



# The Dynamics of Peaceful and Violent Protests in Hong Kong

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The Anti-extradition Movement

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Methodologically, we rely extensively on government documents and press releases to delineate the official interpretations of various events so that a balanced perspective can be maintained.

Finally, we dedicate this book to all those people who are deeply concerned about the political development and future of Hong Kong.

April 26, 2020

Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo  
Steven Chung-Fun Hung  
Jeff Hai-Chi Loo

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Toward a Comprehensive Framework of Studying Peaceful and Violent Protests</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The Legal and Political Origins of the Extradition Bill</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>From Protests in June to the Occupation of Legislative Council on July 1</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>The Politics of Policing Protests and Incidents of July 21 and August 31</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>National Security and Beijing's Responses to the Hong Kong Crisis</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Populist Protesters, October 1 Confrontation and Opposition to Anti-mask Law</b>	<b>211</b>

<b>7 Two Final Battles, District Elections, United States and Taiwan</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>8 Conclusion</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>371</b>

## ABBREVIATIONS

AmCham	American Chamber of Commerce
ASPDMC	Alliance in Support of Patriotic and Democratic Movement in China
BLC	Basic Law Committee
BLCC	Basic Law Consultative Committee
BLDC	Basic Law Drafting Committee
BPA	Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDIC	Central Discipline Inspection Commission
CEFC	China Energy Fund Committee
CGLO	Central Government Liaison Office
CHRF	Civil Human Rights Front
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMC	Central Military Commission
CPLAC	Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CTU	Confederation of Trade Unions
CUHK	Chinese University of Hong Kong
CYL	Communist Youth League
DAB	Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
ERO	Emergency Regulations Ordinance
EU	European Union
ExCo	Executive Council
FTU	Federation of Trade Unions

HKBA	Hong Kong Bar Association
HKGCC	Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
HKMAO	Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office
HKMSA	Hong Kong and Macau Study Association
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HKUST	Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
HSBC	Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation
ICAC	Independent Commission Against Corruption
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Council
LegCo	Legislative Council
LRT	Light Rail Transit
MTR	Mass Transit Railway
NPC	National People's Congress
OMELCO	Office for the Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils
PAP	People's Armed Police
PICO	Policy Innovation and Coordination Office
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PolyU	Polytechnic University of Hong Kong
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SAR	Special Administrative Region
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

## LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram 3.1	The composition of the Hong Kong protesters	115
Diagram 5.1	Vertical accountability of key Hong Kong principal officials. (Source: This diagram is deduced from the protests from July to December 2019 when the authors observed the line of reporting by the three Hong Kong principal officials who visited Beijing)	201
Diagram 6.1	Interactions between Beijing, HKSAR government, nationalistic populists, socialist populists and democratic populists	228
Diagram 7.1	Rating of public satisfaction with the Hong Kong police. (Sources: “People’s Satisfaction with the Disciplinary Force,” in <a href="https://www.pori.hk/pop-poll/disciplinary-force">https://www.pori.hk/pop-poll/disciplinary-force</a> , access date: April 16, 2020)	285
Diagram 7.2	Recorded police arrests from June 2019 to February 2020. (Source: Constructed from the police figures, June 2019 to February 2020. Note: The figures in July included 37 thugs who were not protesters)	285
Diagram 7.3	Police arrests and age groups	286
Diagram 8.1	Public confidence in “One Country, Two Systems.” (Source: “People’s Confidence in ‘One Country, Two Systems,’” in <a href="https://www.hkpopop.hku.hk/pori_table_chart/Trust/K006_Conf_OCTS/K006_chart.html">https://www.hkpopop.hku.hk/pori_table_chart/Trust/K006_Conf_OCTS/K006_chart.html</a> , access date: April 16, 2020)	320

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Position of the Hong Kong Bar Association on the extradition bill	66
Table 2.2	Remarks of mainland legal experts on the extradition bill	71
Table 2.3	Remarks of Hong Kong Basic Law Committee members on the extradition bill	73
Table 2.4	Foreign countries' position on the extradition bill	76
Table 3.1	Detailed events leading to the occupation of Legislative Council on July 1, 2019	86
Table 3.2	The occupation of Legislative Council on July 1, 2019	101
Table 3.3	Social media tools used by protesters and their functions	107
Table 3.4	Responses of Chinese officials to the occupation of Legislative Council	108
Table 4.1	Turnout of Hong Kong's annual July 1st march	118
Table 4.2	Key events in July 2019 after the occupation of Legislative Council	119
Table 4.3	Detailed events of the Yuen Long Triad attack on passengers of Mass Transit Railway on July 21	123
Table 4.4	The confrontations between police and citizens in shopping malls	133
Table 4.5	Citizens' criticisms of police power at San Uk Ling Holding Center	136
Table 4.6	Events leading to the incident of Prince Edward MTR Station on August 31, 2019	141
Table 4.7	Politicians who were arrested on August 30	147
Table 4.8	Events on the August 31 incident in Prince Edward Mass Transit Railway	149

Table 4.9	Peaceful protests that were allowed by the police and turning to be peaceful, July–December 2019	153
Table 4.10	Peaceful protests that were disallowed by the police and turning to be peaceful, July–December 2019	159
Table 4.11	Violent protests, July–December 2019	162
Table 4.12	Parades that were disallowed by the police turned out to be violent, July–December 2019	164
Table 5.1	Movement and training operations for People’s Armed Police in Shenzhen, August 2019	169
Table 5.2	Article 7 of the law of the People’s Republic of China on the People’s Armed Police	174
Table 5.3	Key points of the Basic Law’s article 14 and article 18	176
Table 5.4	Articles 1, 5 and 6 of the Garrison law of the HKSAR of the People’s Republic of China	176
Table 5.5	Press conferences of the Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office	177
Table 5.6	Remarks of Chinese officials on Hong Kong’s protests, July–December 2019	182
Table 5.7	Statements on Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan in the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, November 2019	187
Table 5.8	President Xi Jinping’s remarks on comprehensively governing the country in accordance with law	198
Table 5.9	Remarks of Zhao Kezhi on Hong Kong and National Security	202
Table 5.10	Criticisms of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLAC) on Jimmy Lai, Martin Lee, Anson Chan and Albert Ho	203
Table 5.11	Remarks of Pro-Beijing media on the opposition from July 2019 to November 2019	205
Table 5.12	Key points of Luo Huining’s open letter for the NPC deputies and CPPCC members in Hong Kong	208
Table 6.1	A comparison between democratic populists and nationalistic populists	215
Table 6.2	Events of localist movements	221
Table 6.3	Carrie Lam’s controversial policies before the extradition bill controversy	226
Table 6.4	Number of mainland visitors to Hong Kong, June–December 2019	227
Table 6.5	Events in September leading to the October 1 protests	233
Table 6.6	Detailed events of the October 1 protest in Hong Kong Island	235
Table 6.7	Detailed events of the October 1 protests in other districts	238
Table 6.8	Main content of the Emergency Regulations	249

Table 6.9	The remarks of Pro-Beijing's elites remarks on Emergency Regulations	251
Table 6.10	Major content of the anti-mask regulation	252
Table 6.11	Statements of Liaison Office, Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office and Foreign Ministry on the anti-mask law	253
Table 6.12	Detailed events of October 4 and October 5 protests against the anti-mask law	256
Table 6.13	Remarks of government officials and Pro-Beijing politicians on the "Yellow Economy"	261
Table 7.1	The battle of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, November 11–15, 2019	265
Table 7.2	The battle of the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong	268
Table 7.3	The last stage of the battle of Polytechnic University, November 20–26	273
Table 7.4	The responses of PRC, Taiwan and foreign countries to the Battle of Polytechnic University	275
Table 7.5	Tougher police action after Chris Tang's visit to Beijing to meet Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi	277
Table 7.6	Police use of weapons and police arrests	280
Table 7.7	District Council elections: critical function as a channel for voicing public anger	287
Table 7.8	Protest leaders and activists who were elected to District Councils in 2019	290
Table 7.9	Remarks of American politicians on Hong Kong	292
Table 7.10	US President Donald Trump's remarks on Hong Kong	293
Table 7.11	Key points in the US Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act	294
Table 7.12	Pro-American peaceful protests in Hong Kong	295
Table 7.13	Key points of the US State Department's 2019 country reports on human rights practices in Hong Kong	296
Table 7.14	Taiwan's political parties and Hong Kong protesters	299
Table 7.15	Remarks of Taiwan political leaders on the Hong Kong extradition bill	301
Table 7.16	Remarks of other foreign leaders on Hong Kong's anti-extradition movement	304
Table 7.17	Business tycoon's remarks on Hong Kong's protests	305
Table 7.18	Mass arrests on April 18, 2020	308
Table 8.1	Comparative populist movement in Chile, Iraq, France and Lebanon	340



## CHAPTER 1

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# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.”<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>3</sup> John H. Herz, “Legitimacy: Can We Retrieve It?,” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 10, no. 3 (April, 1978), pp. 317–343.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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

<sup>6</sup>Herz, "Legitimacy: Can We Retrieve It?," p. 319.

<sup>7</sup>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.<sup>8</sup>

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.”<sup>9</sup> 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,<sup>10</sup> 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,<sup>11</sup> 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

<sup>8</sup>Wilson Carey McWilliams, “On Violence and Legitimacy,” *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 79 (1970), p. 645.

<sup>9</sup>M. Stephen Weatherford, “Measuring Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 86, no. 1 (March 1992), pp. 149–166.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 151.

broadly by actors in a broader community.”<sup>12</sup> 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.”<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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

<sup>12</sup> Cathryn Johnson, Timothy J. Dowd, and Cecilia L. Ridgeway, “Legitimacy as a Social Process,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 32 (2006), p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 73–74.

<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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

<sup>18</sup>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,<sup>19</sup> 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."<sup>20</sup> 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."<sup>21</sup> 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

<sup>19</sup> David Easton, *The Political System. An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (New York: Knopf, 1953).

<sup>20</sup> Bo Rothstein, "Creating Political Legitimacy Electoral Democracy Versus Quality of Government," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 53, Number 3 (2009), 311–330. (p. 325).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 325–326.

presence of fair and free election and the presence of political elites to receive, appreciate and understand public sentiments.<sup>22</sup> 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.

### *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:

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

<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup> 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.”<sup>25</sup> 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.”<sup>26</sup>

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

<sup>23</sup> James Ron, “Varying Methods of State Violence,” *International Organization*, vol. 51, no. 2 (Spring 1997), pp. 275–300.

<sup>24</sup> James Ron, “Varying Methods of State Violence,” *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Spring, 1997), pp. 275–300. (p. 298).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>26</sup> *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.<sup>27</sup> Most importantly, different regimes respond to domestic threats in varying ways.<sup>28</sup> 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.”<sup>29</sup> 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 707.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 707–708.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 708.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 708–709.

Other scholars have found that the effect of political dissent on state repression is a function of two strategic processes.<sup>33</sup> Governments engage in “preventive repression,” such as the adoption of curfews and the prohibitions on assembly, to undermine the mobilization of political dissidents.<sup>34</sup> 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.”<sup>35</sup> As a result, “governments who did not engage in ex ante repression will be quite likely to do it ex post.”<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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.”<sup>38</sup> 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.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, if state actors are involved in the participation and endorsement of criminal activities, the boundaries between legality and illegality

<sup>33</sup> 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.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> 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.

<sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> 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.”<sup>40</sup> In short, the state-building processes are complex, involving explicitly criminal activities and the hidden collaboration between some criminal elements and state actors.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 971.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 972–973.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 973.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 973–974.

<sup>45</sup> *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.<sup>46</sup> 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.”<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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

<sup>46</sup>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.

<sup>47</sup>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.

<sup>48</sup>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.<sup>49</sup> Other social scientists have postulated that vandalism occurs more likely in lower socio-economic districts than higher ones.<sup>50</sup> 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.”<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed,

<sup>49</sup>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.

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

<sup>51</sup>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.

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

<sup>53</sup>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.<sup>54</sup>

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.”<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup> However, political violence is also “culture-dependent,”<sup>57</sup> 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.”<sup>58</sup> In a nutshell, it is politics that decides whether the acts of political violence are “terrorists” or “resistance.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> 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.

<sup>57</sup> 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.

<sup>58</sup> Patricia Steinhoff and Gilda Zwerman, “Introduction to the Special Issue on Political Violence.” *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2008), pp. 213–220.