CHAPTER 5

National Security and Beijing’s Responses to the Hong Kong Crisis

As the sovereign power of the HKSAR, the PRC’s responses to the anti-extradition, anti-police and anti-mainlandization movement in Hong Kong must be analyzed and understood. This chapter firstly traces the deployment of the People’s Armed Police (PAP) to Shenzhen’s border with Hong Kong, secondly examines the relevant laws and stipulations governing the PRC’s military intervention in the HKSAR and finally explores the remarks made by mainland officials and leaders on Hong Kong’s political development. From a security perspective, the Hong Kong protests did challenge Beijing’s national security. Nevertheless, Beijing did not wish to deploy the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to assist the Hong Kong police directly, because doing so would have undermined the image of “one country, two systems” and defeated the purposes of using the formula to appeal to Taiwan for reunification, and portraying to the international world that China was a rising power behaving rationally in the era of globalization. Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city was under the international media spotlight in the latter half of 2019, when the capitalist enclave was engulfed in the intensive protests. Any intervention from the PRC could be an indicator of whether it stuck to the promises laid out in the “one country, two systems.” As such, the deployment of the PAP to the Shenzhen border had profound political significance for not only the principle and operation of the “one country, two systems” but also China’s international image and status. Beijing had to strike a fine balance between its consideration of national security interest in Hong Kong and its good image of tolerating the rule of law in Hong Kong and the international world.
Table 5.1 shows that the PAP started to move into Shenzhen’s Bao’an district in early August 2019 and began its training operations. From August 4 to 6, the PAP began to conduct exercises on how to deal with mock protesters, whose appearance and actions imitated the Hong Kong counterparts. The PAP used tear gas, shield arrays and pepper spray to deal with the “demonstrators.” Its exercises involved 12,000 officers, including sea, land and air operations. Most importantly, the exercises were broadcast live by China’s Police Network and the Shenzhen Public Security on the Internet. Although the broadcast video lasted for only ten minutes, about 50,000 netizens watched it, demonstrating the support of many mainland citizens. Most significantly, the exercises aimed to show to the Hong Kong people, including protesters, that if the HKSAR had any turmoil, the PAP would be able to intervene in such turmoil effectively and restore social stability. The exercises from August 4 to 6 were designed to send clear political messages to the people of Hong Kong, especially a warning to radical protesters. On August 10, Shenzhen citizens videotaped the entry of the PAP’s armored vehicles and trucks into Shenzhen through a highway and gas station. The description of a mainland official video said that according to the PAP law, it “shall execute security protection missions, participating in handling riots, disturbances, severe violent crimes, terrorist attacks and other social peace incidents.” This video was officially broadcasted by the Internet version of the People’s Daily on August 12. It was rumored that President Xi Jinping, who was and is the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), ordered the PAP to go to Shenzhen. Clearly, the message broadcasted in the mainland media was an open deployment and mobilization of the PAP to Shenzhen, making a political gesture that it could be sent to deal with any “riots,” “disturbances” and “severe violent crimes” in the HKSAR.

1 “Mainland videos showing PAP vehicles and trucks assembling in Shenzhen, a video with Chinese and English description,” August 12, 2019, in https://hk01.com/, access date: March 29, 2020.
2 Ibid.
3 “Rumor says that Xi Jinping had made an order on Hong Kong, the PAP assembling in Shenzhen,” New Tang Dynasty Television, August 13, 2019, in https://www.ntdtv.com/b5/2019/08/13/a102643117.html, access date: March 29, 2020.
4 Ibid.
Table 5.1  Movement and training operations for People’s Armed Police in Shenzhen, August 2019

| Date       | Details of the movement and training operations |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| August 4–6, 2019 | 1. The PAP began its operation in the Waterfront Plaza of the Bao’an district in Shenzhen.  
2. Xu Wenhai, the director and deputy director of Shenzhen Public Security, presided over an oath-taking ceremony of 20,000 police officers before the PAP exercise. The exercise simulated mass demonstrations and trained the PAP responses. Black-shirted “demonstrators” wearing yellow or red hard hats and masks actively attacked the PAP’s defense line. They also used sticks and umbrellas as weapons to attack the anti-riot police armed with shields. “Demonstrators” kept shouting slogans, throwing artillery battles and petrol bombs at the armed police and pushing the fired mud carts to the police. Explosions occurred. The PAP displayed their shield array and raised a red flag to warn demonstrators “to leave immediately, or forcibly disperse.” After spraying pepper spray and tear gas canisters at demonstrators, the armed police dispatched police dogs to suppress and control the protesters.  
3. This exercise involved 12,000 personnel. Sea, land and air exercises were conducted, including special police exercises and emergency response.  
4. China’s Police Network and Shenzhen Public Security both broadcasted live the exercises on the Internet. The entire broadcast lasted for 10 minutes and attracted more than 50,000 netizens to watch it simultaneously. |
| August 16, 2019 | 1. The PAP vehicles and personnel gathered at the Shenzhen Bay Sports Center.  
2. PAP officers practiced marches and conducted crowd control measures.  
3. PAP officers were equipped with shields, sticks, anti-riot steel forks and other equipment. The front-row policemen raised their shields, while those at the back row raised red flags and yelled out slogans with the words “maintaining the law” and “prosecuting offenders.” |
| August 18, 2019 | 1. Shenzhen Public Security and the PAP conducted joint exercises, simulating a clash between “demonstrators” and the police.  
2. The PAP conducted drilling in the Shenzhen Bay Sports Center. Its officers lined up and some officers held anti-riot forks.  
3. About ten PAP officers were walking with fire extinguishers on their backs.  
4. The Associated Press took photos showing about 20 people dressing as protesters, wearing casual clothes and helmets and holding sticks to confront the police.  
5. The PAP raised a red flag. Some people said in Cantonese, “Stop violence, return to the shore!” The PAP officers held shields and pushed forward to the side of protesters. Some PAP officers raised a red flag saying that “unity and stability are good, violence and harm are evil.”  
6. The PAP also simulated the use of a water cannon vehicle, firing tear gas to disperse demonstrators and pointing guns forward to the opponents. |
| August 29, 2019 | 1. The PAP officers conducted another anti-riot exercise.  
2. They used long shields to form multiple square arrays and dispatched water cannons to drive protesters out of the protest zone. |

Sources: Apple Daily, August 7, 2019, p. A10; August 12, 2019, p. A07; August 30, 2019, p. A06; Ming Pao Daily, August 17, 2019, p. A08; August 19, 2019, p. A03
Other PAP exercises followed on August 16, 18 and 29 (Table 5.1). A photo taken by the Associated Press showed that, on August 16, there were at least 19 armed vehicles, 31 trucks, 9 jeeps, 6 water cannon vehicles and 2 buses.\textsuperscript{5} When asked whether the PAP intervention in Hong Kong would be inevitable, the Hong Kong police commander Yeung Man-pun said that while they encountered tremendous pressure, “I can tell you we’re confident the police have the capability to maintain law and order.”\textsuperscript{6} Although it would be a heavy blow to the morale and image of the Hong Kong police if the PAP were sent into the HKSAR, the PAP moves in early August could also be interpreted as a sign that the Hong Kong police had to be tougher in dealing with radical protesters. If not, the central government in Beijing would have no choice but to utilize the PAP to stabilize the situation in Hong Kong.

A report said that 4000 PAP officers were sent to Shenzhen in the first batch of deployment, followed by at least 6000 others in the second batch, because radical protesters in Hong Kong attempted to block the Hong Kong International Airport on August 12 and 13.\textsuperscript{7} Altogether, there were at least 10,000 PAP officers being sent to Shenzhen, including 11 small teams.\textsuperscript{8} A Taiwan report said that, according to the Associated Press’s utilization of Maxar technologies, there were about 500 vehicles, armored cars, trucks and jeeps of the PAP arriving Shenzhen.\textsuperscript{9} In terms of the timing of the PAP deployment, Beijing appeared to be deeply concerned about the action of Hong Kong’s radical protesters to block and occupy the arrival and departure halls of the international airport. As a matter of fact, the actions of Hong Kong protesters to block the Cross-Harbor Tunnel and international airport, to attack and vandalize the LegCo and to deface the national emblem at the Liaison Office directly challenged the national security of Beijing.

Even before the deployment of the PAP to station in the Shenzhen border, the PLA and other police forces in Guangdong had movements

\textsuperscript{5} Dake Kang and Yves Dam Van, “China flexes muscle near Hong Kong amid more weekend rallies,” Associated Press, August 17, 2019, in https://apnews.com/93f7d5672f54b3d9a2a51c983c50cc6, access date: March 29, 2020.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} “10,000 PAP officers gather in Shenzhen which is only 9 kilometers away from Hong Kong. What is the difference between PAP and PLA?” The News Lens, August 16, 2019, in https://www.thenewslens.com/article/123575, access date: March 29, 2020.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
that pointed to the likelihood of a larger mobilization of military or para-military forces to deal with the Hong Kong protests. On July 22, the PLA’s 74th army suddenly conducted an anti-terrorist military exercise in Zhanjiang city in Guangdong.\textsuperscript{10} The 74th army was stationed in Huizhou city and its anti-terrorist exercise appeared to demonstrate that its commanding officers acquired inside knowledge about a possible mobilization of either the PLA or the PAP in response to the Hong Kong protests. The PLA officers in Zhanjiang were holding batons, shields and even guns to deal with the mock terrorists. A retired PLA colonel Yue Gang told the Hong Kong Now TV news that the PLA’s anti-terrorist exercise might be related to the Hong Kong turmoil, and that the PLA could be sent into Hong Kong to restore social order.\textsuperscript{11}

On July 30, 2019, almost a week after the PLA’s Zhanjiang exercise, the Guangdong police force conducted a large-scale exercise in Foshan city, mobilizing 3700 officers to participate.\textsuperscript{12} Eight other places also mobilized their police to join the exercise, including those from Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Shantou, Shaoguan, Meizhou and Maoming. Altogether 160,000 police and civilians were reportedly joining the exercise. Armored vehicles, helicopters and motorcycles were seen. Both male and female police officers participated in the exercise, together with police dogs. The Guangdong provincial governor and public security chief, Li Chunsheng, was present, demonstrating the importance of the high-level leadership attached to the exercise. As early as January 28, 2019, when the Guangdong NPC meeting was held, Li remarked that Guangdong would have to protect “the great southern gate” of the PRC because “the Western enemy forces collaborate with some people to create some issues.”\textsuperscript{13} The party-secretary of the Guangdong Political and Law Committee, He Zhongyu, said in the opening ceremony on the July 30 exercise that all the police officers and citizens in the province “must win the offensive and defensive war, and fully protect the nation’s political

\textsuperscript{10} “PLA’s anti-terrorist exercise in Zhanjiang raises speculations,” \textit{Headline News}, July 23, 2019, in \url{https://hd.stheadline.com/}, access date: March 29, 2020.

\textsuperscript{11} “Preparing to suppress? PLA Zhanjiang exercise may be related to the Hong Kong situation,” \textit{Liberty Times}, July 22, 2019, in \url{https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/world/breaking-news/2860624}, access date: March 29, 2020.

\textsuperscript{12} “160,000 Guangdong police and civilians join forces and about 4,000 people conduct big military training in Foshan,” July 30, 2019, in \url{https://www.hk01.com/}, access date: March 29, 2020.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
security and social stability.” In view of the Hong Kong disturbances, the Guangdong police leadership was aware of the need to mobilize the province’s police to conduct the July exercise in anticipation of an imminent mobilization of the PAP into the Shenzhen border.

The mobilization of mainland police raised the concerns of some Hong Kong netizens, who criticized the move as “intimidating” the HKSAR. The pro-Beijing elites in the HKSAR, however, saw such mobilization as an encouraging sign of the PRC’s support of the Hong Kong government and the local police. For the mainlanders, the Communist Youth League (CYL) issued an official message on its Internet, saying that the PAP law empowered the paramilitary police to cope with riots, disturbances, serious violent incidents and terrorist attacks. Other mainland netizens believed that the police exercise in Shenzhen was a move of participating in the summer exercise to be conducted by the Guangdong public security. Some mainland netizens went so far as to assert openly that an anti-terrorist exercise conducted by the PAP, public security and aviation authorities in Guangzhou’s Baiyun airport on August 14 was designed to put up “a show to Hong Kong’s rubbish youth.” Although the PAP was stationed in Shenzhen, some observers believed that some PAP officers were actually sent to work with the police in the HKSAR. As mentioned in the last Chapter, Reuters reported in March 2020 that 4000 PAP officers were sent to Hong Kong to observe the protests. Political scientist Jean-Pierre Cabestan of the Hong Kong Baptist University reportedly claimed that PAP officers were dispatched to mingle with the Hong Kong police, especially those mainland police who could speak Cantonese. However, there was no concrete evidence to prove that PAP officers were sent to work with Hong Kong police to cope with the protesters from early August to December 2019. Still, there were rumors during the protests that a few individual Hong Kong police were seen by ordinary citizens to speak Mandarin, and that a former retired Hong Kong police officer’s identity was used by a mainland police officer. Again, there was no evidence to corroborate these claims made by the Hong Kong netizens.

14 Ibid.
15 Apple Daily, July 31, 2019.
16 Ming Pao, August 12, 2019, p. A12.
17 Ibid.
18 Ta Kung Pao, August 15, 2019, p. A24.
19 Apple Daily, August 9, 2019.
Objective speaking, it was likely that some PAP officers were sent to the HKSAR to observe the protests. The exchange visits between the mainland and Hong Kong police provided a legitimate channel through which mainland police could be sent to monitor and study the Hong Kong developments.²⁰ The Global Times editorialized and said:

Washington in recent days has ratcheted up rhetoric on the Hong Kong issue and grossly intervened in China’s domestic affairs. US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi demanded that the Hong Kong Chief Executive and Legislative Council accept the conditions raised by the extreme opposition. John Bolton, US national security adviser, warned the Chinese government against any potential crackdown on the Hong Kong protestors, saying ‘it would be a big mistake’ to create a new memory like the June 4th political incident in Hong Kong. US politicians are blatantly pointing their fingers at China. It’s obvious that they fail to understand the era they are living in. … After the US launched its trade war and exerted enormous economic pressure on China, Washington has had no additional cards to play on China. All US sanction threats on China are empty shouts now. Beijing hasn’t decided to force fully intervene to quell the Hong Kong riots, but this option is clearly at Beijing’s disposal.²¹

Clearly, when the PAP was sent to Shenzhen, the CMC presided over by President Xi Jinping did not decide whether it would be sent to intervene in Hong Kong’s protests.

On August 29, the PLA in the HKSAR underwent a process of rotation the twentieth-second time after the establishment of the HKSAR since July 1997.²² PLA trucks went into Hong Kong from Huangguang checkpoint, arriving at various camps in the HKSAR through the Tolo Harbor and Kwun Tong district. According to the PLA spokesman, the rotation of PLA officers was conducted regularly. Before a new batch of officers arrived Hong Kong, they had “grasped the situation in the HKSAR and studied the relevant laws.”²³ On the same day, the PAP in Shenzhen conducted another anti-riot exercise. Some PAP officers pretended as mock

²⁰ Apply Daily, August 9, 2019, p. E3.
²¹ “Futile for Washington to play Hong Kong card,” Global Times, August 15, 2019, in https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1161632.shtml, access date: March 30 2020.
²² Apple Daily, August 30, 2019.
²³ Ibid.
protesters, while water cannons and shields were used by the uniform PAP to quell the mock riot.\textsuperscript{24}

Strictly speaking, Beijing’s decision of sending the PAP to the Shenzhen border rather than using the PLA to intervene in the Hong Kong protests was a mild measure that sent a warning to Hong Kong protesters on the one hand and refrained from undermining Hong Kong “one country, two systems” on the other. Article 7 of the PAP Law says that the PAP is expected to perform the following missions: guarding major activities as designated by the state; protecting major facilities; defending bridges and tunnels; guarding prisons and detention houses; patrolling key areas; assisting public security organs in the process of arrests, pursuits and escorts; handling riots and disturbances; and dealing with other security missions (Table 5.2). Since the Hong Kong protests fell into the category of riots and disturbances, the PAP deployment to

\textbf{Table 5.2} Article 7 of the law of the People’s Republic of China on the People’s Armed Police

The PAPF shall execute the following security protection missions:
1. “armed guard for the guarded objects and targets and major activities as prescribed by the state;
2. armed guard for the important parts of major public facilities, enterprises, warehouses, water resources, water conservancy projects, electric power facilities and communications hubs relating to the national economy and the people’s livelihood;
3. armed guard for bridges and tunnels at the important places of the main traffic arteries;
4. peripheral armed guard for prisons and detention houses;
5. armed patrol during an unusual period of time in the key areas of a municipality directly under the Central Government, a city where the people’s government of a province or autonomous region is located or any other important city;
6. assisting the public security organs, state security organs, justice administrative organs, prosecution organs and judicial organs in their execution of missions of arrest, pursuit and escort in accordance with law, and assisting other relevant authorities in their execution of important escort missions;
7. participating in handling riots, disturbances, severe violent crimes, terrorist attacks and other social peace incidents; and
8. other security protection missions assigned by the state.”

Source: “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the People’s Armed Police Force,” in \url{http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=7647&CGid=#menu6}, access date: March 27, 2020

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Shenzhen was appropriate. Yet, the PAP stopped at the Shenzhen border to avoid creating any regional and international image that mainland China undermined the autonomy of Hong Kong. The PAP’s stationing in Shenzhen also backed up the Hong Kong police, giving the latter the necessary confidence, _mianzi_ (face or dignity) and exerting suitable pressure on them to deal with local protests more decisively and effectively.

According to the Hong Kong Basic Law, the PLA is responsible for the defense and the maintenance of public order and it shall not interfere in the local affairs (Table 5.3 and Article 14). Moreover, the central government is responsible for the expenditure of the PLA garrison in the HKSAR. Article 18 states that if the Standing Committee of the NPC declares a state of war, turmoil or emergency in the HKSAR, the central government may issue an order applying the relevant national laws in Hong Kong (Table 5.3). The PLA garrison performs the duties of guarding against aggression, protecting the security of Hong Kong, dealing with defense, taking change of military installations and undertaking foreign military affairs (Table 5.4 and Article 5 of the Garrison Law). While the PAP is responsible for tackling domestic riots, turmoil and disturbances, the PLA is focusing on military defense. There was and is a clear division of labor between the PAP and the PLA.

The PAP deployment to Shenzhen triggered an immediate reaction from the United States. On the morning of August 14, US President Donald Trump remarked in his twitter: “Our intelligence has informed us that the Chinese Government is moving troops to the border with Hong Kong. Everyone should be safe!” Later, he added: “Many are blaming me, and the United States, for the problems going on in Hong Kong. I can’t imagine why?” For the PRC government, Trump’s remarks on the HKSAR, as with other US officials and politicians, constituted an act of “interference” with Hong Kong matters. However, the US perspective was that they had the right to comment on the HKSAR development, especially if Hong Kong’s rule of law and civil liberties represented the universal values held by not only Washington but also other parts of the world.

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25 See Donald Trump’s Twitter, in [https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump](https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump), August 14, 2019.
Table 5.3  Key points of the Basic Law’s article 14 and article 18

1. Article 14:
“The Central People’s Government shall be responsible for the defense of the HKSAR. HKSAR shall be responsible for the maintenance of public order in the Region. Military forces stationed by the Central People’s Government in the HKSAR for defense shall not interfere in the local affairs of the Region. The Government of the HKSAR may, when necessary, ask the Central People’s Government for assistance from the garrison in the maintenance of public order and in disaster relief. In addition to abiding by national laws, members of the garrison shall abide by the laws of the HKSAR. Expenditure for the garrison shall be borne by the Central People’s Government.”

2. Article 18:
“In the event that the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress decides to declare a state of war or, by reason of turmoil within the HKSAR which endangers national unity or security and is beyond the control of the government of the Region, decides that the Region is in a state of emergency, the Central People’s Government may issue an order applying the relevant national laws in the Region.”

Source: “The Basic Law of the HKSAR of the People’s Republic of China,” in https://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/pda/en/basiclawtext/chapter_2.html, access date: March 27, 2020

Table 5.4  Articles 1, 5 and 6 of the Garrison law of the HKSAR of the People’s Republic of China

1. Article 1:
“This Law is enacted in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law of the HKSAR with a view to ensuring that the military forces stationed by the Central People’s Government in the HKSAR for defense shall perform its duties in accordance with law, and to upholding national sovereignty, unification, territorial integrity and Hong Kong’s security.”

2. Article 5:
“The Hong Kong Garrison performs the following duties:
• To guard against and to resist aggression, and to guarantee the security of the HKSAR;
• To shoulder the responsibility of defense and patrol duty;
• To take charge of military installations; and
• To undertake relevant foreign military affairs.”

3. Article 6:
“In the event that the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress decides to declare a state of war or, by reason of turmoil within the HKSAR which endangers national unity or security and is beyond the control of the Government of the HKSAR, decides that the Region is in a state of emergency, the Hong Kong Garrison shall perform its duties in accordance with the provisions of national laws decided to be applied in the HKSAR by the Central People’s Government.”

Source: “Garrison Law of the HKSAR of the People’s Republic of China,” in http://www.asianlii.org/en/legis/cen/laws/glothksarotproc785/, access date: March 27, 2020
Reactions of the Hong Kong Macau Office to Hong Kong Protests

The Hong Kong protests from June to December 2019 were characterized by a series of press briefings conducted by the Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO). Four press briefings were held, the first one in July, the second and third ones in August and the last one in early September (Table 5.5). All these press conferences showed the hardline position of the HKMAO. The first briefing on July 29 was presided over by the HKMAO spokesperson, Yang Guang.\(^\text{26}\) He emphasized that the societal sectors of Hong Kong should resolutely oppose and resist violence, protect the rule of law and focus on the development of economy and people’s livelihood so that Hong Kong would go out from the pitfalls of political disputes. Second, Yang said that the HKMAO resolutely supported the Carrie Lam administration, backed up the police action of

| Time               | Prior events                                                                 | Key sentences                                                                 |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First press        |                                                                             |                                                                               |
| briefing July 29   | July 21: Yuen Long triad attack                                             | “Three bottom lines cannot be touched. Sacrificing the police has pressure. External forces increase their intervention.” |
|                    | July 27: Yuen Long parade                                                    |                                                                               |
| Second briefing    |                                                                             |                                                                               |
| August 6           | August 5: Mass strikes                                                      | “Resolutely support the Chief Executive. The PLA stationing in Hong Kong does things according to law. Hong Kong’s national education is problematic.” |
| Third briefing     |                                                                             |                                                                               |
| August 12          | August 11: Police action to clear and arrest protesters in Tai Koo Shing MTR station | “Protestors lose their heart and are crazily sick. We are absolutely furious and strongly condemn them. Terrorism is emerging in Hong Kong.” |
| Fourth briefing    |                                                                             |                                                                               |
| September 3        | August 31: Police action to arrest protesters in the Prince Edward MTR station | “Protestors want to grasp and capture the HKSAR’s ruling power, turning Hong Kong into an independent or semi-independent entity, making the ‘one country, two systems’ exist in name only.” |

Source: “One essay understands the four press briefings of HKMAO,” Hong Kong Economic Times, September 3, 2019, in https://china.hket.com/article/2443109/, access date: March 28, 2020

\(^{26}\) Business Focus, July 29, 2019.
maintaining law and order, supported the judicial authorities of Hong Kong to penalize violent and criminal elements in accordance with the law and shored up the action of the patriotic forces to defend the rule of law. Third, the HKMAO laid down three bottom lines of Beijing’s limit of tolerance, namely disallowing any action to undermine national sovereignty and safety, forbidding any action of challenging the power of the central authorities and the authority of the Basic Law, and prohibiting any action of using Hong Kong to infiltrate into the mainland and to conduct “damaging” activities. The HKMAO’s position remained hardline, implementing the Hong Kong policy that had already been established in the 2014 White Paper on the practice of the “one country, two systems.” The White Paper emphasized Beijing’s “comprehensive jurisdiction” over Hong Kong, setting the tone for a hardline policy toward the HKSAR. It can be argued that Yang Gang’s messages on July 29 were a continuation of the PRC’s hardline policy toward Hong Kong since the issuance of the 2014 White Paper.

The second briefing on August 6 emphasized that the PLA garrison was stationed in the HKSAR according to law and that Beijing fully supported the Hong Kong police. Yang Guang elucidated that “the very small group of unscrupulous and violent criminals and the dirty forces behind them” would have to be held accountable to the law. He also supported the Hong Kong judiciary to punish these protesters who violated the law. The third briefing on August 12 was characterized by Yang Guang’s criticism of the violent protests in Hong Kong as “the emergence of terrorism.” The fourth briefing on September 3 was marked by Yang’s remark that the protesters wanted to change Hong Kong into “an independent or semi-independent political entity.” He emphasized three major points on the Hong Kong disturbances: (1) the hope for consensus and collective action for the government and society of Hong Kong to

27 “The Practice of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, June 10, 2014,” in http://www.fmcoprc.gov.hk/eng/xwdt/gsxw/ t1164057.htm, access date: March 31, 2020.
28 “Hong Kong people urged to stop violence and chaos, bring back order,” Xinhua, August 6, 2019, in http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-08/06/c_138288627.htm, access date: March 31, 2020.
29 “Hong Kong protests have the emergence of terrorism,” August 12, 2019, in https://theinitium.com/article/20190812-whatsnew-china-bill/, access date: March 28, 2020.
30 “Terminating violence is the most urgent task,” September 3, 2019, in https://www.hk01.com, access date: March 28, 2020.
“stop violence and terminate chaos”; (2) the expectation that the people of Hong Kong could distinguish the peaceful expression of views from violent criminal acts; and (3) the need for Hong Kong people to focus on economic development and the improvement of livelihood issues.31 Yang Guang added that the “five demands” of some Hong Kong people constituted not only an attempt of “political hijacking” but also a move to challenge the bottom line of the “one country, two systems.” These demands could be regarded as, according to him, “political intimidation.” The political opposition in Hong Kong, according to Yang, was trying to grasp political power and any discussion of “universal suffrage” had to return to the PRC parameters that were set out on August 31, 2014. The demand for universal suffrage in Hong Kong, according to Beijing, had to accept the central government’s political bottom line clearly delineated on August 31, 2014, meaning that the Chief Executive would be directly elected by eligible voters after a process of having half of the members of an Election Committee to support two to three candidates, who would finally compete among themselves for votes and whose final victory would get the PRC’s formal approval. The HKMAO implied that it was a blunder made by the local democrats to reject the political reform package in mid-2015. Finally, if the Hong Kong situation did not improve and even worsened, and if the PAP or even the PLA were deployed to assist the Hong Kong police, such a move, according to Yang Guang on September 3, would still be in conformity with the content of the Basic Law. This position was a clear warning to those Hong Kong protesters who, from the PRC vantage point, constantly challenged the national security and sovereignty of the central government.

All these briefings did not see the presence of the HKMAO Director, Zhang Xiaoming, who only held a closed-door meeting on August 6 with some 500 pro-Beijing elites in Shenzhen. On August 7, he said that the Hong Kong protests showed signs of a “colour revolution,” and that the disturbances and violence had to be terminated. Yet, Zhang’s reluctance to appear in the four press briefings was puzzling, but the way in which he delegated the authority to subordinate Yang Guang to make pronouncement did not appear to win the hearts and minds of the people of Hong

31 “Spokesperson condemns criminality by small number of rioters in Hong Kong,” Xinhua, September 3, 2019, in http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/03/c_138361972.htm, access date: March 31, 2020.
Kong, for Zhang looked bureaucratic without taking the responsibility to inform the lines of Beijing in a more transparent manner.

As early as mid-May 2019, Zhang Xiaoming told a Hong Kong Executive Council (ExCo) member, Ronny Tong, that the people of Hong Kong should not worry about the extradition bill, and that the amended ordinance was “necessary, proper, reasonable and legalistic.”

This hardline position of the HKMAO was echoed and supported by the Director of the Liaison Office, Wang Zhimin, who on May 14 held a meeting in the HKSAR among mainland officials to convey President Xi Jinping’s message of maintaining law and order in the nation’s police work conference. Wang said in the meeting that the extradition bill had “legalistic foundation” and that it “conformed to the needs of the realities.” The Liaison Office added that, after 1997, the PRC returned some 260 fugitives from the mainland to Hong Kong, and that the HKSAR did not return any mainland fugitive back to the PRC.

According to the Liaison Office, the extradition bill could “help the victims achieve social justice, plug the existing legal loopholes, punish the serious criminal suspects, and avoid Hong Kong becoming a paradise for criminal fugitives and a sanctuary for criminal escapees.” Finally, the Liaison Office hoped that the people of Hong Kong should “understand the facts and truths,” “reject all those rumors and fears manufactured by others” and “believe in the rule of law held by the HKSAR government and the courts.”

At the beginning of the controversy over the extradition bill, both the HKMAO led by Zhang Xiaoming and the Liaison Office led by Wang Zhimin adopted a hardline position, insisting that the bill conformed to the interests of Hong Kong and the central government. Their obstinacy and refusal to listen to the criticisms from many Hong Kong people perhaps explained why the central government eventually replaced both, because if they had listened to public opinion much earlier and adopted a more flexible line, the Hong Kong crisis and protests could have been avoided.

32 *Sing Tao Daily*, May 16, 2019.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
OTHER CHINESE LEADERS’ RESPONSES TO THE HONG KONG CRISIS

A closer analysis of the remarks made by other top-level PRC leaders and officials on the Hong Kong crisis shows that the hardline approach was adopted across all levels, including not only the HKMAO but also the higher-level leaders and party cadres. Apart from the remarks made by Zhang and Wang on August 7, other PRC leaders who talked about Hong Kong included President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, CPPCC chairman Wang Yang, Hong Kong and Macau Coordination Committee chairman Han Zheng, Public Security chief Zhao Kezhi and Political and Legal Affairs Commission chief Guo Shengkun (Table 5.6). All their remarks were displaying toughness and political correctness.

In a speech delivered at the Central Party School on September 3, President Xi Jinping said that “persistent struggle” was necessary in response to all the challenges to the CCP leadership and the mainland socialist system; China’s national sovereignty, security and developmental interests; its core interests and major principles; the people’s fundamental interests; and the objective of realizing the renaissance of the Chinese nation. President Xi added that the principle of “persistent struggle” was a must in dealing with the challenges of the “complex” work on Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan as well as the PRC’s foreign relations. Obviously, the PRC President adopted a Marxist dialectical perspective to “struggle” against the Hong Kong protests that threatened China’s sovereignty and national security. President Xi Jinping on November 4 backed up Chief Executive Carrie Lam, offering the central government’s strongest support and endorsement of her work. Xi’s remarks could be interpreted as a sign of Beijing’s staunch support of Lam amid the intervention of external forces, such as the United States whose politicians severely criticized the extradition bill. Moreover, there were rumors that Lam wished to resign her position as the Chief Executive in June 2019, but the central government did not allow her to do so. Asking Lam to punish the violent protesters, President Xi appealed to her to have more dialogue with the people.

38 “Xi Focus: Xi emphasizes ‘struggles’ to achieve national rejuvenation,” Xinhua, September 3, 2019.
39 James Pomfret, “China won’t allow Hong Kong leader to step down despite mass unrest: Hong Kong official,” Reuters, June 17, 2019, in https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-extradition-lam/china-wont-allow-hong-kong-leader-to-step-down-despite-mass-unrest-hk-official-idUSKCN1TI0WX, access date: March 30, 2020.


| Date         | Chinese official name          | Remarks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 7, 2019 | Zhang Xiaoming, HKMAO Director | “The central government attaches great importance to the current situation in Hong Kong and makes judgments and assessment from an overall strategic perspective.”  
The Hong Kong protests show “signs of color revolution.”  
“We do not tolerate any action against the bottom line of the principle of ‘one country, two systems.’ The central authorities do support the Chief Executive and the police force, which are the keys to stabilize the situation in Hong Kong.”  
“Although there are various public opinions and demands in the society, the largest public opinion in Hong Kong is to protect stability and prosperity and to restore normal social order. The patriotic forces remain the pillar of the Hong Kong society.” |
| August 7, 2019 | Wang Zhimin, Liaison Office Director | “I hope that everyone will continue to stand up for the Chief Executive and the government, and resolutely uphold the authority of the Special Administrative Region.”  
“I hope everyone will continue to firmly support the police force decisively and strictly, back up their law enforcement and resolutely maintain the harmony and tranquility of the Hong Kong society.”  
“I hope that everyone will take an active part in organizing and participating in various activities to improve the social atmosphere and positive energy of the society. I hope everyone will work tirelessly to conduct youth work.” |
| September 3, 2019 | President Xi Jinping | In a speech delivered at the Central Party School, President Xi Jinping said that “persistent struggle” was necessary in response to all the challenges to (1) the CCP leadership and the mainland socialist system; (2) China’s national sovereignty, security and developmental interests; (3) its core interests and major principles; (4) the people’s fundamental interests and (5) the objective of realizing the renaissance of the Chinese nation. President Xi added that struggle was an “art” that needed to maintain its justifications, “reasonable choices,” methods and momentum while simultaneously retaining an ingredient of flexibility in its strategic response. In the process of struggle, he said that solidarity was of utmost importance. President Xi stressed that the principle of “persistent struggle” was a must in dealing with the challenges of the “complex” work on Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan as well as the PRC’s foreign relations. |
| Date           | Name and Title                                      | Statement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September 28, 2019 | Wang Yang, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference | “After the return of Hong Kong and Macau to China, the original social system is fully respected. The people of Hong Kong and Macau are now the masters having unprecedented democratic rights and freedom. We resolutely implement the ‘one country, two systems’ to support the Chief Executive and her government to protect national sovereignty, security and development interests. The motherland is the protective shield of both Hong Kong and Macau forever.” |
| November 4, 2019  | President Xi Jinping                                | “You (Carrie Lam) as the Chief Executive have led the HKSAR government to fulfill its due diligence, strive to stabilize the situation and improve the social atmosphere, and have done a lot of arduous work. The central government has a high degree of trust in you and it is fully affirmative of the work from you and your governing team. Stopping riots and restoring order are still the most important tasks in Hong Kong. Stopping and punishing violent activities in accordance with the law is to safeguard the well-being of the public in Hong Kong. At the same time, we must do a decent job in having dialogue with all sectors of society and in improving the people’s livelihood. It is hoped that people from all walks of life in Hong Kong will fully and accurately implement the ‘one country, two systems’ policy and the Basic Law, and work together to safeguard Hong Kong’s prosperity and stability.” |
| November 6, 2019  | Han Zheng, Head of the CCP Coordination Committee on Hong Kong and Macau | “The storm of amending the legislation has evolved into continuous violence, jeopardizing the overall interests of the Hong Kong society and the vital interests of the general public.” “Mrs. Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive and her Governing Team and the Hong Kong police force are fully fulfilling their due diligence. Stopping riots and restoring order are still the most important tasks of Hong Kong at the present. These are also the common responsibilities of the executive, legislative and judicial organs of Hong Kong.” “It is hoped that all sectors of Hong Kong will further gather positive energy to fight against violence, protect the rule of law and maintain stability.” “We are full of confidence in ‘one country, two systems.’ We must persist and improve in practice to make ‘one country, two systems’ stable and far-reaching.” “The central government has always been a dedicated supporter for Hong Kong to maintain its prosperity and stability. We firmly support the SAR government to take more active and effective measures to solve Hong Kong’s livelihood issues, especially the housing and employment problems of low-income and middle-income families and the young people. Hong Kong’s development will benefit the public much better.” |
| Date             | Chinese official name                                      | Remarks                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| November 14, 2019| President Xi Jinping                                       | “The central government has three firm support. We will continue to firmly support the Chief Executive in leading the HKSAR government to govern Hong Kong according to the law, firmly support the Hong Kong police in its strict law-enforcement work and firmly support the Hong Kong judicial body in punishing violent criminals in accordance with the law.”  
   “Our three unwavering supports are as follows:  
   The Chinese government is unwavering to safeguard its national sovereignty, security, and development interests. It is also unwavering in implementing the principle of the ‘one country, two systems’ in Hong Kong.” |
| December 6, 2019 | Zhao Kezhi, deputy party-secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission and minister and party-secretary of the Ministry of Public Security | “President Xi Jinping on November 14 made important remarks and pointed to the dangerous nature of the radical criminal elements. He also revealed the central government’s basic position and clear attitude toward the termination of violence and the restoration of order in Hong Kong. Since the anti-extradition issue, the Hong Kong police has been loyal and has dealt with the challenges faithfully, protecting social stability and prosperity and remaining a pillar of the protection of national security. We hope that Police Commissioner Chris Tang can maintain the confidence of the police force, retain the high morale of officers and help terminate violence and restore social order. The central government and public security are forever the strong shield of the Hong Kong police and they will continue to support the police in their execution of the law, and their consolidation of cooperation with mainland police and exchanges with them.” |
| December 7, 2019 | Guo Shengkun, Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission | “Under the leadership of Hong Kong police, a lot of work has been done to maintain law and order. We hope that the Hong Kong police continue to fight criminal activities to protect citizens’ safety and properties. We support the police to implement the law strictly and to restore social order diligently.” |
December 16, 2020  Premier Li Keqiang “The Central Government will, as always, firmly implement the ‘one country, two systems’ policy, firmly support you (Carrie Lam) as the Chief Executive to lead the SAR Government to govern Hong Kong according to the law, and firmly maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. Facing on unprecedented and a complicated situation, you led the SAR Government to make every effort to maintain social stability, and successively introduce a series of relief measures to support enterprises and protect employment. These tasks are all difficult. The Central Government is fully affirming the efforts from you and the Special Administrative Region Government. Hong Kong has not yet come out of its predicament. The SAR Government must continue its efforts to stop riots and restore order in accordance with the law, and intensively study and resolve some of the deep-rooted contradictions and problems existing in the economic and social development of Hong Kong to maintain its long-term prosperity and stability.”

December 16, 2020  President Xi Jinping “The year 2019 has been the most difficult and complicated year for Hong Kong since its return to the motherland. In the face of various difficulties and pressures, you adhere to the bottom line of the ‘one country, two systems’ principle, to govern Hong Kong according to the law, to perform your duties with due diligence, and do a lot of challenging work. You also lead the SAR Government to actively respond to social concerns, adopt a series of policies and measures to help enterprises, alleviate the plight of the people, and seriously study and resolve the deep social contradictions and problems. The Central Government is fully affirming the courage and responsibility you have shown during the extraordinary period of Hong Kong.”

Sources: Ta Kung Pao, November 5, 2019, p. A01., November 7, 2019, p. A01., November 15, 2019, p. A01, and December 17, 2019, p. A01; Wen Wei Po, September 29, 2019, p. A03, December 7, 2019, p. A03, and December 8, 2019, p. A03. Also see “Xi Focus: Xi emphasizes ‘struggles’ to achieve national rejuvenation.” Xinhua, September 3, 2019
of Hong Kong—an implicit criticism from the Chinese leader. In December, Xi Jinping again affirmed Lam’s work, praising her while encouraging her to deal with social contradictions and problems in Hong Kong. Xi’s remarks were quite consistent in November and December, showing that Beijing trusted and empowered Carrie Lam to tackle the Hong Kong protests decisively.

Echoing President Xi Jinping’s views toward Hong Kong, Premier Li Keqiang openly supported Lam but asked her to provide more relief measures to solve the livelihood issues in Hong Kong. CPPCC chairman Wang Yang adopted a united front approach to stress the “protective shield” provided by Beijing to both Hong Kong and Macau. Han Zheng, the head of the CCP Coordination Committee on Hong Kong and Macau, praised the work of Lam and the police, while reiterating Xi and Li’s remark that the Hong Kong government must tackle the predicament of the middle-lower classes. Obviously, Xi, Li and Han agreed that the root of Hong Kong disturbances and social unrest was due to the profound social contradictions in the capitalist society of the HKSAR.

The two security chiefs, Zhao Kezhi and Guo Shengkun, focused on the role of the police in Hong Kong. Zhao hoped that the new Police Commissioner, Chris Tang, could maintain the confidence of the police, retain the high morale of rank-and-file officers and stop violence and restore social order. Similarly, Guo expressed his hope that the Hong Kong police continued to combat criminal activities, protect citizens’ safety, implement the law strictly and restore social order quickly. A clear division of labor existed between the top leaders, such as Xi, Li, Wang and Han, and the security chiefs, like Zhao and Guo. The top leaders supported and trusted Carrie Lam, but encouraged her to enhance communications with the members of the public and deal with social contradictions more assertively. Zhao and Guo spoke to the police force, giving them confidence and support.

In addition to the remarks made by PRC leaders and officials on Hong Kong, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CCP in November 2019 made some statements on the HKSAR (Table 5.7). Reiterating the principle of “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong,” the Fourth Plenum affirmed Beijing’s staunch support of Hong Kong’s competitiveness. Yet, Beijing was determined to improve the mechanisms regarding the implementation of the Chinese constitution and the Basic Law, and to “perfect” the system of the central government’s exercise of its “comprehensive jurisdiction” over the
**Table 5.7  Statements on Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan in the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, November 2019**

1. “Fully and accurately implement the ‘one country, two systems,’ ‘Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong,’ ‘Macau people ruling Macau,’ and a high degree of autonomy.”

2. “Insisting on the need to administer Hong Kong and Macau in accordance with the law, maintaining the constitutional order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law, upholding the ‘one country’ principle and respecting the differences between the ‘two systems,’ safeguarding the central government’s comprehensive governing power over the SAR, and protecting the SAR’s high degree of autonomy. The staunch support of the motherland and the enhancement of competitiveness of the SAR itself are integrated together.”

3. “Improve the systems and mechanisms related to the implementation of the constitution and the Basic Law, adhere to the principle of ‘Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong’ and ‘Macau people ruling Macau’ with patriots as the mainstay, and elevate the SAR’s capability and standard of governance in accordance with the law.”

4. “Perfect the system in which the central government exercises its comprehensive jurisdiction over the SAR in accordance with the constitution and the Basic Law.”

5. “Improve the system and mechanism of the appointment and removal of the Chief Executive and principal officials of the SAR, the interpretation of the Basic Law by the Standing Committee of the NPC, and the exercise of all the powers given to the central authorities by the Constitution and the Basic Law.”

6. “Establish and improve the legal system and enforcement mechanism for the SAR to maintain national security, and support the SAR to strengthen law enforcement. Improve the system in which the Chief Executive of the SAR is accountable to the central government, and support the Chief Executive in governing the SAR in governing according to law.”

7. “Improve the integration of Hong Kong and Macau into the overall national development, complement with each other’s advantages, coordinate developmental mechanisms, promote the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, support Hong Kong and Macau’s economic development, improve the people’s livelihood, and strive to resolve the deep-seated contradictions and problems that affect social stability and long-term development.”

8. “Strengthen the constitutional and Basic Law education, national education, Chinese history, and Chinese cultural education for Hong Kong and Macau’s society, especially civil servants and young people, and enhance the national awareness and patriotism of Hong Kong and Macau compatriots.”

9. “Resolutely prevent and curb external forces from not only interfering with Hong Kong and Macau affairs but also carrying out activities of division, subversion, infiltration and sabotage to ensure the long-term security of Hong Kong and Macau.”

10. “Firmly promote the process of peaceful reunification of the motherland. Solving the Taiwan issue and realizing the complete reunification of the motherland are not only common aspirations of all Chinese children but also the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation.”

(continued)
HKSAR. Furthermore, Beijing also wished to improve the system and mechanism of appointing and removing the Chief Executive and principal officials of the HKSAR. Other areas of improvement included the system of maintaining national security in the HKSAR, enhancing the Chief Executive’s accountable relations with the central government, integrating Hong Kong and Macau into the Greater Bay Area, resolving deep-rooted social contradictions, enhancing the Basic Law and Chinese cultural-national education and preventing foreign forces from intervening in Hong Kong and Macau affairs. It is noteworthy that the Plenum attached importance to Taiwan’s development in the future, saying that the CCP would promote the peaceful reunification of Taiwan, promote cross-strait interactions and integration and maintain Taiwan’s lifestyle and social system. Clearly, the CCP believed that if the HKSAR could be improved, it would lay the foundation for the better relationships between Beijing and Taipei. In other words, the Hong Kong protests had to be controlled so that the PRC’s plan on Taiwan would not be disrupted.

**Triangular Relations Between Protests, Beijing’s Response and Hong Kong Government**

Analytically speaking, Beijing’s hardline response was a move to deal with the increasing intensity and frequency of the protests in Hong Kong, leading to a tendency of the local police to adopt a more strategic, if not necessarily hardline, tactic to deal with protesters. Triangular and chain reactions
between protests, PRC officials and the Hong Kong government, including the Chief Executive and the police, could be seen in August 2019.

First, some employees of the Cathay Pacific participated in the anti-extradition movement. On July 28, a Cathay Pacific pilot was arrested by the police in the protests. Then on August 14, the Cathay Pacific fired the pilot who was arrested and another cockpit crew member who was “suspended for misusing company information related to the protests.”40 Meanwhile, two other airport ground employees had been dismissed for “leaking passenger information details of a Hong Kong police soccer team.”41 On August 9, Civil Aviation Administration of the PRC required Cathay Pacific to submit information on its airline staff members on its flights to the mainland.42 The PRC’s tighter measures against those Cathay Pacific employees who were anti-extradition activists were understandable, especially in light of the hardline remarks made by Zhang Xiaoming and Wang Zhimin on August 7. PRC officials were deeply concerned about the challenges of Hong Kong protests to Beijing’s national security.

Second, the events in August showed signs of a worsening situation in the HKSAR, thereby necessitating not only the PRC to deploy the PAP to Shenzhen’s border with Hong Kong but also the frequent remarks made by HKMAO officials. On August 11, protesters adopted guerrilla tactics to march to police stations in Shumshuipo and Cheung Sha Wan, where the police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd. A small group of protesters attacked the Golden Bauhinia Flower in Wanchai and vandalized it by using black paint.43 Some protesters went to surround the Tsimshatsui police station where police fired teargas, some of which were not targeted accurately. During the confrontation between protesters and police, a girl’s eye was seriously injured, sparking a debate between protesters and pro-government supporters over whether she was hurt by the police’s bean bag round or a protester’s steel pellet gun. She had her right eye

40 Danny Lee, “Cathay Pacific sacks two pilots over Hong Kong protest-related incidents,” South China Morning Post, August 14, 2019, in https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/transport/article/3022750/cathay-pacific-says-55000-passengers-stranded-hong-kong, access date: March 31, 2020.
41 Ibid.
42 “China says crew information submitted by Cathay Pacific meets requirements,” Reuters, August 15, 2019, in https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests-cathay-pacific/china-says-crew-information-submitted-by-cathay-pacific-meets-requirements-idUSKCN1V509Q, access date: March 31, 2020.
43 Cable TV news, August 11, 2019.
injured, triggering more protesters to occupy the airport on August 12 and 13 in opposition to police power. The mass sit-in on August 12 and the blockade on August 13 paralyzed the airport, causing tremendous inconvenience to tourists and travelers. The Airport Authority got a court injunction swiftly on August 14 to stop protesters from occupying the airport and to tighten security for the sake of restoring order in the airport immediately.

Third, tougher tactics were deployed by the Hong Kong police after the repeatedly hardline remarks from Zhang Xiaoming, Wang Zhimin and other HKMAO officials like Yang Guang. Zhang used the term “signs of colour revolution” to refer to the Hong Kong protests on August 7, a code word that appeared to harden the Hong Kong police’s handling of the protests. The afternoon of August 11 witnessed some protesters going to Wanchai to set up their barricades near the police headquarters. The police sent undercover agents to infiltrate protesters and arrest some “valiant” elements. On the same day, protesters abandoned going to the North Point where a strong pro-Beijing and Fujianese community resided, and where some Fujianese from Dongguan were visiting Hong Kong for three days to “defend” their community against any intrusion from protesters. Some reporters and citizens were intimidated and beaten by some angry people in North Point, while police were sent to intervene in mediating their disputes. The mobilization of the “patriotic” Fujianese from the mainland could be seen as a kneejerk reaction to the hardline remarks made by PRC officials on Hong Kong protests. On the night of August 11, the police chased some protesters into the Taikoo Shing and Kwai Fong MTR stations. At Taikoo Shing, the police subdued and arrested several protesters who escaped into the underground station—an unprecedented police action that precipitated the August 31 incident in the Prince Edward MTR station. At the Kwai Fong MTR station, the police fired tear gas and rubber bullets, generating public criticism from commuters who feared that the tear gas residue inside the MTR station would pose health hazards. The overall tougher and swift action of the police was like an automatic response to the hardline remarks made by PRC officials. Backing up the police on August 12, the HKMAO spokesman Yang Guang stated that the protest movement approached an early

\[44\] Ibid.
stage of “terrorism,” and that the violent crime in Hong Kong should be cracked down with an “iron fist.”\(^{45}\)

Fourth, there was a tendency that the Chief Executive’s remarks were a strategic response to the mainland’s hardline comments and move. Three days after August 10, when the news reported the movement of PAP to Shenzhen border, Chief Executive Carrie Lam met the press and appealed to the citizens to maintain calmness, stop violence and to consider the best interests of Hong Kong. Otherwise, Hong Kong would be plunged into a “deep abyss” and it would be “smashed into pieces.”\(^{46}\) According to the Hong Kong public opinion research institute, on a scale of 0 to 100, Carrie Lam received a support rating of only 27.9, showing an all-time low for all Chief Executives in Hong Kong.\(^{47}\) Yet, on the same day of August 13, the police went to the airport to arrest a few protesters, but they intentionally or unintentionally let the protesters beat up two mainland journalists, one being a reporter of the *Global Times* and the other believed to be an “undercover agent.”\(^{48}\) The incident aroused the anger of mainland media and netizens immediately, but the strong remarks of Carrie Lam were not matched by a tougher police action immediately. Perhaps the police deliberately allowed the protesters to make themselves unpopular by occupying the airport. In fact, the protesters who occupied the airport discredited themselves. On the morning of August 14, some protesters issued an apology to reporters for causing inconvenience and troubles to travelers, but their behavior had already undermined public support. On August 14, pro-establishment and some pro-democracy elites also criticized the action of protesters, who failed to understand that public opinion could turn against them easily, and who were ignorant of the police’s deliberately minimal intervention in their occupation airport campaign.

\(^{45}\) Cable TV, August 12, 2019.

\(^{46}\) “Chief Executive questions if people want Hong Kong smashed into pieces,” Radio Television Hong Kong, August 13, 2019, in https://news.rthk.hk/rthk/en/component/k2/1474340-20190813.htm?spTabChangeable=0, access date: March 31, 2020.

\(^{47}\) “Carrie Lam’s popularity ‘worst among all Chief Executives,’” Radio Television Hong Kong, August 13, 2019, in https://news.rthk.hk/rthk/en/component/k2/1474412-20190813.htm, access date: March 31, 2020.

\(^{48}\) Elizabeth Cheung, “Global Times journalist beaten by Hong Kong protestors given hero’s welcome after being discharged from hospital,” *South China Morning Post*, August 14, 2019, in https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3022782/global-times-journalist-beaten-hong-kong-protesters-given, access date: March 31, 2020.
In short, the hardline responses from Beijing, marked by Zhang Xiaoming’s “colour revolution” comment on August 7, appeared to stimulate the hardline tactics adopted by the police on August 11. In response to the hardline policing tactics, protesters occupied the airport on August 12 and 13, paralyzing its operation and plunging air traffic into chaos. Flights were canceled and delayed. On August 12, the PAP swiftly moved to Shenzhen to conduct an exercise involving 12,000 officers and 50 armored vehicles. This was clearly a political gesture demonstrating the possibility of sending the PAP to the HKSAR.

Fifth and finally, because the PRC leaders saw the Hong Kong protests as “signs of a colour revolution” instigated by external forces, the extradition bill could not be formally withdrawn until September 4, when Carrie Lam made the open announcement. It was reported that Lam got the direct approval from President Xi Jinping before she made the announcement. Due to the fact that the PRC elevated the Hong Kong protests to the level of national security, specifically in the context of the struggle between China and the United States, the formal withdrawal of the extradition bill needed Xi’s endorsement. Hence, on the day when Carrie Lam made the announcement of withdrawing the bill, she appeared to be more relaxed than ever before, pointing to the likelihood that her immediate superiors, namely Wang Zhimin and Zhang Xiaoming, were perhaps more hardline than conventional wisdom assumed.

The elevation of the extradition bill sage to the national security struggle between China and the United States could also explain why President Xi adopted a high-profile approach to praise the work of Carrie Lam on November 4 and 14 and December 16. Indeed, Chief Executive Carrie Lam was panicking from mid-June to September, especially when she had to clarify her remarks on September 3 shortly after a report from Reuters revealing her emotional and inappropriate remarks during a gathering with a group of businesspeople. Carrie Lam told the business elites that if she had a choice, she would resign and make a deep apology for her

49 Gary Cheung, “Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam sought Xi Jinping’s approval to formally withdraw extradition bill that triggered anti-government protests,” South China Morning Post, September 28, 2019, in https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3030735/hong-kong-leader-carrie-lam-sought-president-xi-jinping, access date: March 31, 2020.

50 Greg Torode, James Pormfret and Anne Marie Roantree, “Special Report: Hong Kong leader soup she would ‘quit’ if she could, fears for ability to resolve crisis now ‘very limited,’” Reuters September 2, 2019
“unforgivable havoc” that wrecked Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{51} She had also admitted that the extradition saga was elevated to the level of Beijing’s national security and sovereignty, especially at a time when the United States and China were engaging in a trade war. On September 3, Carrie Lam tried to repair the damage of the business elite’s leakage of her comments by saying that she had not chosen to resign. Nevertheless, her image as a weak political leader with fluctuating mood and decisions became irreparable. As the Chief Executive in Hong Kong, Carrie Lam was expected by Beijing to follow the President Xi Jinping’s instruction on September 3, namely adopting an attitude of “persistent struggle” with the forces that challenged the central government’s national security and sovereignty.

The remarks made by President Xi on September 3 had an immediate effect on some members of the Hong Kong and Macau Study Association (HKMSA), which advertised in \textit{Tai Kung Pao} on September 4 that the people of Hong Kong should realize the truth of the current disturbances, especially the fact that Hong Kong had already been used by external forces as a chess game in the international geopolitical struggle between China and the United States.\textsuperscript{52} The advertisement added that the image of the “one country, two systems” needed to be protected regionally and internationally, and that the people of Hong Kong should support both the Chief Executive and the police force to restore public and social order in the territory. Clearly, the HKMSA was a united front organization under the PRC, putting out the advertisement immediately after President Xi pointed to the need to engage in a “permanent struggle” with external forces.

The strong and explicit position adopted by President Xi on September 3 was politically significant in the context of how Beijing responded to the ferocity of the Hong Kong protests. On top of the violent occupation of LegCo on July 1 and the defacement of the PRC at the Liaison Office building on the night of July 21, the radical protesters threw some 100 self-made petrol bombs and launched extensive arson attacks in places like Wanchai and Tsimshatsui districts on August 31. On September 1, radical protesters damaged half of the MTR stations, desecrated the PRC national flags in Tung Chung district, blocked access routes to the airport, forced travelers to walk from Tung Chung into the airport terminals and crippled airport train services. All these violent activities, in the mind of Beijing, were endangering the PRC’s national security, sovereignty and dignity.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ta Kung Pao}, September 4, 2019, p. A1
Hence, President Xi used the term “permanent struggle” to implicitly refer to the need to deal with the Hong Kong protests, which to Beijing had the support of external forces. On July 31, Tung Chee-hwa, the vice-chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), said that external forces were suspected of being involved in the anti-extradition movement, including Taiwan and the United States.\(^{53}\) These “external forces” will be discussed in Chap. 7.

On September 4, Carrie Lam met the pro-government elites to explain her intention of withdrawing the extradition bill.\(^{54}\) She refused to use the word “withdrawal” from June to August, except for suspending the bill and saying that it was “dead.” Her formal announcement that the extradition bill was withdrawn in the late afternoon of September 4 was an attempt by the government to appease the anger of many ordinary citizens, trying to calm down some protesters and to defuse the entire crisis. While some Hong Kong people saw her move as a positive step, others regarded it as long overdue and still hoped that she would set up an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the causes and remedies of the entire disturbances, including police performance. The HKSAR government was reluctant to set up an independent commission, but the membership of the existing Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) was expanded to involve two new members. This mild measure could be explained by the fact that the police force opposed any move by the government to establish an independent commission of inquiry.

**Hardliners and Softliners in the Hong Kong Government and on the Beijing Side**

Within the HKSAR government, there were hardliners and softliners in the extradition bill saga. Hardliners included the Secretary for Security John Lee and Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng, who tended to support the bill. In particular, John Lee played the role of the initiator and

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\(^{53}\) Tony Cheung, “Former Hong Kong leader Tung Chee-hwa accuses the United States and Taiwan of orchestrating ‘well-organized’ recent protests,” *South China Morning Post*, July 31, 2019, in https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3020829/former-hong-kong-leader-tung-chee-hwa-accuses-united-states, access date: March 31, 2020.

\(^{54}\) “Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announces formal withdrawal of the extradition bill and sets up a platform to look into key causes of protest crises,” *South China Morning Post*, September 4, 2019,” in https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025641/hong-kong-leader-carrie-lam-announce-formal-withdrawal, access date: April 26, 2020.
promoter of the extradition bill, explaining its content to different business chambers and consulate officials. Teresa Cheng appeared to adopt a relatively low-profile approach, but she supported the bill in public. However, Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung appeared to be a softliner. After the confrontations between protesters and police on June 12, Cheung did mention in the mass media that the government might consider an independent commission of inquiry. However, he quickly abandoned his view after police associations expressed their opposition to such an idea. Moreover, several days after the Yuen Long triad attack on passengers in the MTR station, Cheung issued a public apology to the people of Hong Kong—a move that was quickly criticized by the police associations as “writing off” the police efforts at maintaining law and order.\(^5\) Police Commissioner Stephen Lo sought an “urgent meeting” with Cheung after the latter made the apology to the public over the July 21 incident.\(^5\)

The police force was clearly a hardliner in the Hong Kong protests. Naturally, Beijing sided with the Hong Kong police, as evidenced by the frequent remarks of PRC officials and leaders praising and supporting them. The Hong Kong police, in the eyes of Beijing, played a critical role in maintaining Hong Kong’s law and order and preventing it from becoming “a base of subversion” in collaboration with external forces. As such, the remarks made by Zhao Kezhi on December 6 and Guo Shengkun on December 7 to support the Hong Kong police were politically significant (Table 5.6). As a matter of fact, after Chris Tang succeeded Stephen Lo as the new Police Commissioner, the policing tactics on the protesters became much faster, more decisive and more pre-emptive in arresting protesters who were suspected of stirring troubles, storing and manufacturing explosive weapons and instigating others to confront the police and undermine the law and order.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam was a hardliner at the beginning of the extradition bill controversy, refusing to make major concessions, but she

\(^5\)Yonden Lhatoo, Christy Leung and Clifford Lo, “How Hong Kong’s embattled police force is holding the city back from the brink against all odds,” *South China Morning Post*, August 19, 2019, in [https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3023324/police-story-how-hong-kongs-embattled-law-enforcers-are](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3023324/police-story-how-hong-kongs-embattled-law-enforcers-are), access date: March 31, 2020.

\(^5\)Christy Leung and Victor Ting, “Police anger after Hong Kong No 2 Matthew Cheung says sorry for Yuen Long attack response,” *South China Morning Post*, July 26, 2019, in [https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3020251/hong-kong-no-2-matthew-cheung-says-sorry-police-response](https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3020251/hong-kong-no-2-matthew-cheung-says-sorry-police-response), access date: March 31, 2020.
shifted to a more sofline position toward the end of August and early September, as seen in the formal withdrawal of the bill. However, her action was seen by critics as being too little and too late, partly because the legitimacy of her government had already been severely undermined and partly because the wounds incurred to the society could not be easily healed. Furthermore, the guerilla-style and tech-savvy protests in Hong Kong became a new normal not only taking place frequently on Saturdays and Sundays but also constituting a new mode of political participation that constantly challenged the legitimacy of the HKSAR government and the bottom line of the central authorities in Beijing.

Objectively speaking, the five demands put forward by the protesters could not be easily achieved unless the sofliners dominated both the HKSAR leadership and the Beijing side. As argued above, only Matthew Cheung appeared to be the lonely sofliner in the Hong Kong leadership. He was numerically and politically overwhelmed by other hardliners, some of whom were ExCo members. As hardliners dominated the political leadership of both the HKSAR and Beijing, they collectively responded to the five demands in a concerted manner. As mentioned above, PRC officials like Yang Guang asked the pro-democracy protesters to return to the August 31, 2014, parameters set out by the NPC Standing Committee on the election method of the Chief Executive in the HKSAR. The demand for the release of arrested protesters, to both Carrie Lam and Beijing, was unacceptable. Lam said that such a move would violate the rule of law. On the other hand, the PRC’s rule by law perspective was by no means conducive to the advocacy of releasing arrested protesters. President Xi Jinping and his party colleagues all saw Hong Kong’s radical and violent protesters as those people who breached the law, and who failed to observe the rule of law. As such, Beijing expected the Hong Kong courts to punish the law-breakers. For the demand that the term “riot” should not be used by Police Commissioner Stephen Lo to refer to the June 12 protesters, Lo had already backtracked and said that only those law-breakers were “rioters.” As Beijing was and is led by hardliners supportive of the equally hardline Hong Kong police, both must reject the idea of setting up any independent commission of inquiry into the police performance and operation. The hardliners in the Hong Kong police were and are afraid that any independent commission would look for evidence unfavorable to individual police officers with legal ramifications, just like seven police officers who were convicted in February 2017 of attacking a protester named Ken
Tsang during the Occupy Central Movement in 2014. Finally, with the formal withdrawal of the extradition bill by Carrie Lam in early September, it became a non-issue. Nevertheless, the peaceful and violent protesters continued to share the same target of their socio-political movement, namely the police whose exercise of power was criticized as “excessive” and “arbitrary.”

**CHINA’S LEGAL CULTURE AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

Many Hong Kong people and protesters did not care about how PRC authorities viewed the rule of law. President Xi Jinping’s beliefs in the rule of law could be traced back to his speech as early as August 2018, when he delivered an important speech. His concept of the “comprehensively governing the country in accordance with law” is basically putting the implementation of law and citizens’ obedience to the law on the top priorities (Table 5.8). Although he talked about the need to be people-centered, the people are expected to observe, obey and carry out the law without copying from the Western concepts of constitutionalism, “separation of powers” and “judicial independence.” Obviously, President Xi’s view of the rule of law and the role of citizens is different from many Hong Kong people, especially protesters, who see the law as challengeable and human rights of individuals and groups as of paramount importance. Most importantly, President Xi emphasizes that “every citizen, social organization and state agency must adopt the constitution and the law as their behavioral criteria, and they must exercise their right and power in accordance with the constitution and the law. They cannot surpass the privileges allowed to them by the constitution and the law. Any act violating the constitution and the law will have to be pursued legally and investigated.”

Xi’s concept of law is in conformity with the legalist tradition in ancient China, emphasizing the supremacy of law in governing the country. He also stresses the importance of talents and virtues in building up the socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics. Unlike many Hong Kong people

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57 Jasmine Siu and Eddie Lee, “Seven policemen convicted of assaulting Occupy activist Ken Tsang,” *South China Morning Post*, February 14, 2017, in https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-crime/article/2070641/seven-police-officers-accused-beating-occupy-activist-ken, access date: March 31, 2020.

58 Xi Jinping, “Strengthening the party’s leadership over the comprehensive rule of law in the country,” in: http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-02/15/c_1124120391.htm, access date: March 31, 2020.
President Xi Jinping’s remarks on comprehensively governing the country in accordance with law

1. “Insist on strengthening the party’s leadership in governing the country according to law. Party leadership is the most fundamental guarantee of the socialist rule of law. Comprehensively governing the country in accordance with the law does not weaken the party’s leadership, but it can strengthen and improve leadership, continuously improve the party’s governing ability and level and consolidate the party’s ruling position. We must adhere to the party leadership in initiating legislation, guaranteeing the law enforcement, supporting the judiciary, taking the lead in abiding by the law, improving the system and mechanism of party leadership in comprehensively governing the country, making the party’s platform into the will of the country, forming laws and passing them to protect the implementation of party policies, and ensuring the correct direction of comprehensively governing the country in accordance with the law.”

2. “Adhere to the people-centered status. The construction of the rule of law must be for the people, rely on them, benefit them and protect them. We must firmly grasp the pursuit of social justice and the value of the rule of law, and strive to make the people feel that there are fairness and justice in every legal system, every law-enforcement decision, and every judicial case. It is necessary to implement the entire process of governing the country according to the law, reflecting the interests of the people, reflecting the wishes of the people, protecting the rights and interests of the people, and ensuring that the people manage the state affairs, economic and cultural undertakings, and social affairs under the party leadership.”

3. “The promotion of comprehensively governing the country according to law must go the right way. We must proceed from China’s national conditions and realities and follow the path of the rule of law that is suitable for ourselves. We must not copy the models and practices of other countries and follow the path of Western ‘constitutionalism,’ ‘the separation of powers’ and ‘judicial independence.’”

4. “Insist on building a socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics. The socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics is the legal manifestation of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. We must seize and grasp the construction of a socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics, and strive to form a complete legal scope and system, an efficient implementation system, a rigorous supervision system, and a strong rule of law protection system.”

5. “We must insist on governing the country and implement policies according to the constitution. … The party leadership is necessary to lead the people to formulate the law and constitution. The party must operate with the constitution and the law. Every citizen, social organization and state agency must adopt the constitution and the law as their behavioral criteria, and they must exercise their right and power in accordance with the constitution and the law. They cannot surpass the privileges allowed to them by the constitution and the law. Any act violating the constitution and the law will have to be pursued legally and investigated.”

(continued)
whose concept of the rule of law is to see it as an instrument to check the arbitrary power of the state and ruling authorities, including the police, the mainland leaders view law as an instrument of consolidating party leadership. Two conflicting versions of law could be seen in Hong Kong’s protests from June to December 2019, one that was very “Western” and the other very paternalistically “Chinese.”

The “Western” rule of law cherishes human rights, civil liberties and checks and balances on the state power, but “rule by law” rather than rule of law is arguably the hallmark of the PRC legal system.

China’s legal culture of emphasizing social harmony, police supremacy and political stability means that the Hong Kong protests from June to December 2019 were destined to be regarded as the enemy of the PRC party-state. The political cultures of the PRC and HKSAR remain very different. In China, democracy is supposed to be led by the state,

59 For the paternalistic Chinese legal system, see Randall Peerenboom, China’s Long March Toward Rule of Law (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

60 Ibid., p. 8.
characterized by social harmony and shaped by group interests rather than individual ones. Hong Kong’s political culture tends to be far more pluralistic, emphasizing individual interests, human rights, civil liberties and social movement. The Chinese legal culture that emphasizes the rule by law is necessarily supportive of the hardline approach adopted by the Hong Kong police in dealing with the protests. In a nutshell, so long as the Hong Kong police is seen as the bastion of China’s national security in the HKSAR, its tactics in coping with protesters are bound to be expected to be decisive, swift and iron-fisted. As Yang Guang said on July 29, the urgent task for Hong Kong was to punish the criminal and violent elements. One day after his statement, the Hong Kong police on the night of July 30 arrested 49 protesters who confronted the police in the Western and Central districts. Of the 49 arrested persons, 44 of them were charged for rioting.

**China’s National Security Policy Toward Hong Kong**

Judging from the Fourth Plenum’s emphasis on the need to improve the mechanism and system of principal officials of the HKSAR government, and from the mainland officials whom the Hong Kong counterparts have met since June 2019, it is quite likely that the anti-extradition movement from June to December 2019 produced a new vertical accountability of Hong Kong officials to the central government in Beijing. Diagram 5.1 shows that, on the HKSAR side, the Police Commissioner is now accountable directly to both the Minister of Public Security and the party-secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLAC). Moreover, the Secretary for Security of the HKSAR government is directly accountable to the party-secretary of the CPLAC. Finally, the Secretary for Justice of the Hong Kong government is accountable to not only the President of the Supreme People’s Court of the PRC, but also the party-secretary of the CPLAC. The role of the party-secretary of the CPLAC is increasingly important in Beijing’s relations with the HKSAR.

Table 5.9 illustrates the main remarks made by the Minister of Public Security, Zhao Kezhi, whose position on the HKSAR has increasingly

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61 Andrew J. Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
62 Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo, *Competing Chinese Political Visions: Hong Kong vs. Beijing on Democracy* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2010).
become significant since the June 2019 protests. As early as June 2019, he stressed the importance of preventing "foreign enemies and forces" from infiltrating the Chinese soil and therefore the need to protect China’s political security. Moreover, he stressed that the public security agency was a valuable tool of China’s “democratic dictatorship” and the ruling CCP. Zhao also elaborated that public security work must be loyal to the CCP, to “protect the political security of our ‘southern gate,’ and to consolidate our nation’s political security.” His comments appeared to target at Hong Kong, which is located at the “southern gate” of the PRC. Finally, he stressed that while the mainland public security is the “protective shield” of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong police must strengthen cooperation with the mainland counterpart and maintain social stability of the HKSAR.

Since the CPLAC occupies a central position in Beijing’s national security policy toward the HKSAR, its criticisms of four politicians in the HKSAR in 2019 were noteworthy. Table 5.10 shows that the CPLAC targeted at media tycoon Jimmy Lai, barrister Martin Lee, former Chief Secretary Anson Chan and pro-democracy lawyer Albert Ho. All of them are pro-democracy. They were accused of working with external forces, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Lai’s Next Media...
### Table 5.9 Remarks of Zhao Kezhi on Hong Kong and National Security

| Date          | Event                                      | Zhao Kezhi’s remark                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June 12, 2019 | Attending a Public Security Ministry Meeting in Beijing | 1. Stresses that public security work is to “prevent foreign enemies and forces from infiltrating and subverting China and we need to protect political security.”  
2. The public security agency is “a valuable tool of the people’s democratic dictatorship.” “Loyalty to the Party is the basic political principle of public security. Ideologically, organizationally and in terms of action, public security has to implement the work designated by Party leadership so that the Party principles and policy directions are carried out.”  
3. “In the new era, public security work must be well positioned and requires an ideology of worrying about problems, consolidating our bottom-line thinking, preventing enemy forces from conducting sabotage activities, and protecting our political security. Public security also needs to deal with the relations between reform and developmental stability, to maintain stability and protect interests properly, and to resolve the emerging problems and contradictions at the grassroots level.” |
| August 26, 2019 | Investigation and inspection in Guangdong Province | “Public security work has to resolutely and absolutely follow and insist on the Party leadership, implementing wholeheartedly Party General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important directives and spirit and carrying out the Party’s policy plans and directions. We have to accurately recognize the current circumstances, risks and challenges, to take action to prevent all kinds of subversive and violent activities, to protect the political security of our ‘southern gate,’ and to consolidate our nation’s political security.” |
| December 6, 2019 | Meeting the new Hong Kong Police Commissioner, Chris Tang, in Beijing | “The central government and public security are the protective shields of Hong Kong forever, continuously supporting the Hong Kong police to execute the laws. The Hong Kong police can strengthen cooperation with the mainland counterpart, increase their exchanges and maintain national security and Hong Kong’s social stability.” |

Sources: *Ta Kung Po*, June 13, 2019, p. A15; August 28, 2019, p. A15 and December 7, 2019, p. A05
| Hong Kong’s pro-democracy activists | Main criticisms from CPLAC |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Jimmy Lai                         | 1. “Instigating extreme moves and willing to be a US running dog.”  
2. “Using the Next Media to let US and UK political forces to intervene in Hong Kong matters. The Apple Daily uses its pages and coverage to mobilize people to take to the streets, listing parade routes and time, organizing and leading violent actions.”  
3. “Conducting political donations and betray Hong Kong while joining the US and UK.” |
| Martin Lee                        | 1. “Martin Lee takes the lead in raising legal loopholes of the extradition bill, visited the US and complained to foreigners, and suggested that the US should oppose the bill to create chaos in Hong Kong.”  
2. “Cultivating anti-China forces in Hong Kong and grooming agents for them. Developing outstanding talents to betray Hong Kong and creating chaos to China.”  
3. “Since May 2017, he has appealed to the international society to intervene in Hong Kong matters, to blacken the image of ‘one country, two systems,’ and visited the US, UK, Canada and other countries to complain about the extradition bill.”  
4. “Before the anti-extradition movement erupted, Lee had written a large number of political articles to stir up public sentiments and increase public concern about the extradition bill, implying that readers should use violent confrontation to protect their human rights, democracy and freedom.” |
| Anson Chan                        | 1. “As the second person in command, Anson Chan disagreed with Chief Executive Tung Chee-haw, leading to two headquarters at the top leadership.”  
2. “From 2013 to 2014, she accepted political donations of HK$3.5 million from Jimmy Lai three times, helping him to engage in activities that created chaos in Hong Kong.”  
3. “Using the status of the former Chief Secretary, she openly encourages Hong Kong civil servants to participate in strikes and protests, trying to paralyze the government operation and weakening the governing capacity of the Carrie Lam administration.” |
| Albert Ho                         | 1. “Using his former status as District Councilor and legislator, he increases his media coverage and adopts a high profile, becoming a person oscillating between anti-China and pro-China positions. He eventually was contacted by the US intelligence agency and gradually becomes a political spokesperson for the US in Hong Kong.”  
2. “In the anti-extradition violent protests, Albert Ho curbed police power by raising the banner of democracy and freedom for the violent protestors who adopt terrorism to undermine Hong Kong’s public order.” |

Sources: “Four Politicians who Portray Hong Kong,” in http://www.chinapeace.gov.cn/chinapeace/c54219/2019-08/18/content_12281219.shtml, access date: March 6, 2020
which publicizes and supports the democrats has been regarded as the enemy of the HKSAR government and the PRC’s party-state, for its Apple Daily has been covering all kinds of stories exposing the authoritarian governance of China and public maladministration of the HKSAR government. Lai was also accused of donating money to the pro-democracy movement, playing a crucial role as a financier and leader behind the scene. Martin Lee as the former chairman of the Democratic Party has been frequently visiting foreign countries to discuss Hong Kong’s democratic movement—a move regarded by the CPLAC as collaborating with foreign political forces. Anson Chan was the former Chief Secretary who disagreed with the former Chief Executive Tung Chee-haw on policy issues. After her retirement from the government, she was participating in the pro-democracy movement—a move regarded by the CPLAC as reversing her previously pro-government role. Moreover, she was criticized for supporting those civil servants who openly participated in the anti-extradition movement and for encouraging them to “violate” their political neutrality. Finally, Albert Ho from the Democratic Party has also been criticized as being too close to the United States and “curbing police power.” Clearly, the CPLAC’s high-profile approach to targeting at the four political activists in the HKSAR illustrated the dominance of hardliners on the PRC policy toward Hong Kong.

Because of the PRC’s national security policy, the pro-Beijing mass media, such as Wen Wei Po, Ta Kung Pao and Oriental Daily, have carried reports and commentaries critical of the democrats in the HKSAR (Table 5.11). They use the term “opposition” to refer to the democrats. During the protests from June to December 2019, Wen Wei Po and Ta Kung Pao used the term “pro-violent faction” to refer to the democrats who participated actively in the protests. The task of the pro-Beijing media was to staunchly support China’s national security policy toward Hong Kong, single out the opposition politicians whose activities were deemed to be socially disruptive and violent, and severely criticize those radical and violent protesters for undermining the social stability of the HKSAR. They also accused the peaceful protesters for teaming up with the violent ones, collaborating and participating in the local elections in November 2019.
Table 5.11  Remarks of Pro-Beijing media on the opposition from July 2019 to November 2019

| Date          | Remarks                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 2, 2019  | 1. The opposition and its mouthpiece “beautify” the violent people, labeling them as “heroes” but making them bolder and more violent.  
              | 2. The opposition utilizes the violent protesters for political gains but they “set themselves on fire.”                                  |
| July 22, 2019 | 1. “The opposition form “an alliance with protestors, formulating a strategy of this storm with ‘the Hong Kong independents’ and making ‘peace and unity’ with them.”  
              | 2. “The opposition turns a blind eye to the violent behavior of independenists, using their status of legislators to obstruct police work, and accusing the police work, and accusing the police of ‘abusing power.’”  
              | 3. “The opposition tries to achieve its electoral interest, absorbing radical votes for District Council elections, refusing to cut relations with the radicals, and supporting their violent behavior.” |
| October 13, 2019 | 1. The pan-democrats become “pan-violent” faction that aims at acquiring more voters in the District Council elections.  
                      | 2. “The pan-violent faction leads the violent protestors” and provide them with a “protective umbrella.”  
                      | 3. The “pan-violent” faction violates the law and breaks its own promises.  
                      | 4. The “pan-violent” faction is “unscrupulous.” |
| October 17, 2019 | 1. The opposition legislators are not only “pro-violence but also exercising violence.”  
                      | 2. The opposition legislators do not consider public interest and Hong Kong’s future and they are “professional political rascals.”  
                      | 3. “Hong Kong is going to decline because of the failure to stop violence, terminate social turbulence and cease societal split.”  
                      | 4. “The opposition faction extends its tentacles to LegCo and cooperates with violent protestors at the street level, trying to paralyze the government and capture its governing power.”  
                      | 5. “The opposition legislators sacrifice the interests of Hong Kong and the people’s welfare. They must shoulder the responsibility of the grave consequences.” |
| November 4, 2019 | 1. “The opposition faction tolerates and stirs up the violent protestors, refusing to cut relations with them and dividing the society.” |
| November 12, 2020 | 1. “The pan-violent faction beautifies the violent protestors and we should not let them use LegCo to publicize violence.”  
                      | 2. The “pan-violent” faction blames the police and government for the escalation of violence.  
                      | 3. The “pan-violent” legislators often appear in violent scenes, allowing violent protesters time to escape and providing “protective umbrellas” for them. |
Table 5.11 (continued)

| Date          | Remarks                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| November 25, 2020 | 1. “The pan-violent” faction stirs up black violence for 5 months. On the election day, violence continued. Its members infiltrated elections and undermined the tradition of fair and just electoral culture. Their behavior is contrary to the universal democratic values. They rely on violence to win the elections. This is disgraceful and unconvincing. The most damaging impact is to hurt the feeling and confidence of citizens on fair and just elections.”  
2. “The pan-violent faction reaps the fruits of the elections and benefits from the violent campaigns. Although the pan-violent faction wins the elections, their victory is actually a conspiratorial strategy.” |

Sources: *Wen Wei Po*, July 2, 2019, p. A10; July 22, 2019, p. A10; October 13, 2019, p. A10; October 17, 2019, in [http://news.wenweipo.com/2019/10/17/IN1910170006.htm](http://news.wenweipo.com/2019/10/17/IN1910170006.htm), access date: March 5, 2020; November 25, 2019, p. A04; *Oriental Daily*, November 4, 2019, in [https://orientaldaily.on.cc/cnt/news/20191104/00176_018.html](https://orientaldaily.on.cc/cnt/news/20191104/00176_018.html), access date: March 5, 2020; *Ta Kung Pao*, November 13, 2019, p. A05

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**Reshuffle of PRC Officials on Hong Kong Affairs in Early 2020**

On January 4, 2020, Liaison Office Director Wang Zhimin was suddenly replaced by Luo Huining. Luo was born in Zhejiang province in 1954 and he participated in the CCP in March 1982. Luo got a doctorate in economics from the Renmin University of China and became the party-secretary of Shanxi province in November 2019. At the same time, Luo was selected as the deputy director of the NPC’s financial and economic committee. Although Beijing said that Wang Zhimin’s work in the HKSAR was “confirmed,” his replacement by the 65-year-old Luo Huining raised speculations. Wang maintained a hardline position on Hong Kong matters. In November 2019, Reuters reported that Beijing was unhappy with Wang’s performance and considered to replace him. The defeat of the pro-Beijing forces in the District Council elections in November 2019, which will be discussed in Chap. 7, appeared to anger the central authorities.

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63 “State Council” Dismissing Wang Zhimin as the Liaison Office Director and replaced by former Shanxi party-secretary Luo Huining.” *HK01*, January 4, 2020, in [https://www.hk01.com/](https://www.hk01.com/), access date: March 20, 2020.

64 Keith Zhai, James Pomfret and David Kirton, “Exclusive: China sets up Hong Kong crisis center in mainland, considers replacing chief liaison,” *Reuters*, November 26, 2019.
government in Beijing. At the age of 62, Wang did not reach his retirement age and he was sent to work in the CCP Party History and Documentary Research Academy as a deputy dean.\footnote{Ming, Pao, January 9, 2020} It looked as if Wang was demoted, although the position of deputy dean was equivalent to a ministerial level. Luo’s appointment as the new Liaison Office director raised the concern of the US Secretary for State Mike Pompeo, who said on January 6 that he hoped the Hong Kong situation would return to normal.\footnote{“Guo Wengui: Luo would be handline.” Epoch Times, March 30, 2020.} It was reported that President Xi Jinping made the decision to replace Wang with Luo by the end of December 2019.\footnote{William Zheng, “Beijing’s new Hong Kong envoy Luo Huining was a surprise choice. Here’s why,” South China Morning Post, January 7, 2020, in https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3044905/beijings-new-hong-kong-convoy-luo-huining-was-surprises-choice, access date: March 20, 2020.} Apart from his experiences in Shanxi, Luo also worked in Qinghai for ten years. He also tackled corruption in Shanxi, a characteristic that might make President Xi choose him as Wang’s successor.

In February 2020, Beijing made another personnel reshuffle, replacing HKMAO Director Zhang Xiaoming with Xia Baolong, who was 67 years old. Xia was the vice chairman of the CPPCC. Zhang would become a deputy director of the HKMAO, a move that clearly pointed to his demotion. Xia had a reputation of being a hardline party-secretary in the Zhejiang province in 2014 and 2015, when crosses on the roofs of churches were pulled down in the mainland.\footnote{“China’s New Hong Kong Boss Used to Rip Crosses from Churches,” Macau Daily Times, February 14, 2020. Also see “Architect of China’s cross removal to oversee Hong Kong, Macau Affairs,” Catholic Philly, February 14, 2020, in https://catholicphilly.com/2020/02/news/world-news/architect-of-chinas-cross-removal-to-oversee-hong-kong-macau-affairs/, access date: March 20, 2020.} Acquiring a doctorate in economics from Peking University, Xia worked in Zhejiang province from 2003 to 2017, having rich experiences in governing the coastal province. Like Luo, Xia has strong economics background—a credential showing perhaps why both were selected by the top PRC leaders as the new officials responsible for Hong Kong affairs.

After the new Liaison Office director arrived Hong Kong, Covid-19 broke out in the PRC in early 2020. He wrote an open letter to the Hong Kong NPC and CPPCC members (Table 5.12), encouraging them to unite together to fight the pandemic and to build trust. Luo criticized the political
Table 5.12  Key points of Luo Huining’s open letter for the NPC deputies and CPPCC members in Hong Kong

1. He encouraged NPC and CPPCC members in Hong Kong to be “united and work together to fight the epidemic.”
2. He said: “Trust is the most effective vaccine of the disease. Today’s China had good governance system and good citizen attitudes.” “Hong Kong must prevail if the people can be cohesive and have faith.”
3. “The PRC government makes every effort to pay attention to the situation of Hong Kong compatriots in the mainland, and to cooperate with the HKSAR government in controlling the customs and to fully protect the logistical supply of Hong Kong citizens.” He added that 17,000,000 masks from China would be sent to the HKSAR.
4. “Respect the doctors and nurses who are fearless and who stick to their posts.”
5. “The flesh-and-blood relationships between the mainland and Hong Kong is thicker than water and the spiritual heritage of the Chinese nation in coming together in distress and suffering cannot be changed at any time, and no force can stop it.”
6. “For both the PRC and Hong Kong, the epidemic prevention and control work have reached the most strenuous stage. Only by working together can we overcome the difficulties.”
7. “If a few people are still generating all kinds of opposition for their political self-interest during this period, and even manipulate the use of strike, are these actions not a new political coronavirus?”
8. “Those who grasp the opportunities to spread the feeling of dissatisfaction, artificially create divisions, and deliberately destroy the relationships between the mainland and Hong Kong will eventually be unpopular. ‘More Hong Kong compatriots will agree that no individual can be an island and that Hong Kong should not be an isolated city.’”

Sources: Wen Wei Po, February 21, 2020, p. A02

opposition for having self-interest and manipulating the use of strikes, implicitly referring to the nurses and doctors who threatened to launch strikes to push the HKSAR government to adopt tighter measures to deal with the Coronavirus. Luo’s tone appeared to be more moderate than his predecessor Wang Zhimin, but he had continued to be an equally hardliner dealing with Hong Kong matters. On April 15, 2020, Luo commented publicity that the PRC had to continue to “struggle” against enemies forces in the HKSAR—a remark in line with President Xi’s “persistent struggle” with political foes.69

69 Cable TV News, April 15, 2020.
CONCLUSION

This chapter examines the responses of PRC leaders and officials to the Hong Kong protests. Basically, they maintained a hardline position; nevertheless, the removal of Wang Zhimin and Zhang Xiaoming appeared to demonstrate that the top leadership, including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, were displeased with the former Directors of the Liaison Office and the HKMAO. Two possibilities existed. The first was the failure of Wang and Zhang to withdraw the extradition bill much earlier, rather than pushing it through the LegCo and plunging the HKSAR into a deeper crisis of legitimacy, thereby affecting Beijing’s united front work on Taipei. The victory of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, Tsai Ing-wen, in the presidential election in Taiwan in January 2020 proved the failure of Beijing’s hardline policy toward Hong Kong. As such, reshuffling Wang and Zhang might bring a glimmer of hope in Beijing’s new policy toward both Hong Kong and Taiwan. Yet, it remains to be seen whether Beijing will really adopt a new policy with substantial differences from its traditionally hardline policy toward the two places. The second possibility of replacing Wang and Zhang was their failure to anticipate the failure of pro-Beijing forces in the November 2019 District Council elections, a topic that will be addressed in Chap. 7. The debacle of the pro-Beijing forces in the November local elections represented an indictment of the Beijing’s policy toward Hong Kong. As the PRC leadership lost face in their handling of the Hong Kong protests, partly due to the electoral tsunami in November and partly because of the easy victory of the DPP in Taiwan’s presidential election, the mainland officials responsible for Hong Kong matters, namely Wang and Zhang, had to be replaced and demoted—a move signaling the PRC-style of political accountability.

Whatever the personnel change in Beijing’s officials dealing with the HKSAR, the continuity of adopting a hardline national security policy toward Hong Kong is prominent. The structural relations between the principal officials of the HKSAR, especially those dealing with security, justice and policing, appear to be directly and vertically accountable to the security-related officials in the PRC. As such, Beijing has already reformed and improved the mechanism and system of principal officials in Hong Kong and their relationships with the central authorities. With the benefit of hindsight, the promulgation of the National Security Law in the HKSAR on June 30, 2020 demonstrated the continuation of the PRC’s hardline policy toward Hong Kong.