Introduction

Political uncertainties in Hong Kong after the Occupy Central Movement

This special issue will address the political uncertainties of Hong Kong since the Occupy Central Movement (also known as the Umbrella Movement). The Movement was aimed at forcing the Hong Kong and Chinese Governments to install a genuine democratic process for electing the chief executive of Hong Kong so as to avoid the economic and social disorder caused by massive protests and the occupation of the main central business districts. The occupation of central and mass sit-ins lasted from September to December 2014 because the cofounders and supporters of the Movement thought that the Hong Kong and Chinese Governments had not rolled out a political reform plan that was compatible with international standards of genuine universal suffrage to elect the Hong Kong chief executive in 2017. The government's political reform bill to elect the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive was finally vetoed by the Legislative Council (LegCo).

Politics in Hong Kong has become more uncertain since the Occupy Central Movement period. First, the prospect of consolidating a democratic model for Hong Kong acceptable to all parties is remote. Second, the crisis of legitimacy will be deepened further as the chief executive chosen in 2017 does not enjoy a popular mandate. Third, the executive-legislative relationship will remain adversarial causing the ineffective and inefficient operation of the government. Fourth, the Hong Kong society will remain divided as the political and social unity has been weakened and the society is becoming further fragmented. Fifth, the degree of autonomy given to Hong Kong might be restricted further by the Chinese government in order to suppress the "independence movement" in Hong Kong and to prevent Hong Kong from being used as a counter-revolutionary base against the communist regime.

The political landscape in Hong Kong since the Movement has been transformed owing to the following changes brought about indirectly and directly by the Movement. The Movement brought about a new style of radical political participation, nurtured an alienated political culture, strengthened civil society and gave Hong Kong citizens the chance to reflect profoundly on the prioritization of different core values (genuine democracy, social stability and economic prosperity) and Hong Kong's relationship with the mainland under the "one country, two systems" policy. The political uncertainties and the changing political landscape in Hong Kong are examined in this special issue from different aspects. The civil disobedience movement, the anti-mainland protests, the role of the youth, voting behavior in the 2015 District Council elections, the unity of the pan-democratic camp and the problems of "one country, two systems" are all discussed. This special issue will highlight the political journey and the roadmap for Hong Kong 20 years after Hong Kong's return to China.

The Occupy Central Movement was initiated as a kind of civil disobedience action to express the dissatisfaction with the restrictive framework to elect the Hong Kong chief executive proposed by the National People's Congress of China. Yiu-chung Wong, in his article, has explored the emergence of civil disobedience movements in Hong Kong by examining the notion of civil society. By using a model of civil society typology, which combines the variables of state control and society's quest for autonomy, Wong has outlined the historical development of civil disobedience movements in Hong Kong. He has also discussed the recent evolution of civil society and its relationship with civil disobedience movements, particularly focusing on their development since CY Leung became the Chief Executive in 2012. Wong has outlined the relationships between the development of civil society and the emergence of civil disobedience in Hong Kong. First, civil disobedience cannot emerge when the state and society are isolated. Second, the level of state control and the scale of civil disobedience are positively related. Third, the development of a society's

quest for autonomy is generally in linear progression as an historical trend. Quests for autonomy start from low levels (e.g. interest-based and welfare-based goals) and move on ultimately to the higher aims of civil and political autonomy. If the lower levels of a society's quest for autonomy are not satisfied for now, it leads to the larger-scale civil disobedience in the future. Fourth, the civil disobedience movement would be largest in scale when the state-society relationship is confrontational and major cleavages can be found within civil society itself.

Wong observed that the aims of the protesters in the Movement were not new as there have been democrats striving for their achievement for more than 30 years. The quest for autonomy in civil society is based on the desire for Hong Kong citizens to be able to elect or to be elected as the chief executive. However, the quest for autonomy was strong in 2014 because Hongkongers had been waiting for so long for change while state control had been extraordinarily high in recent times. State control is most severe where it is not only the government being active against the opposition, but also where there are divergent groups in a society. Also, the quest for autonomy is at the highest level and in its longest phase for decades. One significant point, made by Wong for Hong Kong since the handover, has been that the nature of civil society has never been turned towards a stable governance enjoying consent since 1997. Wong has argued that state control is the most crucial factor that influences the emergence of civil disobedience movements. If the institutional channels are blocked and the quest of society for autonomy cannot be fulfilled, citizens may opt to pursue illegal methods for expressing their discontent. Furthermore, if pro-government social groups are mobilized to counterattack discontented groups, civil disobedience movements will react in the most vigorous manner. They could even possibly follow a path that leads in the direction of violence. Wong has suggested that governments must handle state-society relationships carefully as state control can be a factor that gives rise to radical social movements.

The emergence of a new wave of anti-mainland protests in Hong Kong further complicated the social movements and political uncertainties in the special administrative region. Alvin So, in his article, has delineated the unique characteristics of the anti-mainland protests, traced their historical origins and speculated on the political implications of this new wave of anti-mainland demonstrations. So found that this new wave of anti-mainland protest was characterized by its targeting of mainland tourists/immigrants, its militancy, its protest location in the new territories, its constituent membership of people from society's grassroots, its dependence on e-mobilization and its poor image in the Hong Kong mass media. In addition, So identified the complex interplay between the following factors – the influx of tourists/immigrants, the increase of social inequality, the emergence of a localist discourse, the formation of localist organizations and the setback suffered by the democracy movement – as the underlying sociopolitical factors that sparked this new wave of anti-mainland protests. So has discussed the political implications of this new wave of anti-mainland protests and concluded that it has deepened the sociopolitical polarization of Hong Kong politics, transformed the mode of protesting in Hong Kong society and threatened the prospects for the national reunification of Greater China.

So has argued that this new wave of anti-mainland protests in Hong Kong is, to a large extent, similar to the global resurgence of populist movements in Europe, North America and other parts of the world. These right-wing movements have drawn their support from the distressed working classes or the marginalized middle classes, who have experienced the threat of downward mobility since their local economies ran into decline following the 2008 global financial crisis. However, So has also observed that the new wave of anti-mainland protests in Hong Kong is much less organized, much less institutionalized and much weaker than its European and American counterparts because Hong Kong's anti-mainland protests only started in 2012. Thus, Hong Kong's anti-mainland movement is

in a formative stage. It is still in the process of making and remaking itself, and it could move in any direction in the future. So warned that if the distressed Hong Kong population was further provoked by the pro-Beijing patriotic organizations, if the Hong Kong Government continues to ignore the structural grievances of the Hong Kong population (like the baby formula shortage, the worsening lifestyles of the grassroots population and the increasing downward mobility of the young generation), and if Beijing continues its hardline repressive policy towards Hong Kong, then it may be possible that anti-mainland protests could soon grow into a robust Hong Kong independence movement and develop more links with independence movements in Taiwan. In such a scenario, a small anti-mainland movement in Hong Kong that has emerged since 2012 surely has the potential to threaten the Chinese national reunification project for Greater China in the twenty-first century.

Many young people took part in the Movement and a lot of those "umbrella soldiers" formed a number of organizations to take part in the 2015 District Council and 2016 LegCo elections. Wilson Wong and May Chu, in their article, have critically examined the cause and nature of the Movement and the role of the young people in the Movement. Wong and Chu have argued that the Movement is far more than an Occupy Movement led by the youth simply for expressing their anger and frustration with society. It is a movement with a good cause, in which the youth have been playing the role of the "conscience" of society by addressing the structural problems suffered by Hong Kong which have worsened significantly in the post-1997 period since the sovereignty of Hong Kong was transferred from the British to China. Wong and Chu have pointed out that many of the social and economic problems in Hong Kong are structural in nature, which is related to its unjust and undemocratic political system that has been tainted by crony capitalism. This perspective defines the nature of the movement as a continuation of the democratization movement in Hong Kong, and also as a new chapter which has adopted a groundbreaking strategy of civil disobedience. Rather than oversimplifying it as a rebellious youth movement triggered by the rise of post-modernization values and facilitated by social media and e-participation, Wong and Chu have argued that the Movement should be understood more broadly and appropriately as a movement to fight for democracy to eradicate the root causes of Hong Kong's structural problems. They have further argued that the approach of the government to handling the Movement is counterproductive. Wong and Chu have warned that the conflicts and polarization in society caused by the government's approach will contribute to a dangerous and unstable phenomenon of "strong government, weak society" under a weak state, which will create a vicious cycle that generates more and more chaos in the governance of Hong Kong.

Wong and Chu have argued that it is those long-term structural problems, not the personal problems of the youths themselves, which are the real root causes of the Movement, and it is those problems that have made many Hong Kong citizens decide to join the Movement to fight for a democratic political system. It was concluded that the political situation in Hong Kong may be described as "strong government, weak society" under a weak state. The impact of the Movement on the governance of Hong Kong would depend heavily on the approaches of the Hong Kong and Chinese Governments in response to the Movement and its underlying causes. Wong and Chu thought that if the approach of the governments is more about eliminating their "enemies" who started and led the Movement rather than eradicating those structural problems underlying the Movement's emergence, it would only deepen the governance and legitimacy crisis in Hong Kong. Wong and Chu predicted that without such a change and a determination of the new chief executive to finally revisit all the structural problems in Hong Kong, including its dysfunctional political system, the complication of "strong government, weak society" under a weak state would continue as the governance and legitimacy crises in Hong Kong worsened further.

The Hong Kong District Council elections in 2015 were the first territory-wide elections held after the 79-day Occupy Central mass sit-ins in 2014. Jermain Lam, in his paper,

has examined the 2015 District Council elections as a political litmus test for the political responses of the general public towards the Movement. In Lam's study, the election results show that the Hong Kong society is still polarized, as most voters are divided into those who supported the Movement and those who opposed it; there is no consensus on political reforms, as most voters are split into those who support pocketing a restrictive political reform model and those who reject the fake universal suffrage model; the activists of the Movement consolidated support in some constituencies and have become a new, young political force to attract young voters who have demanded change; and the Movement has become a breeding ground nurturing localism, which is an idea that puts the Hong Kong people's interests first in the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland. Lam has argued that the political battlefields of the Movement just shifted from the streets to the District Council constituencies. The 2015 District Council elections were indeed a continuation of the Movement and the elections were litmus tests of the legacies of the Movement. The political positions dividing Hong Kong were actually entrenched, as revealed by the 2015 District Council elections.

Lam has suggested that the 2015 District Council elections sent some political messages to the key political players in Hong Kong. To the Hong Kong government, the 2015 elections showed that Hong Kong society is politically divided and there have been no changes in that since the end of the mass sit-ins of the Movement. There is no clear consensus on the direction for political reforms ahead. The increasing numbers of seats gained by the pan-democratic camp were an indication that more voters were dissatisfied with the performance of the government. The problem of a disabled governance experienced since 1997 has continued. The rise of localism, as part of the Movement's philosophy, will prompt the Chinese leaders to reconsider what they feel to be appropriate policies for resolving conflicts between Hong Kong and the mainland. For the pro-establishment camp, the 2015 elections were a warning, as their performance in the ballots was far from impressive. Although the overall political landscape has not changed, the mediocre performance and the defeat of some established heavyweights indicated that voters are considering change rather than maintaining the status quo. In the traditional parties of the pan-democratic camp, their leaders are facing the challenges of the young post-Occupy activists. They are left with a task to reinvent their images and strategies to tap the support of voters, especially of young voters. For the "umbrella soldiers," their survival will depend on their continuous efforts to serve the voters in their constituencies and to make constructive impacts on the politics and society of Hong Kong. It is essential for them to turn their protest moment into a real movement that can sustain its momentum and strength. In the final analysis, Lam has argued that the Movement has consolidated the strengths and support of the pan-democratic camp, although the 2015 District Council election results showed that a majority of voters still oppose the Movement.

The changing status and development of the pan-democratic camp in the post-Occupy period are contributing to the political uncertainties of Hong Kong. Steven Hung, in his paper, has analyzed the political radicalization and fragmentation of the pan-democratic camp in the LegCo elections in Hong Kong. Hung has explained how radical politics were initiated and changed in the Hong Kong context after the transfer of sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997. Hung has observed that the pan-democratic camp will not lose its key opposition status in the near future. However, Hung has pointed out that the situation is quite risky, and that whether the pan-democratic camp can maintain the status quo is questionable. Hung has concluded that the support of the pan-democratic camp will be weakened further.

Hung pointed out that the pro-establishment camp has gained support increasingly and progressively while the pan-democratic camp's support has weakened and deteriorated gradually. It was observed that the proportional representation system made the pan-democratic camp parties increasingly pluralized, radicalized and fragmented. The split

within the pan-democratic camp parties was acute, and they disintegrated into more groups and lists in the LegCo elections. From the observation of election results throughout the past 20 years, Hung pointed out that there had been a gradual deterioration of popular support for the pan-democratic camp in Hong Kong. It was observed that the popular vote gained by the pan-democratic camp was just slightly more than 50 percent, even though they could maintain their support by simple majority. Hung predicted that if the pan-democratic camp disintegrated further, or if they could not find any new plan for change, their opposition status would be jeopardized and their political power would be diminished gradually.

The problems and prospects of the implementation of "one country, two systems" following the Movement will certainly create political uncertainties in Hong Kong. Chor-yung Cheung, in his article, has argued that there is a tendency for Hong Kong's pursuit of democracy, particularly among the younger generation, to turn itself increasingly into a dissent movement. This will make the prospects of achieving a consensus between the opposition politicians and activists in Hong Kong and the central government over the future democratic development of Hong Kong more remote and difficult. This, in turn, is likely to deepen Hong Kong's current governance problems. Furthermore, Cheung has pointed out that the hardline approach adopted by Beijing against Hong Kong's opposition forces since the publication of the white paper is expected to be continued, if not strengthened, since it is now Beijing's clear intention that the future development of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong will be on the terms driven by the central government instead of by Hong Kong's dissenting voices, particularly if the voices of the younger generation in Hong Kong turn more strident and secessionist. Cheung has added that the terms understood and adopted by Beijing are qualitatively very different from those advocated by Hong Kong. Cheung has pointed out that there is a genuine risk that the practice of "one country, two systems" may fail if the current uncompromising trend continues.

Cheung has contended that Hong Kong's democracy movement has now become increasingly like a dissent movement, if the former is defined as a movement using negotiation and other practical political means to achieve the best achievable results under the circumstances to make progress towards a full democracy for Hong Kong, and the latter is understood as a kind of protest and oppositional movement to the extent that it prefers to stick to the moral high ground and the principle of political self-determination, even though the prospects of achieving the latter when making such an insistence are very remote. Cheung has commented that the Movement is the most utopian and most creative protest movement Hong Kong has had in its modern history. Cheung has observed that when it comes to having serious disputes between Beijing and Hong Kong over how quickly and just how Hong Kong should be democratized, Beijing has not been hesitant in asserting its "one country perspective" over Hong Kong. Cheung has admitted that the prospects for "one country, two systems" currently look grim. Nevertheless, Cheung has suggested that if Beijing and the opposition can both show more self-restraint instead of being confrontational, if the middle-of-the-road types of moderates can manage to play a greater role and if those in power in the Hong Kong government can adopt more inclusive and less divisive measures for governing Hong Kong, the "one country, two systems" policy in Hong Kong may have better a chance of succeeding.

In conclusion, this special issue highlights the political uncertainties that Hong Kong has been experiencing since the Occupy Central Movement was formed. There are signs that civil disobedience movements will continue and intensify. The new wave of anti-mainland protests will negatively affect the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland. More young people are dissatisfied with the status quo and they are willing to join more political and social movements. Voters expressed some significant empathy for divisive political messages in the 2015 District Council elections, showing that the Hong Kong

society is politically divided with more radical voices coming to the fore. The 2016 LegCo elections also revealed the political radicalization and fragmentation of the pan-democratic camp. The democracy movement has now gradually become a dissent movement which is a kind of protest and oppositional movement. The above-mentioned political uncertainties are not conducive to the maintenance of stability and prosperity in Hong Kong. It is therefore hoped that this special issue can generate a more constructive discussion to move Hong Kong ahead 20 years after Hong Kong's reunification with China.

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