

Hong Kong Between “One Country” and “Two Systems”

**Essays from the Year that Transformed the Hong
Kong Special Administrative Region (June 2019 – June
2020)**

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Transformed the Hong Kong Special
Administrative Region (June 2019 –
June 2020)

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Donna Marie, you know why.

The essays are offered to the people of Hong Kong who have served as the subjects of two great experiments in governance.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

“言有尽而意无穷” [Words and meanings are endless].

It will be hard to forget the late afternoon of 9 June 2019. People had been whispering for days about what was coming—some worried and others looked forward to whatever was to come with a sense of excited anticipation. Only three days before, as I was arriving in Hong Kong, there has been a rare protest against the proposed extradition bill¹ by Hong Kong’s lawyers. People were angry; they believed this extradition bill might be the beginning of the end of Hong Kong’s autonomy. Some people in Hong Kong suggested that this return of the extradition bill was meant as a means of reaching into Hong Kong to rectify² critics of the central authorities. And they did not want to see it gone—whatever the formal political relationship with the Mainland.

I did not pay much attention; I had been focused on a series of meetings and remembered in any case the way that the Umbrella Movement protests had evolved in 2014. I had been told that protests were scheduled that day against the Extradition Law that had been the subject of intense discussion among many people in Hong Kong. It was not clear what the central authorities in Beijing had planned or what the local government would do in the face of mounting disquiet on the street and, surprisingly, among Hong Kong’s business leaders. Everybody had an opinion, of course. Few thought that the protests would amount to much in the long term. This was a city now used to

¹ The Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 (2019 年逃犯及刑事事宜相互法律協助法例 (修訂) 條例草案)).

² Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution” (6 November 1957); available <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch03.htm>.

(“It is a movement for carrying out a nation-wide debate which is both guided and free, a debate in the city and the countryside on such questions as the socialist road versus the capitalist road, the basic system of the state and its major policies, the working style of Party and government functionaries, and the question of the welfare of the people, a debate which is conducted by setting forth facts and reasoning things out, so as correctly to resolve those actual contradictions among the people which demand immediate solution. This is a socialist movement for the self-education and self-remolding of the people”). For a sense of the way in which this term is used, see, e.g., Frederick C. Teiwes, “The Origins of Rectification: Inner Party Purges and education Before Liberation,” *The China Quarterly* 65:15-53 (1976.)

mass manifestations of opinion, and as well, a city seemingly now beyond the large scale protests of the 2014 Umbrella Movement.

I was not prepared for the scale of the manifestations, even the very small glimpse of which I could see standing on the pedestrian bridges crossing Hennessey Road near the Wai Chai station. I stood for a long time looking at the faces of the individuals and then blurring them to see the aggregated face of the crowd. I assumed exuberance, but there was a funereal air to the manifestation of public sentiment, one that seemed to mix hope, fear, and a determination to push forward, whatever the cost. At the time many felt the cost would be small. They looked back on the apparent consequences of the Umbrella Movement and thought that this would produce something of a repetition from the authorities.

The year that followed was one of tremendous change. These changes, however, could not have been readily foreseen by the hundreds of thousands marching on 9 June 2019, the local officials who viewed this with some trepidation but with little deep concern, or the central authorities who expected quick and resolute response to avoid the embarrassments of the upheavals of 2014 and the Umbrella Movement. Few could have predicted that the protests would transform their objectives from resistance to the Extradition Law, permitting Hong Kong people to be extradited to the Mainland, into a push for a substantially deeper and more permanent understanding of the “Two Systems” principle in the “One Country-Two Systems arrangement that served as Hong Kong’s political model.

No one could have predicted the sustained support of the people for the protesters, the Five Demands as an organizing principle of local protest political action, of the violence that would follow the initial protests, of the detachment of the principles of democratic governance of Hong Kong from the Sino-British Joint Declaration,³ and of the strong support by the international community for the protest movement. Likewise no one could have foreseen an equally strong transformation of the position of the central authorities, which moved from a more or less patient toleration and plan for gradual Sinification of Hong Kong to be completed by the end of the term of the Sino-British Joint Declaration to a strong move to incorporation of Hong Kong into its regional development plans. No one could have foreseen the way that the “One Country” principle would be developed and eventually manifested in the National Security Law for Hong Kong and associated regulations that would effectively reconceive the nature and practice of political autonomy in Hong Kong. And no one could have seen how a global pandemic might play

³ Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong (19 December 1984); available [<https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/jd2.htm>].

a critical role in the great shifting of local power dynamics that made it possible to eventually crush the protest movement, successfully counter international support for the protesters at relatively little cost to the central authorities in Beijing, and reset the China-Hong Kong political model.

People, and especially elite chroniclers of events, prefer to travel into the future with their eyes firmly focused on the past. Society is organized, and tends to see itself—under the guidance of vanguards who have captured authority for this task one way or another—in a classically dysfunctional way, that is in a way that defies a normality. Society's present is only understood in relation to its past. The future cannot be unlocked, nor the present understood, in the absence of a well interpreted understanding of the past. That project of *intentionally* understanding the past provides the basis for orthodox society for reading, understanding, and evaluating the condition of its present, and for identifying the actions necessary to recast the past that vindicates its future.

To that end history becomes an obsession—to preserve the past, to mimic it, to liberate oneself from the past. But it is through the lens of the past that the present is understood and the future can be conceived. And thus the dysfunction: the past is never merely a collection of facts, but a chronicle of the societal present wrestling with its current self. One understands the past, then, only as a function of its use to the present; one understands the present only as its own reflection of the past. The dysfunctional, then, is the definition of the normal and becomes functional, that is it serves as the basis for recognizing the normal, the real, the “fact” or the proper interpretation of things.

In a sense, all history is bound up in “history issues”—and are centered on socio-cultural projects that are directed toward preserving the past into the present, of constituting the past as an indictment of present, or of understanding the past as an incomplete movement toward an idealized future. This changes very little whether the underlying premise of history is cyclical or progressive. The present mimics the past and that mimicry calls out either for rejection to break the pattern of repetition (and the failures of progress in historical development) or as evidence that the present might give way to a distinctive future. In any case, one has one's eyes firmly focused on the past. The history of the United States before 1865 provides a case in point. Reading the past—the journey from union in 1789, to secession, in 1861—has been the subject of varying interpretation and emphasis, depending for example, on whether the “present” national project involved nation building (1865 – 1937) or whether that contemporary project centered on slavery and race. The not much shorter history of Hong Kong also suggested a long period of distinctive “presets” making use of the past to manage its self-

understanding and pointing societal objectives toward a managed future.

So it was that one might have been excused, given these baseline socio-cultural reflexes, of assuming that the great protests that started 9 June 2019 would somehow mimic the events of 2014 and its Umbrella Movement. There would be protests, international attention, much handwringing and blustery statements, and little but perhaps crucial compromise. But of course that backwards looking was far too narrow. It focused only on a reading within Hong Kong. It did not take into account that other key actors might read (backwards) their own histories, and their own interpretations of the Umbrella Movement in the (re)construction of their present moving forward. It failed, certainly to note that China itself was now a quite different political space in 2019 than it had been in 2014. It failed to recognize that the UK's present was molded by a rereading of its own history that might reconceive its role in the world and the forms and objectives to be emphasized. And it failed to read the way the United States had plunged into its own contemporary crisis of self-identity as it engaged in a tremendous battle over the meaning and implications of its own past (projected inwards to its domestic reconstitution and outwards toward its external relations).

From 9 June 2019, every major actor—and the ‘priestly castes’ of elite interpreters who were to chronicle the events that then transpired—all of them miscalculated. All of them were blind to the compulsions of others. All of them were so focused on themselves that the present came undone in the chaotic interplay of changing views of narrowly drawn pasts projected onto the present. Of course, a year later, one can at last see what the ultimate consequences of the events set in motion, at least symbolically, by those protests that started on 9 June and extend to the present. The protests appeared to mark a turning point, and the start of an end game, around the issue of the character and prerogatives of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) within China and in the world. An end game because one could trace the origins of this discussion back to the negotiations between the United Kingdom (perhaps as proxy for the international community) and the People's Republic of China for the return of land leased to the Hong Kong Crown Colony at the turn of the 19th century, and the ceding (back) of sovereignty over the smaller territory ceded to the United Kingdom by the last imperial dynasty in the 19th century.

The compromise reached to make possible those transfers became known as the “One Country, Two Systems” model. That model reconstituted the Crown Colony, both those lands ceded to Britain by the Imperial Chinese Government and those portions of the Colony situated on lands leased from China, as a single Chinese Special Administrative Region (“SAR”). Within that SAR the Chinese government agreed to preserve certain features of its political-economic model, features that were incompatible with the Marxist-

Leninist political-economic model of the rest of China. This arrangement was memorialized in an *international agreement* between China and the United Kingdom. But the essence of that agreement conceded that Hong Kong was an *integral part of the People's Republic of China* and thus that its constitutional ordering would be related to and subsumed within the Chinese political order. And thus a fundamental contradiction was built into the arrangement from the very outset—a piece of national territory, but one subject to international constraints on the authority of the national government with respect to its governance. Still, it was the ambiguities within that contradiction that made the arrangement possible. It served as a space within which each side could indulge its own beliefs as to the fundamental character of the arrangement, the intentions and objectives of its provisions, and the relationship between the three parties to the arrangement—China, the U.K (and after to some extent the international community) and the people of Hong Kong. How those ambiguities would be exploited and then manifested in the governance of Hong Kong remained open.

The history of the SAR has shown the ways that the ambiguities in the arrangement could be used to the advantage of the parties, and how it chronicled the changing power relations between the two great power parties. One Country, Two Systems started life with a heavy emphasis on the “Two Systems” portion of the model. China was still at the start of what would be the wildly successful project of “socialist modernization.” The emblem of that future was marked by the establishment of Shenzhen, just across the border from the Hong Kong SAR. And indeed, from the 1980s, one might even measure the relative position of Chinese economic development by noting the growth of Shenzhen as part of what became the great Pearl River delta manufacturing hub for transactions at first negotiated mostly in Hong Kong but then gradually migrating across the SAR border.

As Chinese economic power grew and along with it, China's political confidence and the elaboration of its political theory, the status of Hong Kong became increasingly focused, on the Chinese side, on the cultivation of the “One Country” part of the formula, and the stricter management of the “Two Systems” elements of the arrangement. This impulse grew even as Hong Kong developed its own unique political culture, and its sense of the SAR's relationship with the rest of the nation. As central authorities increasingly thought of integration and domestication, Hong Kong people (intellectuals, workers, and others mostly) increasingly cultivated the unique political culture of Hong Kong as an international city, one that had absorbed substantial elements of international political sensibilities. For them, “Two Systems” served as an internationally guaranteed right to develop autonomously, and as a constraint on the power of the Chinese central authorities of “misuse” of the One Country principles to absorb Hong Kong into the Chinese political-economic

model. Hong Kong was part of China, to be sure, but a separable part, and one whose uniqueness would be guaranteed not by the Chinese state but by the international community.

That difference of view proved to be increasingly explosive after the end of the 20th century. That was a period marked by increased political differentiation—especially respecting the cultivation of civil and political rights—even as an increasingly frustrated China sought to more tightly align the Hong Kong SAR to its national goals and cultures, under the leadership of the vanguard. There were explosions almost from the start of the 21st century. Efforts viewed by the masses as threatening Hong Kong political “liberties” especially as against the central authorities, were the subject of political agitation. Many of these campaigns were successful enough to limit substantial threats to the central elements of Hong Kong’s political self-conception.

But all this changed after 2014 and the Umbrella Movement. What started out as an effort of the central authorities to aid in the reform of Hong Kong’s government, its forms of representation, and the relationship with national organs, became a mass response against threats to the democratic governance (such as it was and as it was understood within the broader constraints of the original One Country Two Systems deal) in Hong Kong. What was particularly notable was both the leadership of young people, mostly students, and their alliance with elements of the working class. Also notable was the way that the international foundations of the One Country Two Systems deal appeared to permit the internationalization of the Umbrella Movement. I suspect that 2014 marked a sort of moment of clarity for the Chinese central authorities—one in which they realized the extent to which the One Country Two Systems arrangement might pose a threat to their overall authority over Hong Kong. That threat was made more immediate given what appeared to be the emergence of policy that sought to align all of the cities of the Pearl River delta into a sort of aggregated whole. That planning also required a greater control over the entire region, and perhaps also likely, a greater emphasis on the One Country portion of the deal. As well, one enters here a time of increasing government suspicion of the projection of international arrangements, special procedures and the like into Chinese territory. Notions of foreign interference, especially as global discourse became increasingly critical of the Chinese political-economic model, began to loom larger. And suspicions only grew in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement.

By 2019, then, the stage appeared to be set for explosion. On the one side was the alliance of Hong Kong elements, along with significant portions of the international community, who saw Hong Kong as an international city, one whose foundation was built on international law and treaty that constrained national power to reshape its political-economic model. This was the Hong Kong of Two

Systems—pluralist, centering political and civil rights, transnational constitutionalist, and aligned with the sensibilities of global society. On the other side were the Chinese central authority and Hong Kong nationalists, who saw Hong Kong as an integral part of China, who were worried about separatist tendencies, and who sought greater integration with the rest of the nation. This was the Hong Kong of One Country—nationalist, focused on security and economic, social, and cultural rights, and seeking greater alignment with the rest of the nation (subject to protection of peculiarities that would over the generations perhaps disappear).

Still, as 2019 began, this contradiction and its explosive potential were viewed by many through the lens of past events—it was the natural order of things. There were expectations of realignment between One Country and Two Systems, but no one expected a challenge, and especially a successful challenge to the fundamental principles or their application. That is, no one expected the need or desire to resolve the fundamental contradiction of Hong Kong as an international city within China. But then, little notice appeared to be taken of what was going on beneath the polished surface of conferences, press events, and the routine of politics and bureaucracy in a city focused on prosperity. Hardly anyone, then, was prepared for the spiraling of events that was triggered by yet another point of friction (like so many before) between Hong Kong internationalists and nationalists—the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 (2019 年逃犯及刑事事宜相互法律協助法例 (修訂) 條例草案)(the “Extradition Law”).⁴

Over the year that began in June 2019, Hong Kong became a nexus point of global conflict. What started as dislike of the Extradition Law, became part of a larger struggle on several levels. On one level the struggle pushed both internationalists and nationalists to more extreme positions and to give them the space to push for change that would have been unpalatable even a year earlier. Hong Kong also became a battleground in the conflict between the United States and China over the shape of the international trade order. And lastly, Hong Kong became an even more important battleground over the legitimacy of the internationalization of politics and constitutionalism. At the end of the process, Hong Kong was no longer faced with the adoption of an Extradition Law. Instead, a year later Hong Kong adopted a National Anthem Law and was forced to accept adoption of a National Security Law for Hong Kong (one which it had successfully avoided for decades).

⁴ Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019; SBCR 1/2716/19; available [https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr18-19/english/bills/brief/b201903291_brif.pdf].

At the same time Hong Kong internationalism appeared to collapse, or at least to evidence its weakness in the face of a resurgent Chinese national government. By the end of June 2020 it was becoming clear that there would be a fundamental shift from Two Systems to One Country; more importantly there would be a shift from the management of that arrangement from the international community to Chinese national authorities. It will take years to understand the magnitude of the changes and to see their effects in Hong Kong, and their effects on Chinese efforts to move to the center of shaping international affairs. As important, by the end of June 2020, Chinese political ideology had also evolved—the deepening of New Era theory, and its expression as policy, was decisive in shaping the increasingly muscular approach of the Chinese authorities toward both the nationalization of the Hong Kong issue and the significant refocus of the governing principle from Two Systems to One Country. To understand this shift one must understand Chinese Marxist-Leninism in its transition to the New Era, a transition that assumed its current trajectories after 2012 which continues to the present. One must also understand the rise of a self-conception of Hong Kong as a permanently autonomous political apparatus apart from the Mainland, a *political sovereignty* grounded in international norms but one that acknowledges China's claims of *territorial sovereignty*. Lastly, one must understand the changed international situation that made reliance on the international community, and the UK as the representative of that traditional global internationalism, a very great gamble.

These essays were written as the events unfolded. They are meant to retain the freshness of the moment. The essays are presented in the form of a diary that marks an intellectual progression that matches the march of events. The original drafts were written at the time the events analyzed were happening (each essay is dated to the time of its initial writing) and lightly edited for the book. The object is to capture not just the strategic and normative developments that produced the new order for Hong Kong in June 2020, but also to give a sense of the uncertainties and anticipations as the events themselves transpired during the course of the year. The process of ideological genesis from June 2019 to June 2020 is most immediately captured from a state of anticipation without the benefit of foresight. It is that immediacy that adds a layer of analysis to the usual post facto accountings and examination of events. That layering, anyway, is the aim. The essays, then, do not look back on events after the fact, but speculate, discover, and captures moments that from June 2020 look inevitable but which from the perspective of June 2019 appeared far less so. They are meant to retain the freshness of the moment.

Much like the protest and democracy movement itself, as well as the responses of local and central authorities and the international community, these events occurred in fits and starts from the initial mass protests to the adoption and enforcement of the Hong Kong

National Security Law and the Allegiance Law to more quickly fold Hong Kong into a borough of the Pearl River Mega City planned for the region by the central authorities, an embedding occurring well before the anticipated 2047 end of the international agreement's term. The first half of 2020 marked the decisive move by the central authorities to resolve brought on by the protests. What followed was a period of substantial clean up.

By 2021, the transformation of Hong Kong was effective complete. While the National Security Law and the Allegiance Law laid the foundation for advancing patriotic elements and punishing others, the changes to the Hong Kong election law of 2021 effectively made it impossible for Hong Kong's internationalist camp, and those involved in the protests of 2019-2020, to effectively participate government. The arrest of over fifty pro-democracy campaigners, forty-seven of which were indicted in a single count,⁵ on the eve of the announcement of the plans for moving forward with the reform of Hong Kong's election law in the National People's Congress in Beijing⁶ signaled the end of the protest era and the finalization of the transformation of Hong Kong's two systems principle into an expression of a closely managed variation of the One Country principle, one that necessarily rejected civil and political internationalism in order to align with the basic principles of the political-economic system of the nation under the leadership of its vanguard.

The central government is taking decisive action to develop a democratic election system that conforms to the conditions of Hong Kong and reflects the overall interests of society, to ensure that patriots govern Hong Kong and kick out the disruptors from Hong Kong. This will push Hong Kong's democracy toward a healthy, orderly and higher-quality level.⁷

The short road from June 2019, the last year of the initial phase (1997-2019) of Hong Kong's return to China, to 2020 and the start of Hong Kong's "New Era" is observed and considered in the essays that follow.

⁵ Jessie Pang, James Pomfret, Dozens of leading Hong Kong pro-democracy campaigners charged with subversion, *Reuters* (27 February 2021); available [<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-politics/dozens-of-leading-hong-kong-pro-democracy-campaigners-charged-with-subversion-idUSKCN2AS00J>].

⁶ 关于《全国人民代表大会关于完善香港特别行政区选举制度的决定（草案）》的说明——2021年3月5日在第十三届全国人民代表大会第四次会议上 [Notes on the "Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Electoral System (Draft)" at the Fourth Session of the Thirteenth National People's Congress on March 5, 2021]; available [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021lh/2021-03/05/c_1127172464.htm].

⁷ Shen Du, "Improving Hong Kong's electoral system important for developing high-quality democracy," *China Today* (7 March 2021); available [http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctenglish/2018/zdtj/202103/t20210307_800238930.html].

In 2019 those who initially wrapped themselves in what they thought was the protective shielding of the Sino-British Joint, or even more audaciously, in the protections of international law and principles, found that these have provided little more than the shroud used to bury their aspirations in 2020. Now outcast and outsiders, they must adjust their aspirations to the new realities of Hong Kong or face rectification; fleeing has become dangerous.⁸ “In Western democracies, they have been welcomed as refugees escaping Beijing’s tightening grip over Hong Kong. In China, they have been denounced as violent criminals escaping punishment for their seditious activities.”⁹

The essays are offered in the spirit of the old saying--core of 当局者迷，旁观者清 [Insiders are blind to what bystanders can see]-yet sensitive to the realities that insiders also know what bystanders cannot see. The essays are originated as and retain the flavor of a contemporaneous engagement with historical events as they unfolded. The essays, as well, are presented as the story of a rapidly changing analytical framework within which events occurred and through which they could be interpreted. The essays, then, are both a journal of events, and a journey. For its readers it may serve as a record of the way that the way of thinking about the situation of Hong Kong changed radically over such a short period of time. It is also, in part, a chronicle of the way in which larger events—the US-China trade war, and the COVID19 pandemic—can have a substantial effect on what would otherwise be a localized affair.

It is as important to underline that there is no great moral or political agenda to the essays. They take the world as the parties represent it, and then hold each to their respective representation. Do not expect this to be the work of a public intellectual with a (not so) hidden agenda. It is not meant as polemic, nor as apology. But it does relish recounting the idiosyncrasies of the protagonists, each bound within the constraints of their driving ideologies which drive them relentlessly through a series of events that for at least some of the actors became a deeply personal tragedy, even as for others it represented a triumph perhaps unimaginable when the protests began in June 2019.

⁸ Natalie Lung and Kari Lindberg, “China Jails 10 Hong Kong Activists Over Attempt to Flee by Boat,” *Bloomberg* (30 December 2020); available [<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/china-jails-10-hong-kong-activists-over-attempt-to-flee-by-boat/ar-BB1ckMSi>]

⁹ Austin Ramzy and Maria Abi-Habib, “As China Clamps Down, Activists Flee Hong Kong for Refuge in the West: China calls them “violent criminals.” Asylum seekers from Hong Kong are the latest catalyst for deteriorating relations between Beijing and Western countries,” *The New York Times* (24 October 2020); available [<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/world/asia/hong-kong-asylum-seekers.html>].

The focus on discourse. The essays examine the events as they happened from the perspective of the rhetoric of the parties--their statements, their gestures, their performances on the streets, and ultimately their memorialization of these discourses in binding instruments most acutely expressed in the two of the three germinal laws of the new Hong Kong after June 2020--the National Anthem Law and the National Security Law. To some extent this discursive focus owes a debt to and might be comfortably embedded within analytic traditions that owe much to the insights of Guiguzi (鬼谷子) and its rhetoric,¹⁰ which makes its appearance throughout the essays and perhaps binds them together into something more coherent. These insights frame some of the analysis, as do the insights of critical thinkers from the Western tradition.

The essays are organized chronologically into six parts. They are critical essays in the sense that they try to make sense of events as they are occurring. Part I (Epilogue as Introduction) starts at the end of the story. It uses a fairly rare statement endorsed by a substantial majority of the representatives of United Nations Human Rights special procedures calling for the development of decisive measures to protect human rights in the face of the enactment by Chinese authorities of a National Security Law for Hong Kong to situate the end of the story that began with exuberant protests on 9 June 2019 and ended with the imposition of a legal order that effectively reshaped the character of the Hong Kong political order. It does this from the perspective of one of the international community--perhaps among the actors most adversely affected by the story that is Hong Kong between June 2019 and July 2020.

Part II consists of eleven chapter essays. These essays take the reader from the beginning of the protests in June 2019 to the end of August 2019. The essays serve as an analytical witness to the development of the initial phase of the Hong Kong protests. Step by step, as it occurred, it considered the escalations of ambitions and tactics of the protesters, the growing intransigence of local officials, and the start of what would become an elaborate and largely effective counter position of the Chinese central authorities. Much of what is developed in these early weeks provides the foundation for everything that develop thereafter. Positions that have their start, sometimes quite tentatively, in these early weeks, later emerge as powerful strategies in the months that follow.

Part III consists of seven essays. The essays critically chronical what then appeared to be the critical events taking place from the beginning of September to the end of November 2019. These take the reader through the next phase of development, one in which

¹⁰ Guiguzi (鬼谷子), *Guiguzi: China's First Treatise on Rhetoric; A Critical Translation and Commentary* (Hui Wu (trans.); Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016 (before 220 A.D.))

initial positions are fully developed and hardened. Here one sees fully developed the ideological position of the central authorities that in retrospect were faithfully memorialized in the National Anthem Law, the National Security Law, and most recently in the amendments to the Election rules in the Hong Kong Basic Law in March 2021. At the same time, one encounters here the maturing of an aligned position of the various groups of protesters that sought to deepen the internationalization of its movement and preserve its efforts to permanently protect a measure of liberal democratic order in Hong Kong. Lastly the manifestation of international response, grounded first in the narrow strictures of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and thereafter in general fundamental principles of self-determination and the international civil and political rights of coherent political communities, is also well developed in this period.

Part IV then considers the relatively short period of stalemate between December 2019 and April 2020 in three essays that cover the apex of protester power in December 2019 and January 2020, and then the stalemate pause imposed by the realities of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. One moves here from the unabated storm of protest to the opportunity that pandemic provides local and national authorities to break that stalemate in their favor. It was during this period that the stakes around the proper conceptualization of the One Country Two Systems principle became clear. On the one side were the central authorities who now had fully developed the construct of the principle as a means of permitting autonomy within the discretionary authority of the state. On the other were the protesters and the international community who now saw in One Country Two Systems a principle of divided sovereignty in which the political choices of the Hong Kong community could be protected against encroachment by the central authorities, one based on international liberal democratic and human rights principles.

Part V then chronicles the end of the protest movement and the emergence of a “new era” Hong Kong between May and July 2020. Its seven essays critically chronicle the way that the central authorities drove events from May 2020, in a way that paralleled the way that protesters drove events in June through September 2019. This starts with the announcement of an intention to impose a National Security Law, through the imposition of first a National Anthem Law and then ending with the adoption of the National Security Law itself. It considers the critical importance of the development of the mechanics of a patriotic front as a means of dividing and managing the people of Hong Kong, and the relatively little opposition that the central authorities faced in successfully realizing its objectives.

The single essay that makes up Part VI serves as the afterword of the story that was told in chapters two through thirty. This is not just the end of the story of the protests in Hong Kong but also the

beginning of the story of Hong Kong as a more integrated part of the Pearl River area of China. No longer an international city in the sense of internationally recognized and protected legal autonomy from its territorial sovereign, Hong Kong now rejoins the nation as a Chinese city with substantial international connections. Beyond that, Hong Kong's future is now far more closely aligned with that of the Chinese heartland and with the vision of China's central authorities for the nation as a whole.

The essays have been only lightly edited and footnoted to retain their connection with the time in which they were written; very little was done to update the essays or the writing except where necessary to add context. It was the journey from protests to National Security Law rather than its conclusion that is rich with insight about all of the principal participants in these events. My hope is that these essays may provide some perspective, not just on the events in Hong Kong as they unfolded, but on the evolution of Chinese and international political ideology in this crucial period of history. The object of these essays is not so much the accumulation of facts as it is to reveal the meanings that were constructed from out of responses to perceptions of threat and the undertaking of responsibility, where such action invited not just contradiction but conflict. Again it is worth emphasizing that the essays are meant to provide a record of thinking at the time the events were occurring, full of the presumptions, prejudices and perspectives of the times. Each one of them, then, is offered as a sort of temporally contingent witness statement, both of the times and of the thinking as events occurred, without benefit of foreknowledge of what was to come. And that, I hope, may, be their ultimate value to those who read the essays in the years to come.

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31 March 2021

Hong Kong Between “One Country” and “Two Systems”:

**Essays from the Year that Transformed
the Hong Kong Special Administrative
Region (June 2019 – June 2020)**