

Thao Thanh Tran

Dorian Johnson

ENG 1302-02

08 September 2019

Hong Kong's Identity Crisis: Protesters are Right to Fight

The protests in Hong Kong this 2019 are still going on—sometimes with violence. It has been fourteen weeks already. “A government that is not elected by the people do not respond to their demands,” one suicide note read. "What Hong Kong needs is a revolution" This note belongs to Mak. Mak was not the only one killed herself; there were five suicide cases closely attributed to the protests (Perper par. 4).

"The whole society has fallen into hysteria due to a volcanic eruption of the deep-seated identity crisis triggered by the [anti-extradition] bill," Paul Yip, the director of the Center for Suicide Research and Prevention at the University of Hong Kong, said (Perper par. 3-8). The bill was proposed by the Hong Kong government to allow China to extradite Hong Kong residents to the mainland to face criminal trial.

The moment Hong Kong residents demanding this bill to be withdrawn set off the protests. Since, there's come more demands—as the people there feel the need to say something about how they are governed. All along, the 2019 Hong Kong protests are simply about the Hong Kong residents' deep-seated identity crisis—and they are right to fight their fear of China's growing influence.

The streets of Hong Kong have gotten more and more violent with clashes between protesters and police. As hardcore protesters heating up the scenes with their anger, large fires, and petrol bombs, police fired tear gas and water cannon back at the end of August. One pro-

democracy demonstrator, Stone, said, "Peaceful protest doesn't work" (Al Jazeera, "Hong Kong protests: All the latest updates").

"Riots" is what most protests in Hong Kong characterized by the government since June, the onset of the protests, which led to a wave of arrests. For instance, on 30 August, Joshua Wong was "forcefully pushed into a private minivan on the street in broad daylight," according to activist group Demosisto's Twitter account. Wong is 22, he is one of the leaders of 2014 pro-democracy "Umbrella Revolution." Shortly after, Agnes Chow, a founding member of Demosisto, was also arrested. Both Wong and Chow were charged with inciting and participating in illegal rallies. Because of the police brutality, Hong Kong protesters demand the government to retract the characterization of the protests as "riots," to release and exonerate arrested protesters, and to establish an independent inquiry on police conduct and use of force during the protests (Inocencio par. 3-9).

On 4 September, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam announced to formally withdraw the extradition bill, gave into protesters' first demand. She also stressed that the "violent" protests came from a "contentment exists far beyond the bill," and that her administration would set their priority to end this violence to restore order and safety in Hong Kong's society. On protesters' side, the people demand Carrie Lam to resign (South China Morning Post par 8-10).

To Hong Kong people, Carrie Lam, who is the Chief Executive of Hong Kong since 2017, is a pro-Beijing figure. In the 2017 election, Lam won the majority of the votes in the pro-Beijing business and political sectors; however, Lam failed to receive any nomination from the pro-democracy camp. In Lam's victory speech, she pledged to "heal the social divide" and "unite our society to move forward" (Ng par 5-11) as Hong Kong and Mainland China have live in the

“one country, two system” since the handover of Hong Kong 1997, as until 2047, there will be “One China” country—“One China” system.

In mainland China, the Hong Kong protests were barely mentioned. On Weibo, China’s Twitter-like platform, a “Hong Kong” keyword only led to posts from verified accounts, mainly government sites and media organizations (Blanchard par. 4-7). China’s narrative from its media organization paints Hong Kong as separatists, and paints other media agencies, especially Western, as “have played a disgraceful role by taking advantage of its communication influence” amid a crisis in a developing country (Global Times, “Reuters fake report on Hong Kong is a stain on global journalism”). China’s narrative is a blindfold blocking people from questioning the legitimacy of the Communist Party rule.

More than three devastating months of protests, it is clear that the Hong people do not want to be a part of China’s system—they do not want “One China.” Focusing ideologically on “One China” is to stand in the opposition of the Hong Kong people. Silencing protesters from having a say in how they are governed as to characterize them as “riots with destructive behaviors” is to deny their rights in full participation in their government. Hong Kong residents are right to fight for their own sake for a system that works for them—not the one that polishing its name and words to make their people work for.

Because Hong Kong now is governed by their own system, there is still hope that the end will not look even a bit alike to the tragic end of 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, in which the Communist Party exerted martial law, killing several hundreds to several thousands both demonstrators and bystanders because the protests were believed to be a political threat.

Works Cited

- “Hong Kong protests: All the latest updates.” *Al Jazeera*, 31 August 2019, aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/hong-kong-protests-latest-updates-190831101706243.html. Accessed 8 September 2019.
- “Reuters fake report on Hong Kong is a stain on global journalism.” *Global Times*, 31 August 2019, globaltimes.cn/content/1163217.shtml. Accessed 8 September 2019.
- Blanchard, Ben. “Chinese paper says 'foreign forces' using Hong Kong havoc to hurt China.” *Reuters*, 9 June, 2019, reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-extradition-march-china/chinese-paper-says-foreign-forces-trying-to-create-havoc-in-hong-kong-idUSKCN1TA0U4. Accessed 8 September 2019.
- Ng, Khang-chung. “‘The work of uniting society begins now’: Carrie Lam pledges to heal Hong Kong’s divide.” *South China Morning Post*, 26 March 2017, scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2082226/new-leader-carrie-lam-pledges-heal-divide-hong-kong-society. Accessed 8 September 2019.
- Inocencio, Ramy. “Hong Kong protest leaders arrested and charged as police ban huge planned demonstration.” *CBS News*, 30 August 2019, cbsnews.com/news/joshua-wong-arrested-hong-kong-pro-democracy-activists-arrested-ahead-of-planned-rally-2019-08-30/. Accessed 8 September 2019.
- Perper, Rosie. “Protesters in Hong Kong are killing themselves in a disturbing turn in their high-profile struggle against China.” *Business Insider*, 5 July 2019, businessinsider.com/suicide-notes-hong-kong-protesters-reference-protests-2019-7. Accessed 8 September 2019.