

## *Hong Kong's Summer of Uprising: From Anti-Extradition to Anti-Authoritarian Protests\**

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### *Abstract*

After a period of movement abeyance since the Umbrella Movement, millions of Hong Kong citizens took to the streets in summer 2019 to protest against a proposed extradition bill that would allow the Hong Kong authorities to extradite its citizens to mainland China. Initially calling for the withdrawal of the impending bill, the mass protests soon evolved into a prolonged and city-wide movement targeting police abuse of power and seeking political reforms. Using data collected from onsite surveys along with population survey results, this article offers a

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rich descriptive account of the origins and characteristics of this momentous movement. We first examine how the protests unexpectedly emerged despite the absence of favorable conditions amidst a declining trend of political efficacy. We then illustrate several core characteristics of the protests through the survey data: first, protesters were motivated by a coherent set of demands that focused on police powers and the unrepresentative political system; second, they are self-mobilized and technologically-enabled, showing strong alignment with the leaderless ethics of the movement; and third, they displayed a tremendous level of solidarity unseen in previous protests, which provided the momentum for escalation and radicalization. Our findings indicate that despite some basic continuities with past trajectories, political activism has undergone a profound evolution under the authoritarian tightening in post-handover Hong Kong.

On February 12, 2019, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government revealed its plan to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance. The amendment would have allowed Hong Kong to surrender fugitives to jurisdictions with which the city does not have existing bilateral extradition agreements, as well as to Mainland China, Taiwan and Macau. On the surface, the proposal was triggered by a murder case in Taipei in 2018. But as the amendment covered mainland China, there were strong public concerns and suspicions about the government's motivations. The democrats voiced their criticisms within the legislature, and the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF) organized two "anti-extradition bill" protests on March 31 and April 28, which were participated by 12,000 and 130,000 people, respectively.

Supported by the pro-establishment majority in the Legislative Council (LegCo), the government was confident about its ability to push the amendment through despite public opposition. On June 9, three days before the second reading of the bill, one million citizens demonstrated in another CHRF-organized protest. On June 12, tens of thousands of citizens surrounded the LegCo and forced the cancellation of its meeting. Police-protester clashes ensued in the afternoon. Protests forced the continual closure of the LegCo in the next two days. On June 15, Chief Executive of the SAR, Carrie Lam, announced the suspension of the bill.

The protesters were not satisfied with the mere "suspension" of the bill. In the evening of June 15, a young man committed suicide to protest

against the government's inadequate response. The next day, two million citizens demonstrated to demand the complete withdrawal of the bill. Protest actions did not subside afterwards. They adopted more diversified formats, and protest targets were extended to include police abuse of power and the issue of political reform. The originally policy-oriented protests quickly morphed into a summer of discontent and uprising. When we finalized this article in early October, the SAR Government had made use of the power offered by the Emergency Regulations Ordinance and declared, on October 4, an emergency law against the wearing of masks in protests. Yet tens of thousands of citizens continued to protest—many of them defied the law to wear masks—in the subsequent weekend. There were still no signs of when and how the protests would end.

The Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill protests (Anti-ELAB protests hereafter) have raised a series of intriguing questions for students of Hong Kong society and politics. Close observers of the movement should have noticed issues such as, among others, the role of new media technologies in the protests, the phenomenon of radicalization with collective restraints, expansion and innovation of action repertoire, and the seeming inefficacy of the state's response. But these issues cannot be properly addressed without a solid and holistic overview of the protest movement. Regardless of how the movement is going to end, the first four months of the movement have already contained a set of complex dynamics and phenomena that are worth explicating. Hence this article aims at providing a rich descriptive account of the background and core features of the Anti-ELAB protests in this period. An overview of the emergence and evolution of the movement in its first four months shall provide meaningful grounds on which other issues can be more closely examined and the further development of the movement can be understood. It also provides the basis for a comparison with the Umbrella Movement – which we will attempt in the concluding discussion of this article.

The following begins by reconstructing, through a literature review, the historical context of the Anti-ELAB protests. We then draw upon a series of protest onsite surveys we conducted between early June and late August, supplemented by population survey data, to present the core characteristics of the Anti-ELAB protests in that period. We discuss five aspects of the protest movement: participants' demographics, forms of organization, participants' motivations, action tactics, and movement frames. The concluding section discusses the implications of the findings on how we may explain the emergence and sustainability of the protest movement.

## **1. Dynamics of Contention Before, During, and After the Umbrella Movement**

Although some scholars have argued that protest participation has long been an undercurrent in Hong Kong's political culture,<sup>1</sup> large-scale protests were rare before the transfer of sovereignty (The 1989 demonstrations in support of the Beijing student movement were the exception). After the handover in 1997, a combination of repeated government blunders and severe economic recession led to the rise of public grievances and protests. The most prominent large-scale protest in the early post-handover years was the July 1 protest in 2003, in which half a million citizens demonstrated against the proposed national security law.<sup>2</sup> The protest not only successfully forced the government to postpone the legislation; it also kick-started a protest cycle and led to the formation of new political groups,<sup>3</sup> the growth of alternative media,<sup>4</sup> the dissemination of transgressive repertoire<sup>5</sup> and an increase in citizens' collective efficacy.<sup>6</sup> These developments fueled the growth of protests in subsequent years.

However, as protests became more frequent and common, they also became "normalized" and started to lose their disruptive and shocking power.<sup>7</sup> As a result, part of the movement sector began to consider the need and justifiability of adopting more radical forms of actions. A trend toward movement radicalization began in the late 2000s.<sup>8</sup> Against this background, the idea of Occupy Central came out in early 2013. Legal scholar Benny Tai proposed occupying the main roads in the financial district Central in order to force the Chinese and Hong Kong government to make concessions on democratic reform. After 20 months of public deliberation, discursive contestation, and advanced planning, Occupy Central was scheduled to occur on October 1, 2014. Nonetheless, a set of contingent events compelled Tai and his colleagues to begin the occupation on September 28. The police's use of tear gas on the first day of occupation then led to the quick scaling-up of the action and the spontaneous transformation of the campaign into the Umbrella Movement.<sup>9</sup>

The Umbrella Movement lasted 79 days and remains hitherto the largest and most enduring civil disobedience campaign in the history of the city. Yet it failed to force the government to concede on the issue of democratic reform. The 'failure' of the Umbrella Movement to achieve tangible outcomes can be understood in relation to a few factors. First, political opportunities for a local protest to influence the outcome of democratic reform are basically lacking because the rules regarding

democratization in Hong Kong are essentially determined by the Chinese government. The pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong does not have elite allies who can influence politics at the national level. Second, although the proponents of occupation have exercised self-restraint through the emphasis on non-violence and “love and peace,” a large part of the general public still saw the proposed action as too radical for one to support.<sup>10</sup> Public opinion polls generally showed that citizens opposing the occupation campaign outnumbered citizens supporting the campaign.<sup>11</sup>

Third, the state employed the strategy of attrition effectively in handling the movement.<sup>12</sup> After the use of force by the police in the first week of protests, the police and the government refrained from further repressive actions. Rather, the state allowed the inconveniences and nuisances caused by the occupation to accumulate, which facilitated the pro-government forces’ counter-mobilization efforts. Finally, facing the stalemate, some movement supporters felt the urge to escalate the actions and consider the use of force. Yet the leaders of the movement retained their emphasis on non-violence. Internal dissension, which was spatially manifested through the divide between the Admiralty and Mongkok occupation,<sup>13</sup> grew as time went on. It further eroded the morale of the movement participants in the latter stages of the campaign.

The above factors are worth mentioning because they provide interesting points of contrast with the Anti-ELAB protests in 2019, which we will return to in the concluding section. In any case, Umbrella Movement’s failure led to further radicalization of social movements in Hong Kong.<sup>14</sup> Ideologically, the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement witnessed the growing appeal of “localism” among young people.<sup>15</sup> Localism was originally promoted by a group of activists in the mid-2000s as a way to push forward a leftist-progressive agenda.<sup>16</sup> But since the early 2010s, the notion was appropriated by activists to articulate a critique against integration with the mainland.<sup>17</sup> After the Umbrella Movement, the discourse of localism was picked up by new political groups such as Youngspiration and The Hong Kong Indigenous, and it quickly mutated into a call for Hong Kong independence.<sup>18</sup>

Movement radicalization was also manifested in the adoption of more confrontational and even violent tactics. The year 2015 and 2016 witnessed several “reclamation actions” conducted by the localists. The actions targeted mainly at tourists from mainland China who were seen as swarming over the city to consume its resources. The reclamation actions were highly confrontational, though it would be an exaggeration

to call them “violent.” Tactical radicalization reached a new peak in the clashes that happened on the first day of Chinese New Year in 2016. Dubbed the Mongkok riot (from the perspective of the government and mainstream society) or the Fishball Revolution (from the perspective of the localists), the clash involved protesters digging up bricks from the pavements and throwing them at the police.

The Chinese and SAR governments adopted a hardline approach featuring both targeted repression and outsourced counter-movements to manage radicalism.<sup>19</sup> A total of 33 people were charged for rioting, assaulting the police, or other crimes in association with the Mongkok clashes. Between April 2018 and June 2019, 23 people were found guilty of rioting, with the heaviest sentence being seven years in prison. In late 2018, nine leading figures of the Umbrella Movement were brought to the court for charges including conspiracy, incitement to commit public nuisance, and incitement to incite public nuisance. All were found guilty. Four had to serve prison terms from eight to 16 months.<sup>20</sup>

Outside the court, six elected legislators were disqualified in an oath-taking controversy in late 2016,<sup>21</sup> and proponents of Hong Kong independence and self-determination were barred from participating in elections.<sup>22</sup> In September 2018, the government declared the National Party, a pro-independence group formed after the Umbrella Movement, an illegal entity. In early October, the government refused to renew the working visa of a *Financial Times* journalist who hosted a talk by the National Party’s chairperson. It sent out a strong signal that the government could punish anyone showing sympathy to Hong Kong independence.<sup>23</sup>

The hardline approach by the state had seemingly succeeded in demobilizing the supporters of the pro-democracy movement as well as the localists. Between 2017 and 2018, protests addressing various issues, such as the collocation arrangement at the high-speed rail station and the plan of a mega-land-reclamation project, were still conducted, but public participation was not enthusiastic. Protests on political issues, such as those against the disqualification of legislators and election candidates mentioned above, registered participation by only about 2,000 to 3,000 citizens.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, the pro-establishment forces won several important electoral victories. In March 2018, the pro-establishment camp beat the pro-democracy camp in a LegCo by-election. This was the first time the pro-establishment camp won against the pro-democracy camp in a LegCo election adopting the rule of simple majority. In November 2018, the pro-establishment camp won another LegCo by-election. Besides

being illustrative of the increasingly powerful electoral machine on the pro-establishment side, the results could also be partly attributed to the continual tension between the democrats and the localists in the opposition camp. In the online arena, localist opinion leaders urged their supporters not to vote at all or even to vote for the pro-establishment candidate. The latter was related to what some localists called the “scorched-earth policy”—if people cannot take control from China and the establishment, people should just let Hong Kong be destroyed.

There was no solid data about how widespread the appeal of the scorched-earth policy was. But most observers perceived a pervasive feeling of powerlessness and desperation among Hong Kong citizens. Survey data did register a decline in citizens’ level of collective efficacy over time.<sup>25</sup> Conceptually, between late 2016 and early 2019, the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong was in a period of abeyance. Nevertheless, as social movement scholars have pointed out, one should pay attention to the sustenance of networks, values, and resources during periods of movement abeyance in order to understand movement continuity over the long haul.<sup>26</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the abeyance structures between late 2016 and early 2019 in Hong Kong, but two points can be noted. First, despite the absence of prominent society-wide mobilization on the major controversies of the day, the period saw the development of a community movement that focused on transforming the everyday lifeworld for citizens.<sup>27</sup> The networks and practices developed through the movement constituted resources for the Anti-ELAB protests to draw upon.

Second, the period did not see any substantial improvement in governance and on issues such as social and income inequality. Despite the SAR government’s apparent success in passing various controversial policies, social and political grievances did not dissipate. In February 2016, the month of the Mongkok clashes, Hong Kong University’s public opinion poll showed that 48.7 percent of the public were dissatisfied with the performance of the government. The percentage dropped to 39.8 percent at the beginning of Carrie Lam’s tenure as Chief Executive in July 2017, but it rose back to 49.1 percent in January 2019, the month before the government put forward the extradition bill.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, the conditions and resources for large-scale mobilization remained in place despite the appearance of quietness. The extradition bill was the trigger that reignited the fire. It should be noted that the extradition bill was capable of generating huge concern among the Hong Kong public because of Hong Kong people’s deep distrust toward the

legal system in China and worry about the possibility of political prosecution. In an opinion poll conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong in early June 2019, 58 percent of the respondents replied that they do not believe suspects extradited to mainland China could receive a fair trial. Only 15 percent believed in the presence of fair trial in the mainland.<sup>29</sup> The Hong Kong government failed to alleviate people's fear and worries. After the already large-scale protest on April 28, debates within the legislature became highly confrontational in May. A huge online petition campaign then followed suit. By early June, momentum was building up, though the scale and intensity of the protests that followed were still a surprise.

## **2. Data and Methods**

Data analyzed below is primarily drawn from 19 protest onsite surveys that we conducted from June 9 to August 31. Almost every major protest during this period has been covered, with the exception of the Kowloon protest on July 7, the Sheung Shui protest on July 13, the Mongkok protest on August 3, and various smaller-sized protests organized by different professional and social groups. Surveys were conducted through three sampling options: (1) onsite online questionnaire; (2) take-home online questionnaire; and (3) face-to-face paper-based questionnaire.<sup>30</sup> Generally, interviewers are distributed evenly within a designated area (the meeting point if the protest is a rally), and they are asked to invite every tenth person they see in their designated zone to complete the survey. The total sample size reached 12,231 with an overall response rate of 86 percent; but the sample sizes of each survey varied according to the turnout and format of each individual protest.<sup>31</sup> Table 1 provides a summary of the location, nature, sample size, and response rate of the 19 onsite surveys.

We complement the survey data with onsite participant observations. Many of the demonstrations in the Anti-ELAB protests unfolded spontaneously. Hence it was important for researchers to be on the spot to feel the protests and observe protesters' actions and emotions. These observations and feelings are a crucial lens through which we can gain a deeper understanding into the numbers.

Finally, we also draw on a number of population surveys published by the Public Opinion Program of the University of Hong Kong and the Center for Communication and Public Opinion Survey (CCPOS) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to sketch the context against which the

Anti-ELAB protests took place and delineate the public sentiments through which they unfolded.

**Table 1: Summary of the Onsite Surveys**

| Date   | Location                            | Nature               | Sample size | Response rate | Standard error |
|--------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| 9 Jun  | Victoria Park—CGO                   | Mass rally           | 285         | 74.0%         | 5.80%          |
| 12 Jun | CGO**                               | Fluid demonstration  | 175         | N/A           | 7.40%          |
| 16 Jun | Victoria Park—CGO                   | Mass rally           | 875         | 89.0%         | 3.30%          |
| 17 Jun | CGO*                                | Fluid demonstration  | 717         | 91.5%         | 3.70%          |
| 21 Jun | CGO, Police HQ and Revenue Tower**  | Fluid demonstration  | 316         | 87.8%         | 5.50%          |
| 26 Jun | Edinburgh Place                     | Static demonstration | 418         | 90.7%         | 4.80%          |
| 1 Jul  | Victoria Park—CGO**                 | Mass rally           | 1169        | 83.1%         | 2.90%          |
| 14 Jul | Shatin**                            | Mass rally           | 546         | 87.8%         | 4.20%          |
| 21 Jul | Victoria Park—Southern Playground** | Mass rally           | 680         | 90.8%         | 3.80%          |
| 27 Jul | Yuen Long* / **                     | Mass rally           | 235         | N/A           | 6.40%          |
| 4 Aug  | Tseung Kwan O**                     | Mass rally           | 717         | 85.6%         | 3.70%          |
| 4 Aug  | Sai Wan**                           | Static demonstration | 555         | 92.7%         | 4.20%          |
| 10 Aug | Airport*                            | Static demonstration | 2309        | N/A           | 2.04%          |
| 11 Aug | Sham Shui Po**                      | Mass rally           | 412         | 90.7%         | 4.83%          |
| 13 Aug | Airport**                           | Static demonstration | 485         | N/A           | 4.45%          |
| 16 Aug | Chater Garden                       | Static demonstration | 632         | N/A           | 3.90%          |
| 18 Aug | Victoria Park—CGO                   | Mass rally           | 806         | 82.8%         | 3.46%          |
| 25 Aug | Kwai Chung—Tsuen Wan* / **          | Mass rally           | 372         | 91.5%         | 5.09%          |
| 31 Aug | Victoria Park – CGO* / **           | Mass rally           | 527         | N/A           | 4.27%          |

Notes: The response rates presented in this table refer to the response rate from face-to-face interview in each survey. For those surveys that were conducted only by distributing leaflets, N/A is indicated in the column of response rate.

A fluid demonstration is one in which the protesters would move to different locations without prior planning. Mass rallies marked with \* either received an objection letter from the police or did not apply for a letter of no objection. Participation in the rallies was therefore technically speaking illegal, though protesters generally agreed that it was their rights to protest.

In rallies marked with \*\*, violent clashes between police and the protesters occurred during or immediately after the peaceful protest march.

### **3. The Anti-Extradition Bill Protests**

Our analysis covers the period between early June and late September. Table 2 in the appendix lists the series of major protests and other notable events in this period, but we can also briefly recount the key happenings here before we analyze the survey data.

After the million-strong protest on June 9 and the violent confrontation on June 12, the Hong Kong government announced to suspend the extradition bill amendment which originally appeared set to pass. In retrospect, what seemed a possible end to the protests turned out to be the beginning. In the following weekend, two million people marched on the streets to demand the complete withdrawal of the bill and the dropping of the riot characterization of the June 12 protest. The surprising turnout of the rally easily made it the largest protest in the city's history, forcing the Chief Executive to issue a rare public apology. However, protests did not die down. The next few weeks saw the occurrence of a series of fluid and confrontational protests, as protesters increasingly targeted their dissent at the police. An illustrative episode of these was the demonstration outside the police headquarters on June 26, which followed the G20 Stand with Hong Kong protest at Edinburgh Place.

The July 1 rally brought the Anti-ELAB protests to an early climax. Not only did it draw much more participants than most of the annual July 1 rallies in the past, it also turned militant towards the end as some protesters stormed into the LegCo building, where they vandalized walls and issued a manifesto that stated their five demands, including the complete withdrawal of the bill, investigation into police abuse of power, and implementation of popular elections of the whole LegCo and the Chief Executive.<sup>32</sup> The escalation led to more protests in the following weeks, which diffused to different local districts. The July 6 Tuen Mun rally and the July 7 Kowloon rally were the first mass rallies that were held outside Hong Kong Island, and this was followed by the Sheung Shui rally and the Shatin rally on July 13 and 14 respectively. Many of these protests were met with escalated police violence, tear gas, rubber bullets, as protesters wearing hard hats and gas masks engaged in violent confrontation. On July 21, hundreds of thousands again rallied on Hong Kong Island to reiterate the demands. That evening, while thousands marched to the Central Liaison Office and engaged in violent clashes with the police, thugs in white shirts launched an

indiscriminate attack on citizens, some of whom were returning from the rally, in Yuen Long Station. The attack injured many and triggered a widespread uproar not only against the thugs but also against the police, because the latter were seen by many as intentionally allowing the attack to happen.

The Yuen Long incident triggered a new round of escalation. Protesters staged a march in Yuen Long the following weekend as a response to the incident in the previous week. The march, which was banned by the police, quickly descended into another heated exchange of violence. In the weeks that followed, the level and intensity of confrontation clearly ascended. Protests became a fixture every weekend, and many of them ended with militant protesters surrounding local police stations or confronting with riot police on the streets and in metro stations with umbrellas, bamboo sticks, bricks and even petrol bombs. With Beijing now instructing the Hong Kong government to quell the protests, the police force intensified their repressive actions, stepping up the use of force and making as many arrests as possible.

Nevertheless, some protests managed to remain peaceful. Different professional and social groups organized their own demonstrations—including lawyers, doctors, nurses, journalists, bankers, flight attendants, teachers, students, and even civil servants and family members of the police. For several days in August, the airport also became a venue for protest, until a court injunction was issued to ban it. On August 23, the public staged a “human chain action” along the route of Hong Kong’s sprawling metro system. The human chain was then adopted by secondary school students after the beginning of the new academic year in September. In September, protesters joined singing flash mobs in shopping malls around the city and sang a newly-composed movement song, *Glory to Hong Kong*, among others.

On September 4, the Chief Executive finally announced the withdrawal of the extradition bill, but she stopped short of conceding to other demands. The CCPOS survey conducted right after the latest government concession found that 75.7 percent of respondents, which included 68 percent self-identified centrists, believed that the withdrawal of the extradition bill was insufficient. According to the CCPOS surveys, public trust in the SAR government also plummeted from 4.16 on a 0-to-10 scale in early June to merely 2.87 in early September. These results thus suggested that protesters’ goals continued to enjoy a majority of support from the public by early September.

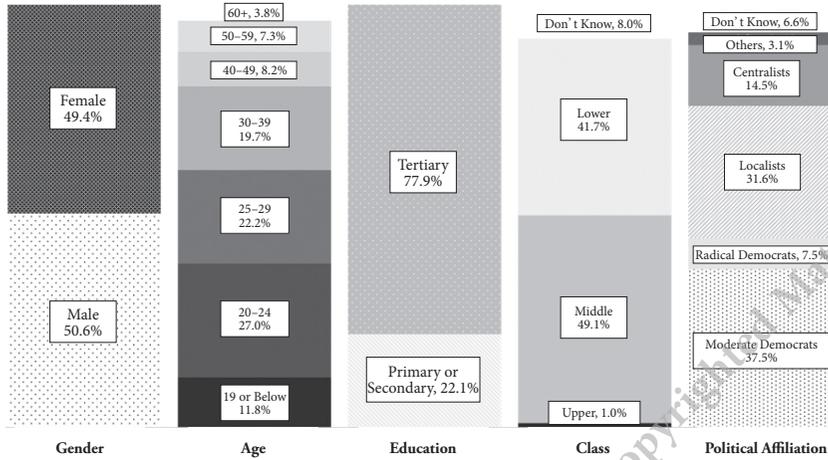
Nevertheless, there were still no signs that the government would back down. Governmental rhetoric focused on “stopping the violence and halting the chaos.” In early September, SAR government officials publicly talked about the possibility of evoking the Emergency Regulations Ordinance to deal with the situation. The tense atmosphere before October 1, the National Day, led the government to cancel celebratory activities on the day. As expected, large-scale protests and police-protester clashes occurred on the National Day. In one of the clashes, a police officer fired a live round at an 18-year-old protester. Public anger rose further. On October 4, the SAR government evoked the emergency law and announced the ban on face masks during protests. The ban only succeeded in immediately heightening the intensity and level of violence of protester actions.

#### **4. Who Were the Protesters?**

Like most of the city’s mass protests in the past, the Anti-ELAB protests had a youthful profile. The majority of our respondents belonged to the age group of 20–24 and 25–29, which took up 26.9 percent and 22.1 percent respectively in the overall sample. There was also 11.8 percent of respondents who were aged 19 or below, which shows the participation of secondary school students in the protests. The percentages varied across individual mobilizations. Mass rallies, such as those on June 9, June 16 or July 1, generally attracted more mature citizens, whereas fluid demonstrations and those that involved militant confrontations drew younger ones. Overall, the number of male (50.6 percent) and female protesters are similar in the sample.

Anti-ELAB protesters are highly-educated. On average, 77.9 percent reported having university/diploma level qualifications or above. This impressive figure is partly due to the rapid expansion of tertiary education in the past two decades—and because of that, the high concentration of young people in the movement thus logically implies an overall higher educational level of the protesters. However, this figure did not translate into overwhelming middle-class identification. While half of the respondents (49.1 percent) identified themselves as middle-class, 41.7 percent labelled themselves as lower-class. This may be an indication of downward social mobility experienced by some, though it does not necessarily mean that economic factors drove their participation.

Figure 1: Demographics of Anti-ELAB Protesters



In terms of political affiliation, the biggest group of respondents (37.5 percent) identified themselves as “moderate democrats”. This is followed by those who considered themselves “localists” (31.6 percent), in broadly defined terms. It is interesting to note that, early on in the protests (particularly June 9 and June 16), as much as 30 percent of the respondents claimed to be centrists or having no political affiliations, although this percentage dropped over the course of the protests. On the other hand, the proportion of “localists” gradually increased. 26.0 percent of the respondents claimed to be “localists” in the protests in June. In July and August, the percentage rose to be 27.0 percent and 35.6 percent respectively. It could be due to the absence of peaceful mass rallies similar to those in 9 June, 16 June, and 1 July in August. It suggests a process of ideological radicalization among the protesters alongside the radicalization of protest tactics over the four months.

Meanwhile, respondents tended to be somewhat experienced in social activism. 83.4 percent have joined a protest before, and 60.6 percent have participated in the Umbrella Movement of 2014. The majority of respondents said that their first protest experience was either the annual June Fourth commemoration or the Umbrella Movement. Still, 16.6 percent of respondents were newcomers, meaning that the Anti-ELAB protests was the first time they participated in social activism. Looking into these newcomers, we find that a significant proportion of them (33.5 percent) were young people aged 20–24, who were mostly secondary school students at the time the Umbrella Movement happened.

## 5. How Were They Organized?

Media and anecdotal accounts have described the Anti-ELAB protests as leaderless and decentralized. Unlike many previous protests in Hong Kong, the Anti-ELAB protests had no recognized leaders or leading organizations. Protesters coordinated their protest activities primarily through encrypted messaging apps, such as Telegram, as well as a popular online forum called LIHKG. By connecting protesters online and allowing them to stay anonymous, these social media and online platforms enabled sustained resource mobilization and a high volume of strategic discussions even in the absence of organized mobilizing structures. Although conventional political groups and their leaders were not completely irrelevant, they had been sidelined and merely played a supportive role to the protests. As such, the Anti-ELAB protests are in essence similar to many digitally-mediated, connective movements around the world, such as the Arab Spring uprisings, the Spanish Indignados movement, and Turkey's Gezi Park protests, where flat organizational structures were core to the protests.<sup>33</sup>

Our survey data corroborates with this leaderless characterization in several ways. First, respondents tended to report being self-mobilized in participating in the protests. Overall, the majority of respondents (84.4 percent) said they came with friends, schoolmates, family members or colleagues. Only 4.5 percent reported that they came with organizations. As much as 15.1 percent even claimed to have participated alone. This pattern of self-mobilized political participation is consistent with similar observations in the 1 July rallies.<sup>34</sup> Second, respondents tended to be heavily reliant on online and social media for information and communication related to the protests. Online media was overwhelmingly important in this movement. As much as 93.8 percent said that online news outlets were a frequent source of information, compared to 58.6 percent of mainstream media, including TV broadcasters, radio broadcasters and newspapers. This difference is revealing given that many mainstream media outlets have been co-opted by the government and the Chinese capital, and that online alternative media have become an important actor in Hong Kong's media landscape.<sup>35</sup> This finding thus more or less reflects protesters' vigilance in choosing their sources of information. In terms of social media, Facebook and online forums are the most popular for receiving information about the protests, with 85.0 percent and 75.9 percent of respondents using them as the most frequent channel.

Following that are Telegram and Whatsapp, both of which are encrypted messaging apps through which protesters coordinated protest actions and obtained real-time information about the protests.

Certainly, self-mobilization and high reliance on digital media were not new to the Anti-ELAB protests and were not the defining elements of leaderless protests. Survey findings on the Umbrella Movement have indicated very similar results in that protesters also claimed to be self-mobilized and digitally-mediated.<sup>36</sup> In fact, self-mobilization has long been a core feature of protest participation in Hong Kong, given the lack of strong movement organizations and the underdevelopment of party politics.<sup>37</sup> And while digital media did not become popular until the late 2000s, it quickly became the central platform through which participants mobilized and coordinated protests, as witnessed in earlier protests such as the anti-express rail-link movement of 2009–2010 and the anti-national education movement of 2012. But despite traits of horizontalism and decentralization, none of these protests were considered leaderless, as they were, more or less, led by some movement organizations—or simply regarded as such by the public. In the Umbrella Movement, for instance, the Hong Kong Federation of Students was generally recognized to be a core leader, even though it originally had no plans to become one.

Essentially, the leaderless nature of the Anti-ELAB protests had more to do with the prevalent antipathy among protesters towards a centralized movement leadership. Since early on in June, protesters already claimed to have “no central stage” (無大台 *wu datai*). Instead, they followed a “be water” philosophy, which guided them to be formless and shapeless as they moved fluidly across the city to create new protest sites. The mottos of “no central stage” and “be water” also imply two important lessons from the Umbrella Movement. First, there should be no particular political groups or movement activists able to represent the protesters as a whole. This alleviates the movement’s pressure to come to a consensus on ideologies and tactics, i.e., different groups can continue to advocate their own ideologies and tactics. Conflicts can be reduced, and the protests can stay highly vibrant. Second, learning from the failure of the Umbrella Movement that insisted on “protecting” the occupied sites, the “be water” approach allowed the protests to stay energetic. It also prevented the movement from causing continual public nuisance to the same community. To gauge protesters’ attitudes on leadership, we added two new survey questions in the protests from mid-June to late July: the first asked whether leaderless protests were more effective than protests with leaders;

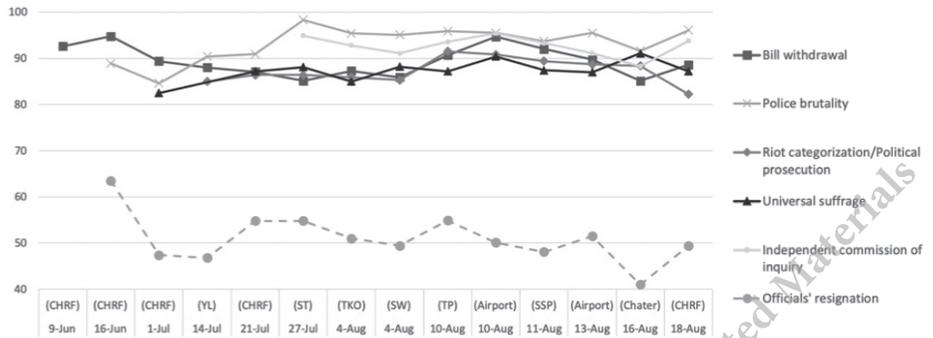
the second asked whether leaderless protests were better at representing respondents' voices than protests with leaders. 73.4 percent and 73.9 percent of respondents indicated that they "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statements respectively.

## **6. What Were They Fighting For?**

One central question in our surveys was what motivated people to protest and how strong different motivations were over time. The survey data provided some clues. We found that "calling for the withdrawal of the extradition bill" was the most important motivation of protesting in the early stage of the Anti-ELAB protests, namely in June and most of July, even though the bill was suspended on June 15. The percentage of respondents who saw it as "very important" remained at a high-level ranging from 85.1 percent to 94.8 percent in June and August, before the government declared the withdrawal of the Bill on 4 September.

"Expressing dissatisfaction with the police's handling of the protesters" was another key reason why participants joined the protests. On 1 July, there were 84.6 percent respondents regarded that to be a "very important" reason for them to join the protest. Since mid-July, it replaced "calling for the withdrawal of the extradition bill" to be the reason that the most respondents considered to be "very important." In selected protests, our survey also included options related to more specific actions of the police. Proportions of respondents who chose "very important" in the following options were: "protesting against arbitrary arrest by the police" (June 16, 98.3 percent), "demanding the government to retract its characterization of the June 12 protest as a riot" (July 14, 96.2 percent), and "expressing the dissatisfaction with the riot charges imposed by the police against the July 28 protesters" (August 4, 98.3 percent). The overwhelming importance attached to these options reflected the concerns of protests over police abuse of power. It shows that their focus has shifted from the bill to the police. This shift in focus can also explain why the movement could last for such a long time. While the demand for withdrawal of the bill is a static concern, the dissatisfaction towards the police is a persistent dynamic between the police force and the citizens. Every time when there appeared to be abuses of power on the part of the police, the momentum of the movement could be maintained or further energized.<sup>38</sup>

Figure 2: Motivations of Anti-ELAB Protesters



Note: Percentage of respondents who considered a given motivation as ‘the most important’ in the onsite surveys.

Due to the widespread concern about the police’s abuse of power, there was a rising public demand for launching an independent commission of inquiry to show that the government was accountable to the public. Therefore, since mid-July, we added the option “calling for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry.” Those who saw it as “very important” fared consistently more than 90 percent. Meanwhile, “striving for Hong Kong’s democracy” or “striving for dual universal suffrage”—another one of the core demands—also received tremendous support, with consistently more than 80 percent of respondents seeing it as “very important”. In comparison, fewer respondents consider “calling for the resignation of Carrie Lam or major officials” as “very important.” On June 16, 63.5 percent respondents considered it a very important motivation. The percentage dropped to around 50 percent from mid-June to early August and remained there throughout the rest of August. The stark contrast between calling for institutional reforms and officials’ resignation is noteworthy. It shows that protesters were seeking the fundamental overhaul of the political system rather than some quick fixes, as they did back in the July 1 rally of 2003, when they demanded that the then Chief Executive, C.H. Tung, step down for his responsibility in pushing forward the national security legislation. This ‘realization’ is likely due to their rich protest experiences accumulated over the past decade, through which they learned about the pitfalls of the political system that underrepresented the voice of the people.

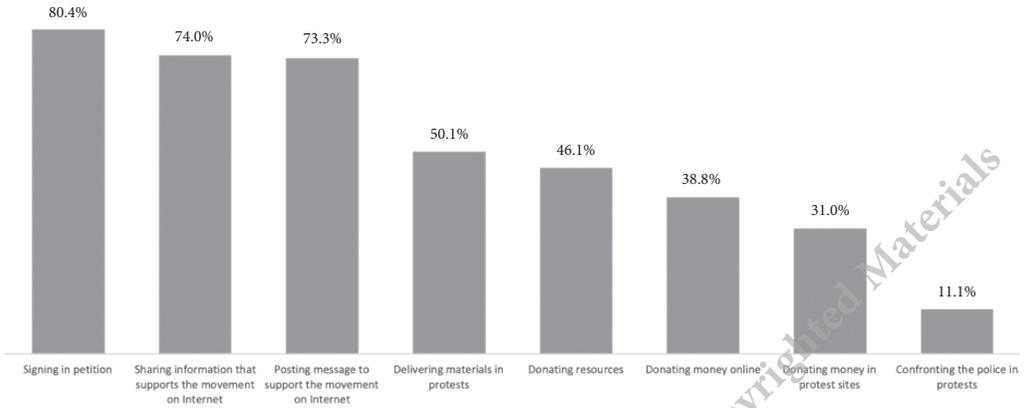
## **7. What Were the Protest Repertoire and Tactics?**

Another distinguishing feature of the Anti-ELAB protests is the diversity of protest repertoire and tactics. The protests were carried out in various forms: marches, rallies, sit-ins, wildcat actions, flash mobs, strikes, class boycotts, and human chains. There was a combination of peaceful actions and militant confrontations. Rather than following a fixed route or gathering at a specific place—as in most of the city’s previous protests—the Anti-ELAB protests often became fluid and formless, despite starting at specific spots, and were spontaneously shaped by onsite consensus and interactions with the police. Unlike their predecessors who were mostly held on the Hong Kong Island, the current protests diffused to different parts of the city, taking place in neighborhoods that had never experienced any protest events before.

There is no way to measure repertoire on a collective level through onsite surveys; but we tried to gauge the variegated means of participation on an individual level, starting in the August protests. Protesters engaged in a variety of protest activities: 46.1 percent reported having donated resources to the protests; 38.8 percent and 31.0 percent have donated money online and at protest sites respectively; 73.3 percent and 74.0 percent have respectively posted online and shared online information to support the protests; 80.4 percent have signed petitions; 50.1 percent have passed on resources on the frontline; 11.1 percent have stopped police advances. Overall, 43.7 percent of respondents have participated in more than five of the activities we listed.

Although the survey did not explicitly ask about protesters’ militant involvement (out of concern for the legal implications), we also found a high toleration of radical tactics among protesters. Overall, 90.9 percent of respondents either agree or strongly agree that confrontational actions could be justified when the government does not listen to the people. Meanwhile, 85.2 percent believed that peaceful and confrontational actions should be combined to yield the maximal impact. These figures indicate a high level of solidarity among protesters.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 3: Individual Means of Participation (percent respondents who engaged in a given protest action)**



Compared with the Umbrella Movement in which protesters became intensely divided over tactics at a later stage, the Anti-ELAB protests displayed an extraordinary level of solidarity rarely seen in Hong Kong's civil society. This is likely due to several factors: protesters' learning from their past mistakes, the increasingly repressive environment, and the gradual buildup of the protests that aligned protesters' motivations to act. In addition, the acceptance of radical action should also be understood in relation to the fact that the radical protests have exercised collective restraints. Across the protests throughout the summer, the protesters mostly targeted damage at government buildings and some public utilities that were considered to have played a role in suppressing the protests with the government. At least until the end of September, no innocent citizens were hurt by the protesters, nor were innocent shops damaged by the protesters<sup>40</sup>—although by October a fraction of protesters began attacking rival protesters who harassed them and damaging shops that were explicitly supporting the government.

Finally, protesters also displayed strong resolution in achieving the protest demands. From June to August, over 90 percent believed the protests should continue if the government refused to give any concessions beyond the suspension of the bill. Among them, over half argued that the protests should escalate. The proportion of supporters of escalation (out of the full sample) further rose from 39.1 percent on 1 July to 44.4 percent on August 18, even though the scale of the August 18

protest was even larger than the July 1 protest (and therefore should have included a larger proportion of “peaceful and non-violent protesters”). Proportions of supporters of escalation were even higher in the various district protests with relatively smaller scale, e.g., the proportion stood at 61.3 percent on 25 August. And among these respondents, 42.3 percent supported escalating the level of violence; 78.1 percent supported non-cooperative actions to paralyze the government; and 73.1 percent supported strike actions.

The growing level of radicalization may be attributed to two factors. One is that protesters were indeed increasingly radicalized, likely due to the concomitant escalation in the police’s hard-handed repression of the protests and the suspicion that the triads were working together with them. This is evident in the Yuen Long protest on July 27, which was staged to demonstrate against suspected involvement of triads the preceding week. In that protest, as many as 84.7 percent of respondents “strongly agree” with the use of radical tactics, making this the highest of all. Another factor is the possibility that less radical protesters were “dropping out” from the protests along the way for various reasons. The result was that an increasing proportion of protesters, who were either originally radical or increasingly radicalized, stayed behind in the sample. Since the onsite surveys are cross-sectional, we are unable to know which of these two factors is playing a more important role.

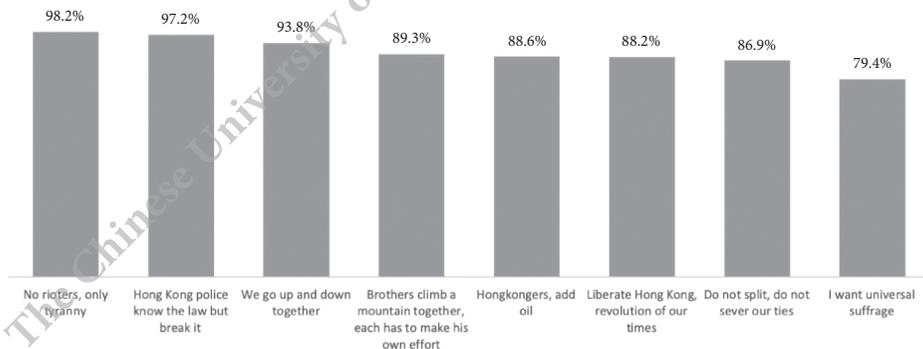
## 8. How Did They Frame Their Discontent?

While protesters shared a coherent set of motivations, multiple slogans had emerged and circulated throughout the Anti-ELAB protests. In social movement studies, slogans are often considered to be manifestations of collective action frames, which are meaning-making devices or “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate” social movements.<sup>41</sup> Frames are important for movements because they focus attention on certain elements, articulate them, and transform them into actions.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, understanding frames (and the framing processes) allows us to go beyond the motivations and explore the meanings that are being produced to achieve cultural resonance.

We began asking protesters questions about slogans in August because a number of slogans had been circulating by then and it would be important to see how protesters viewed them. Among a number of options, we found that “No rioters, only tyranny” (沒有暴徒，只有暴政

meiyou baotu, zhiyou baozheng) and “Hong Kong police know the law but break it” (香港警察，知法犯法 *Xianggang jingcha, zhifa fanfa*) are slogans with the highest identification, with 98.2 percent and 97.2 percent respectively who think that they are “able to” or “highly able to” represent the protests. “WE go up and down together” (齊上齊落 *qishang qiluo*), “brothers climb a mountain together, each has to make his own effort” (兄弟爬山，各自努力 *xiongdi pashan, gezi nuli*) and “no snitching, no severing of ties” (不篤灰、不割席 *bu duhui, bu gexi*), which were aimed at promoting solidarity and mutual respect for different views among protesters, are identified with slightly less. But there were still 89.3 percent and 86.9 percent of the respondents who saw them as very representative. “Hongkongers, add oil” (香港人加油 *Xianggangren jiaoyou*)—with “add oil” being a popular Cantonese phrase to express encouragement and support—is equally important (88.6 percent). “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” (光復香港，時代革命 *guangfu xianggang, shidai geming*) was recognized to a similar degree (88.2 percent). In comparison, “I want universal suffrage” (我要真普選 *woyao zhen puxuan*) (79.4 percent), which was the major slogan in the Umbrella Movement, was less popular and not regarded as being representative of the Anti-ELAB protests, even though political reform was one of the demands of the current protests.

**Figure 4: Identification with Slogans (percent respondents who think a given slogan is “able to” or “highly able to” represent the protests)**



Compared with the other slogans with extraordinarily high recognition, “Hongkongers, add oil” and “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” were more like empty signifiers with no particularly defined meanings. “Hongkongers, add oil” can be considered to be a personal

action frame which allows protesters to express their individual demands and emotions. By contrast, “liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” was considered to be more radical—and, to an extent, revolutionary—because of the word “liberate” and “revolution”. In fact, protesters of different age groups and political affiliations held markedly different views regarding to what extent these two slogans could represent the movement. Among the protesters who were aged 30 or below, 85.1 percent thought that “Hongkongers, add oil” could represent the protests, while 95.4 percent of the older protesters thought so. Meanwhile, younger protesters had stronger identification with “liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times”: 93.5 percent thought this slogan could represent the protests, while 77.5 percent older protesters thought so. This difference in identification between “Hongkongers, add oil” and “liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” was also found in protesters with different political orientations. Significantly more “moderate democrats” than “localists” thought “Hongkongers, add oil” could represent the protests. Yet the “localists” identified with “liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” more than the “moderate democrats.”

The results show that frames regarding police brutality were still, on the whole, the most resonant among protesters. To a large extent, this is not surprising given that the police had become a central focus of the protests by August. What is more interesting is that frames that emphasize unity and morale constituted the next most resonant category of frames. This finding suggests that maintaining collective identity among protesters—a crucial element that helps to sustain collective mobilization<sup>43</sup>—had also become an implicit objective in the Anti-ELAB protests, besides the withdrawal of the bill and an independent investigation into police brutality. By contrast, frames that advocate institutional changes—what social movement scholars call prognostic frames—are least important among the given options, even though they still enjoyed a significant degree of support. One possible explanation is that, although a sizeable proportion of protesters wanted either gradual or revolutionary reforms, reforms were still not the greatest common factor that could align most protesters.

## 9. Conclusion

After a period of movement abeyance in the post-Occupy period, Hong Kong experienced an emotional and turbulent summer of uprising that pushed the city to the brink of revolution. This article combined the

findings from onsite and population surveys to examine the characteristics of the Anti-ELAB movement. The results indicate that the politically oriented motivations, the coexistence of self-restrained and radical tactics, and the identity and solidarity frames of the protesters were largely shared by the majority of the public throughout the movement. While young and educated participants were the main driving forces of the movement, they were not struggling alone. Mobilization spanned generations, classes, and political orientations. The prolonged protests were therefore not a mere outgrowth of youth discontent, but rather had the characteristics of a popular movement. Digital technologies, meanwhile, served as a crucial medium for mobilizing people from horizontal networks, coordinating collective action, deliberating on collective frames, and sustaining the protests despite the strong sense of political inefficacy that prevailed in the preceding periods.

Moreover, this article also demonstrated that the new manifestations of protest found in the Anti-ELAB movement were mediated by the trajectory of dissent and counter-dissent dating back to the Umbrella Movement of 2014 and through to the new political environment of summer 2019. The perceived failure of the 79-day occupation in 2014 and the success of the counter-mobilization efforts thereafter all played crucial roles in shaping protesters' motivations, structure and strategy in the present movement.

First, in terms of motivations, although the Anti-ELAB Movement originated from dissent against a single policy initiative, the protesters' collective motivations for political reform and against the establishment illustrated the accumulated grievances towards the political system and various authoritarian encroachments in the last decade. Despite the absence of leaders to adjust protest frames and coordinate actions, protesters quickly dropped the expedient demand that called for the resignation of the major officials responsible for introducing the bill. Instead, they achieved an implicit consensus that the priority should be placed on investigation into the police and implementing universal suffrage. The former is crucial not only for addressing the wrongdoings throughout the movement, but also for preventing Hong Kong from becoming a police state. The latter is fundamental for making the SAR government accountable to its citizens. In short, the movement evolved into one with the broader goal of resisting the authoritarian control of Hong Kong society.

Second, in terms of structure, even though the Beijing authorities' hardline policy in the post-Occupy period effectively impeded traditional

movement organizations and imprisoned leading activists, it also created the conditions for the rise of a leaderless organizational structure. This leaderless structure was sustained by the use of digital media and online deliberation on Telegram and LIHKG, which also served as mobilizing platforms and information sources. These digital platforms enabled self-mobilization, sometimes of people from diverse backgrounds. Although these digital platforms were crucial in facilitating self-mobilization, rapid diffusion of information and, at times, collective deliberation and self-restraint among participants, they were assisted by on-the-ground networks and facilitators that had emerged earlier. For instance, the majority of the organizers of the city-wide and district rallies were politicians or activists who had been actively participating in community movements since 2014. Similarly, the student leaders and young politicians who earned territory-wide fame during the Umbrella Movement continued to be seen as the faces of the movement, who then took up a role in representing and lobbying for Hong Kong in the international arena.

Third, in terms of strategy, the defining organizational principle, “be water,” and the associated fluidity and diversity of the tactics adopted in the Anti-ELAB movement were the antithesis of the long, static occupation in the Umbrella Movement, which stirred up discontent among the wider population and hampered the morale of the protesters. Similarly, the action protocols, “climbing mountains together, making your own effort” and “do not split, do not sever our ties,” which stressed solidarity and mutual respect between nonviolent and militant protesters, were surprisingly effective in redressing the deep and evolving divisions between the nonviolent and militant camps during and after the Umbrella Movement. These protocols helped to facilitate the co-existence of peaceful rallies and militant confrontations. Once in place, these action protocols constrained and guided the responses of the participants in the face of radical actions, such as the storming of the LegCo building and the seizure of airport terminals. In parallel, the diffusion of the Lennon Wall in different districts in Hong Kong was actually a materialization of the plan of “blooming flowers into the communities” that was proposed by the non-violent camp during the Umbrella Movement.

Nonetheless, the resilience of the Anti-ELAB movement cannot be fully explained by the learning curve of the protesters or the hidden networks developed after the Umbrella Movement. Two contextual conditions in 2019 have to be highlighted. The first condition is the fact that

the extradition bill was indeed highly unpopular among the general public. In the opinion poll conducted by the HKUPOP before the June 9 protest, about two-thirds of the Hong Kong public disapproved the extradition of Hong Kong citizens to mainland China. Only about 17 percent approved it. In addition, throughout the first four months of the Anti-ELAB movement, public opinion toward the government and the police was highly critical. In the September survey conducted by CCPOS, for instance, about 70 percent of the respondents agreed that the police had used excessive violence, whereas only about 40 percent agreed that the protesters had used excessive violence. About 80 percent of the respondents supported the setting up of an independent commission of inquiry, one of the five core movement demands, whereas 75 percent supported the restart of political reform. Certainly, by the time this article was finalized, we could not predict if continual social unrest and increased levels of violence committed by protesters might have brought about changes in public opinion. But focusing on the first four months of the movement, it is very clear that strong public backing is a main condition for the movement's strength and sustainability.

The second contextual condition is the division within the ruling class in Hong Kong throughout the extradition bill controversy. Fearing that the bill would threaten their assets under Chinese jurisdiction, business elites had already expressed dissenting voices and adopted forms of passive resistance before the massive demonstrations began. Despite increasing pressure from the central and local authorities, many business and social elites continued to support the withdrawal of the bill and the introduction of an independent investigating commission, while making ambiguous statements that deviated from the regime narratives that sought to brand the protests in terms of riot or separatism. Unlike the Umbrella Movement in 2014, during which they stood united against the protesters, the ruling class were now much more fragmented. This division created opportunities for protests, such as general strikes and school boycotts, and the perception that concessions would be possible if the movement could be sustained.

The perceived division among the ruling elite and between the central and local authorities continued to emerge as the uprising unfolded. In a leaked audio recording of a close-door meeting between Carrie Lam and a group of business elites, the Chief Executive admitted that she has to serve two masters— the central authorities and local citizens— and hence lacked the autonomy to make necessary concessions

to the end the crisis.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, unlike in the Umbrella Movement, when business tycoons immediately and collectively expressed their disapproval of the Occupy protesters, the tycoons in 2019 did not adhere to the government discourse until the Anti-ELAB movement entered its sixth week, and spoke out only after the *People's Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency* criticized their silence. Whether these developments indicate a clear division among the ruling elite or a reflect a strategic measure to play hawk and dove to provoke division between the militant and peaceful wings of protesters remains uncertain. However, they revealed that the cracks among the ruling elite have deepened through this unprecedented political crisis.

Partly due to the elite divisions in Hong Kong and partly corresponding to the central government's hardline policy, the SAR authorities chose to adopt direct and coercive force to disperse the crowd and seal the cracks in the ruling coalition. In four months, the police fired more than 5,000 rounds of teargas, arrested nearly 2,400 people, and apparently broke many laws and rules of proper conduct. The confrontation between protesters and police spread into different communities and triggered anger from protesters and bystanders. Direct repression did not succeed in dispersing the crowds but instead weakened the public's trust towards public institutions. According to the CCPOS surveys, public trust in the police declined substantially from 5.60 on a 0-to-10 scale in early June to merely 2.89 in September. In other words, the solidarity among the protesters of the Anti-ELAB movement and the citizens' tolerance of radical tactics were not only self-generated; the strategies of the authorities also contributed to them.

Finally, the Anti-ELAB movement was distinguished by its international appeal. Facilitated by digital platforms, the protesters effectively transmitted their grievances and framed their struggle as a fight between democracy and authoritarianism and thus as relevant to the international community. The perceived opportunities for international moral support and political pressure helped them to develop interim goals and divide concrete tasks. Crowdfunding in local and diasporic communities, professionally-designed posters and advertisements in foreign presses, and congressional hearings overseas, for instance, enabled different individuals to make a contribution, to align themselves with the movement, and to make sense of their participation. This unique characteristic not only conditioned the options available to the regime but also contributed to the resilience of the leaderless movement.

To conclude, through the wave of fluid and innovative protests from June onward, public imagination of protest actions has widened, and Hong Kong society has undergone deep reflections on issues ranging from the understanding of violence to meanings of community space. Despite being inspired and conditioned by the movements and counter-movements in the preceding periods, and no matter how the current wave of protests ends, political activism in Hong Kong has undergone a profound evolution in the summer of 2019.

## Appendix

**Table 2: A Timeline of Selected Notable Events, June 9 to October 31**

| Date     | Events   |
|----------|--|
| June 9   | CHRF demonstration participated by 1 million people; Carrie Lam insisted that the second reading of the bill shall proceed on June 12  |
| June 12  | Besieging of the Legislative Council Complex, resulting in police-protester clash in the afternoon   |
| June 14  | "Mothers' Sit-in" Rally  |
| June 16  | CHRF demonstration participated by 2 million people  |
| June 17  | Besieging of the Legislative Council Complex and the Chief Executive Office  |
| June 21  | Besieging of the Police Headquarters   |
| June 26  | "Democracy Now, Free Hong Kong" G20 mass rally, followed by the besieging of the Police Headquarters at late night   |
| July 1   | CHRF demonstration, followed by besieging of and breaking into the Legislative Council by the more militant protesters   |
| July 6   | Reclaim Tuen Mun, which started the practice of organizing protest marches in different districts in Hong Kong during weekends   |
| July 14  | Demonstration in Shatin ended with severe police-protester clashes in a shopping mall  |
| July 20  | The pro-government "Safeguard Hong Kong" rally   |
| July 21  | CHRF demonstration ended in protesters defacing the national emblem outside the Chinese Liaison Office building in Sheung Wan<br>Attack of protesters and citizens by suspected gangsters in Yuen Long |
| July 26  | First Hong Kong International Airport rally  |
| July 27  | Reclaim Yuen Long – first unapproved (and hence technically illegal) protest   |
| July 28  | Rally in Chater Garden against police violence on July 21  |
| August 2 | Rally by civil servants  |
| August 4 | Kennedy Town rally and protest march in Tseung Kwan O  |

| Date         | Events  |
|--------------|---|
| August 5     | City-wide non-cooperation action and strike   |
| August 11    | Sham Shui Po rally; airport sit-in; a female protester's eye was shot by the police in one of the police-protester clashes in the city  |
| August 13    | Airport sit-in against police brutality, including the controversy surrounding protesters imprisoning a mainland journalist who acted suspiciously  |
| August 17    | Reclaim To Kwa Wan  |
| August 18    | CHRF demonstration participated by 1.7 million citizens   |
| August 23    | Pro-democracy human chain action throughout the city  |
| August 25    | Police Relatives Connect rally  |
| August 31    | Protest rally on Hong Kong Island; later at night, police-protester clashes occurred in Kowloon; riot police entered the Prince Edward metro station and attacked protesters on the train |
| September 2  | Class boycotts started in university and secondary schools  |
| September 8  | Rally to U.S. Consulate General to support the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act   |
| September 10 | Beginning of the action of singing of "Glory to Hong Kong" in shopping malls and football matches   |
| September 15 | Unapproved protest march on Hong Kong Island  |
| September 21 | Yuen Long station sit-in rally  |
| September 27 | Rally at Chater Garden to support victims of police brutality   |
| September 28 | CHRF rally to commemorate the 5 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Umbrella Movement  |
| October 1    | Protests on Hong Kong Island and various districts on the National Day  |
| October 4    | The Hong Kong government evoked the Emergency Regulations Ordinance and enacted the anti-mask law   |
| October 6    | Protest march on Hong Kong Island   |
| October 13   | Protests at shopping malls across the city, followed by police-protester clashes in several districts   |
| October 20   | Protest rally in Tsim Sha Tsui  |
| October 27   | Demonstration in Tsim Sha Tsui  |
| October 31   | Police-protester clashes in Central, where protesters used the occasion of Halloween to protest against the anti-mask law; clashes also occurred in Mongkok                               |

## Notes

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- 32 Some activists and protest groups, including the CHRF, started to raise the call for democratic reform in some of the protest activities in late June. The rationale is that the lack of democracy in the political system is the root of governmental irresponsiveness. Hence a fundamental cure of Hong Kong’s problem has to include democratization. Interestingly, according to the authors’ onsite observations, the call for democratic reform was not entirely welcomed by some protesters in some protest activities in late June. The latter protesters thought that the movement should keep a sharper focus on the extradition bill and the plight of the protesters arrested on June 12. The statement made at the end of the successful act of storming the LegCo on July 1, however, virtually established the place of “democratic reform” on the movement’s agenda.
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- 39 Notably, the CCPOS survey in September found that about 55 percent of the Hong Kong general public also agreed with the idea that radical actions are understandable when the government fails to listen to peaceful protests.
- 40 Admittedly, there were ‘borderline cases’ which had caused debates among the protesters. One example was the capture of a mainland journalist during the airport action on August 13. The use of force against a journalist was regarded by some protesters as having crossed the line of acceptability. But some protesters pointed toward the suspicious conduct by the mainland journalist.
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