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The Foundation of an Uprising:
Spatial Socialization and National Identity Formation in Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Law
Amendment Bill Protests

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September 21, 2021

Introduction

On March 31st, 2019, thousands of Hong Kongers took to the streets to peacefully protest the Fugitive Offenders Amendment Bill, an article allowing for criminal suspects to be extradited out of the region and into mainland China. What began as a demonstration calling for the withdrawal of the bill quickly evolved into a massive, city-wide movement against the "One Country, Two Systems" model that delineated Hong Kong as a sub-autonomous region of mainland China until its integration in 2047. At the root of the conflict is a deeply divided civil society operating under the conditions of a hybrid regime, a form of governance inconducive with the region's bottom-up campaign for democratization. The Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Protests (Anti-ELAB) demands interrogation of the process of national identity formation and the development of political resistance throughout Hong Kong. By utilizing the theory of spatial socialization to understand the complex relationship between society and the state, this paper seeks to establish the factors transforming the region into a metropol of contention, and the impact of the Anti-ELAB protests on the development of China and Hong Kongs' transitional, hybrid regime.

Literature Review

The Anti-ELAB protests grew from the legacies of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong and the Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan, which had each renewed a culture of civilian activism in opposition to the People's Republic of China. These events in 2014 inspired copious amounts of political scholarship on the reason for these protests, and the patterns of civil mobilization throughout the region.

Scholars on post-colonial civil development in Hong Kong have largely analysed civil mobilization as an indicator of structural contention and governmental dissatisfaction. The political opportunity structure approach, which I adopt to understand the development of civilian anti-government ideology, emphasizes the institutional weakness of the hybrid regime. Scholars Mong Sing and Ray Yep argue that Hong Kong's pseudo-democracy's unwillingness to implement the promise of democratization has led to a structural "political decay" that further incites public outrage.¹ A post-colonial approach focuses on the implications of imperialism and indirect governance, with scholars like Wing-sang Law regarding the "handover as a re-colonization process, in which the new regime continues to endorse the collaborative structure and crony capitalism" of British imperial control.² Ngok Ma, Qin Pang, and Fan Jiang take a relative deprivation analysis of Hong Kong's contention, believing it to be indicative of a post-industrial society whose conception of citizenship demands democratic institutions that are currently unavailable. These theories provide essential contextual analysis to the development of

¹ Cheng, Edmund W. "Street Politics in a Hybrid Regime: The Diffusion of Political Activism in Post-Colonial Hong Kong." *The China Quarterly* 226, (06, 2016): 383-406.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.ups.edu/10.1017/S0305741016000394>.

² Cheng, Edmund W. "Street Politics in a Hybrid Regime: The Diffusion of Political Activism in Post-Colonial Hong Kong."

civil mobilization in Hong Kong, working together to argue that the struggle for democratic governance and society's determination to preserve autonomy and freedom are foundational to the rebellions.

Scholar Edmund Cheng explores the transformative nature of power and politics in Hong Kong through the development of bottom-up activism. Cheng explores how protest has become synonymous with electoral politics as members of society "express public interests through contentious yet controlled means."³ This is in contrast to the development of "institutional protest" in China, a term explored by Mei Huang in the book "The Institutional Space of Civil Society in China."⁴ Huang explores how China integrated civil society into the peripheral organization of the state to mitigate the relationship between the government and its populace and maintain control of civil opposition. Authoritarian states like China do not need ideological unity, but scholars agree that structural control is integral to the regime's stability.⁵ Unlike mainland China, the hybrid conditions of Hong Kong have created an ambiguous space that neither satisfies the public nor secures the regime. Cheng argues that the recurring process of civil demonstrations and increasingly disruptive regime reactions suggests that Hong Kong's "civil oligarchy" lacks the tools to institutionalize or repress dissent.⁶ The paradox of hybridity- where regimes are in constant negotiation with methods of legitimization- is reflected in the internal conflict of the region.

While authoritarian regimes are dependent upon economic performance (output) to generate legitimacy, democracies rely upon political representation and shared systemic values (input). Hybrid regimes, defined by their convergence of democratic and authoritarian traits, must achieve a balance between these output and input elements to sustain domestic legitimacy. But as argued by Levitsky and Way, "the coexistence of democratic rules and autocratic methods aimed at keeping incumbents in power creates an inherent source of instability."⁷ Hong Kong's status as a semi-autonomous state isolated the region from the regime, further complicating modes of legitimacy. Identifying the factors that furthered the disunity will inform our understanding of the role of domestic legitimacy in the durability of hybrid governance.⁸

³ Cheng, Edmund W. "Street Politics in a Hybrid Regime: The Diffusion of Political Activism in Post-Colonial Hong Kong."

⁴ Huang, Mei, "The "Institutional Space of Civil Society in China: The Legal Framework of Civil Society Organizations," *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 4:1, 55-73, 2015. 10.1080/24761028.2015.11869081

⁵ Huang, "The "Institutional Space" of Civil Society in China: The Legal Framework of Civil Society Organizations," *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. "Linkage versus Leverage. Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change." *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 4 (2006): 379-400. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20434008>.

⁸ Ma, Ngok. "The Rise of "Anti-China" Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections." *China Review* 15, no. 1 (2015): 39-66. Accessed August 25, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24291928>.

I utilize a comparative approach to investigate the explanatory variables changing Hong Kong's civil society and the development of its transitional, hybrid regime. First, we must regard politics as more than a set of specific institutions and practices that occur in clearly delineated spaces like legislative councils and political parties. We must also address the power struggles enacted in the public, private, social, economic, and cultural spaces, as power is not limited to "blocs of institutional structures," but functions as a "social relation diffused through all spaces."⁹ These various power structures are products of the dominant cultural interpretation of politics. Recognizing the political institutions in Hong Kong as products of society is essential to understanding the transformative nature of the identitarian conflict currently reshaping Hong Kong's power relations.

Methodology

Throughout this paper, I utilize urban theory and regional sociology to provide a theoretical framework for the significance of national identity formation in the development of Hong Kong's collective mobilization. Spatial socialization- a term coined by Rob Shield in 1991- offers a geographic approach to identity that "can either reify the state or dismiss its significance," exploring regions and territories as social constructs susceptible to changing notions of power, ownership, and identity.¹⁰ Central to the theory of spatial socialization is scholar Anssi Paasi, author of "The Institutionalization of Regions: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity."¹¹ Paasi deconstructs the assumption of regions and states as natural formations rather than social constructions enforced by norms and institutions. Paasi re-examines spatial socialization as a frame of geographic sociology by analyzing the process of "becoming," in which an individual actor's identity is collectivized and socialized as a territorially bounded spatial entity.¹² This approach reifies the state as an institution that is both empowered *by* and subject *to* the development of civil society. Rather than reducing the state to a superordinate institution, states are amorphous and dependent upon the daily performance of the people who occupy it. Protests directly disrupt these daily performances of authority, making them essential to civil society and dangerous to a regime incapable of managing the dissent.

The process of spatial socialization is essential to understanding the growing discontent in Hong Kong, as the perceived "right" to a territory is reflected in the political structures of the state and the identity groups for which they function. In Hong Kong, different groups have

⁹Alvarez, Sonia E., Dagnino, Evelina, and Escobar, Arturo, *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures : Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*, Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1998, 3.

¹⁰ Paasi, Anssi, "The Institutionalization of Regions : A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity," *Fennia* 164, no. 1 (1986): 105-46.

¹¹ Paasi, "The Institutionalization of Regions : A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity."

¹² *Ibid.*

drastically different interpretations on who the region belongs to. This calls into question the significance of national identity formation in the legitimization of hybrid regimes. I adopt Smith's definition of national identity as an individual's relationship to their nation state including "such factors as a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a public culture, a common economy and legal rights and duties for all members."¹³ Hong Kong is unique in its development of a "civic" national identity indicative of political ideology regarding Beijing's government, making it an essential variant in political scholarship regarding the significance of national identity in regime legitimacy.

By analysing the development of national identity in Hong Kong's society through the geosocial approach of spatial socialization, I attempt to understand how Hong Kong's "One Country, Two Systems" governmental model failed to maintain the regime's legitimacy. Beginning with an analysis of the formation of national identity within Hong Kong, I draw parallels between the evolution of protests throughout the region, and the emerging identitarian conflict. Finally, I explore how the question of identity materialized throughout the Anti-Extradition Bill Protests, and the implications of the movement on the development of Hong Kong's regime.

I. To Be Hong Kongan: The Development of Anti-Chinese Government Identity Formation

The development of national identity within the region is particularly complex, inseparable from factors like colonial legacy, immigration reform, democratization, localisation, and the role of cultural globalization.¹⁴ Following the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong in 1945 and the renewal of the Nationalist-Communist Civil War in China, the dominant narrative of the territory's society "described an apolitical population facing a non-interventionist government."¹⁵ The region--then occupied by the British--was largely a refugee society fleeing communist rule and operating under the tenets of utilitarianistic familism. Often identified as the foundation for the social development of Hong Kong, utilitarianistic familism can be defined as a normative and behavioral tendency to place familial interests above the interests of society or any of its components, often prioritizing materialistic interests.¹⁶ This created a "boundary consciousness" between the colonial state and its society, drastically different from the relationship witnessed now amid the mass political demonstrations.¹⁷ The values of

¹³ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. "Hong Kong's Growing Separatist Tendencies against China's Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students' National Identities." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868102619886597>.

¹⁴ Pang and Jiang, "Hong Kong's Growing Separatist Tendencies against China's Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students' National Identities."

¹⁵ Ma, Ngok, and Edmund Cheng, *The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. P 28

¹⁶ "Social Life and Development in Hong Kong." Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981.

¹⁷ Ma, Ngok, and Edmund Cheng, *The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. P 28

utilitarianistic familism changed with an advanced interest in political participation as a new indigenous Hong Kong identity began to evolve, bringing with it a new claim to the territory.

Though its colonial structures remained strong, Hong Kong began to develop a civil society with its own philosophy of power and territory. The process of spatial socialization, heavily influenced by the division between foreign colonial control and a localized populace, was beginning to define the region's hegemonic identity as disconnected by the state- a precedent for decades of identitarian conflict to come.

The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 marked yet another pivotal political transformation within the region. The declaration, which subjected Hong Kong to Chinese authority in 1997, established the principle of the "One country, two systems" model that positioned Hong Kong as under the direct authority of the People's Republic of China while ensuring a "high degree of autonomy" in its social and economic systems and norms. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China was therefore redefined as semi- autonomous for the next fifty years.¹⁸ For a region already mobilising in favor of democratization, the handover from one foreign occupant to the next did little to appease Hong Kongers.¹⁹ Considering the important role civil society plays in ensuring the stability of hybrid regimes, creating a state defined by duality and division did not bode well for the cultivation of a compliant society. The constitutional design of the Declaration and the Basic Law, Hong Kong's constitutional document, created an inherent legitimacy problem for both Hong Kong and China's government. The system, overtly biased in favor of pro-Beijing loyalists and the upper class, still promised a full democracy through the guarantee of universal suffrage as an eventual goal of the state. Therefore by 1997, Hong Kong was a paradox: a territory operating under the conditions of a transitional hybrid regime with the simultaneous goal of a democratic society for its citizens and complete integration with China, an authoritarian nation state, in just fifty years.

The political, social, and territorial division of Hong Kong is reflected in its civil society. Spatial socialization asserts that the internalization of place-based identities are formed in direct connection to the spaces and structures in which they occupy.²⁰ But while Hong Kong citizens have a strong connection to the metropol itself, increasingly pro-separatist ideologies are demonstrative of a distinction between the institutions that formalize the state, and the region itself.²¹ It wasn't always this way: following the handover of 1997, polling found that 60% of respondents identified more as "Hong Kongan than Chinese," a statistic that decreased over a

¹⁸ Social Life and Development in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981.

¹⁹ Ma, Ngok, and Edmund Cheng, "*The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong*," Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. P 28

²⁰ Paasi, Anssi, "The Institutionalization of Regions : A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity," *Fennia* 164, no. 1 (1986): 105-46.

²¹ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. "Hong Kong's Growing Separatist Tendencies against China's Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students' National Identities." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868102619886597>.

period of ten years.²² In 2009, the distinction of a Hong Kong identity from that of mainland China was at its lowest, situated at about half of respondents.²³ Far more individuals seemed amiable to the concept of a duo-identity, seeing themselves as both Hong Kongan and Chinese.²⁴ This could be attributed to the initial social and economic integration following the handover, as the development of institutions like the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) encouraged cross-regional financial relationships. Following the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and 1998, the economic success of Hong Kong inspired significant immigration from the mainland, and encouraged Beijing to invest in the infrastructural development of the region.²⁵ This unity was short-lived. Following 2009, increasing dissatisfaction with the Chinese government correlated with a split in “Hong Kong” and “Chinese” identities. While Beijing had originally seen its economic involvement as an opportunity to further integration, the aggregate effect of diminishing boundaries roused resistance within Hong Kong citizens, increasing hostility and anti-mainlander sentiments.

Scholars Pang and Jiang identified a similar pattern of self-identification in their research on growing separatist tendencies within Hong Kong college students. Reactionary and defensive, separatist tendencies “strongly resist economic, social, and political assimilation by mainland China.”²⁶ By developing a series of interlocking surveys and interviews spanning from 2012 to 2016, they concluded that Hong Kong students had a much lower sociopolitical identity with China than mainland college students, which paralleled an increase in pro-Hong Kongan separatist tendencies.²⁷ A study by the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong found similar trends throughout the rest of Hong Kong’s society. The number of people who identified as “Hong Konger ” peaked in 2019, and those who expressed “pride” in Chinese national citizenship dropped from one-third in 2018 to one-quarter in 2019. In the survey, fifty three percent of interviewees identified themselves as Hong Kongan, and only eleven percent identified as “Chinese.”²⁸ The HKUPOP study also reported that “the younger the respondents,

²² Pang and Jiang, “Hong Kong’s Growing Separatist Tendencies against China’s Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students’ National Identities.”

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ma, Ngok. "The Rise of "Anti-China" Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections." *China Review* 15, no. 1 (2015): 39-66. Accessed August 25, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24291928>.

²⁵ Ma, Ngok. "The Rise of "Anti-China" Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections." *China Review*

²⁶ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. “Hong Kong’s Growing Separatist Tendencies against China’s Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students’ National Identities.” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28.

²⁷ Pang and Jiang, “Hong Kong’s Growing Separatist Tendencies against China’s Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students’ National Identities.”

²⁸ Cheng, Kris, “Hongkongers identifying as ‘Chinese’ at record low; under 10% of youth ‘proud’ to be citizens – poll,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 28 2019. <https://hongkongfp.com/2019/06/28/hongkongers-identifying-chinese-record-low-10-youth-proud-citizens-poll/>

the less likely they were to feel proud of becoming a national citizen of China, and the more negative they were toward the Central Government's policies on Hong Kong."²⁹ Both studies indicate that younger citizens of Hong Kong are more likely to identify as Hong Kongan, and demonstrate higher opposition to China's government than in previous years. Within this younger demographic, interviewees were more likely to blame the social ills of society on authoritarianism than economic or cultural explanations.³⁰ This is not to suggest that economic inequality is not a contributing factor to political perception; Hong Kong has significant income inequality, hosting a GINI coefficient that is among the highest in the world.³¹ Some literature argues that the increasing demand for democratization among youths is driven by a desire for a better material life.³² But the correlation between identity and political participation among Hong Kong's younger generation is increasingly influenced by political sentiment and less so by the economic prowess of the mainland, suggesting an increasingly post-materialist view of China's economic growth and sociopolitical status. Post-materialism, a term postulated in the early 1970s in regard to Western Europe, emphasizes civic participation in creating an "ideal of humanitarian society," and opposes the prioritization of economic growth and stability over civil liberty.³³ This post-materialistic mentality has encouraged citizens to evaluate their identity on the premise of sociopolitical ideology over pan-economic development, challenging the dominant Chinese narrative of Hong Kong as a region defined by economic success. China failed to recognize that the region had long shed the a-political sentiments of the postwar period, and that low levels of political participation were no longer adequate for the populace. Without the political opportunity structures demanded by an increasingly anti-authoritarian society, the development of social movements were bound to upset the systems of power established in Hong Kong.

II. *Establishing the Precedent of 2019: Identity Politics and Social Mobilization*

Understanding the development of identity formation in relation to social mobilization provides insight on the materialization of Hong Kong's power struggle. Though Hong Kong's development conditioned contention within the region, protests in 2003 marked a significant shift in the relationship between civil society and the state. An attempt to introduce a national security law that would prohibit "treason, secession, sedition and subversion against the Chinese

²⁹ Cheng, Kris, "Hongkongers identifying as 'Chinese' at record low; under 10% of youth 'proud' to be citizens – poll," *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 28 2019. <https://hongkongfp.com/2019/06/28/hongkongers-identifying-chinese-record-low-10-youth-proud-citizens-poll/>

³⁰ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. "Hong Kong's Growing Separatist Tendencies against China's Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students' National Identities." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28.

³¹ Pang and Jiang, "Hong Kong's Growing Separatist Tendencies against China's Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students' National Identities."

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Inglehart, R (1971) The silent revolution in Europe: intergenerational change in post-industrial societies. *American Political Science Review* 65(4): 991–1017.

government” sparked outrage across the region, resulting in a demonstration of more than 500,000 citizens.³⁴ Hong Kong indefinitely shelved the bill, and a precedent was established for future political mobilization in direct opposition to Beijing’s regime. This movement revitalized a reckoning of Hong Kong and Chinese history that did not fall in favor of Beijing, much to its chagrin. The establishment of an annual candlelight vigil at Victoria Park in Hong Kong commemorated the 1989 Tiananmen square massacre, and increased visibility of political groups like the Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement, the “umbrella organization” of other pro-democracy groups in the region.³⁵ Meanwhile on the mainland, commemoration of the 1989 tragedy was still illegal, making Victoria Park the “default contentious space” for pro-independence sentiments throughout the region.³⁶ These demonstrations were a performance of Hong Kong’s desired estrangement from mainland China, and embodied a new kind of Hong Kongan pride.

Protest erupted once again in 2014 following a constitutional change to Hong Kong’s electoral process, which implemented a nomination committee for the elections of chief executives and ensured Beijing’s ability to fully vet eligible candidates. Seeing this as a direct rebuttal of the promise of universal suffrage, the retaliating protest lasted seventy-nine days. Earning the title “The Umbrella Movement” for the use of umbrellas against violent police retaliation, the movement gained international attention for its sheer scale and collective organization around the values of peaceful occupation. Police violence further galvanized the movement, drawing public support for the demonstrators. Occupy movement tactics are by nature unsustainable, and as time went on, The Umbrella Movement failed to create any substantive political change. However, the movement did resocialize the metropol into a city prime for dissent. Localism, which centers on the preservation of Hong Kong’s autonomy and local culture, emerged as a central political ideology that remains prevalent throughout society. By defining Hong Kongers as independent of mainland China, localism opposes the growing encroachment of the Chinese central government, believing in centralizing the political, economic, and social affairs of the region.³⁷ Localism remained a central ideology in the emerging Anti-ELAB protests, embodied by the increasingly Hong Kong-identifying and

³⁴ Gunia, Amy, “A Brief History of Protest in Post-Handover Hong Kong,” *Time*, June 20, 2019. <https://time.com/5606212/hong-kong-history-mass-demonstrations-protest/>

³⁵ Ma, Ngok. "The Rise of "Anti-China" Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections." *China Review* 15, no. 1 (2015): 39-66. Accessed August 25, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24291928>.

³⁶ Ma, Ngok. "The Rise of "Anti-China" Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections."

³⁷ Hui, Victoria Tin-bor. "THE PROTESTS AND BEYOND." *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 2 (04, 2015): 111-121. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.ups.edu/10.1353/jod.2015.0030>. <http://ezproxy.ups.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.ups.edu:2443/scholarly-journals/protests-beyond/docview/1712244211/se-2?accountid=1627>.

pro-separatist demonstrators. The Umbrella Movement transformed the city into a platform for civil resistance and established a precedent for future transformative political resistance.

III. National Identity in The Anti-ELAB Protests

Evidently, Hong Kong is no stranger to dissent; yet it was unprepared for the eruption of the Anti-ELAB protests in 2019, which redefined the purpose and modes of civil resistance, reimagined what it meant to be “Hong Kongan,” and challenged existing systems of state authority. The Anti-ELAB protests were unique for its often leaderless, sporadic formations. Many events were headed by college-educated, young Hong Kongans, the same demographic Pang and Jiang had determined to most likely identify as both Hong Kongan and anti-Chinese governance.³⁸ Though the movement still utilized protest methods like mass demonstrations and occupations, the online organization mobilized protestors and thwarted the state’s ability to respond to sporadic events. Social media became an essential tool in the absence of functional political opportunity structures. In addition, the public staging of many of the protests- including the invasion of the Legislative Building and the occupations of Hong Kong’s international airport- enhanced the “collective recognition” of the discontent embedded in the pseudo-democratic structures of the regime.³⁹ The development of a localized discourse galvanized a pro-Hong Kongan collective memory that directly negated the attempts of Beijing to regain control and reinforce their legitimacy. The emergence of the “Hong Kongan” identity in opposition to Beijing’s regime sought to unify the populace against the state through the assertion of a hegemonic identity fueled by localism. Slogans like, “Hong Kongers, add oil!” and “Hong Kongers, resist,” propelled the protests beyond a critique of the proposed extradition bill and into a movement against the “One country, Two systems” model.⁴⁰

The identitarian conflict within Hong Kong further manifested itself in the spaces utilized during the protests. Universities had become safe harbors for the young protestors at the core of the movement, but a rise in police confrontation led to violent clashes between the state and its students. A spot of particular contention was the Hong Kong Polytech University. In November of 2019, students barricaded themselves in with brick walls, armed with fire bombs and

³⁸ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. “Hong Kong’s Growing Separatist Tendencies against China’s Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students’ National Identities.” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28.

³⁹ Francis L. F. Lee, Samson Yuen, Gary Tang and Edmund W. Cheng, “Hong Kong’s Summer of Uprising: From Anti-Extradition to Anti-Authoritarian Protests,” *The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press*, Vol. 19, No.4, 2019.

⁴⁰ Hiu-Fung Chung, “Changing Repertoires of Contention in Hong Kong: A Case Study on the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement”, *China Perspectives*, 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.10476>

slingshots.⁴¹ Protestors shut down the Cross Harbour Tunnel, an important thoroughway for the island, and police retaliated with tear gas. Students attempted to flee following a three day standoff, and more than 1,100 of the protestors were forced to surrender to the police.⁴² In the wake of six months of protests, this standoff was one of the most violent conflicts of the movement. It was emblematic of the significant generational tension of Hong Kong, and the positive relationship between higher education and Hong Kongan demonstrators. Education plays a significant role in both the socialization of a region and the legitimization of a regime. Referred to as the state's "mainlandization efforts," the Hong Kong government sought to use a pro-chinese history curriculum to instill a sense of chinese patriotism throughout the 1997 handover. The national education programme backfired, and the curriculum provoked resistance from Hong Kongers who'd established a "political distinctiveness" from the mainland.⁴³ Though China has repeatedly used education- or the absence of it- to promote integration, education can be a vehicle for critical democracy with the ability to mediate and transform societal order.⁴⁴ The tension between education and political ideology is demonstrated in Paasi's structuration theory, which directly analyses the power relations that emerge from institutional and individual practices and other "invisible realities instead of purely material phenomena."⁴⁵ Paasi argues that socialization is a constant, ongoing process shaped by social agreements, institutional practices, and state structures. The educational systems of Hong Kong played a key role in the socialization of students and facilitated the direct disruption of the "daily performance" of statehood throughout the demonstrations.

The significance of spatial socialization is further demonstrated by generational differences in the opinions of effective protest strategies and state governance. Given Hong Kong's history of political transition and state formation, each generational cohort has engaged with a different political apparatus. The "cohort effect" refers to "systematic differences in values

⁴¹ Kirby, Jen. "A Hong Kong university becomes a battleground in the latest round of protests" Vox, November 18, 2019.

<https://www.vox.com/2019/11/18/20970453/hong-kong-protests-2019-polytechnic-police>

⁴² Lai, Rebecca, "How Universities Became the New Battlegrounds in the Hong Kong Protests," *The New York Times*, November 19, 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/18/world/asia/hong-kong-protest-universities.html>

⁴³ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. "Hong Kong's Growing Separatist Tendencies against China's Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students' National Identities." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868102619886597>.

⁴⁴ Goodman, Jesse. "EDUCATION FOR CRITICAL DEMOCRACY." *The Journal of Education* 171, no. 2 (1989): 88–116. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42742153>.

⁴⁵ Paasi, Anssi, "The Institutionalization of Regions : A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity," *Fennia* 164, no. 1 (1986): 105-46.

among the generations, formed by their early life experiences.”⁴⁶ A cohort approach delineates a generational trend with the development of a hegemonic national identity that is both reflected and produced by institutions and social environments. Sociopolitical values vary heavily by generation, social class, geography, and other intersectional identities, all of which influence the understanding of the function of civil society.

For example; the ideals of rule of law and freedom are negotiated very differently between cohorts. For individuals born before the 1997 handover, the “daily freedoms” of Hong Kong are valued as symbols of the state's successful autonomy, and “damaging the rule of law” is highly oppositional.⁴⁷ The violence of the Anti-ELAB isolated these citizens from those pursuing their agenda “by any means necessary.”⁴⁸ But for Hong Kongan youth born after the 1997 handover, the violence of the Anti-ELAB protests was propelled by the widespread certainty that escalation was the only way to combat Beijing and secure a democratic future. Seeking to reclaim their city from authoritarianism, young Hong Kong protestors view their battle as the last stand against the destruction of their home. A sense of reckless desperation has inspired a new “chosen generation” among Hong Kong youths.⁴⁹

The cohort theory interrogates the specific demographics of the Anti-ELAB protestors, exploring generational differences in identity formation and spatial imaginaries. The “period effect” also engages with the role of socialization throughout political movements by asserting that the increase in Hong Kongan identity formation is not reduced solely to generational differences, but instead as a factor of simultaneous changes in the social, cultural, and physical environments affecting all members of society.⁵⁰ Though young, college-educated Hong Kongers remained the face of the Anti-ELAB movement, professional sectors also spoke out against the extradition bill. In June of 2019, around 3,000 Hong Kongan legal professionals peacefully marched in silent opposition; teachers joined the demonstration, calling for the state to “protect the next generation of students!”⁵¹ China’s economic development and one-way immigration

⁴⁶ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. “Hong Kong’s Growing Separatist Tendencies against China’s Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students’ National Identities.” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868102619886597>.

⁴⁷ Clifford Stott, Lawrence Ho, Matt Radburn, Ying Tung Chan, Arabella Kyprianides, Patricio Saavedra Morales, “Patterns of ‘Disorder’ During the 2019 Protests in Hong Kong: Policing, Social Identity, Intergroup Dynamics, and Radicalization.” *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 14, Issue 4. December 2020, Pages 814–835.

⁴⁸ Clifford Stott, et. al, “Patterns of ‘Disorder’ During the 2019 Protests in Hong Kong: Policing, Social Identity, Intergroup Dynamics, and Radicalization.” *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*.

⁴⁹ Barron, Laignee, “‘I Absolutely Will Not Back Down.’ Meet the Young People at the Heart of Hong Kong's Rebellion,” *Times*, January 22, 2020, <https://time.com/longform/hong-kong-portraits/>

⁵⁰ Pang, Qin, and Fan Jiang. “Hong Kong’s Growing Separatist Tendencies against China’s Rise: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong College Students’ National Identities.” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 48, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868102619886597>.

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efforts into Hong Kong had increased wealth disparities, changed local demographics, and directly altered the physical space of the metropol. Ultimately, a localized identity was enhanced, and discontent with Beijing's interference within the region only grew.⁵² The period effect asserts that these significant social changes affected the political identities of all intersectional, identity-based groups regardless of age. Both the cohort theory and period effect are useful tools in analysing the amorphous nature of identity formation throughout the Anti-ELAB movement.

A conviction in a Hong Kongan identity separate from the systems and values of the People's Republic of China continued to fuel the movement well into 2020. Though Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, withdrew the extradition bill on September 4th of 2019, the government refused to concede to the other demands of the protestors. Emergency powers were invoked, and confrontations only escalated. In addition to the university occupations, the storming of the Legislative Council Building in July of 2019 and the murders of Chow Tzk-lok and Luo Changqing--both of whom were shot by police--were landmark events in the movement.⁵³ The movement brought about a landslide victory of pro-democratic nominees in the District Council election, but the devastation of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 marked a turning point in the capacity and autonomy of both civil society and the state. In May of 2020, Beijing promulgated a national security bill in Hong Kong that severely restricted mass mobilization and political freedom.⁵⁴ With governmental approval ratings at their lowest since the 1997 handover and significant international rebuke leading to sanctions and global solidarity movements, the Anti-ELAB protests completely transformed the region. The identitarian conflict at the heart of Hong Kong's dissent effectively dismantled the legitimacy of the hybrid regime, forcing Beijing to abandon its pseudodemocracy and implement strict authoritarian restriction across the city.

IV. The Changing Conditions of Hong Kong's Hybridity

China and Hong Kong's response to the mass mobilization efforts of the Anti-ELAB movement demonstrate a significant shift in the capacity of regime hybridity since the Umbrella Movement of 2014. Although both protests stemmed from the same aspiration to shed the subordinate status of its perennial hybrid regime and implement a liberal democracy, the states' ability to respond to the different tactics of political resistance offers a stark comparison. Following the events of 2014, regional scholarship on authoritarianism suggested that hybrid regimes were learning to suppress and tolerate protests to reduce pressure for political change

⁵² "Citizenship, Identity and Social Movements in the New Hong Kong: Localism after the Umbrella Movement." ed. / Wai-man Lam; Luke Cooper. London : Routledge, 2017. p. 114-131 (Routledge Contemporary China Series; No. 178).

⁵³ Lo, Sonny. "Hong Kong in 2020: National Security Law and Truncated Autonomy," *Asian Survey* (2021) 61 (1): 34-42, February 2, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2021.61.1.34>

⁵⁴ Lo, Sonny. "Hong Kong in 2020: National Security Law and Truncated Autonomy," *Asian Survey* (2021) 61 (1): 34-42, February 2, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2021.61.1.34>

and transparency.⁵⁵ Instead of relying on a monopoly of violence, hybrid regimes could evolve to use media framing, counter-movements, and coercion to maintain control over their populace. In 2014, Hong Kong's hybrid regime learned from the transformative events of the occupation and began to frame the protests as a matter of national security, changing the rhetoric of the movement. The regime also incorporated counter-movement tactics by institutionalizing pro-regime civil groups-notably the Caring Hong Kong Power and the Silent Majority for Hong Kong- within the state.⁵⁶ By 2015, political scientists agreed that the Umbrella Movement had lacked the capability to transcend from a political moment to a systematic movement. The consensus suggested that although Hong Kong enjoys greater mobilization capacity than it would under a strictly authoritarian state, it lacked the organizational opportunities necessary to implement significant change.

However, the Anti-Extradition Protests demonstrated a civil society whose contention could no longer be negotiated by the regime. The durability of the movement and Beijing's overtly authoritarian response suggests that the rules of hybridity were no longer sufficient in quelling civil mobilization. In May of 2020, China announced that its National People's Congress would directly draft a new national security law for Hong Kong, bypassing local legislation procedures. Pro-democracy politicians and political analysts alike marked Beijing's actions as the end to the "one country, two systems" principle and Hong Kong's autonomy.⁵⁷ The national security law functionally prohibited mobilization against the state, allowing authorities to pursue suspected offenders of the 66 articles, which targeted "crimes of secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion."⁵⁸ Pro-democracy organizations were disbanded, and core leaders fled the territory, seeking refuge in nations including the United States of America and the Netherlands. Known leaders of both the Umbrella Movement of 2014 and the Anti-ELAP movement were listed as wanted for "inciting secession" and "colluding with foreign powers."⁵⁹ A decision to postpone the Legislative Council elections for an entire year due to concerns of Covid-19 led to significant public speculation that Hong Kong's government was under the strict control of central authorities to postpone elections in fear of a repeat of 2019's pro-democracy landslide.⁶⁰

Beijing's central government is not only relying on force and law; it is also attempting to reintroduce methods of socialization to shift the political sentiments of Hong Kong's society in favor of the Chinese state. Officials are encouraging young Hong Kongers to study and work in

⁵⁵ Cheng, Edmund W. "Street Politics in a Hybrid Regime: The Diffusion of Political Activism in Post-Colonial Hong Kong." *The China Quarterly* 226, (06, 2016): 383-406.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0305741016000394>.

⁵⁶ Cheng, Edmund W. "Street Politics in a Hybrid Regime: The Diffusion of Political Activism in Post-Colonial Hong Kong." *The China Quarterly*

⁵⁷ Vivian Wang and Alexandra Stevenson, "'A Form of Brainwashing': China Remakes Hong Kong," *The New York Times*, Updated July 30, 2021

⁵⁸ Lo, Sonny. "Hong Kong in 2020: National Security Law and Truncated Autonomy," *Asian Survey* (2021) 61 (1): 34-42, February 2, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2021.61.1.34>

⁵⁹ Lo, "Hong Kong in 2020: National Security Law and Truncated Autonomy," *Asian Survey*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

the southern Chinese cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, part of a campaign to promote prosperity as the worthwhile exchange of political freedom.⁶¹ Following patterns of integration witnessed in the early 2000s, Chinese state-owned companies are moving into Hong Kong in an attempt to redefine Hong Kong by its economy. The Hong Kong government has also issued new curriculum guidelines in schools “designed to instill affection for the Chinese people.”⁶² Under the conditions of hybridity, economic development and educational reform failed to instill pro-Chinese sentiments within Hong Kong’s civil society. The development of a pro-seperatist Hong Kongan was a definitive reaction to such measures. But Hong Kong can no longer be defined as semi-autonomous or hybrid, and tactics of integration may operate differently in an authoritarian system. The authoritarian response of Beijing indicates an end to an era of hybridity, and a difficult path ahead for the young generations who maintain a Hong Kongan identity.

Conclusion

Hong Kong’s national security law truncated the autonomy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, ushering in a new era of governance and political turmoil for the region. By adopting Chinese legalism to stave off political dissent, Beijing has sought to stabilize Hong Kong through strictly authoritarian means. The system of semi-autonomy has been abandoned, but Hong Kongers have remained resilient. Determined to defend their civil liberties, protestors have continued to subvert Beijing’s control on issues of education, freedom of speech, and political appointments. The young Hong Kongers on the frontlines of the movement represent a chosen generation bent on fighting for the autonomy they were raised to value. The political turmoil of the Anti-ELAB protests and the practical end of Hong Kong’s hybrid regime demonstrates the significant role of socialization and identity formation in the effective legitimization of a state. Had China understood the relationship between political ideology and identity formation, perhaps it would have known that the semi-autonomous region would fail to remain subservient long before the deadline of 2047. Maybe China did not believe the small region could possibly thwart its political structure--or perhaps the state knew its authoritarian powers would be enough to force integration, should the transition lead to dissent.

Understanding the nuanced development of identity provides key information on the generation leading Hong Kong’s political society. Spatial socialization will continue to shape the norms, values, and institutions that delineate national identity for generations to come, but how it will manifest is not yet known. As the ramifications of both the movement and Beijing’s response continue to develop and 2047 draws nearer, Hong Kong will remain one of the most significant political crises of this era.

⁶¹Vivian Wang and Alexandra Stevenson, “‘A Form of Brainwashing’: China Remakes Hong Kong,” *The New York Times*, Updated July 30, 2021

⁶² Wang and Stevenson, “‘A Form of Brainwashing’: China Remakes Hong Kong,” *The New York Times*.

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