CHAPTER 1

Toward a Comprehensive Framework of Studying Peaceful and Violent Protests

Little research has been conducted on the dynamics and interrelationships of peaceful and violent protests. This book aims at designing an analytical framework for us to comprehend the origins, dynamics and interrelationships of peaceful and violent protests. Peaceful protests refer to those demonstrations, rallies, marches and petitions that do not involve any confrontation and conflicts between the participants on the one hand and law-enforcement authorities, notably the police, on the other. Violent protests mean those confrontational encounters and conflict-ridden relations between the protesters and law-enforcement authorities, including the police, paramilitary and military. This chapter will firstly review the literature and conceptual issues shaping the politics of protests, and secondly will come up with a comprehensive framework for us to comprehend the complex relationships between peaceful and violent protests.

The objective of this book is to use the case study of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to explore why an anti-extradition movement, which began from June 2019, continued to last until December 2019. After the outbreak of Covid-19 in China and Hong Kong in early 2020, the protests in the HKSAR have subsided but taken place occasionally. The 2019 movement could be seen as a series of protests against firstly the extradition bill put forward suddenly by the HKSAR government to transfer criminal suspects from Hong Kong to the mainland, and secondly the increasingly assertive police force, which has been playing a crucial role in maintaining
law and order since the eruption of the peaceful and violent protests in Hong Kong in June 2019. As a matter of fact, the Hong Kong protests from June to December 2019 could be divided into three overlapping stages: (1) the anti-extradition movement from June to early September when the bill was eventually withdrawn by the HKSAR government; (2) the anti-police protests starting from July 21, 2019, when some triad members went out to attack the passengers of the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) in Yuen Long district; and (3) the anti-authoritarianism and anti-mainlandization protests from June to the present. The ideologies of anti-authoritarianism and anti-mainlandization are intertwined, because the former represents the people’s movement against the transformation of a previously “soft” authoritarian regime of the HKSAR to a much “harder” one characterized by the common phenomenon of the police’s determination to exercise their power more arbitrarily against protesters and to arrest them massively. This drift from “soft” authoritarianism to “hard” authoritarianism is ideologically in conformity with the ideology and action of many Hong Kong people, especially protesters, to prevent the HKSAR from becoming more like mainland China politically, economically and socially. Some Hong Kong people, including the protesters, are determined to resist the mainlandization of Hong Kong. The term “mainlandization” is academically referred to a process of making the polity, economy and society of Hong Kong more like the mainland’s monolithic political system, where the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is powerful and hegemonic, and where its society and economy witness the extensive penetration of the Party-state.

At the time of writing, the Hong Kong protests continue to be sporadic, taking place occasionally on the streets of Hong Kong especially during weekends. The protests in Hong Kong are complex, as this book will discuss in detail, and it is academically and practically significant for us to understand its origins, dynamics and the interrelationships between peaceful and violent demonstrations. One main argument of this book is that, for us to understand the politics of protests in the HKSAR, the China factor has to be understood. The HKSAR is territorially an indispensable

1 Edwin Wincker argued that in “soft” authoritarianism, the regime was characterized by occasional repression. See Edwin Wincker, “Institutionalization and Participation on Taiwan: From Hard to Soft Authoritarianism?” The China Quarterly, vol. 99 (1984), pp. 481–499.
2 See Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo, The Dynamics of Beijing-Hong Kong Relations: A Model for Taiwan? (Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2008).
part of China after its return of sovereignty from Britain to the PRC on July 1, 1997. As such, the mainland Chinese policy toward the HKSAR must be considered when we study the politics of peaceful and violent protests.

After all, the triangular issues of the extradition bill, anti-authoritarianism and anti-mainlandization are all directly related to the role of the PRC, as will be discussed later. Once dubbed as “Asia’s finest,” the Hong Kong police force is forefront and prominent in the handling of this tripod of protests against the extradition bill, authoritarian politics and the drift of Hong Kong toward mainlandization. First, it could have played the role of an implementation agent if the extradition bill were passed by the Legislative Council (LegCo). Second, even if it were eventually abandoned, as was the case with Hong Kong in early September when the Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, shelved the bill indefinitely, the police had to maintain law and order by coping with both peaceful and violent protests. Third, the Hong Kong police themselves have to encounter the brunt of public criticisms on whether their actions and performance have already propelled the HKSAR toward a “hard” authoritarian city-state. These actions and performance in 2019 included, for example, the more intensive use of tear gas, the more frequent arrests of political dissidents, the more charges laid upon the protesters who were deemed to violate the law, the increased intensity of conflicts with protesters and the more assertive actions of countering media coverage and reports. Objectively speaking, the police are playing a critical role in maintaining law and order in Hong Kong. At the same time, they are like a political sandwich not only between the HKSAR government and protesters, but also between the PRC regime and local protesters. As such, the Hong Kong police are occupying a pivotal role in the “one country, two systems” principle, which means that the HKSAR can maintain its existing lifestyle and freedom for at least 50 years after July 1, 1997. Whatever actions taken by the local police are bound to be controversial and problematic. The perspective from law enforcement has to be appreciated and understood by the critics of the police. This book is going to adopt an academic, relatively objective, critical and balanced perspective to comprehend the role of Hong Kong police in the dynamic operations of the “one country, two systems” in the HKSAR.
Toward a Comprehensive Framework of Understanding Peaceful and Violent Protests

This chapter is going to review 15 perspectives on the politics of protests, namely (1) legitimacy; (2) state violence and repression; (3) organized crime, vandalism and violence; (4) political violence; (5) democratization and violence; (6) citizenship and violence; (7) social movement and violence; (8) the art of peaceful protests; (9) the relevance of totalitarianism; (10) the psychology of public fear; (11) populism and violence; (12) political symbolism; (13) anarchism and “uncivil society”; (14) insurgency; and (15) the role of the failed state. All these perspectives can help us understand the origins, dynamics and interrelationships of peaceful and violent protests in the case of Hong Kong in a deeper way.

Legitimacy

The concept of legitimacy is useful for us to understand not only groups but also regimes and violence. Group legitimacy refers to the degree of cohesion of a collection of people, who may have a sense of belonging among themselves, and who see themselves as a “distinct entity.” This unique entity can lead to the formation of groupings or groups in which people share their views, interests and common destiny. This kind of group legitimacy can be extended further to become “regime legitimacy,” which can be defined as an “internal type of government and societal organization that characterizes a given unit.” If a regime possesses legitimacy, a large segment of the population considers it as politically acceptable. The late Samuel Huntington reminded us of the importance of distinguishing procedural legitimacy from performance legitimacy. His concepts of procedural and performance legitimacy are important for us to understand the developing states and societies, particularly cities where their legitimacy is based not on the Western notion of choosing their political leaders through competitive elections, but on a non-Western practice of demonstrating the governmental authority through sustained and successful economic performance. The implication for Huntington’s

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3 John H. Herz, “Legitimacy: Can We Retrieve It?,” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 10, no. 3 (April, 1978), pp. 317–343.
4 Ibid.
5 Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).
notions of procedural and performance legitimacy is that, if citizens of a developing state are eager to advocate procedural reforms that can enhance a regime’s legitimacy, like electoral reforms as with the case of Hong Kong that will be discussed later, the existence of performance legitimacy alone cannot consolidate the overall legitimacy of the state.

On performance legitimacy, a regime cannot have strong legitimacy if it continues to adopt a clientelist approach to ruling its peoples, say, favoring the whites and discriminating against the indigenous peoples, as with the situation of an apartheid regime dominated by its white population. While a high degree of legitimacy secures public support of the regime in power, a crisis of legitimacy occurs when a regime whose procedural or performance legitimacy is seriously questioned by its populace. As John Herz wrote:

Legitimacy runs the scale from complete acclaim (where legitimacy feelings are often unpronounced because taken for granted) to complete rejection, or absence of such feelings, ranging all the way from support, consent, compliance through decline to erosion and loss. In the case of conscious rejection, we may speak of ‘illegitimacy.’ But there is also another pole opposed to complete legitimacy: mere absence of any feeling of either loyalty or disapproval—something that should be distinguished from illegitimacy sentiments and which I would call an attitude of ‘sullen toleration.’ Where there is neither acceptance nor rejection of rulership, discussion of legitimacy becomes meaningless.

If legitimacy and “complete acclaim” are located on one side of the spectrum, then “illegitimacy” and “sullen toleration” are situated at the other end, with varying public attitudes being found in the middle. These varying public attitudes may range from lukewarm support to profound distrust toward the regime concerned.

If any regime faces a crisis of legitimacy, peaceful and violent protests can occur, showing public dissatisfaction with the regime. As Wilson Carey McWilliams remarked, the crisis of legitimacy

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6 Herz, “Legitimacy: Can We Retrieve It?,” p. 319.
7 Ibid., p. 320.
involves a challenge to our procedures [and] … does demand change, if only to decrease the likelihood of the worst form of physical violence. In the simplest sense, the crisis requires a rapid expansion of the sense of right and significance among the disadvantaged, and, if violence on the part of the marginal classes is to be avoided, the crisis requires a similar expansion among them (though, obviously, at a lesser rate). In fact, the requirement is one in which all our people have a claim.8

Violence is therefore a means to change a situation and to fight for “a rapid expansion of the sense of right” perceived by some citizens, who see the regime as having legitimacy deficit.

Legitimacy and violence can be studied from two different vantage points, namely “a macro-perspective emphasizing formal system properties, and a micro-view emphasizing citizens’ attitudes and actions.”9 Legitimacy in terms of systemic properties embraces four attributes, namely accountability, efficiency, procedural fairness and distributive fairness. If the rulers are accountable to the governed through effective public participation, peaceful rather than violent protests are the hallmark of such regime. If a government can accomplish the society’s wishes without undue waste of resources, peaceful rather than violent protests can be a feature of efficient governance. If procedural fairness is observed through the protection of public access to “decisional arenas” such as policy-making processes and social justice,10 then peaceful rather than violent protests can be anticipated in such political system. Finally, if distributive fairness is observed through the implementation of an equity principle in tax collection and income redistribution,11 more citizens would be satisfied with the regime and peaceful rather than violent protests are the hallmark of the political system. In short, the operations of macro-level systemic properties can shape whether a regime is characterized by peaceful or violent protests. Violent protests are arguably triggered by a regime that is politically unaccountable, administratively inefficient, procedurally unfair and in lack of distributive fairness.

Legitimacy represents “the construction of social reality” which is expected to be “consistent with cultural beliefs, norms, and values that are presumed to be shared by others in the local situation and perhaps more

8 Wilson Carey McWilliams, “On Violence and Legitimacy,” The Yale Law Journal, vol. 79 (1970), p. 645.
9 M. Stephen Weatherford, “Measuring Political Legitimacy,” American Political Science Review, vol. 86, no. 1 (March 1992), pp. 149–166.
10 Ibid., p. 150.
11 Ibid., p. 151.
broadly by actors in a broader community.” Legitimacy is contingent upon an apparent consensus among social actors in local circumstances in which most people accept the “construction of social reality” as acceptable and satisfactory. This process involved “an implicit and sometimes explicit process in which widespread consensual beliefs about how things should be or typically are done creates strong expectations for what is likely to occur in that local situation.” In the process of creating “new social objects,” four stages are involved: (1) social innovations are created at the local level of actors in response to changing conditions; (2) social innovations that acquire legitimacy must be locally accepted or validated; (3) once social objects are locally validated, they are carried out and diffused into new local circumstances; (4) as a result of this diffusion process, the appearance of consensus creates a general consensus in society. Once “new social objects” become a part of the status quo, socio-political stability can be maintained and the regime concerned has its legitimacy recognized by its citizens. Compliance within and across interest groups to new practices is commonplace. Groups and individuals agree to follow all these new practices, which are then authorized and endorsed by the public. Authorization may come from various professional groups, including for example managers, lawyers, accountants, engineers and teachers. Yet, such authorization may also perpetuate the existing inequalities in the social system. For a minority of groups and individuals that do not accept the new social objects and practices, they may apply sanctions and boycotts, but such resistance cannot harm the overall legitimacy. In other words, legitimacy continues in a regime that can adapt to changing circumstances by creating social reality that is accepted by most of the citizens. If not, a legitimacy crisis can emerge if a regime fails to adapt and respond to the changing social, political and economic circumstances.

From a Marxist perspective, the legitimacy of a capitalist state attempts at perpetuating itself through reforms, which can be a means through which the capitalist class continues to “exploit” the working class. The “construction of social reality” and the creation of “new social objects” and “practices” are bound to be limited in the capitalist context of reforms and changes. The ideologies of citizens in a capitalist state that undertakes

12 Cathryn Johnson, Timothy J. Dowd, and Cecilia L. Ridgeway, “Legitimacy as a Social Process,” Annual Review of Sociology, vol. 32 (2006), p. 56.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., p. 73.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., pp. 73–74.
17 Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).
Reforms are pertinent in our analysis of public attitudes toward governmental adaptation to the changing circumstances. If most citizens are increasingly adopting a Marxist perspective on the state reforms, the capitalist state is arguably encountering a crisis of governance, because its reforms and changes are seen to be piecemeal, inadequate and biased in favor of the dominant capitalist class. As will be discussed later, the Hong Kong case is particularly relevant to this Marxist ideology, because in the recent years more citizens, especially young people, have been perceiving the post-colonial capitalist state as failing to care for the interests of the poor, the needy and the proletariat. As a result, any reforms formulated and implemented by the post-colonial capitalist state in the HKSAR have been seen as partial and in lack of genuine legitimacy. In other words, the capitalist state’s reforms and adaptational policies in response to changing circumstances can be seen as a failure in the minds of its citizens, who may be increasingly attracted by the Marxist ideology to perceive the social and political reality.

Even if some citizens are not necessarily adopting a Marxist exploitative perspective to comprehend social changes and reforms in a capitalist regime, the non-Marxist citizens may harbor different aspirations that cannot be tackled and addressed by the government in power. The challenge here is to design a political system which can be representative of the population and reflective of public demands and aspirations. If the representational system is “democratic” and public policies are decided according to the rules of this political accountability system, citizens will regard political decisions as legitimate, as with the precept in mainstream democratic theory.\textsuperscript{18} To use Huntington’s term, procedural legitimacy is important in the minds of some citizens in a developing state, for they aspire to possess a political system where they can elect the chief executive directly through universal suffrage. If a regime demonstrates its performance legitimacy, including good governance free from the influence of corruption, its legitimacy remains flimsy and weak if its citizens increasingly demand a more representative and accountable political system. As such, the political culture and maturity of citizens in a capitalist state is extremely important. If most citizens are politically apathetic and resign their political destiny to a regime, then the regime’s performance alone can perhaps produce public satisfaction and socio-political stability. If most citizens are increasingly politically active and mature, however, they expect the regime that

\textsuperscript{18}Bo Rothstein, “Creating Political Legitimacy Electoral Democracy Versus Quality of Government,” American Behavioral Scientist, vol. 53, no. 3 (2009), pp. 311–330.
performs well economically to consider and implement reforms that will propel the entire political system to be more democratic, accountable, transparent and representative. As will be shown in this book, the Hong Kong case appears to show an increasingly politically demanding and mature citizenry supportive of a more democratic political system.

If many citizens are increasingly politically assertive and mature, they may tend to use peaceful means to make their demands heard, like holding peaceful rallies and protests. Nevertheless, a minority of citizens may be politically impatient and attempt to use violence to make their demands heard. Violence may become a means by which some increasingly politicized and ideologized citizens lobby the government to undertake drastic reforms. If we recall David Easton’s political system theory in which inputs from citizens and groups are channeled into the “black box” where the government has to produce outputs accordingly,\(^{19}\) then violence can be comprehended as a kind of “input” so that the government is pressured to change its policy and introduce more drastic reforms. If the government fails to do so, more violence may be used by some radical and politicized citizens, thereby perpetuating a vicious cycle in which insufficient reforms bring about violence, and yet violence leads to state suppression and inaction in response to public demands. Hence, the character of the administration is “decisive for the way in which the political system is viewed.”\(^{20}\) Bo Rothstein has argued that “impartiality as the basic norm for generating legitimacy on the output side of the political system is the equivalent of political equality as the basic norm on the input side.”\(^{21}\) If these norms of impartiality and equality were accepted by the government concerned, its legitimacy can be enhanced. Conversely, political biases on the output side and inequality on the input side can harm the legitimacy of the state.

In the case of Hong Kong, as will be examined in this book, the protracted process of protests from June to December 2019 showed political biases on the output side and inequalities on the input side, thereby plunging the entire political system into instability and turbulence.

For a regime to gain legitimacy as it undertakes democratic reforms, three elements are essential: the existence of a political opposition, the

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\(^{19}\) David Easton, *The Political System. An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (New York: Knopf, 1953).

\(^{20}\) Bo Rothstein, “Creating Political Legitimacy Electoral Democracy Versus Quality of Government,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 53, Number 3 (2009), 311–330. (p. 325).

\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp. 325–326.
presence of fair and free election and the presence of political elites to receive, appreciate and understand public sentiments.\textsuperscript{22} If political opposition is suppressed, elections are unfair and political elites are blind to public opinion, the regime legitimacy can be in a deep crisis, leading to a scenario in which protests, both peaceful and violent, can be a commonplace. Objectively speaking, the case of Hong Kong, which will be examined in this book, is marked fortunately by the presence of political opposition and fair elections at the legislative and district levels, even though the political elites may be arguably turning a blind eye to public sentiments, especially in the protests from June to December 2019.

\textit{State Violence and Repression}

If a state responds to citizen actions, like rallies, petitions and protests, by hardline measures such as repression and putting dissidents into jail, the result is to generate more confrontations between citizens and police. State repression and violence are theoretically and practically intertwined. State repression can take the forms of police crackdown of protesters and dissidents, the infiltration of agents into the opposition to divide its leaders and members, the cancelation and rigging of elections and the arrest of protest leaders. An authoritarian regime calculates politically that its repressive tactics would unlikely bring about strong reactions from the opposition and dissidents, partly because of the weaknesses of the political opposition, and partly because the repressive state apparatuses, such as the police and military, can utilize coercion and force easily and effectively. Yet, in the era of globalization in which human rights activists and non-governmental organizations can cooperate across territorial boundaries and fight against authoritarian repression, they can gather collectively and constitute a strong resistance to state repressive tactics. As James Ron observes:

\textquote{Populations, situated outside of traditional state structures, are sometimes able to act successfully in global arenas and to substantially affect state behavior. To the extent that both a state and the population it targets are deeply embedded in the structures of the world polity, patterns of state repression will tend to be more bureaucratized, professionalized, and rationalized. Repressive states will cloak their activities in a mantle of}

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., pp. 325–326.
pseudo- legality that channels their techniques of repression into ways that appear, at least to the outside observer, to follow legitimate patterns of violence. Legitimate repression, above all, eschews methods such as disappearances, massacres, arbitrary executions, and the most obvious forms of torture. These methods are easily picked up by global monitoring agencies and have become so reviled that they become a significant liability to their practitioners.\(^{23}\)

State security forces, global auditors and targeted populations are enmeshed in a complex process of negotiations. In other words, the targeted populations can globalize state repression and seek protection from “illegitimate violence” while exposing themselves to state coercion.\(^{24}\) In short, state repression may not bring about the result that authoritarian regime wishes to see. Rather, by using repression, authoritarian regimes may have counterproductive results in which the targeted population can fight back more effectively with the assistance of global human rights organizations and external actors, thereby exacerbating an already legitimacy crisis that the authoritarian regimes encounter. The new methods of internationalizing the domestic conflicts between political dissidents and the authoritarian regime can “restrict the repressive state’s freedom of action.”\(^{25}\) Ron concludes that “as populations, states, and world polity agents negotiate the parameters of modern conflicts, they call into question traditional notions of state sovereignty.”\(^{26}\)

Ron’s insights on the counterproductive result of state repression, as we will discuss, have implications for the case of Hong Kong from June to December 2019. Some targeted protesters tended to fight back with the help from global human rights groups and, most importantly, the United States as an external factor that enacted the US Hong Kong Democracy and Human Rights Act. As a result, the already deepened crisis of legitimacy endured by the HKSAR government was exacerbated further as it was undermined severely by a democratic deficit. This democratic deficit prolongs the crisis of legitimacy of the Hong Kong administration, making the protests persist and occur sporadically on the anniversary dates in

\(^{23}\) James Ron, “Varying Methods of State Violence,” *International Organization*, vol. 51, no. 2 (Spring 1997), pp. 275–300.

\(^{24}\) James Ron, “Varying Methods of State Violence,” *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Spring, 1997), pp. 275–300. (p. 298).

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 298.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 299.
2020. By anniversary dates they refer to those signature dates in 2019 when the protesters clashed with the police seriously and fiercely. Yet, as Ron mentions, by “internationalizing” domestic conflicts, the protesters provoked external actors’ intervention, “state sovereignty” can be challenged because “populations, states and world polity agents” may “negotiate the parameters of modern conflicts”—a phenomenon that is applicable to Hong Kong where the PRC has remained highly sensitive to “external” intervention.

Christian Davenport observes that three aspects of political conflicts—conflict frequency, strategic variety and the deviance from cultural norms—can shape the degree of state repression.\(^{27}\) Most importantly, different regimes respond to domestic threats in varying ways.\(^{28}\) He found that “non-democratic governments” tend to increase political repression when they encounter more strategic conflicts and deviance from cultural norms. Moreover, “transitional regimes” tend to increase repression significantly in the face of the deviance from cultural norms, while “democratic regimes” followed “a similar pattern of threat perception and response to that identified within the transitional category.”\(^ {29}\) Democracies tend to tolerate some aspects of the behavior of political dissidents, notably their strategic conflicts and conflict frequency. Davenport concludes that “the repressive response of the regime is probably attributed to their low level of regulatory capacity: i.e., the capacity of the regime to monitor acts of political conflict and respond to these acts in an efficient manner.”\(^ {30}\) In other words, when “the culturally defined parameters of acceptable dissent had been violated, then censorship and political restrictions would be applied at relatively high rates.”\(^ {31}\) Regimes tend to stick to their “culturally defined parameters of acceptable dissent” beyond which political repression is bound to be increased. While “non-democratic” regimes show their sensitivity to all kinds of threats, the “transitional” and “democratic” regimes tend to apply sanctions on those threats that undermine the existing cultural norms.\(^ {32}\)

\(^{27}\) Christian Davenport, “Multi-Dimensional Threat Perception and State Repression: An Inquiry into Why States Apply Negative Sanctions,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (August 1995), pp. 683–713.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 707.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., pp. 707–708.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 708.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., pp. 708–709.
Other scholars have found that the effect of political dissent on state repression is a function of two strategic processes. Governments engage in “preventive repression,” such as the adoption of curfews and the prohibitions on assembly, to undermine the mobilization of political dissidents. Interestingly, “when authorities repress in expectation of dissent, most dissent will not occur”; nevertheless, in the absence of preventive repression, political dissidents who “are not tested by direct government intervention” may “self-censor in expectation of a repressive response.” As a result, “governments who did not engage in ex ante repression will be quite likely to do it ex post.” The dynamic interactions between political dissents and the government will be later examined in this book by using the Hong Kong case.

Organized Crime, Vandalism and Violence

Organized criminal violence is a hallmark of state-building processes in which a transition from war to peace often witnesses violent activities that involve former combatants and military personnel. These combatants and military officers may join either the state security apparatus or criminal organizations to gain access to resources and to protect themselves from being penalized. Some members of the security apparatus may continue to act as “informal powerbrokers, allowing impunity and violence to continue despite transitions to electoral democracy.” In some Latin American states, the transition from authoritarianism to democracy was characterized by the collaboration between some state actors and “criminal and extralegal actors in their search for higher levels of political legitimacy.” In other words, if state actors are involved in the participation and endorsement of criminal activities, the boundaries between legality and illegality

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33 Emily Hencken Ritter, “Preventing and Responding to Dissent: The Observational Challenges of Explaining Strategic Repression,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 110, Issue. 1, (Feb 2016): pp. 85–99.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Emily Hencken Ritter, “Preventing and Responding to Dissent: The Observational Challenges of Explaining Strategic Repression,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 110, no. 1 (February 2016), pp. 85–99.
37 Nicholas Barnes, “Criminal Politics: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Organized Crime, Politics, and Violence,” *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2017), pp. 967–987.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 970.
can be blurred. Political violence may be committed by not only criminal elements but also some state actors. This “organized violence” can become “important underlying mechanisms such as demand for looting, desire for political change, opportunity to mobilize, and the mechanisms that lead to claim making and resource extraction.” In short, the state-building processes are complex, involving explicitly criminal activities and the hidden collaboration between some criminal elements and state actors. Criminal elements may confront state security forces, assassinate politicians and judges and threaten bureaucrats. On the other hand, they may infiltrate political parties, state agencies and public security apparatuses, generating a complex but symbiotic relationship between organized crime and politics. The relationships between organized crime and politics can involve manipulation, confrontation, interdependence, mistrust, cooperation and conflicts.

While organized crime and the state are intertwined, organized crime often “maintains its autonomy” even when it is incorporated into the state apparatus through corruption and collaboration in electoral campaigns. Although violence between criminal organizations and the state is commonplace, it usually does not involve an all-out war for territorial hegemony, mainly because organized crime elements are content with their gains and do not want to “rock the boat” by confronting with the state directly and comprehensively through insurgency. The relations between organized crime and the state “are often fluid, shifting back and forth between these various arrangements over time,” with these arrangements being either short-lived or persistent for decades. Finally, because organized crime groups tend to carve out their own territories narrowly, they are quite different from informal criminal groupings, such as hooligans, riot crowds or looters. These insights have implications for Hong Kong, as will be discussed, because the protests in the HKSAR from June to December 2019 were punctuated by many informal groupings, including riot crowds, flash mobs and sudden looters, who were a far cry from the organized crime organizations that have vested interests in their businesses, such as nightclubs, bars, saunas and even restaurants where

40 Ibid., p. 971.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., pp. 972–973.
43 Ibid., p. 973.
44 Ibid., pp. 973–974.
45 Ibid., p. 973.
organized crime elements can earn their lucrative income and launder dirty money easily.

While organized crime and politics have been studied productively by scholars, the question of vandalism has been relatively neglected. “Urban vandalism” is defined as “deliberate damage of property” including the acts of wall painting, windows breaking and throwing stones in municipal transport. Vandalism as an individual act of undermining or destroying the properties of others can be regarded as criminal. If vandalism turns into an act of a group of like-minded persons, then it can be regarded as organized crime. As such, vandalism falls into the gray areas between organized crime and violence.

“Urban vandalism” is different from “body vandalism,” with the former focusing its target at properties and the latter attempting at manipulating “an incapacitated individual through the addition of markings, objects or substances, removal of property or hair, or a relocation of a body.” Urban vandalism may stem from individual or group behavior that damages properties for the sake of expressing their personal freedom and views, including political declaration that may ultimately aim at a regime. On the other hand, body vandalism tends to be committed by some young people who are alcoholic and who target at individuals whom they dislike. Both urban and body vandalism have one thing in common: the ultimate target is disliked or hated by the individuals or groups who perform the act of vandalism.

Some psychologists have found that vandalism is conducted by those people who have a sadistic tendency of finding pleasure through their vandal actions. In brief, vandalism is accompanied by sadism. Apart from sadism, people who commit vandalism are more likely to be hedonistic, to perceive themselves as personally capable to control the situation and enhance their efficacy, and to identify themselves with a group that unifies

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46 N. V. Pavlova, Y. G. Pavlov and K. V. Zlokazov, “Visual Perception of Urban Vandalism,” *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, vol. 131 (October 2018), pp. 121–122.

47 Heather Krieger, Angelo M. DiBello, and Clayton Neighbors, “An Introduction to Body Vandalism: What is this? Who does it? When does it happen?,” *Addictive Behaviors*, vol. 64 (2017), pp. 89–92.

48 Stefan Pfattheicher, Johannes Keller, and Goran Knezevic, “Destroying things for pleasure: On the relation of sadism and vandalism,” *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 140 (2019), pp. 52–56.
its members. Other social scientists have postulated that vandalism occurs more likely in lower socio-economic districts than higher ones. However, one anonymous writer remarked that the principal victims of vandalism are those “relatively poor families” and that the targets of vandalism are usually “semi-public, communal areas of local authority-administered buildings which are ‘out of sight of residents and passers-by,’ such as corridors and lifts in apartment buildings, public lavatories and shopping precincts.” In the case of Hong Kong, we will discuss whether vandalism tends to be committed by people who tend to be anti-governmental, sadistic, hedonistic, group-oriented and whether it is more likely to take place in lower-class districts and “semi-public” areas.

Street art, which refers to the drawing and painting on public or private properties, may be regarded as an expression of freedom and creativity by some people. However, street art can also be a kind of vandalism with the political objective of using words and slogans to discredit and delegitimize any regime. The protests in Hong Kong from June to December 2019 fully illustrated the utilization of street art by some protesters to discredit, delegitimize and criticize the post-colonial government, including the police force. The transformation of street art to urban vandalism in Hong Kong will also be examined later.

**Political Violence**

Political violence can be defined generally as the activities of a group or groups to run against the prevailing socio-cultural norms and to challenge the legitimacy of the state. Protest actions are “by definition un-institutionalized, disruptive forms of collective action” and “have long been unlawful, even if tolerated and semi-institutionalized.” Indeed,

49 V. L. Allen, “Toward an understanding of the hedonistic component of vandalism,” in Claude Levy-Leboyer, ed., *Vandalism, Behavior and Motivations* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 1984), pp. 77–90.

50 William Bates, “Caste, Class and Vandalism,” *Social Problems*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Spring 1962), pp. 349–353.

51 G. B. T., “Vandalism,” *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 19, no. 2 (April 1979), pp. 168–170. Note that the full name of G. B. T. is unclear.

52 Yasmine El Rashidi, “Art of Vandalism?,” *Index on Censorship*, vol. 40, no. 3 (October 2011), pp. 78–88.

53 Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.
some “unlawful” protests can be peaceful, meaning that the participants can use parade and marches to express their views, even though protests have not been approved by the police. Yet, once protests turn violent, the question of political violence is under the media spotlight, involving both protesters and police. Such political violence may include attacks on property, when damage or theft of property is the main goal; rioting, when unorganized disorder leads to damage to property; violent confrontation, when members of opposing political groups fight with one another; clashes with the police, when protesters interact violently with the police; violent attacks directed against persons, when one political group attacks another group, or members of the elite or the public, causing injuries or deaths; random violent attacks, when organized violence is directed against persons, regardless of their political or social identities; armed seizure of places or people, including armed trespassing, holdups and hijacking. It is worth noting that, in all these forms of action, the main objective is a *de facto* display of physical force.54

Political violence embodies “a heterogeneous repertoire of actions oriented at inflicting physical, psychological and symbolic damage to individuals and/or property with the intention of influencing various audiences for affecting or resisting political, social, and/or cultural change.”55 It is used by political actors across the ideological spectrum and includes actions such as attacks on property, bodily harm, the planting of explosive devices, shooting attacks, kidnappings, hostage-taking, stone-throwing, the seizure of aircraft or ships, the occupation of a parliament, assassinations and public self-immolation.56 However, political violence is also “culture-dependent,”57 meaning that all these forms of contentious politics may be called either terrorism or resistance “depending on the circumstances and who is doing the naming.”58 In a nutshell, it is politics that decides whether the acts of political violence are “terrorists” or “resistance.”

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54 Ibid., p. 4.
55 Ibid.
56 Lorenzo Bosi and Stefan Malthaner, “Political Violence,” in Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 439–440.
57 D. Rucht, “Movement Allies, Adversaries, and Third Parties” in D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule and H. Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 369.
58 Patricia Steinhoff and Gilda Zwerman, “Introduction to the Special Issue on Political Violence.” *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2008), pp. 213–220.
In the context of Hong Kong under the PRC sovereignty, who controls the naming of these acts belong to the political leaders. As this book will discuss, there has been a fierce power struggle between the ruling political elites in the HKSAR and the protesters. For the ruling elites, political violence has been committed by the “terrorists,” but it represents a “resistance” movement in the eyes of protesters.

Political violence is a broad term for contested actions and political events which involve the use of physical force. These events may be labeled as terrorism, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency, self-defense, retribution, security policing, national defense, national liberation, state-sponsored terrorism or even genocide, depending on the circumstances and on who controls the political power of naming. The term political violence is arguably neutral, allowing us to focus on the sequences of such violent activities, their content and context, and who are the powerful actors controlling the naming of these acts. In a sense, power struggle is embedded in the process of how political violence is tackled. The political sociology of violence helps us focus on “the naming of acts and the interpretation of their meaning” within the “messy, contested real-world contexts.”

It is important to note that political actors “not only shift back and forth between violent and non-violent forms of action, but also use them in various combinations.” In brief, violence is not an exceptional form of political action, but it has to be understood in the context of other non-violent and “routine” forms of political action. The decision of political actors to use violent means or not is heavily shaped by the groups’ objectives, strategies, identity orientations and their adaptative response to the changing circumstances, including the actions of their opponents and even allies. A hallmark of political violence is that the decision to adopt violent means is considered to be influenced by the fact that “groups are embedded in complex webs of contingent relationships and strategic interactions among a variety of actors—including state agents, rival groups, or counter-movements—all of whom shape the evolution of the conflict as

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., p. 213.
61 Bosi and Malthaner, “Political Violence,” in Porta and Diani, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements, pp. 439–440.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
they are linked by asymmetrical power balances.” These insights are, as will be discussed in this book, extremely useful for us to comprehend the dynamics of peaceful and violent protests in the HKSAR from June to December 2019.

Political violence can be situated in a broader context of social movement. The social movement perspective recognizes that violent interactions between protesters and the state “are embedded in the wider processes of political contentions that shape relations between actors and the trajectory of violent conflicts.” Violent action can be contextualized in three aspects. Firstly, it is one of several forms of confrontation within a wider repertoire of oppositional strategies. Secondly, militant and radical groups are embedded within the broader field of political actors involved in the conflicts. Thirdly, violent interactions are built into the wider processes of political contentions, involving the state agents and security apparatus. Such interactions are the outcomes of dynamic relations between the violent and non-violent actors on the one hand and the state actors on the other. Hence, violence becomes “de-exceptionalized and de-essentialized.” Last but not the least, political violence “does not constitute a single strategic form” and it has various forms and levels, “entailing transformations of political conflicts that are complicated as much as they are significant—hence a richness which the analysis must capture.”

The analyses above are useful for us to comprehend the complex interactional dynamics between violent and non-violent protesters on the one hand and the state actors, such as government leaders and the police, in the HKSAR from June to December 2019 on the other hand. The relations between violent and non-violent actors in Hong Kong have not been carefully studied and this book is going to fill in the crucial gap in the existing literature.

64 Ibid., pp. 441–442.
65 Ibid., p. 442.
66 Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou and Stefan Malthaner, “A Contentious Politics Approach to the Explanation of Radicalization,” in Lorenzo Bosi, ed., Dynamics of Political Violence A Process–Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), pp. 1–26.
67 Ibid., p. 2.
68 Ibid., p. 5.
Democratization and Violence

The literature on the relationships between democratization and violence can contribute to our deeper understanding of the dynamics of political violence. Violence is produced within a wider bargaining process over political change: protests mobilized by opponents to the ruling elites in power brings about public order policing; the ruling regime deploys special forces in coping with opposition protests; and political actors can manipulate local conflicts and utilize protests in the context of party formation and even national elections.\(^{69}\) In the theory of democratic transitions, “if violence-producing mechanisms are linked to bargaining, violence may decline rapidly once its roots are exposed and/or an agreement is formally or tacitly reached.”\(^{70}\) Political actors may make agreements with the regime by utilizing violence as a bargaining chip. If agreements can be reached, the perceptions of bargainers on the effects of violence on their political stance may also change.

From the perspective of rational choice, in an authoritarian state, the opportunity for collective political action and chances of success are low, and the costs of such action are high, thereby reducing the likelihood of protest and political challenges to the regime.\(^{71}\) In a democratic state, the opportunity for peaceful collective action and probability of success are higher than that for violent action.\(^{72}\) In between two types of regimes is the intermediate state, where “opportunities exist for protests and challenges to incumbents but the probability of success through peaceful means is low.”\(^{73}\) The incentives for violent tactics exist on the part of both political challengers and the regime incumbents. These observations will be useful for us to understand the case of the HKSAR, which can be regarded as “an intermediate state” that was arguably neither democratic nor authoritarian in 2019. But it has become more authoritarian since the promulgation of the National Security Law on June 30, 2020.

Four propositions were put forward on how different political actors may employ violence as an indispensable part of the bargaining process.\(^{74}\)

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\(^{69}\) Jacqueline M. Klopp and Elke Zuern, “The Politics of Violence in Democratization: Lessons from Kenya and South Africa,” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 39, no. 2 (January 2007), pp. 127–146.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., p. 129.

\(^{71}\) Ibid.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) Ibid.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., p. 130.
First, hardliners in a government may utilize violence to undermine the opposition actors and to derail any liberal reform. Softliners in the government may not support violence, but they can still benefit from violence during negotiations. Second, moderate opposition actors use protests to test the regime’s promises of liberalization and democratization, mobilizing both domestic and international support for reforms. If such opposition actions are peaceful but encounter state-sponsored violence, then the circumstances may strengthen the position of the opposition. Third, if there is a split in the regime between hardliners and softliners, any revelations of the use of violence by hardliners against opposition actors may strengthen the softliners’ position. The threat of any full-scale civil war may lead to a phenomenon that more political actors support the reformist position of softliners in the regime. Fourth, the radicals or hardliners in the opposition camp may use internal rivalries to fuel conflicts and to weaken the position of their political foes. In short, all political actors can calculate the costs and benefits of conflicts, which become the instruments of achieving their own interests. Once an agreement is reached between the opposition and the regime, incentives to use violence decline among actors. This explains how some “newly democratic institutions might emerge out of violence, producing bargaining processes that, sadly, often leave significant authoritarian and violent legacies.” All these bargaining calculations and considerations can be applied to our study of the case of Hong Kong, where the political opposition is fragmented and divided into hardliners (radicals) and moderates.

Resistant Citizenship and Violence

According to Charles Tilly, identities shape the politics of collective violence.76 Political actors rarely describe themselves as networks; instead, they use collective nouns such as workers, women, fighters, heroic protesters, to name just a few examples. Such political identities offer the collective answers to the question of who the protesters are. Tilly remarked that political identities assemble the crucial elements of separating the boundaries between a group from its enemy, sharing stories about the group’s attributes and delineating the social relations across and within the

75 Ibid., p. 142.
76 Charles Tilly, The Politics of Collective Violence, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
boundaries. Violent groups may identify themselves because of having a common enemy, sharing stories of victimization among themselves and defending their own boundaries at all costs.

In response to political identities, “governmental agents sort political identities into legitimate and illegitimate, recognized and unrecognized.” Democratic regimes tolerate interest groups like Greenpeace and Boy Scouts as legitimate political actors, while other authoritarian regimes may not tolerate non-governmental associations of any kind. For interest groups that speak for ethnic, religious and racial categories, they may claim to have a legitimate right to exist, but it is another matter for regimes to recognize these organizations as legitimate. As such, “political rights come into existence through struggles for recognition.” In the case of Hong Kong, what is politically recognized and legitimate will be discussed in this book, especially for the protest groups that were active from June to December 2019.

The rise of nationalism has been shaping the politics of recognition struggles. From the late eighteenth century onward, nationalism gained increasing importance as a political principle: a nation should ideally have its own independent state, and an independent state should have its own nation. Two versions of nationalism became prominent. A top-down version of nationalism has claimed that the existing rulers have the right to impose their preferred definitions of national culture on their subjects. But a bottom-up version has asserted “the right of distinct nations within heterogeneous states to acquire political independence.” The top-down nationalism is interacting with the bottom-up one. If rulers try to impose national cultures and obligations on their subjects, then distinct minorities are more likely to call for self-determination and independence. Because people have their political identities and organized networks of trust and solidarity, top-down nationalism can “wound minority self-esteem” and threaten their survival. Minorities and ethnic groups try to gain power by gaining political recognition as the representatives or spokespersons of their nations. After the Second World War, many large-scale violent conflicts stemmed from the claims of minorities and ethnic groups to have

77 Ibid., p. 88.
78 Ibid., pp. 88–89.
79 Ibid., pp. 88–89.
80 Ibid., pp. 90–91.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., p. 91.
their right of self-determination and independence.\textsuperscript{83} From the perspective of citizenship, these minorities and ethnic groups firmly believe that citizenship means the realization of their self-determination and call for independence.

Indeed, the denial of full citizenship rights to minority individuals and ethnic groups has triggered political violence in many parts of the world. The incumbent regimes have “felt compelled to resort to constitutional gymnastics to justify their political exclusion on the basis of citizenship.”\textsuperscript{84} To the minorities and many ethnic groups, the regimes in power can manipulate the political processes, hold the power of recognition and shape the meaning of citizenship.

From a bottom-up perspective, citizenship refers to the realization of the rights of the minorities and those ethnic groups whose rights are deprived by the regime in power. As such, protests emerge because of the citizenship claims from these minority groups. They may resort to resistant actions, using protests, petitions and rallies to make their voices heard. The radical elements may even resort to rebellion and uprising. Violence, to the minorities and ethnic groups that are politically suppressed, is a means for them to resist the repressive regime, to achieve their political ends of being recognized and to realize their right of self-determination and independence.

Political resistance can be both passive and active. Passively, citizen resistance to a regime may embrace mass boycott and mass strike. Actively, resistant citizenship entails assertive actions of opposing the regime and sees violence as strategic. Radical citizens, who see their resistance to the state actions as rightful, tend to use violence to achieve their political objective of exerting pressure on the government to make concessions. On the other hand, other radicals may see violence as an ultimate objective in which they find self-enjoyment. In response, the ruling regime must deploy the police and military to suppress violent resistance fighters.

In the context of Hong Kong, some radical protesters believe that they have the right of “self-determination,” a right that was denied by both Britain and China in 1982–1984, when the Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong took place, and when both countries equated self-determination with independence. As will be discussed by this book, a

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., pp. 91–92.

\textsuperscript{84}Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, “Citizenship, Political Violence, and Democratization in Africa,” \textit{Global Governance}, vol. 10, no. 4 (October–December 2004), pp. 403–409.
minority of radical protesters in the HKSAR appear to imagine that Hong Kong is their “nation,” but most protesters tend to fight for other political rights, notably their right to elect their Chief Executive through universal suffrage, rather than achieving any territorial “independence.”

Social Movement and Violence

Collective violence is a common feature in social movements. It involves social interactions with the characteristics of inflicting damages on persons and/or objects, gathering at least two perpetrators of damage and resulting from coordination among those people who commit such violent acts. From the perspective of social movement, violence can be understood in the broader context of political conflicts and social environment, including the relational dynamics that shape violent actions.

Violence represents an “escalation of action repertoires within protest cycles.” Charles Tilly’s concept of “repertoires of action” not only describes the forms of protests at a particular time and place but also entails a learning process from previous waves of protests so that forms of actions can be adapted across nations. There can be clusters of protest activities, which are called “protest cycles” with a sharp peak and then decline. The “repertoires of action” develop during the intense interactions between protesters and the law-enforcement agents within a protest cycle. The analysis of protest cycles is useful for us to understand political violence, which is “frequently one of the outcomes of a cycle of protests.” The “repertoires of action” are regarded as “a relational dynamic, developing from the interactions between challengers and elites.”

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85 For an argument that nationalism in Hong Kong is a “myth,” see Jeff Hai-chi Loo, “The Myth of ‘Hong Kong Nationalism,’” Asian Education and Development Studies, https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-10-2018-0161, forthcoming 2020.
86 Ibid., p. 22.
87 Bosi and Malthaner, “Political Violence,” in The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements, p. 442.
88 Donatella della Porta, “Research on Social Movements and Political Violence,” Qualitative Sociology, vol 31 (2008), pp. 221–230.
89 Ibid., p. 222.
90 Ibid.
91 Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978).
Some sociologists have utilized the concept of “political opportunity” to comprehend the dynamics of social movement and violence.\(^{92}\) Political opportunities include regime shifts, periods of political instability and changes in the composition of political elites that may provide an opening for social movements. Furthermore, “a political environment that was initially more open to social movements may close as the state tries to reassert control over protest, or as new groups come to power that are more hostile to the demands of social movements.”\(^{93}\)

Encounters between social movements and the state apparatuses can produce violence easily. The conditions that favor the escalation of violence in the left-wing or right-wing movements often stimulate radical counter-movements, leading to violent confrontations among these groups.\(^{94}\) Italy was a case in point as student activists clashed with neo-Fascists in the 1970s while conflicts erupted among young members of right-wing and left-wing underground groups who fired at each other right in front of some high schools.\(^{95}\) Radical groups also used terror against civil rights activists in the United States, Northern Ireland and Spain. In response to violence, the policing of protests derives from several characteristics of the police forces, including their structures, culture, training and the degree of professionalization. These elements influence police strategies and their knowledge about their changing environment, thereby affecting their assessment and perception of the rights of protesters. Police strategies depend upon their political choices, which must be studied in the changing political opportunity structure.\(^{96}\)

From an organizational perspective, resource mobilization plays a key role in shaping the politics of social movement and violence. Underground organizations can evolve among themselves and then break away from the larger, non-violent, social movement organizations.\(^{97}\) Yet, political violence can be symbolic: “the cultural and emotional effects that it produces

\(^{92}\)Donatella Della Porta, “Research on Social Movements and Political Violence,” *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 31 (2008), pp. 223–224.  
\(^{93}\)Ibid.  
\(^{94}\)Ibid.  
\(^{95}\)Donatella Della Porta, *D. Social Movements, Political violence and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).  
\(^{96}\)Donatella Della Porta, “Research on Social Movements and Political Violence,” *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 31 (2008), pp. 223–224.  
\(^{97}\)Ibid., pp. 225–226.
are more important than the material damage.” Governmental policies are influenced by the “symbolic struggles” between a “law-and-order” and a “civil rights” coalition. In Italy, Germany, Northern Ireland and the Basque region in the 1970s, different political actors coalesced to form two opposing camps: “a law and order coalition asking for tough measures against protesters, and a civil rights coalition asking for more democracy.” Both used the mass media to shape public opinion about the legitimate forms of protest and acceptable forms of policing, affecting the social movement and state strategies. In general, the emergence of protests increased public concern about law and order, prompting the conservative elites to support and call for hardline tactics, but simultaneously the demands for a more liberal approach to the rights of citizens became widespread in the society. The development of political violence was seen as a phenomenon that polarized the debate over democratization, resulting in “a weakening of the civil rights coalition.” The ideas used by different groups to justify their actions are often the “frames” which identify protagonists and antagonists and which mobilize public support for their chosen course of action. They develop their “explanatory consistency and emotional power through narratives or stories that connect the group’s collective past to their present situation.”

The Art of Peaceful Protests

Protests can be peaceful and cultural. According to T. V. Reed, there are three elements in the cultural study of social movements: movements in culture, movement cultures and culture in movements. Movements in culture mean “the processes by which movements emerge from, and return to, broad cultural contexts.” Movement cultures refer to “the

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98 Donatella Della Porta, D. Social Movements, Political Violence and the State (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
99 Donatella Della Porta, “Research on Social Movements and Political Violence,” Qualitative Sociology, vol. 31 (2008), pp. 225–226.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 T.V. Reed, The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 296.
105 Ibid.
general meaning-making patterns that develop among participants in the subculture formed by a given movement.”\textsuperscript{106} Culture in movements includes “those specific aesthetic-cultural artifacts (songs, poems, murals, and so forth) deployed within the shifting orbit of a movement culture.”\textsuperscript{107}

The cultural dimension of protests is characterized by “three-stage dialectical process.”\textsuperscript{108} First, movements emerge out of a cultural environment in which they develop new cultural features, which are then channeled back into the wider culture. For example, the act of challenging conventional politics may bring about possibilities for the masses to develop a new culture of questioning whether any government action or policy is justifiable and good for public interest. Second, this reviewing process becomes more intensive and extensive, developing into a new movement culture in which citizens are imbued with a novel pattern of questioning the authorities. Third, over the course of developing movement cultures, citizens begin to use artifacts, artworks, creative songs and poems to express their views. These new elements of the movement culture can be diffused back into the wider culture.\textsuperscript{109}

Reed’s insights are, as this book will show, extremely enlightening in the case study of Hong Kong. During the Occupy Central Movement in the HKSAR from September to December 2014, when some democrats pushed for the direct election of the Chief Executive through universal suffrage and the direct election of the entire Legislative Council (LegCo), numerous artworks were displayed and showed not only tremendous creativity on the part of the participants, but also the freedom of expression, of thought, and of speech in the entire movement.\textsuperscript{110} These artworks, including posters, stickers and paintings, developed into a new movement culture, stimulating the citizens and participants to think about political events critically and innovatively. Some participants debated over political issues on the streets, while others formed discussion groups to examine

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., pp. 296–297.
\textsuperscript{110} As early as 2012, when the Hong Kong Chief Executive election was held, some netizens began to show their political creativity in their political discourse and opposition to the authorities. See Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo, “Political Comics and Freedom of Expression: The 2012 Chief Executive Election in Hong Kong,” in C. C. Leung and Sonny Lo, eds., Creativity and Culture in Contemporary Greater China: The Role of Governments, Individuals and Groups (Santa Monica, Los Angeles: Bridge21 Publications, 2014).
the strategies of and solutions to the social and political movement. Culturally speaking, the Occupy Central Movement in the HKSAR from September to December 2014 had long-term ramifications for Hong Kong’s political development, because it fully utilized the existing political space in the territory to generate a new movement culture with the special features of arousing the political awareness of citizens and stimulating to think about a whole range of issues, including politics, political reform, Hong Kong’s relations with mainland China, and their own social, cultural and political identities. The Occupy Central Movement in the HKSAR challenged the mainstream culture of maintaining the status quo and seeing the rule of law as “sacred.” As law professor Benny Tai, one of the three leaders of the movement, remarked, the Occupy Central Movement did “violate the law to achieve justice.”111 The anti-extradition, anti-police and anti-authoritarianism movement in Hong Kong from June to December 2019 was, as this book will elaborate, characterized by the proliferation of artworks and artifacts that challenged the authorities in both the HKSAR and the central government in Beijing. If Reed has noted that the “diffusion of movement culture back into mainstream culture can at times be the most important impact a given movement may have,”112 then the case study of Hong Kong is prominent in illustrating this kind of diffusion.

Other observations made by Reed are also significant for us to study the politics of peaceful protests. He identifies different “functions of cultural forms” within movements: namely encouraging individuals to feel the strength of a group through singing in mass rallies; empowering an individual to feel deeply his or her commitment in the movement; informing participants of the values, ideas and tactics of the movement; educating outsiders about the movement’s values and ideas; achieving the goals of the movement; focusing on the historical aspects of the movement; transforming the group’s emotions and attentions; challenging dominant ideas and values; and providing pleasure, self-satisfaction and respite from the rigors of the movement.113

111 “Benny Tai must be deprived of his teaching post who breaks the law and violates,” Ta Kung Pao, April 10, 2018, in http://www.takungpao.com.hk/p1/2018/0410/157608.html, access date: March 14, 2020.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid., pp. 299–300.
The Relevance of Totalitarianism

Political scientists often see regime types as a crucial factor shaping violence, including both the state violence and the violent resistance from the dissidents. In a totalitarian political system, the ruling elites are characterized by the utilization of personality cult, the mobilization of public support through propaganda, the suppression of political dissent and the imposition of ideological control. As Hannah Arendt observed, a paradox of totalitarian regime is that “the possession of all instruments of governmental power and violence in one country is not an unmixed blessing for a totalitarian movement.”\(^{114}\) She elaborated:

Power means a direct confrontation with reality, and totalitarianism in power is constantly concerned with overcoming this challenge. Propaganda and organization no longer suffice to assert that the impossible is possible, that the incredible is true, that an insane consistency rules the world; the chief psychological support of totalitarian fiction—the active resentment of the status quo, which the masses refused to accept as the only possible world—is no longer there; every bit of factual information that leaks through the iron curtain, set up against the ever-threatening flood of reality from the other, non-totalitarian side, is a greater menace to totalitarian domination than counterpropaganda has been to totalitarian movements. Totalitarianism in power uses the state administration for its long-range goal of world conquest and for the direction of the branches of the movement; it establishes the secret police as the executors and guardians of its domestic experiment in constantly transforming reality into fiction; and it finally erects concentration camps as special laboratories to carry through its experiment in total domination.\(^{115}\)

Arendt argued that the principle of authority “is in all important respects diametrically opposed to that of totalitarian domination,” which aimed at “abolishing freedom, even at eliminating human spontaneity in general, and by no means a restriction of freedom no matter how tyrannical.”\(^{116}\) The most powerful leader had an “absolute monopoly of power and authority” over all his subordinates.\(^ {117}\) Arendt contended that

\(^{114}\)Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt: Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 391.

\(^{115}\)Ibid., p. 404.

\(^ {116}\)Ibid.

\(^ {117}\)Ibid.
totalitarianism was not characterized by the rule of a clique or a gang, but by the dictator’s “complete independence” from all inferiors and his ability to “make swift and surprising changes in policy.”\textsuperscript{118} The body politic of the totalitarian state is “shock-proof because of its shapelessness.”\textsuperscript{119} Furthermore, the “fanaticism of the elite cadres” is “absolutely essential” for the functioning of the totalitarian movement.\textsuperscript{120} This fanatic mentality pervades the entire population, leading to the constant removal, demotion and promotion of elites and masses on the basis of political loyalty.\textsuperscript{121} Totalitarian rulers aspire to conquer the world, as with Adolf Hitler. They “reckon victories and defeats in terms of centuries or millennia” and believe that “the global interests always overrule the local interests of their own territory.”\textsuperscript{122}

Arendt delineated the power base of totalitarian rulers. The entire population is organized as his supporters and sympathizers, who are checked by a “super-party.”\textsuperscript{123} She wrote:

\begin{quote}
Multiplication of offices, duplication of functions, and adaptation of the party-sympathizer relationship to the new conditions mean simply that the peculiar onion-like structure of the movement, in which every layer was the front of the next more militant formation, is retained. The state machine is transformed into a front organization of sympathizing bureaucrats whose function in domestic affairs is to spread confidence among the masses of merely coordinated citizens and whose foreign affairs consist in fooling the outside, nontotalitarian world. The Leader, in his dual capacity as chief of the state and leader of the movement, again combines in his person the acme of militant ruthlessness and confidence inspiring normality.\textsuperscript{124}
\end{quote}

To build up his empire, the totalitarian dictator squeezes the local economic resources for the sake of achieving his aggressive territorial expansion.\textsuperscript{125} Totalitarian dictators, to Arendt, are idealistic, self-interested and see power as lying “exclusively in the force produced through

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] Ibid., pp. 406–407.
\item[119] Ibid., pp. 408–409.
\item[120] Ibid.
\item[121] Ibid., p. 409.
\item[122] Ibid., p. 411.
\item[123] Ibid.
\item[124] Ibid., pp. 412–413.
\item[125] Ibid., pp. 414–415.
\end{footnotes}
organization.” As such, the totalitarian organization and police are efficient, enforcing their power ruthlessly, making politics unpredictable and achieving the dictator’s goals and ambitions. The totalitarian political system is marked by a mixture of the ruling party and the state. Arendt wrote: “The goal of one-party systems is not only to seize the government administration but, by filling all offices with party members, to achieve a complete amalgamation of state and party, so that after the seizure of power the party becomes a kind of propaganda organization for the government.” The ruling party suppresses all other parties and opposition forces, utilizing the army to perpetuate its governance. Arendt went so far as to maintain that “the power of the party rests on a monopoly guaranteed by the state and the party no longer possesses its own power center.” Totalitarian rulers deal with non-totalitarian governments in a way like how they tackle domestic politics and opposition forces. They present “a semblance of normality and common sense to the normal outside world.” Domestically, totalitarian dictators rely on the secret police as the sole organ of power, while the military forces are trained to “fight a foreign aggressor” and to become “a dubious instrument for civil-war purposes.”

Some recent studies of China have argued the PRC under Xi Jinping since his rapid rise to political power in 2012 has transformed the mainland Chinese state from authoritarianism to the path of neo-totalitarianism. David Shambaugh wrote in 2016 that China would perhaps lurch back to “neo-totalitarianism,” partly because its conservative leaders might see “hard authoritarianism” as being insufficient to deliver the necessary reforms for the maintenance of social stability and partly because they would close the PRC’s door to the outside world. Shambaugh predicted that citizens would resist such a move as China has already been integrated into the global economy. Jean-Philippe Beja has argued in 2019 that China has been mixing state capitalism with neo-totalitarianism in its publicity of the China model of development, that it has been cracking down

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126 Ibid., pp. 417–418.
127 Ibid., pp. 418–419.
128 Ibid., p. 419.
129 Ibid., p. 419.
130 Ibid., pp. 419–420.
131 Ibid., p. 420.
132 David Shambaugh, “Contemplating China’s Future,” The Washington Quarterly, vol. 39, no. 3 (Fall 2016), pp. 121–130, especially pp. 126–127.
on the labor groups and non-governmental organizations that were unleashed in the Hu Jintao era, that the two-term limit for the president was relaxed in spring 2018, and that President Xi has been deepening his anti-corruption campaign and tightening his personal control over the entire political system. The new “Chinese fascist” regime, according to Beja, has elevated the importance of party dictatorship, the top leader’s personality cult, the semi-autonomous market economy, the exaltation of nationalism, the emphasis on the heritage of the empire—characteristics that showed commonalities with Italy under Mussolini.

Objectively speaking, the PRC under President Xi Jinping has been gradually drifting from hard authoritarianism to neo-totalitarianism, as predicted by Shambaugh, but its economy remains state capitalist, as mentioned by Beja. The most prominent features of the PRC’s neo-totalitarianism include its personality cult of the top helmsman, the suppression of the civil society, the dominance of police forces, the mixture of the ideology of Marxism and Confucianism, and the omnipresence of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the mainland’s society, economy and politics. Xiaoguang Kang elaborated the hallmarks of China’s “neo-totalitarianism” in detail:

In the economic realm, the neo-totalitarian regime is associated with “state capitalism.” In the political realm, this neo-totalitarian regime perseveres in Leninism, centralized political power, a unified party-state system, and an unchecked government. Ideologically, China’s neo-totalitarianism adheres to Marxism and, more importantly, depends on Confucian political cultures as well as nationalism for its political legitimacy. In the social realm, China’s neo-totalitarian regime constrains the people’s freedom of speech, assembly, and association and regulates social organizations via the governing system of administrative absorption of society. Finally, China’s neo-totalitarianism maintains its foreign policies of opening up the country and embracing free trade.

133 Jean-Philippe Beja, “Xi Jinping’s China: On the Road to Neo-totalitarianism,” Social Research: An International Quarterly, vol. 86, no. 1 (Spring 2019), pp. 203–230.
134 Ibid., p. 226.
135 For the mixture between Marxism and Confucianism, see Xiaoguang Kang, “Moving Toward Neo-Totalitarianism: A Political-Sociological Analysis of the Evolution of the Administrative Absorption of Society in China,” Nonprofit Policy Forum (September 2018), in https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/npf.2018.9.issue-1/npf-2017-0026/npf-2017-0026.pdf, access date: March 15, 2020.
136 Ibid.
As a mainland scholar, Kang was sharp in identifying the gradual transformations of the PRC regime. Originally, in the presidency of the Hu Jintao era, civil society groups emerged and later played a crucial role in forming a partnership with the state in the rescue efforts during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. However, with the inception of the Xi Jinping era, civil society groups were increasingly brought under the CCP’s legal framework and political control. On the other hand, “state capitalism” persists and therefore the “Chinese fascist” regime as mentioned by Beja is generally accurate in capturing the political metamorphosis of China from the Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping era.

In the context of Hong Kong, as this book will argue, the drift from hard authoritarianism to neo-totalitarianism had corresponding impacts on Beijing’s policy toward the HKSAR. The central government has since 2012 been adopting a far more hardline policy toward the growth of Hong Kong’s civil society, which coincidentally has surged by leaps and bounds through the mobilization of the anti-national education campaign in 2012, the launching of the 2014 Occupy Central Movement, the eruption of the Mongkok riot in early 2016, the emergence of provocative oath-taking behavior of two legislators-elect (Yau Wai-ching and Baggio Leung) in late 2016, and the occurrence of the anti-extradition, anti-police and anti-authoritarianism movement from June to December 2019. All these movements in Hong Kong reinforced the PRC’s perception of the HKSAR as a politically and practically “subversive” territory whose politics and civil society must be controlled and tamed. In Hong Kong, a pluralistic perception of the civil society persists, meaning that interest groups’ existence is natural and conducive to social divert and political checks and balances. This pluralist perspective clashes with the neo-totalitarian vision of civil society, which to the totalitarian leaders must be curbed, tamed and crushed. As such, there are two competing visions of civil society between the Hong Kong and the PRC. The PRC transformation from hard authoritarianism to neo-totalitarianism has arguably brought about a process of reverse democratization and increased authoritarianism in the HKSAR.

137 Ibid.
138 Jeff Loo, “A Localist’s critique of Hong Kong’s political development: Political decay, legitimacy crisis and reverse democratization,” Asian Education and Development Studies, vol. 7, no. 1 (2018), pp. 76–88.
government and its police apparatus adopted an increasingly hardline policy toward the protests from June to December 2019. The endurance of protests in the HKSAR can reflect the failure of mainland China’s united from work in the HKSAR.139

The Psychology of Fear and Mass Movement

Public fear can be caused and exacerbated by news and popular culture, leading to mass actions to participate in social and political movements. David Altheide has reminded us that messages about fear are repetitious, stereotypical of outside “threats” and especially suspect and “evil others.” These messages also resonate moral panics, with the implication that action must be taken to not only defeat a specific enemy, but to also save civilization. Since so much is at stake, it follows that drastic measures must be taken. … In addition to propaganda effects, the constant use of fear pervades crises and normal times: it becomes part of the taken-for-granted word of “how things are,” and one consequence is that it begins to influence how we perceive and talk about everyday life, including mundane as well as significant events.140

Mass media can stimulate public fear, shape public agenda and influence the degree of public fear. The ways in which issues and policies are described, packaged and presented can shape public opinion. In short, the politics of public fear can be triggered by news media that frame the “problems” concerned.141 Public fear can also be presented and exaggerated in the news media as “a feature of entertainment.”142 The most important consequence of the discourse of fear is “to promote a sense of disorder and a belief that ‘things are out of control.’”143 If things are really getting out of control, then the conditions are favorable to mass movements that represent public attempts at stopping, delaying or removing a controversial government policy.

139 For China’s new united front work in Hong Kong, see Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo, Steven Chung-fun Hung, and Jeff Hai-chi Loo, China’s New United Front Work in Hong Kong: Penetrative Politics and Its Implications (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
140 David L. Altheide, “Notes Towards A Politics of Fear,” Journal for Crime, Conflict and the Media, vol. 1, no. 1, (2003) pp. 37–54.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., p. 38.
143 Ibid., pp. 38–39.
The politics of fear may be shaped by cultures and values, policies and issues. For example, terrorist attacks may trigger public fear and discourse of terrorism. If news reports and advertisements connect drug use with terrorism, they may shift “drugs” from criminal nature to the “unpatriotic” act of terrorism. Numerous “crises” and public fears involving crime, violence and uncertainty were important for the public definitions of the situation after attack of terrorists in New York on September 11, 2001. In response to the politics of fear, politicians had to make a choice. Many of them dared not stand up against the politics of fear after the September 11 attack as they could be labeled as “unpatriotic.” Most citizens sought “protection within the symbolic order of the politics of fear.” After the attack, fear was perceived as “crime and terrorism,” while police and military forces were viewed as “protectors.” The politics of fear in the United States led to the need for intensive public surveillance with the use of video cameras scanning public places for all suspicious activities. As Altheide concludes: “The staple of the politics of fear—crime—is now linked with terrorism, and victimization.”

In the case of Hong Kong’s protests from June to December 2019, the issue of extradition was portrayed by the mass media as an attempt by the government to send the people of Hong Kong back to mainland China, namely sung zhong in Cantonese. The public fear of seeing some residents to be sent to the mainland was widely reported by the mass media, backed up by public opinion polls. As a result, the politics of fear generated a huge social and political movement against the extradition bill, as this book will analyze. In short, the psychology of public fear can stimulate mass movements against a regime.

**Populism and Violence**

In the political science literature, populism has at least four perspectives, including Marxist, ideational, political-strategic and socio-cultural, each with its connections with peaceful and violent protests. Populism can be defined as movements that appeal to public opinion against elitist rule. Its

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144 Ibid., p. 45.
145 Ibid., p. 48.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., pp. 52–53.
four perspectives have unique characteristics. First, the Marxist dimension defines populism in terms of class struggle, which highlights the significance of market conditions, economic production and social contradictions. The developmental conditions of a state shape the unorganized masses politically, leading to some elites taking a leadership role.\textsuperscript{149} Populism is a response of the subordinate classes to the exploitation of the dominant capitalist class and elites.\textsuperscript{150} The populist political parties, from the Marxist perspective, concentrate on the development of a mass-elite class coalition that could promote socio-economic development at the peripheral regions \textit{vis-à-vis} an exploitative center. In short, populism is defined by Marxists as a political movement that cultivates a close mass-elite and class linkage to address the problem of socio-economic inequality.

Second, the ideational perspective has insisted that populism is an ideology concerned about power structure of society. Populism is defined here as “an ideology that considers the split of society,” demonstrating the clashes between the masses and dominant ruling elites.\textsuperscript{151} Populism is also a discourse focusing on three major concepts, namely “the people or masses,” “democracy” and “sovereignty.”\textsuperscript{152} It is also a phenomenon in which appeals are made to mobilize the masses against the dominant establishment who monopolize ideas and values in the society. This elite monopoly over ideas and values may alienate some citizens in a society as they are relatively powerless.\textsuperscript{153} The masses may take actions against the ruling elites through peaceful or even violent protests to assert the popular sovereignty, especially when populists see politics as an immediate

\textsuperscript{149} Torcuato S. Di Tella, “Populism and Reform in Latin America.” in Claudio Veliz, ed., \textit{Obstacles to Change in Latin America} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 47–74. Also see Alistair Hennessy, “Latin America,” in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner eds., \textit{Populism and Its Meaning and National Characteristics} (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 28–61.
\textsuperscript{150} Anibal Quijano, “Tendencies in Peruvian Development in Class Structure,” in James Petras and Maurice Zetlin, eds., \textit{Latin America: Reform or Revolution} (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1968), pp. 289–328.
\textsuperscript{151} Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” \textit{Government and Opposition}, vol. 39, no. 4 (2004), pp. 542–563.
\textsuperscript{152} Koen Abets and Stefan Rummens, “Populism versus Democracy,” \textit{Political Studies}, vol. 55 (2007), pp. 405–424.
\textsuperscript{153} Andreas Schedler, “Anti-Political-Establishment Parties,” \textit{Party Politics}, vol. 2, no. 3 (1996), pp. 291–312.
expression to protect the interest of the general public. Populists favor direct forms of democracy to replace the current political and institutional arrangements that are manipulated and dominated by the ruling elites. They also see public opinion as of paramount importance in shaping government policies. Populists tend to define the people as “homogenous,” “unified” and “collective” group.

Third, populism can be a political strategy for politicians to win the hearts and minds of the people. These strategies have its national and regional concerns. Populism can be a strategy for charismatic political leaders to link themselves with the masses to obtain enough support during elections. It can also be an electoral strategy used by populist politicians to legitimize their actions in the legislature. Populism can be utilized by personalistic leaders to mobilize supporters against dominant elites. It can be a means by which different factions deal with their power struggles. In brief, political mobilization is often utilized by charismatic leaders for achieving their political objectives, including the need to bolster their legitimacy, to engage in factional and power struggle, and to win the hearts and minds of the masses against their political foes.

Fourth, populism can be understood in terms of social and cultural context. Populism can be defined as not only a “particular form of political relationship between leaders and a social basis” but also a phenomenon deeply influenced by social, cultural and historical factors. In other words, populism is shaped by the social and cultural background of a

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154 Margaret Canovan, “Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy,” in Yves Mény and Yves Surel, eds., Democracies and the Populist Challenge (London: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 25–40.

155 Koen Abets and Stefan Rummens, “Populism versus Democracy,” Political Studies, vol. 55 (2007), pp. 408–409.

156 Danielle Resnick, “Varieties of African Populism in Comparative Perspective,” in Carlos De la Torre, ed., The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

157 Rene Antonio Mayorga, “Outsiders and Neo-populism: The Road to Plebiscitarian Democracy,” in S. Mainwaring, A. M. Bejarano, and E. P. Leongómez, eds., The Crisis of Democratic Representation in the Andes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

158 Kenneth M. Roberts, “Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organization in Latin America,” Comparative Politics, vol. 38, no. 2, (2006), pp. 127–148.

159 Takis S. Pappas, “Populism Emergent: A Framework for Analyzing Its Contexts, Mechanics, and Outcomes,” EUI Working Paper RSCAS, no. 1 (Florence: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2012).

160 Pierre Ostiguy, “Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach,” in Ostiguy Ochoa, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Populism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 73–97.
society, where ideologies are complex and cannot be simply divided into left and right. Hence, we must understand the existing ideologies in the society.\textsuperscript{161}

In the case of Hong Kong, these four perspectives as outlined above are useful for us to comprehend the dynamics of the protests from June to December 2019. The Marxist perspective helps us understand the protests from the vantage point of class exploitation and class dominance in the capitalistic society of Hong Kong. The ideational perspective highlights the values and ideas of the populists, who exist not just in the pro-democracy camp but also in the pro-government side. Strategically, populism can be a tool of political mobilization by politicians to achieve their objectives and ambitions. Most importantly, populism can shape how protesters strategize among themselves, choosing peaceful protests or violent means to make their demands heard. It is the strategic perspective on populism that can contribute to our deeper understanding of the Hong Kong case. Socially and culturally, the protests in Hong Kong can be regarded as populist movement reflecting the conflict-ridden values in the society that interacts with the PRC.

\textit{Political Symbolism}

Symbols exist independently of human beings and may “transmit meanings from person to person despite vast distances of space and time.”\textsuperscript{162} While symbols depend on human interpretations to shape their meanings, they do have some degree of autonomy from the social and psychological interpretations by human communities.\textsuperscript{163} Lowell Dittmer asserts that the study of political symbolism can help us understand political culture. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
Political symbolism as the most promising unit of analysis for studies of political culture than it is to define the term. Symbolism is one of the essential identifying characteristics of mankind, and its study is of ancient provenance: symbols have been studied from so many different perspectives and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{161}Gary Pollock, Tom Brock and Mark Ellison, “Populism, Ideology and Contradiction: Mapping Young People’s Political Views,” \textit{The Sociological Review}, vol. 63, no. 2 (2015), pp. 141–166.

\textsuperscript{162}Lowell Dittmer, “Political Culture and Political Symbolism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis,” \textit{World Politics}, vol. 29, no. 4 (July 1977), pp. 552–583.

\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., p. 557.
for so many different purposes that the term has become even “softer” and more ambiguous than the notion of political culture. It is difficult to define the term either synthetically (that is, by distinguishing it from related concepts) or analytically (that is, by specifying its characteristics). In synthetic definitions, symbols tend to merge with “language” on the one hand and with the substantive “reality” that language represents on the other.164

There are many symbols, ranging from public to private, religious to artistic, logical to linguistic and tangible to intangible. All these symbols are used to express, communicate and represent “logical relationships, intangible cosmic forces, and repressed drives and feelings.”165

Dittmer’s emphasis on political symbolism can be applied to the case of Hong Kong’s protests from June to December 2019. As this book will examine, political symbols proliferated in this period, showing how participants acted in a way that represented symbols with tremendous meaning and implications.

Anarchism and Uncivil Society

In the minds of some young radical activists, anarchism refers to “a decentralized organizational structure, based on affinity groups that work together on an ad hoc basis, and decision-making by consensus.”166 Anti-globalization radicals believe that anarchism also means “egalitarianism; opposition to all hierarchies; suspicion of authority, especially that of the state; and commitment to living according to one’s values.”167 Young radical activists, who regard themselves as anarchists, are likely to be hostile to capitalism, multinational corporations and dictatorship. Many of them envision a stateless society based on egalitarianism and anti-authoritarianism.168

Anarchists share some values with socialists. They share a critique of the capitalist society, despise its exploitative nature and commit to achieving egalitarianism. However, anarchists are hostile to the state and tend to adopt a moral perspective to see social change. On the contrary, socialists

164 Ibid.
165 Ibid., p. 559.
166 Barbara Epstein, “Anarchism and the anti-globalization movement,” Monthly Review, vol. 53, no. 4, (September 2001), pp. 1–14.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid., pp. 2–4.
tend to be reform-minded, hoping for a transition to socialism and believing in better planning and strategy.\textsuperscript{169} Barbara Epstein has made the following observations:

There are also things that Marxists could learn from the anti-globalist activists. Their anarchism combines both ideology and imagination, expressing its fundamentally moral perspective through actions that are intended to make power visible (in your face) while undermining it. Historically, anarchism has often provided a too-often ignored moral compass for the left. Today, anarchism is attracting young activists, while Marxist socialism is not, or at least not, in the same numbers.\textsuperscript{170}

Anarchists do not see the working class as the agents of political change. Rather they see violent action as necessary to express themselves. It is important to note that some anarchists in the United States during the Vietnam War even went so far as to see attempts at damaging missiles as “part of non-violent direct action,” while “destruction of property can be part of non-violent politics.”\textsuperscript{171}

Little research has connected the action of anarchists with the concept of “uncivil society,” which refers to the “dark side” of civil society where groups resorted to political activism and protests to challenge the state.\textsuperscript{172} These groups may be excluded from the civil society and are determined to take actions to confront the state. Here, anarchists may be one of the interest groups excluded from the mainstream civil society. Carlo Ruzza has alerted us to the fact that “uncivil” society groups can include extremist organizations from both the left and the right.\textsuperscript{173} These “uncivil” society organizations can be seen as an alternative type of political participation, articulating anti-political sentiments and displaying the features of racism, nationalism, populism, biological essentialism and territorial or cultural exclusionism.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., pp. 3–4.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., pp. 13–14.
\textsuperscript{172} Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde, eds., \textit{Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe} (London: Routledge, 2012).
\textsuperscript{173} Carlo Ruzza, “Populism and Euroscepticism: Towards uncivil society?,” \textit{Policy and Society}, vol. 28, no. 1 (2009), pp. 87–98.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
The combined concepts of anarchism and uncivil society can be borrowed for us to understand the politics of protests in the HKSAR from June to December 2019. Specifically, some groups tended to exhibit anarchist features, utilizing violence to challenge the post-colonial state, especially the police which to them represented both the Hong Kong administration and Beijing. Moreover, this tendency of anarchist groups utilizing violence is an indispensable part of the “uncivil society.” Violent anarchists have traditionally been excluded from the mainstream civil society of Hong Kong. As this book will explore, some of the violent groups were not necessarily anarchist, but localist extremist to the extent of seeing violence as an ultimate objective. That was why the Hong Kong police also referred to these extremist groups as “home-grown” or “localist terrorists.”

**The Politics of Insurgency**

The literature on insurgency can also be used for us to develop a comprehensive framework of understanding the politics of violent protests. Insurgency can be defined as an anti-government uprising launched by rebellious activists who are determined to delegitimize and even overthrow the existing leaders and regime. The typical supporters can be young men who use violence and disorder to enrich themselves, while challenging the economies and political system of the corrupt states where patron-client relations are serious, and where public maladministration pervades the society. Many young people believe that possessing weapons and supporting a local strongman can offer the chance for them to improve the socio-economic predicament. Youths who join the insurgency may have various grievances and they tend to see conflicts as inevitable and beneficial to their self-interests. They hate the regime and its political leaders, who in their minds are corrupt, power-hungry and interested in only personal gains. When public order of a corrupt state collapsed, as with Liberia’s war in the 1990s, the young rebels rose up and participated in

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175 Remarks made by the new Hong Kong Police Commissioner Chris Tang. See Christy Leung, “New Hong Kong police chief Chris Tang tells residents: the force cannot end the protests alone,” *South China Morning Post*, November 19, 2019, in https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3038305/incoming-police-chief-christ-tang-tells-hongkongers, access date: March 15, 2020.

176 William Reno, “The Politics of Insurgency in Collapsing States,” *Development and Change*, vol. 33, no. 5 (2002), pp. 837–858.
insurgency, filling a political vacuum and believing that they became “dare devils” participating in “an uprising with the prospect of creating material wealth.” Under these circumstances, locally organized home guard units, religious groups and community associations sprung up, forming private armies led by local strongmen and using their weapons to challenge the existing regime. If their capacity to cause insecurity and chaos were recognized, they were even given further incentives to fight, because “predatory violence is a ticket to a seat in negotiations.” Insurgency entails the likelihood of capturing political power. Once the insurgents seize political power, they can gain diplomatic recognitions, dominate the control over economic resources, become the most powerful actors enjoying all kinds of prerogatives in the political arena. Hence, the violent strategies adopted by insurgents comprise a range of behaviors, including murder, violence and even genocide. Jeremy Weinstein has remarked:

While variation in levels of violence is relatively easy to assess, differences in the character of violence are reflected in its selectivity and brutality. Violence is selective if it targets individuals or groups that threaten to undermine a rebel organization; selective violence has a tactical purpose for the group. When violence is used selectively, civilians can be relatively certain that cooperation can be exchanged for the right to survive. Indiscriminate violence makes no distinction among potential victims, neither protecting supporters nor punishing defectors.

Hence, violence can be selective or indiscriminate, depending on the choice and decision of the insurgents concerned.

If a total war is not launched by insurgents, civil conflicts are often characterized by “bargains, deals, and norms that structure patterns of violence, from collusion to spheres of influence to guerrilla disorder.” Civil conflicts are complex, including cooperation and control between states and non-state armed groups. To counter insurgency and violent groups, the ruling elites rely on counterinsurgency, which means the

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177 Ibid., pp. 854–855.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid., p. 855.
180 Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 13.
181 Paul Staniland, “States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders,” *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 10, no. 2 (June 2012), pp. 243–264.
182 Ibid.
provision of national security, the building of political and economic institutions and the need to restore socio-political order. State-insurgent cooperation can be difficult to sustain and can spiral into breakdown, because regimes and insurgents may be reluctant to bargain, make concessions and reach compromises. The policy of counterinsurgency was to “create an institutionalized environment for security and goods provision,” including the need for “security, good government, and progress” in countries supported by America during the Cold War.\textsuperscript{183}

The concepts of insurgency and counterinsurgency can be used in our analysis of the dynamics of protests. In the case of Hong Kong’s protests from June to December 2019, since some localist extremists did utilize home-made petrol bombs to attack the police, the ruling elites in both Hong Kong and Beijing saw them as “insurgents” trying to topple the HKSAR regime. As such, the Hong Kong police were expected to play a critical role in the counterinsurgency operations. This book will examine the detailed operations of the police in their counterinsurgency, and the selective violence approach adopted by the radical protesters.

\textit{The Role of Failed State}

The concept of failed state can help us understand why protests are launched by citizens to challenge the regime concerned. In 2019, the Fund for Peace came up with some indicators of the fragility of states, including indicators in the aspects of cohesion, political, economic, social and cross-cutting indicators.\textsuperscript{184} Cohesion indicators embrace the security apparatus, the factionalized elites and group grievances. Economic indicators include economic decline, uneven economic development and human rights and brain drain. Social indicators are composed of demographic pressures, refugees and external intervention. Political indicators comprise state legitimacy, public services and human rights and the rule of law.

In the eyes of the United States and its Western allies, failed states can be a political liability because they provide the bleeding ground for terrorism, leading to the occurrence of the terrorist attack on the New York Tower on September 11, 2001. Failed states can undermine the national security interests of the United States and its allies. These states, like

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., p. 256.
\textsuperscript{184} See “Fragile states index,” in https://fragilestatesindex.org/methodology/, access date: March 15, 2020.
Afghanistan, failed because of their inability to protect their own population’s security, welfare and rights, posing great danger for Western security interests. As a result, terrorist groups emerged and prospered in these failed states, constituting a threat to the United States.\textsuperscript{185} The necessity of combatting terrorism has led to the urgency of strengthening the capacities of these failed or fragile states. Although security is a \textit{sine qua non} for sustained regime legitimacy and development, external efforts at increasing the coercive capabilities of these failed states can be regarded as political moves to “bolster abusive, predatory and illegitimate states.”\textsuperscript{186}

While definitions of failed states vary, most observers have seen failed states as being unable to fulfill the conditions of successful states, such as controlling defined territories and populations, conducting diplomatic relations with other states, monopolizing legitimate violence within their territories, providing adequate social goods to their populations and maintaining peace and stability. Failed states cannot ensure economic growth and achieve a reasonable distribution of social goods. In other words, they are often characterized by “massive economic inequities, warlordism, and violent competition for resources.”\textsuperscript{187}

Failed states can present tremendous challenges for the international system. Some challenges are humanitarian because state failure can bring about poverty, hunger, disease, violence and massive refugee flows that can strain foreign aid and affect the budgets and social stability of other countries. Failed states can be characterized by anarchy where a political vacuum provides for the easy entry and emergence of terrorist and extremist groups, whose activities can impact on neighboring countries. Failed states can upset the international system because they cannot enter into or abide by treaties; cannot participate in the dense network of international trade, environmental and human rights agreements; and cannot enforce contracts between their citizens and foreigners.\textsuperscript{188} In short, the legitimacy of failed states is at stake.

Even if some states are not failing, they can be weak ones. Weak states include a broad continuum and they are inherently weak because of a range of factors, such as internal antagonisms, public maladministration,

\textsuperscript{185} Charles T. Call, “The Fallacy of the ‘Failed State,’” \textit{Third World Quarterly}, vol. 29, no. 8 (2008), pp. 1491–1507.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., p. 1505.
\textsuperscript{187} Rosa Ehrenreich Brookst, “Failed States, or the State as Failure?,” \textit{The University of Chicago Law Review}, vol. 72, no. 4 (2005), pp. 1159–1196.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., p. 1162.
political corruption, despotism, ethnic rivalries, religious tensions, domestic crime, external attacks on their territories. Some weak states show deterioration in their physical infrastructure, such as the neglect of schools and hospitals, the decline in the rule of law and the deterioration in economies. Weak states are often ruled by despots, elected or not, but they tend to harass the civil society.\footnote{189}

Violence is an enduring characteristic of the failed states. In a failed state, the ruling elites encounter insurgencies, civil unrest, communal discontent and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at groups within the state.\footnote{190} Civil wars that characterize failed states usually stem from ethnic, religious, linguistic and intercommunal hostilities. Disharmony between communities is serious in failed states, where the society is deeply divided between haves and have-nots, and where the minorities are usually oppressed with brutal force. Eventually, failed states cannot control their borders and lose legitimacy and authority over their own territories. Rebel groups may threaten the personal security of citizens in the failed states, leading to a climate of public fear. Violence grows in failed states as criminal gangs take over the streets of some cities and as arms trafficking becomes commonplace. The police force becomes paralyzed and citizens must turn to their own clans and warlords for self-protection.

Institutionally, failed states are punctuated by the failure of legislatures, which may be either rubber-stamping political machines or divided chambers without compromise and consensus. The judiciary becomes an arm of the executive rather than being independent, and citizens know that they cannot rely on the court system for their redress or remedy against the arbitrary powers exercised by the state apparatus, notably the police and the military.\footnote{191} The bureaucracy has lost its sense of professional responsibility and tends to carry out the executive orders without impartiality and efficiency. Even the military may be highly politicized and lack the esprit they once demonstrated.\footnote{192}

The concept of failed state has been utilized by a journalist to refer to Hong Kong’s sluggish response to the PRC’s outbreak of the Coronavirus in early 2020. Clara Ferreira Marques has observed that citizens were

\footnote{189}{Robert Rotberg, “Failed states, collapsed states, weak states: causes and indicators,” in Robert Rotberg, ed., \textit{State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror} (Cambridge, MA: World Peace Foundation, 2003), p. 5.}
\footnote{190}{Ibid.}
\footnote{191}{Ibid., pp. 7–8.}
\footnote{192}{Ibid.}
panicking and trying to buy masks which were woefully inadequate in January and February 2020. She wrote:

A fragile state is usually defined by its inability to protect citizens, to provide basic services and by questions over the legitimacy of its government. After an epidemic and months of poorly handled pro-democracy demonstrations, Hong Kong is ticking most of those boxes. Add in a strained judicial system, and the prognosis for its future as a financial hub looks poor.193

This book will later address the question of whether the HKSAR is showing signs of a failed state, especially considering how its government tackled the June–December protests in 2019.

AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STATE, SOCIETY, PROTESTS AND VIOLENCE

Figure 1.1 develops an analytical framework of understanding the relations between the state, society, protests and violence. First and foremost, the state can be understood and analyzed at the central and local levels. At the central level, socialist states, such as the PRC, Vietnam and North Korea, are led by a communist party, like the CCP in mainland China. Moreover, socialist regimes led by the communist parties tend to merge the ruling parties with the state apparatus. As such, the term party-state can be used to describe the regime at the central level. The local state obviously includes local governments that interact with the central administration. The central party-state may have two major considerations in its governance: (1) the protection of its territorial sovereignty and (2) the consolidation of its national security. Socialist regimes tend to see their legitimacy as of paramount importance, especially in the PRC, Vietnam and North Korea where their ruling party’s legitimacy stemmed from revolutions.

Yet, legitimacy, in the minds of the central party-state, can be undermined by any threats to national security and sovereignty. Socialist regimes have elections held for their law-marking bodies and local party

193 Clara Ferreira Marques, “Hong Kong is showing symptoms of a failed state,” Bloomberg, February 9, 2020, in https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-02-09/coronavirus-hong-kong-shows-symptoms-of-a-failed-state, access date: March 15, 2020.
congresses, although such elections are characterized by some degree of political control over the participation of candidates, their campaign activities and the impacts on the ruling party’s hegemonic leadership. Candidates must be screened by the party, and no political force can challenge the ruling communist party. Electoral authoritarianism can be referred to the phenomenon that, although elections are held in communist regimes, the elements of authoritarianism are present, such as the censorship of the mass media, the control over the content of the campaign platform of candidates, the suppression of political dissent and the predictable victorious result of the ruling party.

Although the central state appears to be powerful vis-à-vis the local state, the latter can be a political sandwich between the center and the society. Specifically, the society is composed of citizens and groups resistant to both the ruling regime at the central level and the local state. Furthermore, social movements, such as populist and democracy movements, can exert tremendous pressure on the local state to democratize and liberalize the political system. Social movements may also be influenced by external actors, including foreign countries that may have connections with the leaders of such movement. Compounded by the public fear and anger over a controversial government policy, these social movements can bring about citizens’ protests. Whenever protests take place,
they can easily turn into violence, especially when protesters clash with the
police, or when the police adopt a high-handed policy toward protesters. If protesters demonstrate against the local and central states in a pro-
longed period, organized crime elements may come into the picture by
disrupting the ongoing protests and restoring social and political order
quickly. The reason is that organized crime groups may be supportive of
the *status quo*, seeing any social disorder as detrimental to their business
operations.

Alternatively, organized crime elements may participate in protests, if
such protests can achieve their common interests. If the central and local
states are infiltrated by organized crime elements, then the security and
police apparatuses may even mobilize organized crime groups to be an
intermediary in the retaliation and violent actions against protesters.

In the context of Hong Kong, this framework, which has been built up
by utilizing the perspectives we have examined in this chapter, is useful for
us to comprehend the dynamics of peaceful protests and violence. The
HKSAR can be viewed as the local state, which is like a political sandwich
between the central party-state in Beijing and the civil society of Hong
Kong. From Beijing’s party-state perspective, the maintenance of national
security and the protection of territorial sovereignty are of paramount
importance in its regime legitimacy. Hence, even if elections are held at
the national, provincial and local levels in the PRC, they are bound to be
politically controlled and manipulated by the CCP. The Chief Executive
election has arguably been controlled by Beijing to ensure that the elected
Chief Executive would be politically loyal to the central government—a
sign of electoral authoritarianism in the HKSAR. The local state of Hong
Kong, however, is far more pluralistic than the central party-state, particu-
larly at the civil society level. The civil society of the HKSAR comprises
citizens and groups not only resistant to both the central and local states,
but also assertive in their push for populist and pro-democracy move-
ments.194 Those movements can be activated and stimulated by public fear
and anger, as this book will show in the case of the protests from June to
December 2019. Social movements in Hong Kong naturally use peaceful
protests to make their demands heard by the central and local states. Yet,
under the possible influence from the authoritarian central party-state, the

194 Steven Chung-fun Hung, “Interest groups and democracy movement in Hong Kong:
A historical perspective,” in Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo, ed., *Interest Groups and New Democracy
Movement in Hong Kong* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 14–33.
local state in the HKSAR can be hard-pressed to mobilize the police to adopt hardline tactics against protesters, who in turn resort to violence to articulate their demands and protect themselves. On the other hand, alongside the civil society of Hong Kong is the “uncivil” aspect in which violence has been cherished by some extremist groups. As such, violence is both a means to an end and an end in itself. Most significantly, Hong Kong’s social movements, including populist and pro-democracy activities, can be supported, if not necessarily funded, by external actors, including neighboring Taiwan and the superpower, the United States. From the US perspective, it supported the pro-democracy demand of the peaceful protesters, not the violent ones. The role of Taiwan, however, was more complex, as will be discussed in Chap. 7.

If the PRC perceives any existence of external support of the protest movement in the HKSAR, it naturally sees the protests in Hong Kong as being a conspiracy orchestrated by some local activists and foreign actors to “subvert” not only the HKSAR government but also the central government in Beijing. In other words, any external intervention in Hong Kong’s populist and democracy movement can challenge the legitimacy of the central party-state in Beijing, which perceives such interference as undermining its national security and territorial sovereignty. If this perception exists among the political leaders at the central level, they can exert pressure on the leaders at the local state in the adoption of hardline measures against protesters. At this juncture, violent confrontation between the protesters and local police becomes inevitable. The analytical framework designed in this chapter may also be applicable to other places and countries which have been affected by peaceful and violent protests, including populist and democracy movements.

The following chapters will examine the chronological development of the protests from June to December 2019 and then conclude our findings by using the aforesaid perspectives and analytical framework. Chapter 2 is going to trace the historical development of the anti-extradition movement by examining the arrangements over the transfer of fugitives between Hong Kong and the PRC, and by exploring the origins of the extradition bill in early 2019. Chapter 3 will focus on the protests in June to the occupation of LegCo on July 1. Chapter 4 will examine the politics of policing protests, including the incidents of July 21 and August 31. Chapter 5 will explore Beijing’s responses to the Hong Kong crisis from its national security perspective. Chapter 6 will examine the populist protesters, the October 1 protests and the opposition to the anti-mask law. Chapter 7 will
study the two critical battles of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Polytechnic University, and it will also seek to understand the role of District Council elections on November 24, the policy of the United States and the responses from Taiwan. The conclusion will sum up the arguments of this book and go through different perspectives on the dynamics of peaceful and violent protests.