

## **Post-Umbrella Movement: Localism and Radicalness of the Hong Kong Student Movement**

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### **Abstract**

Hong Kong student movements before the Umbrella Movement showed a political outlook of voicing within norm of the establishment, using “peaceful, rational and non-violent” approaches, acknowledging the authorities of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and mainland Chinese governments and recognizing attachment to the motherland China. Today’s new emerging political outlook of the Hong Kong student movement has a profile of anti-establishment, using more assertive means and not excluding radical behaviour, distrust of the HKSAR and mainland authorities and assertion of radical localism. In the last two years, Hong Kong students have undergone a rapid change in their orientation, resulting in today’s outlook. This paper argues that the Umbrella Movement is the key for the turnaround and it testifies to the birth of a new social and political consciousness amongst Hong Kong students.

**Keywords:** *post-Umbrella Movement, student movement, localism, radicalness*

## **1. Introduction**

Student movement is commonly defined as students' collective engagement in social or political activities throughout a certain time-span. Across the world, participants in most student movements are primarily university students and occasionally secondary school students. The nature of student movement is usually but not necessarily anti-establishment and based on a concern for local society or politics. Student movement, in essence, is a manifestation of idealism. Students are in pursuit of justice, people's general interests, welfare for disadvantaged groups or other imperatives based on idealistic values.

Student movement has a long history in Hong Kong. In the post-WWII colonial years, Hong Kong students and youth had been generally characterized as a generation of political indifference. Other age cohorts were actually much the same in their political indifferent orientation. The colonial Hong Kong was thus described as a politically apathetic society. However, small changes and political awakenings occurred in the 1970s. When China tore down its own "bamboo curtain" and entered into the global system by joining the United Nations and establishing diplomatic relationships with the West, Hong Kong students also showed their concern for their motherland with a show of nationalism (towards China) and anti-colonialism (towards their sovereign state, Britain). In the 1970s and 1980s (until the 1989 Tiananmen massacre), several student movements occurred on university campuses and in selected secondary schools. With the anticipation that the sovereignty of Hong Kong would be returned to China in 1997, student movements such as the Chinese Language movement, anti-corruption movement, Defending

the Diaoyu Islands movement, Knowing More about Our Motherland movement and others showed growing sentiments of Chinese nationalism and anti-colonialism.

The 1989 movement was a student movement in mainland China, but the outcome of the movement had a huge impact on Hong Kong society. On 21st May 1989, Hong Kong held a rally with 1.5 million protestors (one out of four of the whole population) on the streets in support of the Beijing Tiananmen students and on June Fourth every year since 1989 tens of thousands of Hong Kong people gathered to memorialise the deaths in the Beijing tragedy. The year 1989 is a turning point for Hong Kong people of all ages including students attending schools. The long existing political apathy in Hong Kong has changed to political awareness and concern since 1989. Even the young Hong Kong students have learned the lesson that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authorities could act cruelly to young students and the Chinese regime could hardly be trusted. The June Fourth massacre laid a seed of erosion of contemporary Hong Kong youth's Chinese identity.

After the handover and in the early years of the new millennium, Hong Kong's young activists (with many from universities) became upset by the HKSAR government's massive demolition of old neighbourhoods and communities under the excuse of urban development. They participated in successive smaller-in-scales but increasingly prominent local heritage protection movements. These protection targets include the Star Ferry Pier (天星碼頭), the Queen's Pier (皇后碼頭), buildings on Wan Chai 灣仔 Lee Tung Street (利東街, known as "Wedding Card Street" / 喜帖街) and other cultural heritages associated with Hong Kong people's collective memories. In 2009 and 2010, a larger-in-scale localist movement carried out a sequence of protests against the construction of the Hong Kong section of the Express Rail Link connecting to the mainland (Law, 2014).

One large-scale social movement was the 2012 Anti-National Education Movement. Hong Kong's secondary school students were afraid that their existing liberal civil education would be replaced by the mainland-style ideological indoctrination. Beijing viewed that movement to be a resistance to identifying with China as the motherland. Scholarism (學民思潮), a joint-secondary-schools student organization, under the leadership of the then 16-year-old secondary school student Joshua Wong Chi-fung 黃之鋒, emerged in the 2012 movement as a chief organizer; Wong became a well-known figure remaining prominent in subsequent social and political movements. Many issues raised in the new millennium social movements are related to Hong Kong young people's perceptions of China, their new sovereign state, Hong Kong's self-identity and the new relationship between Hong Kong and China.

Previously, Hong Kong youth had been generally voicing their concerns within the norms of the establishment, using a "peaceful, rational and non-violent" approach, acknowledging authorities of the HKSAR and Chinese governments and recognizing attachment with the motherland. By contrast, today's new emerging political outlook of Hong Kong youth is a profile of anti-establishment, using more assertive means and not excluding radical behaviour, distrust of the HKSAR and Chinese authorities and an assertion of local identity. In the last few years, Hong Kong youth have experienced a rapid change in their orientation, resulting in today's outlook. The Umbrella Movement is the key for this turnaround and it testifies to the birth of Hong Kong students' new social and political consciousness.

## **2. Hong Kong Students' New Experience in the Umbrella Movement**

The Umbrella Movement, lasted from September to December 2014, in terms of its size, intensity and duration of participation, could be regarded as the largest-scale social movement in modern Hong Kong history. Only less than two years after the ending of the movement, it is perhaps too early to evaluate the movement's definitive impact and consequences; nevertheless, the movement's impact on and consequence for the political outlook of Hong Kong's younger generation so far are obvious.

The movement started from an initial preparation in 2013 by three founding leaders, two university professors and one reverend, who had planned the Occupy Central (佔領中環 / 佔中) movement with the hope of getting more middle-aged participants to join in. Out of their expectation, in the process, the Occupy Central movement was transformed into the Umbrella Movement with mainly student participants. Student leaders, in their early twenties from universities, were from the joint-universities student organization, the Hong Kong Federation of Students (香港專上學生聯會, HKFS), accompanied by teenage secondary school students from Scholarism. A less prominent group of adult participants was from the pan-democrat camp who claimed that since 1980s they have been fighting for Hong Kong democracy.

Occupy Central was publicly announced to begin on 1st October 2014. Adult leaders anticipated that students would play a minor role in the movement. A week before 1st October, to support their adult counterparts and to publicise the movement, the HKFS and Scholarism organised a one-week class boycott and demonstration at the Government Headquarters near Admiralty (金鐘), adjacent to Central on Hong Kong island. On 26th September, students' peaceful sit-in turned into a swift fervent climbing over the fences and breaking into the

fortified area. Such developments propelled Occupy Central organisers to accelerate the date of commencement of their movement to capitalize on the presence of these masses. The site of peaceful sit-in also changed from Central to Admiralty and later expanded to Mong Kok (旺角), Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣) and Tsim Sha Tsui 尖沙嘴. Thereafter, students replaced adults and became prominent characters in the movement.

Since the students took over and were in charge, adult leaders of the Occupy Central movement had surprisingly played a minor role; they mainly offered consultation to the student leaders and helped with management affairs. The students had played the major role and steered the course of the movement all along. They negotiated with officials of the HKSAR government, proposed terms of negotiation and asked for a direct dialogue with Beijing. It is from this perspective that the Umbrella Movement essentially is a student movement (Chan, 2014).

Both the Occupy Central and Umbrella movements had fought for the same aim: a “genuine universal suffrage” for the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive election. As previous Chief Executives had been elected by small-circle electorates, the major plea was asking the Chinese government not to set rules to pre-screen the 2017 Chief Executive election candidates and to allow Hong Kong people to have a real choice of their Chief Executive through universal suffrage. Students in the movement also asked for more democratic elements to be infused into future Hong Kong elections in order to make those genuine democratic elections. The movement has been perceived as a failure by its participants since both the Chinese and HKSAR authorities made no concession to the plea.

Yellow umbrella is the symbol of the Umbrella Movement. Umbrellas had been astutely used for blocking police’s pepper spray and tear gas as a defense. Thus, umbrella also stands for civil disobedience

and passive resistance of the movement. The Umbrella Movement was pronounced as a civil disobedience movement at the beginning and in the process we witnessed the emergence of elements of radicalness and violence. These elements varied in degrees among different groups participating in the movement and grew stronger as time passed by. Those participants in the movement based at Mong Kok were more radical, militant and localism-oriented than those Admiralty participants who were led by the HKFS and Scholarism. The Mong Kok participants at the time had blamed the Admiralty participants for being too soft and pacific and they have taken the failure of the protest as a result of this mellowness.

### **3. Post-Umbrella Movement**

Students learn the lesson from the Umbrella Movement that they could not put any hope on the Beijing authorities and the HKSAR government anymore, particularly on the Chun-ying (CY) Leung 梁振英 administration. Resistance with moderation and peaceful means could not reach their goal of democracy.

After the Umbrella Movement, the approach of utilizing street action and militancy have gradually become a norm accepted by some Hong Kong youth. At the time being, they are preparing themselves ideologically (going to the direction of radical localism) and strategically (inclination to adopt a militant and conflictual approach). They are waiting for another major opportunity to arise and be involved in a forthcoming social resistance movement.

During and after the Umbrella Movement, different opinions among student leaders representing different university student unions led to a split of the HKFS. By the end of 2015, four of the eight university student unions had separated from the joint organization. The split

indicates the loss of dominant power of the group focused on “negotiating with China” and adoption of peaceful means; and simultaneously the growing strength of the group focused on localism and radical orientation. Since the Umbrella Movement, students on university campuses have become more and more radical and localism-oriented (*SCMP*, 3rd March 2016). Conflicts occurred within various universities between student activists and university council members who have been known for their pro-CY Leung administration and pro-Beijing stance (*SCMP*, 2nd February 2016; *SCMP*, 22nd February 2016).

Localism and radicalness are the two major elements emerged in the post-Umbrella Movement period among the Hong Kong youth. Both elements could be found in various incidents and one prominent one was the “riot” at the 2016 Chinese New Year. Street hawkers selling local food is considered as a distinctive Hong Kong local culture; yet under urban development in the last decade, street hawking has been mostly banned by authorities. As a tradition, only during the Chinese New Year (without blocking the traffic), street hawking would be leniently handled by authorities. In this past year’s Chinese New Year, a localist political group, Hong Kong Indigenous called for a gathering at Mong Kok to protect street hawkers from harassment by legal enforcers. The gathering ended as a violent confrontation between police and protesters. The police was attacked with glass bottles, bricks, flower pots and trash bins. Fires were set and police cars were damaged by protestors. Police used pepper sprays and fired warning shots in return. The western media, with their sympathies on the side of protesters, accused the police of reacting in a heavy-handed manner. They called this incident the “Fishball Revolution”. Instead, the HKSAR and mainland Chinese authorities called it a “riot” and in addition, the mainland authorities criticized it as “a riot plotted mainly by local radical separatist organization” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 11th February 2016).



In the last three months of 2015, five booksellers (owners and staff) of a bookstore, the Causeway Bay Books, went missing and their later reappearance indicated that they were being detained by mainland Chinese authorities. Two of these booksellers were suspected of having been kidnapped to mainland, one from Hong Kong and the other from Thailand. This bookstore published and sold books on mainland political gossip and scandals, with much about mainland officials including Xi Jinping 習近平. These are considered as “banned books” censored by mainland authorities, yet popular with both Hong Kong and mainland general public (*SCMP*, 6th January 2016; 17th June 2016). From Hong Kong people’s perspective, particularly youth’s perspective, the incident stands for Chinese authorities’ serious violation of adherence to the “one country, two systems” (一國兩制) principle (respect for the Hong Kong legal system) and respect for Hong Kong’s core values (freedom of speech and press). This incident would only alienate more Hong Kong youth away from the mainland, develop more distrust of the Chinese authorities and cultivate a stronger sense of localism.

## **4. Localism and Radicalness**

### ***4.1. Localism***

Localism in Hong Kong refers to social and political movements aimed at the preservation of the city’s autonomy and local culture. Localism, in recent years, has been mainly a reaction to mainland China’s cultural and political dominance in Hong Kong affairs. This dominance is perceived as a threat to Hong Kong autonomy. The mainland dominance has been more evident since CY Leung became the Chief Executive in 2012, complemented with his obvious disposition to follow the “needs” and “inclinations” of the mainland Chinese authorities. Hong Kong students generally perceive Leung as a “cunning wolf”. As early as when he

contended for the position of Chief Executive, he was suspected of being a secret CCP member and that he would serve the CCP interests in his governing of Hong Kong (*SCMP*, 19th March 2012).

Some Hong Kong people are afraid that Hong Kong sooner or later would lose its “one country, two systems” and turn into just another major city of China under its unitary system, with no difference from Beijing and Shanghai. With these perceptions, Hong Kong students have an increasing urge for greater Hong Kong autonomy. The development of Hong Kong localism also has become more and more radical and turned into a movement of “excluding the outsiders”. In the contemporary Hong Kong context, the “outsiders” refer mainly to mainland Chinese authorities and mainlanders.

Political localism refers to ideas of different degrees of Hong Kong’s staying away from the control of mainland authorities. These ideas could range from demands for more Hong Kong “self-determination” to affiliation back with the British to outright Hong Kong independence. There is a growing trend in past years, particularly after the Umbrella Movement, that among the younger generation, when compared with other older age-cohorts, their self-identities as “Hong Konger” are much stronger than as “Chinese” (Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, November 2014). The younger generation is the group most attuned to political localism.

Hong Kong students’ sense of localism has grown as they perceive that Hong Kong’s development in recent years, under the HKSAR administration, has turned into a process of “mainlandisation”. Therefore, the localism in the society is also a reaction to this “mainlandisation”. In the colonial years, Hong Kong maintained much Cantonese culture and its distinct features on one hand while being governed under British colonial influence on the other. Dissatisfied in

recent years with this “mainlandisation”, a group of Hong Kong’s younger generation has reacted with nostalgia. The British colonial flag has been waved in young people’s participated protests as a sign of showing anger and discontent towards both the HKSAR and Beijing authorities. To this group of Hong Kong youth, Hong Kong has gone downhill since the handover. Increased mainland immigrants, tourists and parallel traders have brought high housing prices and overcrowding all over the territory. Mainlanders compete with Hong Kong people on all local resources. For several years until 2013, local pregnant women when they gave births had no place in hospitals while mainland pregnant women came over to take their places; and baby powdered milk was in serious shortage when mainland parallel traders came to buy in large quantities. The Hong Kong youth are disillusioned that the CY Leung administration has not stopped the influx of mainlanders and on the contrary has carried out policies of “mainlandisation”. On the other hand, the mainland authorities are perceived as carrying out their pledged “one country, two systems” policy based on their own values and ignoring Hong Kong’s inherited core values. In the eyes of some youths, cutting ties with the mainland is the only unambiguous way to uphold a bright political future for Hong Kong. Today’s student movements are much more critical of China in contrast to the early student movements of the 1970s and even 1980s which posited support for China in a “patriotic” way.

#### ***4.2. Radicalness***

In Hong Kong, people divide the pan-democrats camp into moderate democrats and radical democrats. Moderate democrats are comprised of older political parties and organizations such as the Democratic Party (民主黨), Civic Party (公民黨), Labour Party (工黨), some independent Legislative Council (立法會, LegCo) members and others.

Radical democrats, who have mostly emerged in the last few years, are comprised of political parties and organizations such as People Power (人民力量, with its former leader Raymond Wong Yuk-man 黃毓民 as the LegCo member) and League of Social Democrats (社會民主連線, with its leader “Long Hair” (長毛) Leung Kwok-hung 梁國雄 as the LegCo member); and they have adopted offensive means such as shouting dirty-words, throwing objects and staging weeks-long filibusters during LegCo meetings. The moderate-democrats have adopted a “peaceful, rational, non-violent and no dirty-words” approach in pursuing Hong Kong democracy. Seeing this moderate approach as ineffective in challenging the system and in achieving the goal of democracy, Hong Kong students in the last few years have dissociated themselves from the moderate democrats and rather allied with radical democrats and engaged more and more in fighting through radical means.

Hong Kong students also learned from their experience in the Umbrella Movement to give up moderate means and engage in radical strategies. They first learned from the Sunflower Movement which happened in Taiwan just months before the Umbrella Movement. Images of Taiwan students using shock tactics to break into the legislature main building and then occupying the legislative floor have been vivid in Hong Kong people’s minds. Hong Kong students started the Umbrella Movement by using the same strategy in their own operation and successfully occupied some open areas of the Government Headquarters. But more than two months of peaceful sit-in and negotiation with the HKSAR government resulted in nothing.

During the movement, we already could witness the argument between the radical and moderate group of students. Failure of the Umbrella Movement has frustrated students and this makes some moderate students change their orientations to become radical; on the

other hand, the same frustration reinforces the radical students' desire to continue to be, and even more, radical. An orientation of political radicalness has grown up among the Hong Kong youth and today they believe in "resistance with courage and militancy" (*yongwu kangzheng* 勇武抗争).

### **4.3. Radical Localism**

Horace Chin Wan-kan 陳云根 is recognised by Hong Kong youth as the mentor pointing the way to Hong Kong self-rule and autonomy. Chin indicated that Hong Kong should be more detached from the mainland and exist as a "city-state". He asserted that since 1997, the CCP has carried out an "assimilation" policy towards Hong Kong: opening more travel and immigration quota for mainlanders coming to Hong Kong, pushing for national education movement in Hong Kong schools, encouraging the erosion of Hong Kong's core values (such as criticizing the checks and balances among Hong Kong's executive, legislature and judiciary, harming Hong Kong's judicial independence, blaming on Hong Kong's human rights assertion, etc.) as well as the erosion of Hong Kong's distinctive culture (such as encouraging the learning of *Putonghua* 普通話, i.e. Mandarin, in place of Cantonese and encouraging simplified Chinese characters in Hong Kong's daily use and schools). Chin described the mainland's policies to Hong Kong as "neo-imperialist" policies. Mainlanders' immigration to Hong Kong is part of mainland's "colonisation" plan. According to Chin, "one country, two systems" is not a permanent promise but only a transitional arrangement for Hong Kong from the CCP perspective and the CCP aims for a final "one country, one system". Although Chin has not directly advocated Hong Kong independence, his conception of Hong Kong's relationship with China under the alleged "one country, two systems" is very much different from the Hong Kong Basic Law (基本法)'s formulation.

According to Chin, Hong Kong should be a polity with total autonomy and only affiliates with China in name. China should not exercise any control or influence on Hong Kong. To strive for the “city-state” status, Hong Kong people should “resist with courage and militancy” (Chin, 2011). The radical Hong Kong youth today are deeply influenced by Chin’s assertions and see Chin’s words as their guidance in fighting against the CCP and the HKSAR regimes.

Even before the Umbrella Movement, some university students have already shown an orientation of radical localism. The official publication of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) Student Union, *Undergrad* (學苑), in February 2014 published a few articles on the subject of a Hong Kong nation, with articles entitled “The Hong Kong Nation Deciding Its Own Fate” and “Democracy and Independence for Hong Kong”, which were later put into a book, *Hong Kong Nationalism*, which became a bestseller (*Undergrad*, HKU Student Union, 2014). Chief Executive CY Leung, in his 2015 policy address in the LegCo, openly and harshly denounced the HKU students for promoting Hong Kong independence. His act fanned more debates and sympathies for university students within the LegCo and in the society (*SCMP*, 15th January 2015). The *Undergrad* in March 2016 went further, in a published article entitled “Hong Kong Youth’s Declaration”, providing a blueprint that, upon expiry of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 2047, Hong Kong should become independent. In 2047, Hong Kong should be a full democracy and its constitution should be drawn and approved by the Hong Kong people only. The article also accused the current HKSAR government of being a “puppet” of the CCP, weakening the city’s autonomy (*SCMP*, 15th March 2016).

In the post-Umbrella Movement period, there is a growth of radical localist political parties such as Youngspiration (青年新政), Hong Kong Indigenous (本土民主前線), Hong Kong Independence Party

(香港獨立黨) and Hong Kong National Party (香港民族黨). Leaders and members of all these organizations are mostly youngsters (and mostly in-school university students) who previously participated in the Umbrella Movement. These parties are so far the most radical groups in their assertions and behavior.

Formation of the Hong Kong National Party was publicly announced on March 2016 with the party platform advocating Hong Kong independence and denying the Chinese sovereignty and legitimacy of the Hong Kong Basic Law. The Party clearly states that China is Hong Kong's enemy and China at the moment carries out a "colonisation" policy in Hong Kong featured with suppression and deprivation. HKSAR government is only a "colonial government" set up and used by China. The Party urges Hong Kong people to rebel against China's "colonisation" towards Hong Kong (Hong Kong National Party, 21st March 2016). The party has a membership of 50 odd young activists, mostly in-school university students. The party leader and spokesman, Chan Ho-tin 陳浩天, a former Umbrella Movement activist, said that the party would use "whatever effective means" including violence to push for independence. To them, "staging marches or shouting slogans is obviously useless now." The party intends also to place candidates to run for the September 2016 Legislative Council election (*SCMP*, 28th March 2016). The emergence of this party with its advocacy for forthright independence stands for the extreme end of Hong Kong youth's localist movement.

### **5. A Case Study: Commemoration of the June Fourth**

A case study of Hong Kong youth's participation in the annual Hong Kong commemoration of the June Fourth could illustrate the change of Hong Kong youth's ideological orientation from Chinese nationalism to

Hong Kong localism. Holding any memorial activity for the killed students in the 1989 Chinese June Fourth military crackdown has been a taboo in mainland China. Hong Kong is the only Chinese territory that allows public memorial activities. The world-known annual event, organised by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (香港市民支援愛國民主運動聯合會, “the Alliance”), is the candlelight vigil on June Fourth evening in the Hong Kong Victoria Park, the biggest assembly of this commemoration in the world with number of participants ranging from 35,000 to 180,000 since 1990 and this year with 125,000 people attending (明報 / *Ming Pao*, 5th June 2016, p. A2). Participants are predominantly Hong Kong citizens, with also some low-profile mainlanders coming to Hong Kong for this commemoration purpose. Many Hong Kong youngsters said that starting from this year, they would stop going to the annual candlelight vigil (明報 / *Ming Pao*, 5th June 2016, p. A5).

In terms of spirit and value, the Umbrella Movement has learned and inherited from the 1989 Chinese democracy movement. In the years before the Umbrella Movement, the number of Hong Kong youth and students attending the candlelight vigils had grown significantly. The HKFS and Scholarism were deliberately included as organisers. Their role, obviously, was mainly to mobilize participation of the secondary school and university students and to advance the cause for Chinese democracy. It was argued that Hong Kong youngsters would pass the legacy to future generations until the demands of the commemoration could be achieved.

Although before the Umbrella Movement, all university student unions and the HKFS were active participants in the annual candlelight vigil, since 2015, however, influenced by radical localism, some students have questioned the significance of holding the annual candlelight vigil.



Both the HKFS and student unions of several universities started boycotting the annual candlelight vigil from last year (2015) and this year the remaining university student unions also quit. The HKFS cut its final connection this year by discontinuing to be a member of the Alliance, which it co-founded 27 years ago. Alternative seminars were held on June Fourth evening by students on different university campuses. These seminars focused on discussion of the prospect for democracy in Hong Kong and the original memorial element – about democracy in mainland China – has been wiped out. A student leader of the University of Hong Kong even suggested the ending of any commemoration of the June Fourth (*SCMP*, 28th May 2016; 3rd June 2016). The Hong Kong students' general attitudes and acts towards the June Fourth commemoration show that a growing detachment from mainland Chinese politics is prevalent among the Hong Kong's younger generation today.

Paul Liu Chun-sing 廖俊升, currently a university student and an executive member of the HKFS, has changed his orientation to extreme localism after his participation in the Umbrella Movement. He explained why he does not want to join the commemoration of the June Fourth anymore after the Umbrella Movement: "It's the sense of helplessness. We sat there for 79 days, and we achieved nothing. After the Umbrella Movement, I completely gave up my identity as a Chinese. I don't think we need to fight for the 'political fruits' for a different race that always invades us." (*SCMP*, 3rd June 2016). Liu's sentiment represents a typical post-Umbrella Movement mentality of a large group of the 2014 movement participants.

Nathan Law Kwun Chung 羅冠聰, a university student leader, who was also one of the prominent student leaders in the Umbrella Movement, in April 2016 set up a new political party, Demosistō (香港眾志), as one of the new political parties standing on the position

between moderate and radical localism. Hong Kong independence, to this group, is a “choice among alternatives” to be decided in the future by a Hong Kong referendum. Law commented that the June Fourth incident should be memorialised from the localism perspective. The incident’s significance is more on Hong Kong people’s resistance to the Chinese authorities and on Hong Kong people’s continuous pursue for democracy (Law, 2016).

From the radical localist student perspective, one critique is that as a social movement to push for Chinese and Hong Kong democracy, the annual June Fourth assembly has turned into a regular ritual which has not offered any meaningful idea and activity in pushing for democracy. Every year in the past, the candlelight vigil had been held at the same place and same time, used the same format and shouted the same slogans.

“Building a democratic China” has been a regularly chanted slogan in the annual vigil. From radical localism perspective, some Hong Kong students interpret the nature of the June Fourth movement as a “neighbouring country’s resistance movement” and Hong Kong people should not be involved in it. Since the radicalised Hong Kong student leaders today deny their “Chinese” identity, they question why Hong Kong people should be concerned about any development in mainland China, including its democratic development. All they perceive is the fact that the CCP today wants to be in control of Hong Kong. To these students, how to escape from this control is their major concern. They criticise that Hong Kong people have indulged too much in seeing themselves as part of the “Greater China”. Today, they aim to distance themselves from China and the Chinese authorities and ask for the ending of commemoration or at least a major change of format of the June Fourth activities.

Some Hong Kong students also criticise the Alliance's motto of "rehabilitation of the June Fourth" (平反六四). The significance of this "rehabilitation" (平反) is asking the ruling CCP to confess to the massacre and persecution committed in 1989, offering an apology and acknowledging the 1989 movement as a patriotic and democratic one. To some Hong Kong students, this position only reflects an acknowledgement of legitimacy of the CCP and simply forgives its inexcusable wrongdoing in 1989. They perceive the Alliance's act more as a plea than a demand. To these students, the June Fourth movement has already been generally acknowledged as a patriotic and democratic movement in civil societies across the globe and there is no need for the ruling CCP to approve it. Worse in nature, from these students' perspective, the underlying agenda of the Alliance's organisation of the June Fourth commemoration is a promotion of Hong Kong people's patriotism towards China and acknowledgement of the CCP's authority over Hong Kong. Between unification with and separation from the mainland, the Alliance wrongly stands on the side of unification (明報 / *Ming Pao*, 3rd June 2016, p. A31).

## **6. Conclusion**

In February 2016, among six candidates, a Hong Kong Indigenous-nominated candidate and a suspected Mong Kok "rioter", Leung Tin-kei 梁天琦, finished in third place of the vote in a LegCo by-election for the vacant New Territories East seat. Though he failed in being elected, Leung claimed that localism has gained a strong foothold as the third largest political force in Hong Kong, after traditional pan-democrats and the pro-Beijing camp. This has boosted their morale to stick to the belief of Hong Kong independence and their ambition to run in the coming September LegCo general election (DWnews.com, 1st March 2016).

Since various radical localist political parties have already announced their intention to place candidates running in the coming September 2016 LegCo general election and this is also the first LegCo general election after the Umbrella Movement, it is true that the election itself will provide a good indicator whether radical localism is widely accepted in the Hong Kong society and whether candidates and political parties with radical localism orientation would become the third major political force in Hong Kong. On the other hand, the election will also be a test of popularity of the traditional pan-democrats and pro-Beijing camps.

The development of the radical localist movement among Hong Kong students shows that the movement is mainly a strong reaction to the mainland Chinese authorities' interference in Hong Kong affairs and the HKSAR government's compliance to such an interference. When we carefully examine its development in Hong Kong in the last two years, we could understand that radical localism is not a suddenly pop-up movement. Frustration out of the failure of the Umbrella Movement has led Hong Kong youth on their way to radical localism. Since this movement in nature is a student movement and radical localism might not be that popular among other age cohorts in Hong Kong, one argument points out that student movements across the world usually only last a short while and perish with those students' graduation from school and that might also be the case for Hong Kong. Nevertheless, in Hong Kong, students have formed different new radical localist political parties and they have the intention to continue fighting for their political causes both inside and outside the establishment. We could hardly say that the phenomenon of prevailing radical localism among students is a temporary one and it will perish soon. Perhaps success or failure in the coming September LegCo election will encourage or discourage its

continuation and its expansion. We still need time to ascertain the development of radical localism in Hong Kong.

## Note

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