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State-Mobilized Countermovement in the Democratic Movement of Hong Kong

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Abstract

Chinese Communist Party-state sponsored organizations in Hong Kong rarely carried out contentious activities during British colonial rule. Incidents such as the Guangzhou-Hong Kong General Strike in 1925-1926 and the 1967 riot were the exceptions rather than the rule. During 2013-2015, the issue of democratic reform galvanized political parties and societal activists into a new wave of democratic movement, and triggered a party-state-sponsored countermovement. In the beginning, the state-mobilized countermovement was quite successful in delegitimizing and containing the pro-democracy movement due to favorable political opportunities, strong mobilizing structures and effective framing strategies. Subsequently, a situation of hyper-countermobilization and the repressive action of the authoritarian state triggered a large-scale outbreak of spontaneous popular uprising and rebellion.

Introduction

The events surrounding the democratic movement in Hong Kong from 2013-2015 represent the latest chapter of a long and torturous strife for democracy that can be dated back to the early 1980s when Britain and China held their negotiation over the city's future (So 1998). The Occupy Central Movement initiated by three pro-democracy activists triggered countermobilization from the Chinese Communist Party-state ("party-state"). Operated mainly through their unofficial agents and sponsored organizations in Hong Kong, its scale of operation was almost unprecedented, at least since the social riot in 1967. This sustained state-sponsored

countermobilization can be characterized as a countermovement, given its duration and mode of operation.

Various scholars have noted that the interplay of contending movements is an understudied and undertheorized topic (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Andrews 2002; Derichs (ed) 2014). Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) define a countermovement as "a movement that makes contrary claims simultaneously to those of the original movement" (p.1631). One can assume that most countermovements in liberal democracies are mobilized by societal actors. The idea of an authoritarian state being the mobilizer of a countermovement thus adds complexity to the theorization of the dynamics. One may view the movement-countermovement dynamics as a constitutive part of state-society relations.

The case of Hong Kong is further complicated by the special relationship between the national state (which is a strong authoritarian state) and the local state (which is a weak authoritarian state and a hybrid regime) under the "one country, two systems" arrangement. While the goal of the pro-democracy movement activists was to bargain with the national state, the countermovement was largely remote from the national state's direct control and carried out through the rather uncoordinated actions of multiple agencies. At the same time, the pro-democracy movement consisted of a wide spectrum of challengers (from moderates to radicals). A fragmented democratic movement was thus met with a fragmented authoritarian regime.

While the state-mobilized countermovement was immediately triggered by the mobilization and threat of a strong civil society, both the movement and the

countermovement occurred in the context of three decades of ongoing struggle between the civil society and the state. As such, the study of this particular event has to be put in the context of the dynamics between the party-state and the pro-democracy movement since the 1980s.

Pro-democracy Movement in a Postcolonial, Postindustrial, and Postmaterial Setting: Opportunities and Challenges

It will be impossible to offer a full picture of the pro-democracy movement within the scope of this paper. The Sino-British negotiation in the early 1980s signified the birth of a pro-democracy movement and the beginning of a long democratic transition that remains unfinished. Hong Kong has been undergoing partial democratization in slow pace starting from the introduction of popularly elected seats in the legislature in 1991. The process was mostly arrested after 2004 as the percentage of popularly elected seats reached 50 percent. The chief executive remains a nonelected figure. During this period, the pro-democracy movement has gone through periods of mobilization and demobilization. It has witnessed the emergence of the third, fourth and fifth waves democratization, each of which has inspired pro-democracy activists to try out different strategies of contending the party-state – the single major external force that has been prohibiting the progress in democratization. Successive waves of mobilization saw increasing radicalization in the repertoires of contention adopted by movement activists, as well as the proliferation of new leaders, new internal conflict and fragmentation due to disagreement over strategies, ideological differences and generational change.

The prolonged democratic transition was also complicated by postcolonialism, postindustrialism, and postmaterialism, giving rise to changes in collective identities and values of citizens. The decolonization process in the 1980s heightened the rights and democratic consciousness of the general population, and with the handover of sovereignty led to the search for a new political identity. From 1984 to 2014, GDP per capita in Hong Kong increased by threefold from USD13,190 to USD35,596. The percentage of the population with post-secondary educational attainment increased from 9.2 percent in 1986 to 30.8 percent in 2015, with a significant gap between the younger and older generation: 46.9 percent among the 20-29 year-old group had post-secondary educational attainment, as opposed to 13.7 percent among the 50-59 year-old group. [1] It was also during this period that civil society and new social movements quickly flourished.

The combined effect of these factors on the pro-democracy movement is complex. In a way, they offered Hong Kong some of the most favorable conditions for democratization (and thus the most challenging conditions for authoritarian rule to persist). Further supporting democratization are: hyper-free flow of information in a cosmopolitan city and thus an extremely well-informed citizenry; absence of ethnic, linguistic, religious or urban-rural divides; low political cost of public activism compared with other authoritarian states thanks to the constitutional protection of civil liberties.

[1] Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/gender/education_and_training/index.jsp

Ironically, these might also have afforded unfavorable conditions for pro-democracy movement to succeed. While among the population there is substantial grievance with the status quo and dissatisfaction with the current regime, the pro-democracy movement has never been driven by the urgent need to remove a brutal dictator or corrupted government. Rather, the quest has been about the ideal of having a popularly elected government. The public debate about democracy is also inevitably enmeshed with many critical governance issues. A wide economic gap between the haves and have-nots in a postindustrial economy gives rise to socioeconomic cleavage. There are major differences in people's interpretation of the colonial experience, the relationship between Hong Kong and China, the legitimacy of the party-state, etc. All these mean that the pro-democracy movement is bound to suffer from serious frame dispute.

These settings offer the party-state much room for maneuver, either to divide or contain the movement. Unlike other authoritarian regimes, the "one country, two systems" formula is a self-limiting arrangement that largely precludes the option of outright repression. Control has been attained through indirect rule, ie by aligning a united front of pro-Beijing social organizations in Hong Kong. Lam and Lam's (2013) discussion of China's united front work in Hong Kong provides a good analysis. They argue that China's united front work consists of different tactics: supportive forces are united through integration, cooptation, and collaboration, while hostile forces are dealt with through containment and denunciation.

The Hybrid Regime and the Rise of State-Mobilized Contention

Historically, both the Kuomintang (KMT, or the Nationalist Party) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have set up various social organizations in Hong Kong, including chambers of commerce, trade unions, youth clubs, welfare organizations, schools, and women's groups. During the colonial era, there were also a few major instances of contention that were linked to the party-states. As early as the 1920s, the KMT was involved in the mobilization of labor unions in the Seamen's Strike (1922), while CCP members were active organizers of the Guangzhou-Hong Kong General Strike (1925-1926).[2] The 1967 riot was the spillover of the Cultural Revolution mobilized by Chairman Mao Zedong. By and large, these instances of state-mobilized contentions were spillover of China's internal political turmoil. During the colonial era, activities of infiltration were restrained if not sanctioned by the draconian laws of the colonial government, which adopted a "firmness without provocation" approach toward CCP (and KMT) activities.[3]

The CCP had infiltrated society through setting up numerous social organizations, which served as part of their united front strategy as well as avenues for recruiting underground party members. During the political transition leading up to 1997, capitalists were among the major groups to be coopted. Upon the handover of sovereignty, the party-state has aligned a range of social organizations, from political parties, business associations, labor unions, clans associations, women organizations, community-based and neighborhood based organizations, recreational

[2] For an analysis of the activities of these two parties, see Daniel Y. K. Kwan, *Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement: A Study of Deng Zhongxia 1894-1933* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).
[3] Steve Tsang (ed), *A Documentary History of Hong Kong: Government and Politics* (HK: Hong Kong University Press, 1995), p.294.

clubs, arts and culture organizations, schools, etc. Also growing in number in recent years are professional groups, alumni associations, think tanks and students organizations. These organizations have varying degree of closeness with the party-state. Some organizations may have direct linkage with the CCP machinery; others may be subsidiaries of such organizations. Still others may be part of an extensive patron-client network. Through these organizations the party-state is able to extend its influence to many major spheres of society.

At the same time, the postcolonial era witnessed the growing maturity of civil society. The watershed was the mass rally on 1st July, 2003, in which as many as half a million people protested against a local legislation on national security (which is required under Article 23 of the Basic Law) that was widely felt to threaten civil liberties. In the decade that followed, wave upon wave of social protest in relation to environmental protection, heritage conservation, urban planning, and democratization testified to the coming of a postmaterial society in search of a postcolonial identity. Beijing's decision to arrest democratization in Hong Kong has prolonged political conflict and deepened the legitimacy crisis of the HKSAR government.[4]

Since the mass rally in 2003, the "Liaison Office"[5], which is the central government's de facto local agency in charge of overseeing Hong Kong, has stepped up its involvement behind the scene in all areas of Hong Kong affairs, from taking an interest in the Hong Kong government's public policymaking, coordinating pro-

[4] Eliza W.Y. Lee, Joseph C.W. Chan, Elaine Y.M. Chan, Peter T.Y. Cheung, Wai Fung Lam, and Wai Man Lam, *Public Policymaking in Hong Kong: Civic Engagement and State-Society Relations in a Semi-Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[5] The full name is the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Its predecessor during the colonial era was the New China News Agency, which was widely recognized as the de facto party machinery in Hong Kong. See Christine Loh,

establishment political parties in fielding candidates for elections, deploying manpower for electoral campaigns, to funding social organizations. The past decade also witnessed the expansion of party-state sponsored leading mass associations and their subsidiary organizations, estimated to be hundreds of thousands of members in total.[6] Clans associations (*tongxianghui*) were revived and proliferated in size and number. New forms of pro-Beijing issue-based populist organizations have emerged, often led by figures that were hitherto unknown to the public and who portray themselves as unaffiliated concerned citizens.

Many of these organizations have actively participated in contentious activities in the past few years, from signature campaigns, rallies in support of government policies that are unpopular, patriotic marches, protests and counter-protests, etc. Often, leaders and figures of the pro-democracy camp were targets for attack. At times, there were open or even violent confrontations among the contending groups. State-sponsored social organizations have acted as "foot soldiers" for making counterclaims and rhetorics to delegitimize the claims of civil society. Smearing campaigns are carried out to attack opponents and intimidate potential opposition. Street-level confrontations that disrupt social order are opportunities for shifting the blame to the other side and demobilizing the moderate majority. At times, even physical violence is employed to take up the "dirty jobs" that cannot be taken up by the government or its police force. Vocal representatives would compete for media attention and their share of airtime to shape public perception.

[6] Stan Hok Wui Wong, *Electoral Politics in Post-1997 Hong Kong: Protest, Patronage, and the Media* (Singapore: Springer Science+Business Media, 2015), pp.97-129.

The Occupy Central Movement

In the past three decades, Beijing[7] has been using tactics of delay in response to demand from the Hong Kong society for democracy. The pro-democracy forces, which first arose in the 1980s, have been faced with multiple incidents of defeat and dismay. Despite Beijing's promise in 2006 that there could be universal suffrage of the chief executive in 2017, there was wide skepticism as to whether it would be a free election, as Beijing could manipulate the electoral process and outcome through crafting the details of the electoral method. Article 45 of the Basic Law (the mini-constitution of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, or HKSAR) stipulates that:

> The method for selecting the Chief Executive shall be specified in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures.
>
> The specific method for selecting the Chief Executive is prescribed in Annex I: "Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region".

[7] In this paper, the term Beijing means the Central Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

It has long been the pro-democracy camp's worry that Beijing would try to manipulate the composition and operational rules of the Nominating Committee with the purpose of controlling the choice of candidates and even the outcome of the election. Beijing has also set down procedures for amending relevant provisions of Annex I, and in practice it has complete control over when to initiate the process and what constitutional reform plan to submit to the local legislature for voting.

The Occupy Central Movement (OCM) started off with a commentary written by Benny Tai, a law professor at The University of Hong Kong, published in Hong Kong Economic Journal (a local newspaper) on January 16, 2013, in which he expressed his pessimism that Beijing would honor its promise to let Hong Kong choose its own Chief Executive through free elections in 2017. Given that past strategies of contention, such as mass rallies, sit-ins, protests, and so on, have proven to be rather ineffective, he regarded that Hong Kong people needed to step up its pressure on Beijing by arming themselves with "more deadly weapons". The article further elaborated a plan of nonviolent civil disobedience, that over ten thousand people would gather in Central (the central business district and financial center in Hong Kong), occupy the major roads and paralyze the heart of the city's economy. His idea caught the media's immediate attention and soon went viral among pro-democracy activists. In March 2013, Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) was officially formed with Benny Tai, Kin-man Chan (a sociology professor teaching at the Chinese University of Hong Kong), and Reverend Yiu-ming Chu as the leading figures.

Political Opportunities

The democratic movement in Hong Kong has always been affected by a mix of perceived opportunities for success, perceived threats for inaction, and a sense of outrage over the status quo. There is also often a wide gap in the subjective perception of opportunities and threats between the activists and the average citizens. Repeated opinion polls over decades have shown that the majority of Hong Kong people want a democratic system, but many hold a pragmatic attitude about the opportunities of success in demanding such system from China. Past experiences show that instances of successful mobilization usually happened when there was strong sense of threat and outrage.

Democratic activists understood that their bargaining position vis-à-vis Beijing would always be weak. On the other hand, over the years persistent pressure on the latter has yielded some marginal gains. The mass rally in 2003, where half a million people protested, resulted in Beijing replacing the chief executive afterwards. After the refusal of the pro-democracy political parties to accept the proposed reform on the Legislative Council electoral method in 2005, the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) announced that the universal suffrage of the chief executive could be implemented in 2017. In 2010, Beijing made a deal with the Democratic Party (a prodemocracy party) and agreed in the eleventh-hour to accept its Legislative Council electoral reform proposal. In September 2012, tens of thousands of anti-national education protesters, among them secondary school students and parents, besieged the government headquarters forcing officials to back off from its insistence on making national education a compulsory subject, allegedly a

duty assigned by Beijing. All these experiences convinced the activists that if popular mobilization were strong and persistent enough, they could press Beijing to make some concessions.

The political reform in 2010 caused serious conflict and fragmentation within the democratic camp. The moderates, led by the Democratic Party and a group of academics, were under severe attack for the "secret deal" they made with Beijing. The Democratic Party did not gain any advantage after making the deal. Beijing did not further reconcile with the moderate camp. The moderates' approach was thus delegitimized and side-tracked. The current Chief Executive C.Y. Leung was widely viewed as a hardliner who would carefully follow Beijing's order instead of speaking up for Hong Kong. Among the activists the general feeling was that a more radical approach would be needed to put pressure on Beijing.

In summary, pro-democracy activists perceived that strong social mobilization and persistent pressure on the party-state were the only ways to obtain marginal concession from Beijing. The increasingly contentious civil society also signaled to democratic activists that it was looking for more transgressive forms of contention. There was a strong sense of threat and urgency over the cost of inaction, that Beijing would resort to a tactic of delay and reveal an offer at the very late stage thus making it too late for societal mobilization and negotiation. Past experiences have also shown that the average citizen may or may not be mobilized to take part in contentious activities, depending on the sense of threat and urgency felt, and this, quite often, was the result of the choice of action of the party-state and its agents.

With hindsight, what the OCLP activists have missed out was that since around 2008, Beijing has increased its repression against dissenting voices in the Mainland, thus reversing a decade of loosening up political control. The leadership in China was worried if not paranoid about the destabilizing potential of increasing social unrest. Heavy-handed measures would be adopted to nip any sign of unrest in the bud, as stated in the official policy. The magnitude of the problem is reflected in the skyrocketed budget on stability maintenance (*weiwen*). This paranoia against unrest had spillover effect on Hong Kong. Observers note it was around the same time that the reconciliatory approach toward Hong Kong for the most part of President Hu Jintao's administration was gradually replaced by a hardline approach. The hardliners' viewpoint was that Hong Kong could easily become the bastion of western subversive forces against China. There were signs of expansion of personnel in Hong Kong under the Liaison Office. New state-sponsored organizations were emerging and increasingly confrontational. One prominent example is the organized assault against Falun Gong and their activities. A negative atmosphere largely set the stage for Beijing's approach toward the increasingly contentious civil society in Hong Kong and its demand for more democracy. Xi Jinping's ascendance to power officially signified China's switch from soft authoritarianism to hard authoritarianism (Shambaugh 2016).

As expected, Beijing was both threatened and outraged by OCLP. It was threatening not only for the potential disruption it might cause, but also for its potential to evolve into a strong movement that united the democratic forces of a wide spectrum. As soon as the idea of occupying Central was made public, numerous high profile political and public figures openly pledged to participate. The movement, if

successful in gaining public support, might seriously limit Beijing's room for maneuver. Beijing officials were outraged by the use of such offensive tactics as a way to pressure the party-state. Inside the policymaking circle there were views that giving in to such pressure would only encourage more provocative behavior in the future. In that regard, OCLP might have further strengthened the hardliners' voice within Beijing's policymaking circle.

The state-society dynamics was such that both sides have triggered a strong sense of threat and outrage against each other. Much of that sense of threat and outrage was constituted by the long history of state-society confrontation that structured the behavior and expectation of the actors. The latest radicalization of the activists was met with repressive turn of the authoritarian state. The party-state was moving from reconciliation to repression while the pro-democracy activists became radicalized.

The movement activists were not acting on the perception that there was an opening up of political opportunities. Quite the contrary, Beijing's lack of signaling to offer a more liberal political reform made them more pessimistic about the future but also drove them to be more determined to act. The average citizens, however, were deterred by the high stake. Thus, at least at the initial stage of the movement, public support was weak. The potential social and economic disruption caused unease among the business sector and those who were risk averse and feared instability.

Beijing saw urgent need for countermobilization in order to deter the general public from participating in occupy Central. In the context of the party-state's united

front policy, it had to contain and denunciate its enemies. In many ways, this provided favorable political opportunities for the proliferation of new groups through the availability of resources and material reward. For the agencies in charge of Hong Kong affairs such as the Liaison Office, it represented opportunities for increase in budget, resource, and influence. Establishment elites (or those who aspired to be become one) saw this as an opportunity to gain recognition and/or material reward.

Mobilizing Structures

As a movement that was inspired by Occupy Wall Street, OCM had a formal organization at the center that was almost antithetical to the spontaneous spirit of the contention. OCLP had a secretariat manned by full-time staff. It had elaborated logistics for when and how actions would take place. It issued operational manuals to its followers and participants. It required participants to sign a memorandum. It held multiple drills to prepare its participants for the actual operation. It would not be too exaggerated to say that entire operation was designed to maximize uncertainty and minimize if not eliminate spontaneity. For the leaders, the purpose was to ensure that the protest would not get out of control and that the principles of peace and non-violence were seen to be observed. The need for such level of control was largely to gain the public's understanding and support for the protest. The leaders also tried to leave room for the possibility of entering into negotiation with Beijing. In these senses, the leaders tried to design the organizational form as a way to control their mode of mobilization, which they saw as important for attracting supporters and

limiting counter-mobilization. The leaders also foresaw that a complete showdown with the party-state would not help them gain anything, and thus the movement had to be self-limiting.

The leaders of OCLP had strong personal ties with many pro-democracy activists that facilitated the organization of collective action through overlapping membership and social ties. It was also able to count on a few pro-democracy media, including a couple of newspapers, online news, and social media, to propagate its ideas. Cognitive mobilization, however, has been of utmost importance for the democratic movement in Hong Kong to gain mass support. Thus, OCLP tried to build a platform engaging the pro-democracy political parties, civil society organizations, and the public in order to generate consensus among them. The idea was that if they could produce a consensus plan for the 2017 Chief Executive election, it would allow the pro-democracy camp to speak with one voice. The two major events that were organized for such purpose were Deliberation Days and civic referendum. The former consisted of three rounds of deliberation forums on constitutional reform that were open to the public for participation. Afterwards, the three most popular constitutional reform plans would be offered to the general public for an unofficial referendum. The latter was done through an electronic voting system developed by Public Opinion Programme (POP) of The University of Hong Kong that would enable all permanent residents aged 18 or above to be registered with POP and use their mobile phones to vote for their most preferred constitutional reform plan. Through these processes OCLP hoped to generate a unified reform proposal that had the public's mandate (particularly that of the moderate middle class). By so doing, they hoped to pressure Beijing to get to the bargaining table and not to impose an electoral

plan unilaterally. This ambitious idea, however, did not quite materialize. Throughout, there were conflicts between the moderates and the radicals. The radicals were more eager to push for a model that met their perception of an ideal democratic system. They also felt that occupy Central should be carried out sooner in order to express their determination to fight for democracy. The deliberation forums ended up attracting mostly members of radical groups rather than the average citizens.

As a whole, the mobilizing structures of the movement reflected the multiple constraints it faced, namely, narrow social base of support, internal fragmentation, and the precarious balance it needed to maintain between public opinion, the different factions within the movement camp, and the party-state.

In contrast to the high reliance on cognitive mobilization and the relatively weak organizational capacity of OCM, the anti-OCM camp showcased the mobilizational capacity of the party-state in Hong Kong. Defining its formal organization can be difficult. While a lot of analyses support that the party-state was behind the countermobilization, we simply do not have enough information to ascertain the actual role of the party-state or unravel many of its operations, which remain a black box to researchers. The Liaison Office is the official agent of the party-state in Hong Kong and plays a crucial role in managing and coordinating state-sponsored organizations there. Reports have also named the United Front Work Department of the CCP and the National Security Bureau as being very active in infiltrating the society of Hong Kong, and have very likely played various roles in aligning agencies to organize contentious activities.[8]

[8] See *Insider Magazine*, Issue 31, July 22, 2014. (《內幕》第 31 期, 2014)

The countermobilization largely began with the emergence of new social organizations. Among them, the Silent Majority of Hong Kong set up in August 2013 soon became the de facto lead organization of anti-OCM. (It was reorganized as the Alliance for Peace and Democracy in July 2014.). Initiated by a former journalist Yung Chow and some academics and businesspeople, it was not a very formally structured organization but did give the countermovement the face of civil society.

Anti-OCM was reliant on the mobilizing capacity of party-state agencies and the extensive organizational networks they have built over the years. State-sponsored organizations are often linked up by extensive patron-client networks or umbrella organizations representing many subsidiary organizations. Political parties are supported by extensive matrices such as local branches and neighborhood based organizations. Investigatory reports have revealed the operation of a "responsibility" system whereby cell leaders would be responsible for gathering a definite number of people to turn up, often using monetary and other material reward as incentives.

Anti-OCM was able to gain some popular support. Aside from the new organizations led by "new faces" that conferred an image of independence, the involvement of professionals (e.g. senior academics) also offered the movement some "credibility" to the general public. One strategy of gaining support is through imitating the repertoires of contention commonly adopted by civil society in contentious activities, such as mass signature campaigns and rallies. There was also

rather sophisticated use of the social media, including Facebook and Youtube, to publicize their ideas.

Framing

Concepts in frame analysis are useful for analyzing the dynamics of the two camps. Snow and Benford's (1988) argue that the construction of collective action frames involves core framing tasks, namely, "diagnostic framing" (stating what the problem is), "prognostic framing (stating what tactics or solutions should be adopted) and "motivational framing" (stating the rationale for action).

For the OCM camp, their diagnostic framing was that the pro-democracy movement has repeatedly utilized various forms of contention such as protest, sit-in, mass rally, mass gatherings, etc, but to no avail. Beijing might very likely offer Hong Kong people "fake universal suffrage" for 2017 through manipulating the composition of the Nominating Committee and the method of returning candidates. Their prognostic framing stipulated a more disruptive form of contention to put pressure on Beijing. Their motivation framing called upon the public to support the operation of occupying Central and to reject any arrangement short of genuine universal suffrage that met international standard.

OCM defined its proposed action of occupying Central as an act of civil disobedience, which is a rather unfamiliar concept for many Hong Kong people. The idea of blocking the major roads of the business center represents a new repertoire of

contention. It was unsurprising that many activists immediately jumped at this new idea and offered their enthusiastic support. OCM's typical supporters were the young (below 40) and well-educated (with tertiary level education). While these approaches had considerable idealistic appeal, it has been a rather uphill battle for OCM leaders to obtain general social support. The average citizen was worried about the social disruption, deterred by the possible consequence of illegal behavior, and skeptical of its effectiveness in pressuring Beijing.

Benford and Snow (2000) regard that experiential commensurability, meaning how the framing resonant with the everyday experience of the targets of mobilization, is one of the major factors affecting the salience of a collective action frame. The major problem of OCM's framing was in persuading the public to accept civil disobedience, which was a rather new and radical idea for the average population. Bridging, which is "the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (Snow and Benford 2000, p.624), was attempted as a frame alignment process. OCM activists proclaimed that during the occupation they would surrender to police arrest as a way to morally indict Beijing for refusing to give Hong Kong democracy. They cited Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King as their role models. Gandhi's idea of nonviolent resistance, in particular, was much proffered to the public. Through linking this mode of resistance with the principles of peace and non-violence (which was well-recognized and resonated by the public), they attempted to bridge OCM with the city's more traditional mode of contention.

The skepticism of the general public on the idea provided space for the anti-OCM camp to construct their counterframing. While party-state agencies might have done a lot of the mobilization work behind the scene, most of the counterframing was done by the leaders of anti-OCM, particularly the Silent Majority of Hong Kong (later reorganized into Alliance for Peace and Democracy). Their focus was on countering the prognostic framing of OCM, that occupy Central is a violation of the right of innocent people, a destruction of the rule of law, and a disaster to the economy. They also questioned whether Beijing would bow to the pressure of the movement. They counter OCM's motivational framing by calling upon Hong Kong people to oppose occupying Central in order to defend democracy and the rule of law.

Exploiting the low resonance of OCM's collective action frame to the general public, anti-OCM adopted a strategy of frame amplification through skillfully appropriated terms such as democracy, civil right, and the rule of law to justify its opposition against OCM, thus framing the latter as the enemy of these values. At the same time, it appealed to the fear of the public through painting bleak pictures about the consequence of OCM: economic loss, social chaos, loss of harmony, youths and minors being attracted to occupy Central and got arrested, all of which would destroy Hong Kong -- the home that many people held dear. Through integrating the democratic discourse and the stability discourse, the framing by the anti-OCM leaders has successfully captured the worry, the fear and the pragmatism of a definite sector of the population. The Chinese name for the Alliance for Peace and Democracy (保普選反佔中大聯盟) means "The Protect-Universal Suffrage and Anti-Occupy Central

Alliance",[9] which literally portrayed the anti-OCM camp as the true defender of democratic values, while sidetracking the OCM camp's contestation that universal suffrage under the framework prescribed by Beijing was fake democracy.

Hyper-countermobilization, State Repression and Sabotage

In the course of the eighteen months after the idea of occupy Central was made public, OCM has not been able to gain strong support among the general public. OLCP's attempt to engage the moderate middle class in deliberative forums in order to afford them a voice in formulating the constitutional reform plan was largely a failure. Radical groups were pushing for occupy Central to be launched sooner rather than later. Student activist groups such as the Federation of Students (an organization that represented all university students) and Scholarism (a secondary school students organization) were insistent that the nominating procedure for the election of the Chief Executive must include civic nomination, a demand that was seen by Beijing officials as blatant violation of Basic Law Article 45 (which requires the candidates to be nominated by a Nonimating Committee). OCM was thus confronted with internal frame disputes and low salience among the population.

At the same time, anti-OCM was gaining upward momentum in discrediting OCM. From June through September 2014, anti-OCM entered into a state of hyper-countermobilization. Various pro-establishment organizations advertised in newspapers stating their opposition against occupy Central. There were instances of

[9]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_for_Peace_and_Democracy_%28Hong_Kong%29

intense confrontation on the street between opposing groups that turned violent at times. Silent Majority sent letters to all the school boards alerting them there were teachers that were encouraging their students to participate in occupy Central. In July, the Alliance for Peace and Democracy held a mass signature campaign and claimed that over one million signatures were collected. This was followed by a mass rally on August 17th, which was reported to have attracted 190 thousand participants. What is more, the state-sponsored network was operating in a mode of "total mobilization", penetrating organizations such as business enterprises, Mainland Chinese students organizations, etc. Critics regard this as an adaptation of the *biaotai* (making explicit one's attitude) practice inherent in the party-state culture.

These activities of the anti-OCM camp, which largely operated with the face of civil society, was further complemented by more overt state action. State-sponsored newspapers and the Mainland media (such as Global Times) made strong-worded commentaries. The People's Liberation Army in Hong Kong had multiple drills that mimic operations in the crowded downtown of the city. The united front operation of the party-state was stepped up as the Secretary for Security and directors of various disciplinary force visited Beijing and were received and praised by high level officials. The Secretary for Education openly urged schools and parents not to let students participate in occupy Central, and warned teachers that they might be arrested and convicted, and would lose their teaching licence as a result.

In June 2014, on the eve of the civic referendum organized by OCLP, the State Council of the PRC announced the One Country, Two Systems White Paper, in which it stated that all the major institutions in the HKSAR, including the executive,

the legislature, and the judiciary, must be led by patriots as the mainstay, and that the Central Government had "comprehensive jurisdiction" over Hong Kong. The tough-worded statements added fuel to an already highly tensed atmosphere. It was widely taken as a strong signal that Beijing intended to impose an extremely restricted arrangement for the 2017 election and set the path to reduce Hong Kong's autonomy.

In July, an influential online newspaper The House News suddenly stopped operating after its founder Tony Tsoi was found missing for a weekend in Mainland China. Allegedly under duress, he reappeared in public announcing and apologizing for his decision.

Critics regarded that these repressive measures actually helped savage the dwindling public support of OCM. Days before the unofficial civic referendum was due to be held on June 22nd, POP's electronic voting system encountered large scale DDoS attacks (described as unprecendented and, at 500Gbps, the largest cyber attack in history).[10] This sabotage was speculated to be coming out of mainland China. Apparently, public outrage with the repressive atmosphere boosted the turnout to almost 800 thousand people, a figure that was much higher than expected.

[10] For one detailed account of the story, see "The Largest Cyber Attack in History Has Been Hitting Hong Kong Sites", http://www.forbes.com/sites/parmyolson/2014/11/20/the-largest-cyber-attack-in-history-has-been-hitting-hong-kong-sites/#3342ae103fc4.

Violent Confrontation and the Umbrella Movement

On August 31st, NPCSC announced its resolution regarding the 2017 election, in which it stated that the majority support of the Nominating Committee would be required for a person to run for Chief Executive. This was tantamount to giving Beijing full power to control the process of nominatiing chief executive candidates. The pro-democracy political parties and activists all regarded the resolution as completely objectionable and a clear gesture that Beijing had no intent to offer Hong Kong real democracy. Beijing's decision completely alienated the pro-democracy activists, both radicals and moderates. OCLP announced that they would soon carry out occupy Central. Nevertheless, they were still not hopeful that there would be a high turnout of participants. The grand plan of OCLP was to choose October 1st the National Day to carry out their operation, with the expectation that probably just about a few thousand people would be occupying the street. In fact, their choice of National Day was highly tactical, as it was a public holiday and the actual disruption was expected to be minimal. At that point, there was no expectation that the operation would be large scale or strong enough to be threatening to the political authority.

By then, some activists, particularly the students, felt that OCLP's operation was way too moderate. In particular, social mobilization has then spread to secondary schools, as many students started to set up their own concern groups. To deter the activism of young students, Chow the leader of the Alliance for Peace and Democracy set up a "Save the Children hotline" for informants to report any case of organized class boycott activities in secondary schools (with the implications that this could subject such students to disciplinary action by the school authorities).

The Federation of Students announced that they would launch class boycott for the week of September 22nd, and called upon their supporters to assemble at the front gate of the government headquarter. On September 26th, at the assembly some students made a surprise attack to climb into fenced off area outside the government building (a move they labelled as “reclaiming the civic square” as that area was once open space where many public protests had taken place). A few student leaders were arrested and pepper spray and physical force were used to dispel unarmed students. Outraged citizens came to show their sympathy and support for the students, culminating into thousands of protestors, including the leaders of OCLP. On September 28th after midnight, OCLP announced that they would commence occupy Central on the spot. This came as a surprise to all, as it completely deviated from their original plan of launching a small-scale occupation in another location in Central on October 1st. A large number of police blocked all the roads and footbridges to prevent people from joining the protestors in front of the government headquarters, and pepper spray was used to dispel the crowd. The police escalated their operation with the use of multiple tear gas grenades, inciting tens of thousands of protestors to take themselves to the street and leading to the eventual occupation of major roads in Central and other areas of the city. The outbreak of the Umbrella Movement, as it was subsequently called, represented a dramatic turn of event that was beyond the original calculation of both camps.

Overall Analysis

At the heart of this case is the bargaining between a strong civil society and a strong authoritarian state, both of which are self-limiting and internally fragmented. In the beginning, the state-mobilized countermovement was successful in delegitimizing and containing the pro-democracy movement due to favorable political opportunities, strong mobilizing structure and effective framing strategies. Subsequently, a situation of hyper-countermobilization and the repressive action of the authoritarian state generated outrage and sense of threat of such intensity that they triggered a large-scale outbreak of spontaneous uprising and rebellion. This eruption of popular revolt was completely beyond the original intent of the leaders of OCM. In many ways, it represented an outbreak of grievance incited by state repression.

In many ways, the hyper-countermobilization by the anti-OCM camp, and even the excessive repression and sabotage, were the direct result of the fragmented authoritarian setting, that the party-state could only operate indirectly through multiple agents with limited coherence and conflicting interests. The state-mobilized countermovement can be understood as a collaborative project, in which the party-state's policy approach opened up favorable political opportunities, state agencies provided material resources and the extensive organization networks they have cultivated over the years. The local countermovement organization offered the face of civil society, and provided framing and repertoires of contention.

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