that may threaten its core interests. Since 2012, Xi consolidated his authority through launching an

unprecedented anti-corruption campaign and fierce struggle against his political opponents, including the purge of top military officers and Zhou Yongkang, former member of Standing Committee of the Politburo. The slowing Chinese economy, the growing social unrest, and the rising tensions in Sino-American relations and China's ties with Japan and other neighboring countries over border disputes further complicate the domestic and international contexts for Xi. Such a challenging environment is thus useful in understanding why the Chinese leadership has adopted an increasingly stringent approach in governing Hong Kong affairs.

### ***Promoting a “Correct Understanding” of the Basic Law and the Constitutional Order under One Country, Two Systems***

One key element of Beijing's strategy is to promote what it sees as the “correct” understanding of the Basic Law (BL) in order to consolidate its jurisdiction over Hong Kong. As stipulated in the BL, Hong Kong can “exercise a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power” and the judicial power shall be “free from any interference”.<sup>4</sup> The judiciary and its common law tradition has come under public criticisms from both formal and informal channels from the Mainland, inevitably sparking concerns about the threat to judicial independence.

The first signal of revisiting the understanding of the BL was sent by the then Chinese Vice-president, Xi Jinping. During his visit to Hong Kong on July 8, 2008, he stated that there should be “solidarity and sincere co-operation with the governance team” and “mutual understanding and support amongst the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary” (Leung 2008). In response, the Hong Kong Bar Association (HKBA) retorted that “it is important to recognize, reiterate and affirm the importance of an independent judiciary” and that the “judiciary in Hong Kong has always been, and under the BL it shall remain, separate and independent from the Executive and the Legislature”, hence not part of the governing team (HKBA 2008). Former and current Chief Justices, namely Andrew Li and Geoffrey Ma, regularly reiterated the importance of judicial independence and the separation of powers. The views of Hong Kong legal community hence show an understanding of the BL radically different from that of the central authorities.

Other unofficial voices from Beijing also criticized such understanding of Hong Kong's constitutional order. For instance, Rao Geping, criticized Hong Kong's foreign judges for not properly understanding the BL and legislations of the Mainland in mid-April 2015 and even proposed changing the practice of having foreign judges at the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) after 2047 (Lui 2015). Zhang Rongshun, vice-chairperson of the legislative affairs commission under the NPCSC said Hong Kong needs a “re-enlightenment” to give citizens an accurate understanding of OCTS. As aptly summed up by Zhang Xiaoming in early 2016, Hong Kong is reminded to accurately understand the BL and OCTS and shoulder the duties and responsibilities to contribute to the three core interests of the country. In view of the weakening authority of the HKSAR government and the challenge to central authority arising from the demand for democracy by the pan-democratic opposition, the CPG had decided to emphasize their “correct” and “accurate” understanding of the BL as a foundation in implementing the OCTS in the past few years and in defending its core interests,

### ***Chief Executive's “Transcendent” Position***

The debate on separation of powers and judicial independence was further reopened by Zhang Xiaoming, who claimed that the CE has a “transcendent” legal position above the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary in mid-September 2015. He also said

“Hong Kong is not a political system that exercises the separation of powers; not before the handover, not after the handover” (Zhang 2015). Zhang’s statement has raised serious concerns in Hong Kong, as exemplified by responses from the HKBA which reiterated that “the common law principle of ‘separation of powers’ will continue to be implemented within the constitutional framework of the BL”, and that the CE “cannot be said to be above the law” (HKBA 2015). From Beijing’s perspective, while the three branches of government each had their own powers and duties, the CE’s position is supreme (Xinhua News 2016a).

### ***Promulgating a New Policy Framework: Exercising Comprehensive Jurisdiction***

Beijing’s new framework on governing Hong Kong is systematically expounded by State Council’s *White Paper on the Practice of the “OCTS” Policy in the HKSAR* issued on June 10, 2014 (The Information Office of the State Council 2014). This document is critical in understanding Beijing’s new approach as it formalizes (*fazhijhua*) and institutionalizes (*ziduhua*) how the CPG may use its many powers. *For the first time, the CPG formally states that it will exercise comprehensive jurisdiction (quanmian guanzhi) over Hong Kong.* With more and more detailed and authoritative provisions, there will be less and less room for maneuver in ensuring a high degree of autonomy in future. *The White Paper* also categorized judges of the courts and other judicial personnel as part of the “Hong Kong administrators”, and hence they should “have on their shoulders the responsibility of correctly understanding and implementing the BL, of safeguarding the country’s sovereignty, security and development interests, and of ensuring the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong”, as “loving the country is the basic political requirement for Hong Kong’s administrators” (The Information Office of the State Council 2014).

*The White Paper* has stimulated critical responses from the Hong Kong community, but the strongest response again came from the legal profession. The HKBA refuted *The White Paper* by stating that “judges and judicial officers of the HKSAR are not to be regarded as part of ‘Hong Kong’s administrators’ or part of the governance team upon whom a political requirement is imposed” (HKBA 2016). It also argued that *The White Paper* contradicts the common law system of Hong Kong, as it “seems to suggest that there is a ‘correct’ meaning of the BL which exists separately as an objective fact that is capable of being understood or learned by Hong Kong judges from someone else, somewhere else” (HKBA 2016). Over 1,800 lawyers protested against *The White Paper* on June 26, 2014, saying that the document jeopardizes Hong Kong’s judicial independence.

## BEIJING’S GROWING INVOLVEMENT IN HONG KONG’S GOVERNANCE

The Mainland’s involvement in Hong Kong’s governance has also become increasingly apparent, covering a wider spectrum of issues not merely restricted to high politics like constitutional order or the CE election, but also other areas such as the media. This section examines three cases where Beijing’s growing involvement and influence have important implications for Hong Kong’s governance, while other instances will be analyzed in the later sections.

### ***Central Government’s Role in the 2012 Chief Executive Election***

The 2012 CE election revealed Beijing’s direct involvement in selecting the head of the HKSAR government, although formally it was supposedly an election by a 1,200 strong electoral college. The former Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) Henry Tang, a

second-generation Hong Kong tycoon, was first considered the preferred candidate. However, after Tang's scandal of owning a lavish but illegally built basement at his home was exposed by the media, the tide turned to favor Leung Chun-ying (CY Leung) (Moore 2012). The former Convener of the Executive Council and the Secretary General of the BL Consultative Committee, Leung is widely seen to have a very close relation with the Chinese authorities (Steger and Chen 2012). The CPG has gone all out to lobby votes for Leung—involving high-level officials such as the then State Councilor Liu Yandong, and Liao Hui and Wang Guangya from the HKMAO (Hong Kong Economic Journal 2012). During the election period, LO's Cao Erbao has allegedly ordered the then Director of Office of the CE to cease the investigation on CY Leung's potential conflicts of interest in the West Kowloon Reclamation Concept Plan Competition (Apple Daily 2012). This abrupt change in the supposedly pre-arranged election has severely split the pro-establishment camp, especially the business sector. Despite all the last minute coordination by Beijing, CY Leung eventually won the CE election with 689 votes, and a sizable minority of the committee members did not support him. The first thing CY Leung did the day after he won the election was to visit the LO for an hour and a half, indirectly showing that the LO has played an important role in his victory.

### ***Increasing Constraint on the Freedom of Speech and the Press***

Freedoms of speech and of the press are protected by the BL. However, increasing political and economic pressure over media owners and businesses has led to growing self-censorship in the media industry so as not to antagonize Beijing. Freedom House (Freedom House 2015) and Reporters Without Borders (World Press Freedom 2016) ranked Hong Kong's press freedom 83<sup>rd</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> respectively in 2015, both the lowest in history. In a meeting with senior news executives from almost all Hong Kong news outlets in April 2014, Vice-president Li Yuanchao urged them to “consider the overall interest of China and Hong Kong” and report the OC protests “correctly”. A few months later, Chan King-cheung, *Hong Kong Economic Journal's* (HKEJ) then editor-in-chief quitted abruptly, revealing that he had received pressure from the management to drop the column of OC initiator Benny Tai. He also exposed that HKEJ was boycotted by some Chinese companies which pulled off their advertisements as they were unsatisfied with the paper's stance on the OC movement (Ming Pao Daily News 2014). The outspoken newspaper *Apple Daily* and the independent free newspaper *am730* also suffered from the same problem (HK Journalists Association 2015).

Demotion of outspoken journalists or editors and their replacement by pro-Beijing personnel is a common approach to restrain the media indirectly. On September 15, 2011, the HKSAR Government appointed Roy Tang, a civil servant without any media experience, to be the head of the reputable public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK). The appointment was regarded as political pressure to undermine RTHK's broadcasting independence, which triggered strong opposition from its staff union. RTHK's former senior manager admitted that Tang assigned him political missions and the outspoken host Ng Chi-sum was sacked three months after Tang's appointment. Such control over personnel was also extended to commercial media outlets.

The English-language newspaper, *South China Morning Post*, replaced its editor-in-chief with Wang Xiangwei, a member of the Jilin Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in 2012 and a Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba bought the paper in December 2015. Wang has a tight control on negative news coverage of China, including the story about the Chinese

dissident Li Wangyang (HK Journalist Association 2012). Commercial Radio's talk-show host, also a vocal critic of China and CY Leung, Li Wei-ling was fired on February 12, 2014 without prior notice. On March 22, 2016, the government approved the license renewals of two private radio stations—Commercial Radio and Metro Broadcast—after an unusual long period of consideration, which aroused concerns with political considerations.

In early January 2014, *Ming Pao Daily News* replaced its chief editor Kevin Lau with a Malaysian editor Chong Tien Siong. On February 26, 2014, Lau was stabbed six times and almost killed in broad daylight, the two arrested assaulters later admitted they were paid to “teach Lau a lesson”. It was suggested that Lau's attack might be related to his investigation of a story regarding the wealth of China's top leadership. Chong officially assumed the position of chief editor in January 2015, despite strong opposition from the staff union, and sparked off multiple controversies regarding editorial decision to censor news.

Online media platforms were also under different forms of pressure. On August 8, 2012, four assailants ransacked the office of *Inmedia*, an online media with a strong localist orientation established in 2005. In 2012, Tsoi Tung-ho co-founded a popular pro-democratic online news site, *The House News*. The site has taken a supportive stand for the OC movement and posted articles of columnists who criticized CY Leung. On July 26, 2014, Tsoi shut down the site and deleted all existing articles, claiming he was “frightened” and he and his family had felt the pressure, without disclosing any details (Ng 2014). Although no evidence directly linking all these incidents with Beijing's involvement was exposed, the media under pressure have all taken a political stance different from Beijing's and hence many worried about the future of media freedom.

### ***Eroding the Boundary between “Two Systems”: The Mystery of the Missing Booksellers***

A mysterious case threatening OCTS concerns five missing booksellers. On December 30, 2015, Lee Bo, a Hong Kong bookseller who specialized in selling banned political books on Mainland China disappeared. Two colleagues and two employees of Lee had also disappeared since October 2015. However, Lee's wife found his travel document at home and there were surveillance tapes and witness indicating that he might have been brought to the Mainland involuntarily. On January 17, 2016, a co-owner of Lee's bookstore, Gui Minhai appeared on the state television CCTV, admitting that he killed someone in a drunk driving crash 12 years ago. Many Hongkongers questioned the authenticity of the charge and believed Gui was coerced by the authority to confess. For the general public, the concern over cross-boundary law enforcement actions by Mainland personnel and the danger of publishing and voicing views unpalatable to the Chinese leadership constitute unanswered questions that will erode their confidence in OCTS. After the huge attention from both the local and international community focused on their disappearance, the sudden return of the three missing men to Hong Kong, the TV appearances of the alleged main culprit, and their quick return to the Mainland in spring 2016 to help with the investigation did little to inspire confidence in the actions by whatever level of Mainland authorities.



## RISING TENSIONS IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN HONG KONG AND THE MAINLAND

### ***Direct Confrontation between Mainlanders and Social Groups in Hong Kong***

Localism—a loosely defined term—has become a prominent political narrative of identity politics in Hong Kong, as well as a thorn in Hong Kong-Mainland relations since 2011. Localism initially referred to the values and beliefs championed by activists protesting to preserve Hong Kong’s historical heritage, way of life, and local communities, in opposition to the ideology driven by economic development since the protests against the demolition of Star Ferry Pier and Queen’s Pier in 2006—2007 (Chen and Szeto 2015). Nevertheless, the term was used by anti-Mainland advocates in 2011 and developed into principles of many loosely organized groups. While there is no formal alliance formed among these groups, most of them hold similar views fighting for Hong Kong’s autonomy and resist more cultural, social, or some even economic integration with the Mainland. These groups include Neo Democrats, People Power, Youngspiration, Hong Kong Indigenous, Civic Passion, Hong Kong Autonomy Protests (*xianggang zizhi yundong*), Hong Kong Nativism Power (HKNP, *xianggang bentu lilian*, later renamed as Hong Kong Localism Power), among others.

Although self-proclaimed localists, they actually constitute a wide political spectrum. Some just prioritize Hongkongers’ interests over Mainland tourists and migrants, while others advocate secession from China or the creation of an independent city-state. Some have registered as formal political parties to run for LegCo elections, while some are online communities with loose structures which organize demonstrations occasionally. Some even advocated the use of violence. HKNP was the first group formed online to protest against offering social benefit to new immigrants, mostly coming from the Mainland, such as opposing the HKSAR government’s \$6000 cash handout to include non-permanent residents, as originally planned in the 2011 Budget Plan (Chen and Szeto 2015: 438).

The right of abode and access to public resources of the babies from Mainland parents sparked off one of the major controversies in Hong Kong-Mainland relations since 2011. In 2011, 43,982 Hong Kong babies were born to Mainland women and 35,736 were from parents who were both non-permanent residents (HK Census and Statistics Department various years). On October 23, 2011, a Facebook group was formed, and they later pressed the government to stop issuing birth certificates or offering residency to newborn babies whose parents are both Mainlanders. Discussion in popular online forums and later an advertisement in three newspapers on February 1, 2012 used discriminatory and derogative languages to describe visitors from the Mainland as “locusts that steal public resources from Hongkongers” (Lai 2012). On December 17, 2013, the CFA dismissed the seven-year residency requirement for new-immigrants to apply for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). The ruling further fueled the localists’ anti-Mainland sentiments in society (Chen and Szeto 2015).

Another controversy that induces constant conflicts between Hongkongers and Mainlanders is the expansion of the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) which was intended to boost Hong Kong’s economy in the aftermath of the SARS outbreak in 2003 and allowed travellers from 49 Mainland cities to visit Hong Kong on an individual basis in 2016. In 2014, 31.3 million Mainland visitors visited Hong Kong under IVS, accounting for over half of total number of worldwide visitors received by Hong Kong (HK Tourism Commission 2014). The rising number of Mainland visitors created problems of overcrowded malls and theme parks, parallel trading, shortage of infant

formula and some daily products, and undesirable manners (Lo 2013). Since 2012, many “guerrilla-style” protests were organized by different groups, with many protesters referring themselves as localists or “militant localists” (*yongwu bentu*, protesters who adopt radical or violent approaches in expressing their views). In response to such pressure, the CY Leung administration finally took the unprecedented step to restrict the amount of baby formula taken by visitors departing Hong Kong to two cans in February 2013.

The conflict later extended from parallel traders to ordinary visitors and tourists from the Mainland. For instance, hundreds of people organized an “anti-locust” campaign in Tsim Sha Tsui in mid-February 2014, waving colonial-era flags and chanting “go back to China” at Mainland visitors. In early February 2015, some localist groups such as Hong Kong Indigenous and Civic Passion gathered at Tuen Mun and Shatin to protest against Mainland parallel-traders and shoppers, which ended in scuffles with the police. Both events were reported widely by the Chinese media in the Mainland (China Daily 2015). The Editorial of *Global Times* on February 20, 2014 said IVS was a gift from CPG to Hong Kong to revive its depressed economy in 2003, and criticized that Hongkongers for being selfish to impose quota or discriminatory measures to control Mainland visitors (Global Times 2014a).

### ***The Rise of Hongkongers’ Identity and the Decline of Confidence in One Country, Two Systems***

Identity politics is a sensitive issue in Mainland-Hong Kong relations. For instance, the moral and national education curriculum for primary and secondary schools students proposed by the Education Bureau in 2012 caused another serious political controversy and the first political crisis for the CY Leung administration. The curriculum was criticized for “brainwashing” students with propaganda, which provoked massive public outcry after the booklet “The China Model”—published by the government-funded National Education Services Centre described the CPC as “progressive, selfless and united”. Fifteen civil society organizations—led by a newly created student group Scholarism—initiated a week-long sit-in at the government’s headquarter from August 30 to September 9, 2012, unexpectedly attracting over 120,000 protesters. The government later backed down on the mandatory introduction of the curriculum. From Beijing’s perspective, however, this was considered a concession and also an indication of the failure of national identity building and youth work in Hong Kong.

Former CE Donald Tsang asked the Hong Kong people to equip themselves to be the “new Hongkongers” in order to seize the development opportunities brought by China’s rise, in his 2007 Policy Address. On October 9, 2013, *People’s Daily* reinterpreted the term “new Hongkonger” as immigrants to Hong Kong from the Mainland, arguing that these new Hongkongers—no matter joining the city via the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMTP) or one-way permits issued by the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—have become a crucial force in driving Hong Kong’s development, and it also denounced the worries and discrimination against these new Hongkongers within the HKSAR (People’s Daily 2013).

Beneath these public outcries against the Mainland and the CPC is a deeper yearning of Hongkongers’ identity and their confidence in OCTS. According to an opinion poll conducted by the University of Hong Kong Public Opinion Programme (HKUPOP) in December 2015, 40 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hongkongers while only 18.1 percent identified themselves as Chinese. Comparing to 2008, only 18.1 percent of respondents identified themselves as Hongkonger while 38.6

percent believed they are Chinese.<sup>5</sup> Further, Hong Kong people hold an increasingly pessimistic view on the future of the city and its relations with the Mainland. HKUPOP's poll in March 2016 indicated that the people's net confidence in Hong Kong's future has dropped from 21.8 percent in June 2012 to the lowest at -8.6 percent since April 2003. Their net confidence in China's future has dropped significantly to 25.9 percent from 43.6 percent in June 2012. The people's confidence in OCTS plummeted to -7.9 percent, compared with 14.4 percent in June 2012 (HKUPOP 2016). The poll also found that the youth between the age of 18 and 29 profoundly distrusted both the Hong Kong and Mainland governments. While over 75 percent and 73 percent of respondents said they did not trust the HKSAR government and the CPG respectively, 80 percent of the youth interviewed said they have no confidence in OCTS (HKUPOP 2016).

#### THE POLITICS OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND THE OCCUPY CENTRAL PROTESTS

Despite the increasing social tension in Hong Kong, political reform regarding the selection method of the CE and LegCo remains the most divisive issue in Mainland-Hong Kong relations. According to NPCSC's resolution adopted in 2007, the 2017 CE election may be implemented by universal suffrage.<sup>6</sup> However, the government must first introduce the bill of political reform to LegCo with the endorsement of a two-thirds majority of all legislators. This sparked off a yearlong battle involving all political actors of Hong Kong and Beijing, and eventually led to the OC protests which erupted on September 28, 2014—a 79-day civil disobedience campaign unprecedented in Hong Kong history.

Since a law academic Benny Tai from the University of Hong Kong (HKU) raised the idea of a massive sit-in to occupy the central business district as a “last resort” to demand for universal suffrage in January 2013, the CPG has started to establish different criteria or constraints for Hong Kong's constitutional reform, via both formal and informal channels. Two key criteria—the CE candidates have to be people who “love the country and love Hong Kong (*aiguoai gang*)” and the new electoral system must be in accordance with the BL and NPCSC's decisions—were reiterated by central officials in March 2013 (Lee 2013). Qiao Xiaoyang later admitted that *aiguoai gang* is a criterion that is difficult to be written into the laws and that such a criterion would be decided by the nomination committee, voters in Hong Kong and the CPG, and candidates who would confront the CPG are not qualified (Wenweipo 2013). On April 25, 2014, another central official Li Fei warned that electing a CE who confronts the CPG would threaten the national security of the PRC (Hong Kong Economic Journal 2014). On the other hand, pan-democratic politicians, scholars and civil society organizations have suggested a number of reform proposals. Most of the debates centered around the nomination process of CE candidates. The idea of “civic nomination”, allowing anyone to run for the CE election if he or she has obtained a certain proportion of voters' nominations, has rallied strong support from the pan-democratic camp, but also fierce opposition from Beijing. Central officials all publicly denounced the plan of civic nomination, claiming it was “irrational and impractical” (Ming Pao Daily News 2013) and a violation of the BL and NPCSC's decisions.

On August 31, 2014, The NPCSC issued a decision on the rules to select the CE by universal suffrage and in forming the LegCo in 2016. Despite certain restrictions and criteria listed for the eligibility and nomination method for the CE election, it stated that the CE has to be “a person who loves the country and loves Hong Kong (*aiguoai gang*)” in order to maintain “long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong

and uphold the sovereignty, security and development interests” of the PRC. Both documents have set out the clear parameters for guiding the future political reform and are widely regarded as the primary reason triggering the OC protests (Tai 2013).

### ***Erosion of Mutual Trust and the Struggle over the Occupy Central Protests***

Mutual trust between Hong Kong and the Mainland has been viewed as the cornerstone and prerequisite for the CPG to allow the HKSAR to move forward democratization. From Beijing’s perspective, the 8.31 Decision is regarded the most realistic step forward for Hong Kong’s democratization, and the launching of the OC would be an invitation for trouble as it will be seen as succumbing only to heavy political pressure from the protestors. On September 22, 2014, President Xi Jinping spoke about “two trusts (*lianggexinren*)” during his meeting with Hong Kong’s business and professional representatives, reiterating that the CE of Hong Kong must be someone who is “*trusted by the CPG, loves the country and loves Hong Kong*”. He also said that the CPG trusts the SAR government to maintain the stability of Hong Kong, and the CPG supports Hong Kong government to handle any illegal activities which disrupt the social order, according to the law (Hong Kong Economic Times 2014). Meanwhile, Xi also reiterated the “Three Unswerving Perseverance (*sange jianding buyi*)”, i.e. the CPG will implement the OCTS principle and the BL, support Hong Kong’s democratic development according to law, and safeguard Hong Kong’s long-term prosperity and stability, with unswerving perseverance (People’s Daily 2014a). The *People’s Daily* has continuously criticized the OC on its editorial and columns, especially after September 28, the day that Benny Tai announced the official launch of the OC protests and the police fired 87 canisters of tear gas at OC protestors. The *People’s Daily* argued that the protests aimed to challenge China’s “*supreme power organ*” (People’s Daily 2014b). Hence the OC movement constituted the most dangerous confrontation between the pro-democracy forces and the central authorities since 1997, which pushed Hong Kong-Mainland relations to the brink

The OC was soon framed as a “color revolution” colluding with foreign countries to destabilize the PRC, by central officials and the official media. On October 16, 2014, the official *Global Times* described the OC as a naive political gamble that mistakenly pushed Hong Kong towards the Western power politically (Global Times 2014b). The *People’s Daily* claimed that the goal of the OC was neither a democratic election, nor a high degree of autonomy under “one country”, but the independence of Hong Kong (People’s Daily 2014c). CY Leung also said there was “external forces” behind the organization of OC protests without providing details (BBC News 2014). Hence the alleged collusion with foreign forces constitutes a threat to Beijing’s core interests.

### ***Building an Anti-Occupy Central United Front and Forming Pro-Beijing Mass Organizations***

The CPG has not only sought to boost the support for the HKSAR Government but also cultivated various mass organizations in Hong Kong in struggling against the OC movement (Cheung 2012). For instance, on September 3, 2013, Zhang Dejiang unprecedentedly met directly with 60 representatives of disciplined officers from Hong Kong, showing that the central government would strongly support them in tackling the OC protests. This was followed by another meeting between Li Yuanchao and another delegation of senior civil servants (Lai 2013).

One week before the eruption of the OC protests, CH Tung led a delegation of more than 70 Hong Kong business tycoons to meet the top leadership in Beijing in September 2014. The delegation, including the tycoons (or their children) from Cheung

Kong (Holdings), Henderson Land Development, Kerry Group, New World Development, Wharf Holdings and many more chairpersons and executives, had a closed-door meeting with Xi Jinping, Zhang Dejiang and Li Yuanchao, seemingly to secure their support against the OC movement. To Beijing's displeasure, not all the tycoons had taken a very high profile in publicly denouncing the OC protests after the civil disobedience broke out, although these businessmen were not necessarily sympathetic to these protestors because of the disruption of the social order during this period.

The mobilization of pro-Beijing organizations has become a new means to counter the rise of civil society organizations in Hong Kong. The establishment of Alliance for Peace and Democracy is a recent example of Beijing's United Front work. Instead of reacting to the opponents, the newly emerged groups organized pro-Beijing marches and signature campaigns to counter the pan-democratic camp. Many of these groups emerged around 2012, when CY Leung became the CE. Some groups such as Protect Central (*baowei zhonghuan*) and The Sound of Silence (*chenmo zhisheng*) were mainly founded to act against the OC protests, while others such as the Voice of Loving Hong Kong (*aigang zhisheng*) and Caring Power Hong Kong (*aihu xianggang liliang*) are known for making verbal and physical attacks and organizing protests against the pan-democrats. Yu Zhengsheng also met with the Friends of Hong Kong Association in Beijing on October 28, 2014, suggesting that the Association and other patriotic organizations should continuously promote related work and support the HKSAR government (Ng 2014).

The "blue ribboners", a pro-police, pro-Beijing and pro-government group, were one of those that had gained more attention, as they were formed to oppose the "yellow ribboners" that supported the OC protests. Most blue ribboners are supporters of the Alliance for Peace and Democracy (also known as the Alliance for Universal Suffrage and against the OC Movement in Chinese), which was founded by a pro-Beijing media practitioner on July 3, 2014. This is a newly formed mass organization that aimed at denouncing the OC protests in late 2014, with support from many prominent members from the pro-Beijing political camp (Lim 2015). The CE and other principal officials also endorsed their petition against the OC movement. The Alliance claimed they have received over 1.83 million online and offline signatures by November 2, 2014, although the authenticity of the signatures has been widely questioned (Apple Daily 2014). The Alliance also mobilized a massive anti-OC protest on August 17, 2014 (with an estimated turnout between 79,000-88,000 as estimated by HKUPOP and 193,000 as claimed by the organizers). The CPG will continue to mobilize mass organizations as part of the effort to fight the pan-democratic camp in order to show that their stance is backed by local support.

### ***Negative Coverage by the State Media***

Media reports on Hong Kong protests are usually censored in the Mainland. However, the state media CCTV's daily news program, *Xinwen Lianbo*, reported the OC protests on September 30, 2014 for the first time and condemned the protests for severely disrupting Hong Kong's socio-economic order (CCTV 2014). More Mainland media outlets covered the protests in the following days, from the angles of negative impact caused by the protests and the corresponding actions taken by the HKSAR government (People's Daily 2014d). Such negative framing was done to condemn the OC movement and garner support from the Mainland people against the protests. Such media coverage has profoundly affected the image of Hong Kong as a stable city for cultural and economic exchanges with the Mainland, hence deterring more Mainland

students from applying to Hong Kong's universities and visiting the city after the OC protests as well.

Despite all the OC protests, Beijing did not make any concessions. In April 2015, CS Carrie Lam rolled out the political reform proposal for the CE election in accordance with Beijing's 8.31 *Decision*. The proposal ruled out the possibility of party or civic nomination and proposed that only two to three candidates with the highest numbers of approval votes (and at least 600 votes minimum) from the 1,200 nominating committee members are eligible for running for the CE election. On June 18, 2015, the proposal was rejected in the LegCo by eight votes of support and 28 against amid a pro-establishment camp confusion in delaying the vote, despite the extensive effort by the government to lobby the pan-democrats and market the proposal. This failure in passing the reform plan has not only stalled the movement toward political changes, as the matter will not be handled by the CY Leung administration again, but also further widened the gulf between the CPG and the pan-democrats.

### ***The Rise of Pro-Independent Voices among the Younger Generation***

The OC movement further aggravated Beijing's worries over the lack of national identity among Hong Kong's youth. A new uniform youth group Hong Kong Army Cadets Association was inaugurated at People's Liberation Army's (PLA) naval base on January 18, 2015, with CY Leung's wife Regina Leung Tong Ching-ye as "commander-in-chief" and CY Leung, Zhang Xiaoming and the Commander of PLA in Hong Kong Tan Benhong as honorary patrons. Various commentators believed the Association would be used to indoctrinate students in patriotism (Zhao 2015). In response to the outbreak of the OC protests and other localist tendencies, Yu Zhengsheng urged Hong Kong delegates in March 2016 to strengthen the city's youth work so they could learn about China's achievement through cultural exchanges (Cheung 2016). A Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) research commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2015 found that youths (aged 15-35) in Hong Kong have negative perceptions of the Mainland—giving it an overall score of 4.8 out of 10—and 64.5 percent of respondents are not optimistic about China's political development (CUHK 2016). The political culture of Hong Kong's youth evidently seems problematic from Beijing's perspective.

### ***The Aftermath of the Occupy Central Protests: Impact on the Universities***

With the active involvement of academics and students in the OC movement, universities have come under pressure in the aftermath. The most serious case concerns HKU. In October 2014, pro-Beijing newspapers *Wenweipo* and *Takungpao* published internal emails of Benny Tai and accused him of receiving anonymous donation of HK\$1.45 million for the OC protests, which allegedly violated HKU's internal guidelines (Takungpao 2014). In late 2014 to early 2015, the then Dean of Faculty of Law at HKU Johannes Chan, who was recommended by the University's independent selection committee as the only candidate for a pro-vice-chancellorship, was criticized extensively by the pro-Beijing media, questioning his academic credentials, leadership ability and his close ties with Tai (Takungpao 2015). HKU's Vice-chancellor Peter Mathieson also admitted that he believed pressure on him and others who back Chan's appointment was being "orchestrated", which he "could not rule out the possibility Beijing was behind the episode" (Reuters 2015).

Arthur Li, a member of the CPPCC and former President of CUHK and a former Secretary for Education was appointed by CY Leung as Chairman of HKU's Council in 2015, amid strong protests from vocal students and considerable opposition from the

staff. Chan's appointment was later vetoed by the Council chaired by Arthur Li on September 29, 2015. Hence the power of the CE serving as the chancellor of all public universities' governing councils with broad appointment powers, which followed a colonial tradition, was widely questioned. Over 4,000 staff members (92 percent of votes) from across eight universities voted to abolish CE's powers in appointing members to the university councils in March 2016. Leung's favored candidate as chair for CUHK's council was nonetheless approved in mid-April 2016. These actions could be interpreted as efforts of the CY Leung administration in reining in the universities, especially against academics who supported or were related to the OC protests (The Wall Street Journal 2015).

### ***From the Mong Kok Riot to the Rise of Pro-Independence Parties***

At the night of February 8, 2016, the localist group Hong Kong Indigenous organized a protest to support the unlicensed street hawkers who were cracked down by hawker control teams in Mong Kok district. The protest soon escalated into a riot. For the first time since 1997, rioters threw bricks at the police and lit fires after confronting with the police. Partly due to the poor deployment of the police, over 120 people were injured—mostly policemen and some journalists. Many analysts believe the underlying causes of the riot are due to multiple factors such as the failure of the OC protests, dissatisfaction against the government and the police, spread of localist ideology and demands for Hong Kong independence (Lian 2016). After the riot, many pro-Beijing politicians and commentators soon raised the legislation of Article 23 of the BL, although the government had reiterated this is not on their agenda.

While Hong Kong independence has rarely been an agenda for the mainstream protest movements of the city, it has started picking up momentum since the end of the OC movement. The post-Occupy localist group Youngspiration and a newly founded political party Demosistō—led by former convener of Scholarism Joshua Wong—both pledged to advocate self-determination and proposed to hold a referendum for deciding the future of the city after 2047. While both groups insisted Hong Kong's independence should be only one of the options for the referendum, the HKU's student magazine *Undergrad* and another newly founded Hong Kong National Party advocated turning Hong Kong into an independent sovereign state.

Responding to these pro-independence activities, Beijing has taken a firm stance. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the Mong Kok riot was “plotted mainly by local radical separatist organization” (PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016). On March 30, 2016, HKMAO issued a strongly worded statement stating that the founding of a pro-independence party is a serious violation of the BL and a threat to national security and sovereignty (Xinhua News Agency 2016b). Zhang Xiaoming said that the newly founded party must not be tolerated, as it went beyond the realm of the freedom of expression and the bottom-line of OCTS (Ming Pao Daily News 2016). The official Mainland media soon launched strong criticism of such sentiments and urged the HKSAR government to take action against these groups. Such new parties will become a new political force that Beijing has to deal with.

### ***Beijing's Involvement in the 2015 District Council Elections and Beyond***

Beijing has played an active role in coordinating local elections in recent years. The District Council (DC) Election in 2015 is the first election held after the OC movement, hence reflecting people's sentiments toward the OC and the constitutional reform. With the highest voter turnout rate (47.01 percent) in history, 1.36 million people cast their votes on November 22, 2015. Soon after the OC protests, CY Leung urged Hong Kong

electors to “vote out” the pan-democrats in elections, if they were unhappy with them and their filibustering in the LegCo (Cheung and Lam 2015). On May 31, 2015, Zhang Xiaoming warned the pan-democrats who rejected the constitutional reform proposal “will pay the debt with their votes (*piaozhai piaochang*)” (South China Morning Post 2015). While the higher turnout rate usually favored the pan-democrats previously, both the pro-establishment political parties and the pan-democratic camp hold similar percentage of seats compared with the last DC election (25 percent for democrats and 70 percent for pro-establishment), with a slightly increase of seats for the democrats this time. Three OC protesters-turned-candidates (known as the “Umbrella Soldiers”) also won seats in this election. Moreover, the media reported that the LO was involved in coordinating supporters to vote for different pro-establishment candidates (Apple Daily 2015). The pro-establishment camp still monopolized all the chairperson and vice-chairperson posts and had a majority in all 18 DCs. Beijing also attempted to coordinate the 2016 LegCo elections among the pro-establishment camp. For instance, central officials stopped the rural body Heung Yee Kuk’s plan of forming its own political party in late April 2016, despite strong determination from the rural leader Bowie Hau Chi-keung and other villagers.

## CONCLUSIONS

Given the rising localist sentiments among the younger generation and the emerging tensions in Mainland-Hong Kong relations, Beijing seems to have adopted a new strategy in dealing with Hong Kong. The various incidents and examples analyzed above offer ample evidence for this evolving strategy, which will be recapitulated below.

1. Constitutional authority will be deployed as a primary instrument to steer Hong Kong’s political development. The central authorities will not hesitate to assert the authority of the Chinese constitution which enshrines the One Country principle and the “correct” understanding of the BL over political or constitutional matters.
2. Efforts to coordinate and lead the fragmented pro-establishment political forces in Hong Kong by Beijing have been further strengthened, especially given their lackluster performance in the past.
3. The mobilization of mass organizations along different social sectors—a characteristic Communist tactics—will be used to counter the rise of civil society organizations that protested against the HKSAR government and Beijing, as shown in its anti-OC efforts.
4. Social and cultural exchanges with the Mainland will be promoted mainly to enhance more identification with the achievements of the PRC, so Hong Kong will not continue to harbor negative sentiments toward the Chinese Communist regime.
5. More propagation of the official Mainland views of OCTS, the BL and other contentious political issues will be achieved through both official and unofficial channels in Hong Kong. Constraints on the expression of “unacceptable” views in Hong Kong may become the norm than the exception. The mass media will be under increasing pressure in reporting or discussing sensitive political issues. Media and academic freedom will likely be further curtailed.
6. More importantly, with the rise of other cities and regions in China such as Shanghai, the Yangtze Delta and the PRD, Beijing will pay less effort to highlight



Hong Kong's role in China's development, given its alleged political turmoil and the lack of progress of its economic restructuring. The central government may give even more support to other Chinese cities and regions in order to bolster her sagging economic growth.

The broader context of Chinese politics in the near future will witness the consolidation of Xi Jinping's tough authoritarian approach to governing China in preparation for the 19<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress to be held in 2017 that will likely usher in his second five-year term. With the onset of a slower economic growth rate (though still high by world standard) and the persistence of social tensions, not to mention the increasingly precarious international environment, the Chinese leadership will face even greater domestic and external challenges. Paradoxically, this tightening grip may engender even greater centrifugal tendencies among the Hong Kong people, especially the younger generation. The promise of "a high degree of autonomy" and the continual existence of "Two Systems" has clearly been replaced by the prerogative of "One Country." The OC protest may actually expedite the irreversible erosion of OCTS as it has unleashed more localist sentiments and actions and subsequently, even more stringent responses from Beijing. Well before 2047, Hong Kong will already be placed under Beijing's tightening grip.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Beijing here refers to the central authorities for the sake of simplicity. For my analysis of the relations between Hong Kong and the Mainland since 1997, see "Intergovernmental Relations between Mainland China and the Hong Kong SAR," in *Public Administration in Southeast Asia: Thailand, Philippines Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Macao*, ed. Evan M. Berman (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2011), pp. 255-281; Peter T.Y. Cheung, "The Changing Relations between Hong Kong and the Mainland since 2003," in *Contemporary Hong Kong Government and Politics*, ed. Lam et al. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 325-348. For other

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important works, see, e.g. Sonny Siu-hing Lo, *The Dynamics of Beijing-Hong Kong Relations* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See Zhang Xiaoming's brief note in *Shibada Baogao Fudao Duban* [Guiding Book on the 18th National Party Congress' Report] (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2012), 339-340 and Yan Xiaojun, *Xianggang Zhi Yu Luan: 2047 De Zhengzhi Xiangxiang* [Hong Kong's Governance and Chaos: The Political Imagination of 2047] (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2015), 178.

<sup>3</sup> PRC National Security Law, Art 40.

<sup>4</sup> HKSAR Basic Law, Art 2 and 85.

<sup>5</sup> 27.4% of respondents identifying themselves as Hongkonger in China while 13% of identifying themselves as Chinese in Hong Kong. For full result:

<https://www.hkpop.hku.hk/chinese/popexpress/ethnic/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> HKSAR Basic Law, Instrument 21.

Hong Kong (CNN) China has imposed restrictions on the publication of academic research on the origins of the novel coronavirus, according to a central government directive and online notices published by two Chinese universities, that have since been removed from the web. Under the new policy, all academic papers on Covid-19 will be subject to extra vetting before being submitted for publication. Studies on the origin of the virus will receive extra scrutiny and must be approved by central government officials, according to the now-deleted posts. A medical expert in Hong Kong who collaborated Research output: Chapter in Book/Report/Conference proceeding 9 Chapters. Overview. Original language. English. Title of host publication. Hong Kong 20 years after the handover: Emerging social and institutional fractures after 1997. In Beijing's tightening grip: Changing Mainland-Hong Kong relations amid integration and confrontation. In B. C. H. Fong, & T.-L. Lui (Eds.), Hong Kong 20 years after the handover: Emerging social and institutional fractures after 1997 (pp. 255-286). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Access to Document. 10.1007/978-3-319-51373-7\_11. Find@EdUHK Library. China's President Xi Jinping officially opened the world's longest sea bridge connecting Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China Tuesday, at a time when Beijing is tightening its grip on its semi-autonomous territories. The 34-mile (55-kilometre) crossing, which includes a snaking road bridge and underwater tunnel, links Hong Kong with the southern mainland city of Zhuhai and the gambling enclave of Macau, across the waters of the Pearl River Estuary. Xi presided over an inauguration ceremony attended by Hong Kong's and Macau's city leaders at a new port terminal in Zhuhai. The source explained that Beijing's move came amid the increasing number of social issues in China caused by defectors, including cases where female North Koreans headed to South Korea after getting married in China to Chinese citizens. These women's sudden departures to the South left broken marriages and children behind. It is unclear how many North Korea defectors are hiding in China since the Chinese census does not recognize them, but some estimate the number as between 30,000 to 50,000. It appears that Beijing wants to make sure it has a full grip on the defector community. China recently issued an Internet Content Provider (ICP) certificate to four North Korean propaganda websites, namely Uriminzokkiri, Arirang-Meari, Ryomyong, and Ryukyong. This chapter examines Beijing's policy toward Hong Kong and the increasingly conflictual relations between the Mainland and Hong Kong in the midst of socioeconomic integration since 2012. This... In Beijing's Tightening Grip. Changing Mainland-Hong Kong Relations amid Integration and Confrontation. Authors. Authors and affiliations. Peter T.Y. Cheung. Chapter. First Online: 30 July 2017. 4 Citations.