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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

The Unification of China and Taiwan: 2019 Hong Kong Protest, 2020 Taiwan Presidential Election, and U.S. Policy toward Cross-Strait Relations

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Executive Summary

Title: The Unification of China and Taiwan: 2019 Hong Kong Protest, 2020 Taiwan Presidential Election, and U.S. Policy toward Cross-Strait Relations

Author: Lieutenant Commander Denise Chiu, United States Navy

Thesis: China's continued support of the suppression of the Hong Kong protests would further impede President Xi Jinping's call for the unification of China and Taiwan.

Discussion: China has repeatedly urged for the unification of Taiwan under the "one country, two systems" principle. China's continued support of the suppression of the 2019 Hong Kong protest and the current de facto police state of Hong Kong have demonstrated to Taiwan that the "one country, two systems" governance is not feasible. The recent 2020 Taiwan presidential election revealed the Taiwan population's support of a pro-democracy, pro-independence, and pro-Taiwanese identity president.

Conclusion: The official U.S. policy is to be neutral and ambiguous toward Taiwan, while the United States does not support Taiwan independence. The current situation in Hong Kong forces the United States into the position of having to side with the protesters or China. A byproduct of the United States' policy of ambiguity is for the United States to support a peaceful resolution to the cross-Strait conflict while deterring China from coercing Taiwan in order to achieve unification.

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My utmost respect for the people fighting for basic human rights, justice, freedom, and democracy in this world. Thank you to the people in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate how China's continued support of the suppression of the Hong Kong protests would further impede President Xi Jinping's call for the unification of China and Taiwan. The use of non-peaceful means to unify Taiwan with China contradicts the National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States. From the NSS, the United States "will maintain our strong ties with Taiwan in accordance with our "One China" policy, including our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) to provide for Taiwan's legitimate defense needs and deter coercion." The paper begins with the background of Taiwan's back-and-forth position over pro-unification and pro-independence, and the demographic of Taiwan. Then, the background of 2019 Hong Kong Protest, the Hong Kong government's response to the protests, and China's response to the protest will be discussed. Finally, the paper concludes with China's influence on Taiwan's 2020 presidential election, the response of the Taiwan population, and the implications for the U.S. policy toward cross-Strait relations.

Background of Taiwan

China's objective to unify Taiwan began at the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. The war was a domestic power struggle between two political parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party of China (CCP), over the governance of China. At the time, the two parties agreed on their one Chinese identity. When the KMT was defeated by the CCP, the Republic of China (ROC) government retreated to the island of Taiwan. Over the years, the ROC's stance on unification evolved under the leadership of the KMT and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan.

When President Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-shek and a KMT member, established the “three nos” policy in 1979, it was evident that unification had to be under the ROC, not CCP. Under this policy, there were to be “no official contact, no official talks, and no compromise” regarding its relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Towards the end of his term, President Chiang took on a more pragmatic approach by allowing limited travel to mainland and trade with mainland China, through a third party. In 1987, for the first time in over thirty years, Taiwan people could travel to the mainland to visit family members through indirect flights, as direct flights were not allowed.

When President Lee Teng-hui took office in 1988, he softened the stance on no exchanges and set the conditions in which communication channels with the PRC could be established. In his inaugural speech, President Lee stated, "If mainland authorities can adopt democracy and a free market system, renounce the use of force in the Taiwan Strait, not interfere in our pursuit of foreign relations under the one-China premise, we will be willing to establish communication channels on equal footing to fully open up economic, academic, cultural, scientific, technological and other exchanges."¹ Furthermore, President Lee established the National Unification Council (NUC) in 1990 to promote the unification of China and Taiwan. The promotion of unification was contrary to President Chiang’s earlier “three nos” policy. Two organizations were formed in 1991 to increase exchanges between China and Taiwan, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) in Taiwan and its counterpart, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) on the mainland. The SEF and ARATS were set up to handle technical or business matters across the Taiwan Strait. Furthermore, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) in Taiwan was established in 1991 as the agency responsible for overall

planning and handling of the mainland China affairs. The counterpart of the MAC is the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) on the mainland.

As the cross-Strait exchanges appeared to be moving toward a positive direction, the SEF and ARATS meeting in Hong Kong resulted in a verbal agreement known as the 1992 consensus that has recently soured the relations.² Both parties agreed over the one China principle; in which, there is one sovereign state encompassing mainland China and Taiwan. However, both parties could not agree on which is the legitimate government to represent China. As noted by the (MAC), “The CCP believes "one China" is the "People's Republic of China," while Taiwan believes "one China" should mean the ROC established in 1912 and hitherto exists.”³ A follow-on meeting was held in Singapore without a written agreement. At the meeting, China requested to set up direct air and sea links with Taiwan which was rejected by Taiwan.⁴ In return, China rejected Taiwan’s request for protection of its investments in the mainland. Cross-Strait relations declined further when President Lee visited his alma mater Cornell University in June of 1995. As the New York Times described Lee’s visit, “China has been livid that Mr. Lee has been treated like, well, a president, of what they consider a renegade province.”⁵ A week after President Lee’s visit to the United States, the ARATS contacted SEF to postpone future negotiation meetings. China’s disapproval was evident when it conducted missile testing near the waters of Taiwan the following two months and in March 1996, threatening Taiwan’s security.⁶

China’s missile testing led President Lee to recognize the economic danger of being excessively dependent on China. In response, Lee introduced the No Haste, Be Patient (NHBP) policy in September 1996. The NHBP policy aimed to improve the investment climate within Taiwan while limiting investment in China, to achieve stable liberalization, and to ensure

national security.⁷ Under the NHBP policy, any Taiwan investments over \$50 million in China would require Taiwan government approval.⁸ The policy also applied to Taiwan investments on infrastructure construction and high-tech industries in China.

Tensions over unification had risen again in 1999 when President Lee depicted the Taiwan-China relations to be equivalent to a “state-to-state” or at least a “special state-to-state relations.”⁹ He gave China both what China had wanted and had not wanted when he declared Taiwan was not pursuing independence nor immediate unification.

President Chen Shui-bian took office in 2000. He was the first member of the DPP elected as president. It was apparent in his actions that he intended to lead Taiwan closer towards gradual independence. Under his guidance, the ROC passports were renamed as the ROC Taiwan passport to create a separate entity for Taiwan. He repeatedly applied for membership with the United Nations under the name Taiwan rather than the Republic of China. During his term, Taiwan became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002, which allowed Taiwan to be a part of the international community. In 2006, he suspended the operation of the National Unification Council, which ceased the promotion of unifying China and Taiwan. In response to Taiwan’s move towards independence, China passed the Anti-Secession Law in 2005 to declare Taiwan as a part of China and which authorized China to take non-peaceful measures to protect its sovereignty.¹⁰

As the cross-Strait tensions grew, at the same time, Taiwan’s economy became increasingly dependent on China. As a result of the NHBP policy and post 9/11 global recession, Taiwan experienced an economic decline. To stimulate the economy, President Chen replaced the NHBP policy with the ‘proactive liberalization with effective, management’ (PLEM) policy in 2001. The PLEM policy relaxed some of the restrictions on Taiwanese investments in China.

Chen's PLEM policy effectively stimulated Taiwan's economy, but it also led Taiwan's economy to become increasingly dependent on China. By 2004, China was Taiwan's largest trading partner accounting for a total of \$61.6 billion, compared to \$37.4 billion (39% growth) in 2002.¹¹

Succeeding President Chen, President Ma Ying-jeou, who was then the KMT chairman, took office in 2008. President Ma took a less confrontational approach to the cross-Strait relations. Referencing President Lee Teng-hui's inaugural speech, the KMT is willing to forge closer ties between Taiwan and the mainland if China can adopt a more democratic system without the use of force. The KMT believes unification is possible if China undertakes a democratic transformation. Under Ma's governance, Taiwan signed over twenty agreements with China that strengthened cross-Strait exchanges. Three notable agreements on direct flights, direct shipping, and direct mail were signed in November 2008 by the SEF and ARATS officials.¹² For the first time since the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Three Direct Links, consisted of regularly scheduled flights, shipping, and mail, reopened between China and Taiwan in December 2008.¹³ Furthermore, the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), signed in 2010, was a significant trade agreement to "reduce or eliminate barriers to trade and investment for each other" by tariff cuts.¹⁴ The first meeting of the leaders of China and Taiwan since 1949 occurred in November 2015 when President Ma met and shook hands with PRC President Xi Jinping in Singapore.¹⁵ At the meeting, President Xi laid out two paths Taiwan can take in regards to the 1992 consensus: peaceful development or zero-sum hostility. Xi noted Taiwan independence would lead Taiwan to the zero-sum hostility path. President Ma raised four areas of concern to Xi in regards to Taiwan, "international participation, military security, regional economic integration, and representative offices" in respective capitals, but to little

avail.¹⁶ Ma had hoped that the friendly cross-Strait relations he had developed would yield a favorable response from Xi, but Xi gave a noncommittal response to each of his four requests. The product of the meeting was an agreement to establish a hotline to handle cross-Strait policy.

President Tsai Ing-wen, the DPP chairman, took office in 2016. Initially, Tsai was ambiguous over the 1992 consensus by addressing it as the 1992 meeting at her inaugural speech. Her position has evolved from acknowledging KMT's accomplishments under the 1992 consensus and to publicly rejecting the 1992 consensus. She was quoted as saying, "I myself expect all of Taiwan's political parties to clearly state, 'We reject "one country, two systems.'" And there's no need to talk about the 1992 consensus anymore, because this term has already been defined by Beijing as 'one country, two systems.'"¹⁷ Tsai, as the DPP chairman, supports the Taiwanese identity and claims Taiwan is already independent.

President Tsai has openly expressed her support of the Hong Kong protests and rejection of China's system of governance in Hong Kong. She was quoted at a rally the night before the presidential vote, "Young people in Hong Kong have used their lives and shed their blood and tears to show us that 'one country, two systems' is not feasible. Tomorrow, it is the turn of young people of Taiwan to show Hong Kong that the values of democracy and freedom overcomes all difficulties."¹⁸

Demographic of Taiwan

Aside from Taiwan politics and cross-Strait relations, the demographic of Taiwan is noteworthy for understanding the popular view of the Taiwan population. Based on the survey data collected by the Election Study Center in National Chengchi University, from 2018 to 2019, a substantial shift occurred in the Taiwan population to prefer the Taiwanese identity over the mainland identity, to "maintain Taiwan's status quo while move toward independence," and to

support the DPP. Since 2007 the percentage of the Taiwan population who self-identified as Taiwanese has continually surpassed the population who self-identified as both “Taiwanese and Chinese.” The self-identified as Chinese and no response both remained at around 3.5%.¹⁹ Comparing the changes from 2018 to 2019, there was a 4% increase from 54.5% to 58.5% in the Taiwanese identity and a 3.5% decrease from 38.2% to 34.7% in both “Taiwanese and Chinese” identity.²⁰

Changes in the unification-independence stance of the Taiwan population was also studied by the Election Study Center in National Chengchi University. Since 2003 to present, the percentage of the population supporting to “maintain status quo while move toward independence” has continuously surpassed the population supporting to “maintain status quo while move toward unification.” From year 2018 to 2019, there was a sharp increase in the population supporting to “maintain status quo while move toward independence” and a sharp decrease in the population supporting to “maintain status quo while move toward unification.”

For 2018 and 2019, there was a 2.9% population increase to “maintain status quo indefinitely” and a 6.5% increase to “maintain status quo while move toward independence.”²¹ The percentage of the population selected to “maintain status quo indefinitely” went from 24.9% in 2018 to 27.8% in 2019.²² The percentage of the population selected to “maintain status quo while move toward independence” went from 15.3% in 2018 to 21.8% in 2019.²³

For years 2018 and 2019, there was a 3.6% population decrease to “maintain status quo and decide later,” a 5% decrease to “maintain status quo while move toward unification,” and a 1.7% decrease to “unify as soon as possible.”²⁴ The percentage of the population selected to “maintain status quo and decide later” went from 33.4% in 2018 to 29.8% in 2019.²⁵ The percentage of the population selected to “maintain status quo while move toward unification”

went from 12.5% in 2018 to 7.5% in 2019.²⁶ The percentage of the population selected to “unify as soon as possible” went from 3.1% in 2018 to 1.4% in 2019.²⁷ There was not a significant change in the population that selected “no response” at 6.5% and “independence as soon as possible” at 5.0% for years 2018 and 2019.²⁸

Surveys on the Taiwan population political party preferences were also performed by the Election Study Center in National Chengchi University. Drawing from the survey data, about 9% of the population who reported no response in 2018 became supporters for the DPP in 2019.²⁹ For the years 2018 and 2019, there was a 9.6% population increase of supporters for the DPP, a 1.3% decrease of supporters for the KMT, and a 9.1% decrease in supporters who reported no response.³⁰ In 2019, no response selection was 40%; DPP was 28.6%; and KMT was 24.1% of the population.³¹ For the years 1992 to 1999, 2005 to 2013, and 2018, there were more supporters for the KMT than the DPP.³² For the years 2000 to 2004, 2014 to 2017, and 2019, there were more supporters for the DPP than the KMT.³³

Background of Hong Kong

The recent happenings in Hong Kong has influenced the popular view of the Taiwan population. In the early 1980's, officials from the United Kingdom and China began to negotiate about the future of Hong Kong as the 99-year lease agreement of Hong Kong was expiring in July 1997. An agreement, known as the Joint Declaration on the question of Hong Kong, was signed in December 1984. In June 1985, the Joint Declaration was registered at the United Nations (UN) by China and the United Kingdom.³⁴ The United Kingdom returned the sovereignty of Hong Kong to China in July 1997. After the handover, Hong Kong, a former British colony, became a special administrative region (SAR) of China. Under the Joint Declaration, Hong Kong SAR of China has its mini-constitution known as the Basic Law and is

not subject to the socialist system and policies of the PRC for 50 years, until 1947. The government of the PRC would be responsible for the foreign affairs and the defense of Hong Kong. The Basic Law provides Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy, its own executive, legislative, and independent judicial power, and be governed under the principle of “one country, two systems.”³⁵ Hong Kong would continue its “previous capitalist system and way of life.”³⁶ In regards to universal suffrage, Article 45 of the Basic Law states, “The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR shall be selected by election or through consultations held locally and be appointed by the Central People's Government. The ultimate aim is the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures.”³⁷

2019 Hong Kong Protest

Despite the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law in effect, mass protests against the Hong Kong government and the encroachment of the “one country, two systems” occurred in the summer of 2019. The Hong Kong government proposed to amend the existing Fugitive Offenders Ordinance (FOO) and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance (MLAO) which triggered the mass protests in February 2019. The proposed amendment is known as the 2019 Hong Kong extradition bill. The bill would allow the Hong Kong government to extradite criminal suspects from Hong Kong to China for trial. The Hong Kong government stated the bill was intended to plug a legal loophole for the over 100 countries and territories with which Hong Kong does not have a mutual extradition treaty.³⁸ The extradition bill raised serious concerns that it would undermine Hong Kong’s independent judicial system by sending Hong Kong citizens and foreign nationals to the flawed legal system in China which lack the protections of basic human rights. If the bill is passed, any U.S. citizens in Hong Kong

who are criminal or fugitive suspects could be extradited to China with their homes and businesses subject to search by authorities. According to the U.S. Department of State, there were an estimated 85,000 U.S. citizens and over 1,300 U.S. firms in Hong Kong in 2018.³⁹

In response to the proposed extradition bill, various sectors in Hong Kong including legal, academic, business, diplomatic, and press expressed their concerns to the Hong Kong government from March to June of 2019 before the second reading of the bill at the Legislature Council on June 12, 2019. The Hong Kong Bar Association submitted their list of observations to the Hong Kong government and stated that the government did not answer to “the concerns over the significant differences between the judicial and criminal justice systems practiced in Hong Kong and the Mainland in terms of protection of fundamental human rights.”⁴⁰ All public universities and one in seven secondary schools in Hong Kong, a total of 90 schools, over 23,000 students, alumni, and teachers signed a petition against the extradition bill.⁴¹ The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce suggested extra levels of safeguards, such as human rights and humanitarian factors, to be considered in the extradition bill.⁴² The Hong Kong Journalist’s Association stated the safety of journalists is being threatened and Hong Kong’s limited freedom of speech is being taken away as China could capture journalists in Hong Kong with all kinds of unfounded charges.⁴³ The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission stated, “The extradition bill could pose significant risks to U.S. national security and economic interests in the territory, and if passed and implemented may provide grounds for the United States to reexamine important elements of its current relationship with Hong Kong, as outlined in the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992.”⁴⁴ This act applies to the United States and Hong Kong relationship after the 1997 handover. The United States may change how the law is applied should Hong

Kong's autonomy diminishes. The U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, commented the bill as threatening Hong Kong's rule of law.

Hong Kong residents participated in a number of mass protests to express their opposition to the extradition bill. The Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), consisted of over 50 non-government organizations, held the first and second marches against the extradition bill in March and April 2019 with over 100,000 people in attendance.⁴⁵ Over 3,000 lawyers in black attire gathered on June 6, 2019 for a silent march at Hong Kong's highest Court of Final Appeal to oppose the bill. On June 9, 2019, an estimated one million people dressed in white, as a symbol of justice and mourning, participated in a peaceful demonstration organized by the CHRF to oppose the proposed bill. With a population of 7.5 million people in Hong Kong, it equated to one out of every seven Hong Kong residents.⁴⁶ The next day, despite strong local and international oppositions, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, re-announced the second reading of the bill to be held on June 12, 2019. In the morning of June 12, thousands of protesters sieged the Legislative Council building to stop the second reading. Lam's unwavering decision to push forward with passing the bill subsequently intensified the confrontation between the protesters and the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF).

Oppositions to the extradition bill revived the objective of the 2014 Hong Kong protests, also known as the Umbrella Movement, for genuine universal suffrage for the Chief Executive election. The Umbrella Movement in 2014 emerged from opposition to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) of the PRC's decision to reform the electoral system of Hong Kong, in which the CCP would pre-screen the candidates for the future Chief Executive elections. To the Hong Kong people, this is not a genuine universal suffrage when the candidates are pre-selected by China. The Umbrella Movement name originated from the use of

umbrellas by protesters as a defensive shield from pepper sprays and tear gas rounds fired by the HKPF. In regards to the extradition bill, the Hong Kong government officially withdrew the bill in October 2019, four months after the one million people peaceful demonstration in June 2019. By that time, the social unrests had escalated beyond the point that can be quelled by withdrawing the bill. From the initial demand for the full withdrawal of the extradition bill, the protest objective was expanded to a total of five demands. The four additional demands included establishing an independent commission of inquiry to investigate alleged police brutality, to retract the classification of protesters as “rioters” on the June 12, 2019 protest, amnesty for the arrested protesters, and the resignation of Carrie Lam and universal suffrage for both the Legislative Council and the Chief Executive elections.

The Hong Kong government’s use of police force to silence opposition has turned Hong Kong into a de facto police state. From June to December 2019, HKPF data reported more than 1,000 protests and demonstrations occurred, 6,105 people arrested, 2,640 hospitalized, 16,000 rounds of tear gas shot, and 10,000 rubber bullets fired in the protests.⁴⁷ According to Human Rights Watch, 25% of Hong Kong residents have participated in a recent protest.⁴⁸ Due to Lam’s refusal to establish an independent commission of inquiry into the HKPF, volunteer citizens compiled mass evidence of suspected police misconduct into online databases. The Hong Kong Democratic Movement 2019 database collected findings related to the following number of alleged cases committed by the HKPF: 237 weapon abuse, 170 physical violence, 160 abuse of power, 115 freedom of the press interference and attack on journalists, 49 collusion with triads, 44 violation of arrestees’ human rights, 37 sexual abuse, 37 attack on medics and interference with medical care delivery, and 28 refusal to show proof of police identification.⁴⁹

Instead of establishing an independent commission of inquiry, Carrie Lam insisted the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) be capable of conducting independent investigation to settle the public complaints of the HKPF disproportionate use of force in response to the protests. The expert panel appointed by the IPCC consisted of five international experts from the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. However, the international experts recruited by the IPCC resigned after concluding the IPCC lacks the power to conduct an effective investigation. Two months after the appointment, the expert panel released a report stating, “Structural limitations in the scope and powers of the IPCC inquiry remain, inhibiting its ability to establish a coherent and representative body of evidence.”⁵⁰ At a press conference, Lam dismissed the findings of the report and stated she is confident the IPCC is sparing no efforts to undertake this very difficult and complex task.

The violent scenes between student protesters and the HKPF can be indirectly associated with the Tiananmen Square massacre. While calling for democracy, college students were forcibly suppressed by the HKPF or the People’s Liberation Army in China along with the violations of human rights. In November 2019, the HKPF stormed and sieged the campuses of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) for five days and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) for 12 days. At the CUHK campus on November 12, 2019, the HKPF fired 1,567 tear gas canisters, 1,312 rubber bullets, 380 bean bag rounds and 126 sponge grenades, as protesters threw Molotov cocktails and bricks.⁵¹ At the PolyU campus on November 18, 2019, HKPF fired 1,458 tear gas canisters, 1,391 rubber bullets, 325 bean bag rounds, 265 sponge bullets, and water cannons that ejected blue-colored pepper solution, as protesters threw Molotov cocktails and launched stones from catapults.⁵² Some student protesters were afraid to leave the campus in fear of police brutality and rioting charges. The HKPF had announced anyone on

campus would be charged with rioting, which could face up to ten years in prison. Medical care to the wounded protesters were restricted or delayed. The road closures and blockade delayed the arrival of the ambulances and paramedics. Outside the besieged PolyU campus, the HKPF detained volunteer doctors, nurses, and first aiders and zip-tied their hands behind their backs. The *Hong Kong Free Press* reported the arrestees included 51 medics and journalists.⁵³ The Hong Kong Public Doctors' Association confirmed at least six volunteer medical doctors were arrested.⁵⁴ *Lancet*, a medical journal, wrote that the HKPF had violated the international humanitarian norms for handling of the volunteer emergency medical providers.⁵⁵ During the siege at PolyU, the HKPF was heard saying they were reenacting the Tiananmen Square massacre.⁵⁶

Despite the violent confrontations and disproportionate use of force, the Hong Kong government and CCP media supported the actions of the HKPF at the protests. In response to the HKPF siege of PolyU, the chief editor of *Global Times*, Hu Xijin, urged the HKPF to further suppress the student protesters with more powerful weapons. The *Global Times* is a subsidiary of the *People's Daily*, an official newspaper of the CCP. Hu wrote that Hong Kong was creating a new form of terrorism and the HKPF should be granted the right to fire live rounds at the student protesters and be acquitted of any legal liabilities.⁵⁷ At a press conference in January 2020, Carrie Lam's support for the HKPF is evident when she stated, "With seven months of that sort of situation, we have not had one single fatal casualty as a result of police action. The police are acting in an extremely restrained way."⁵⁸ At the Legislative Council meeting in January 2020 when Carrie Lam was accused of conniving with HKPF and harboring the HKPF's excessive use of force, Lam responded she "would not accept any one accusing the

police of brutality.”⁵⁹ Lam blamed the Western media disproportionately reported the Hong Kong unrest while she downplayed the excessive use of force by the HKPF.

Ongoing months of social and political unrests, Hong Kong as Asia’s world city has experienced a rapid decline due to the government’s poor handling of the mass protests, the HKPF’s abuse of power, and the protesters’ escalated opposition. Based on the survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Institute (PORI), during the HKPF besiegement of the two university campuses, the public trust in the Hong Kong SAR government was 23% and the public distrust was 64% in November 2019, the lowest ratings since the last available data in 1992.⁶⁰ As the Hong Kong government has lost majority of the public support and trust to act in the citizens’ interests, Hong Kong is showing signs of a failed state.⁶¹ The Moody’s Investor Service changed the city’s outlook from stable to negative in September 2019; then, it downgraded the city’s rating in January 2020 due to the Hong Kong government’s ineffective responses to the ongoing protests.⁶² In March 2020, Hong Kong lost its top place ranking as the world’s freest economy, a position the city had held for 25 consecutive years, according to the Heritage Foundation country rankings.⁶³

China’s response to 2019 Hong Kong Protest

In more than one occasion, President Xi Jinping has declared his support for Carrie Lam over her handling of Hong Kong’s unrest. In contrast, Lam’s concurrent public approval rating was a record low of 20 out of 100 points in November 2019 compared to 64 points in July 2017 when she took office, based on the public survey conducted by PORI.⁶⁴ At the meeting on November 4, 2019, after Lam had briefed Xi on Hong Kong’s situation, “Xi voiced the central government's high degree of trust in Lam and full acknowledgement of the work of her and her governance team. Xi demanded unswerving efforts to stop and punish violent activities in

accordance with the law to safeguard the well-being of the general public in Hong Kong,” according to *Xinhua News Agency*.⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that the HKPF sieged the campuses of CUHK and PolyU in about a week after this meeting and arrested more than 1,100 people, mostly students.⁶⁶ At the follow-on meeting in December 2019, Xi praised Lam for sticking to the “one country, two systems” principle, her lawful governance, her fulfilment of duty, and her hard work. Xi emphasized to Lam saying, “We will continue to firmly support you in leading the SAR government to govern in accordance with the law, firmly support the Hong Kong police in strictly enforcing the law.”⁶⁷ Lam’s handling of the protests garnered her Xi’s support while she heavily lost the public trust and support of the Hong Kong people.

In a coordinated effort between the Chinese media and People’s Liberation Army (PLA), China achieved its political objective by flexing its muscle to condemn the Hong Kong protests and sending a message that the PLA is standing by if the Hong Kong government cannot calm the protests, according to the *South China Morning Post*.⁶⁸ On June 16, 2019 an estimated 2 million people in Hong Kong took to the streets in a non-violent march against the extradition bill.⁶⁹ Ten days later, the PLA garrison in Hong Kong completed a joint military exercise near Hong Kong to raise combat readiness in emergency dispatches. While the demands of the protesters remained unmet, protesters announced escalated actions to be taken. On July 2, 2019, protestors stormed and vandalized the Legislative Council building where the extradition bill reading is held.⁷⁰ However, PLA’s official newspaper, *PLA Daily*, waited until July 3 to report about the PLA drill that had occurred a week prior.⁷¹

Another example of China’s use of the media and military to suppress the Hong Kong protests was through the release of a propaganda video. In early August 2019, the PLA’s Hong Kong garrison released an anti-terrorism and anti-riot drills video which included immobilized

tanks and a soldier shouting, “All consequences are at your own risk.”⁷² Following the release of the drills video, the commander of the PLA’s Hong Kong garrison said, “The garrison has the determination, confidence, and ability to protect national sovereignty, security, stability and the prosperity of Hong Kong.”⁷³ The propaganda video was intended to intimidate the general public in Hong Kong who were neutral or ambivalent to the extradition bill conflict and to suppress the Hong Kong protesters.

Despite ongoing reports of excessive use of force by the Hong Kong police, the *People’s Daily*, CCP’s official newspaper, stated that the Hong Kong police has “unwavering support” from the central government to “fight against violence and restoration of order.”⁷⁴ One Hong Kong police sergeant was regarded as a public hero by China for pointing a shotgun at the Hong Kong anti-government protesters. Afterwards, the sergeant was a few of the selected Hong Kong police officers honorably invited to attend the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the PRC on October 1, 2019.⁷⁵

In response to the United States passing the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act at the end of November, China announced a sanction on multiple U.S. based non-government organizations (NGO) and the suspension on port visits of U.S. military in Hong Kong. The sanctioned NGOs included the Human Rights Watch, the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the International Republican Institute, and Freedom House.⁷⁶ The U.S. military was allowed to make port calls in Hong Kong occasionally. For example, in November 2018, the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76), a supercarrier, and its strike group were allowed to visit Hong Kong for a port call. In August 2019, China refused the USS Green Bay, an amphibious transport dock, and the USS Lake Erie, a guided missile cruiser, to make port call in Hong Kong.⁷⁷ China’s refusal came after U.S.

lawmakers publicly criticized the excessive force used by the Hong Kong police on the protesters. As a diplomatic response to the Hong Kong protests, China decided to sanction the NGOs and refuse U.S. military port calls.

China has condemned Hong Kong pro-democracy activists' effort to garner international awareness and support for Hong Kong democracy. At the United Nation Human Rights Council meeting in July 2019, twice the diplomat from China interrupted the two-minute testimony of Denise Ho, a Hong Kong pro-democracy activist. During her testimony, Ho mentioned about the excessive use of force by the HKPF against unarmed protesters in opposition to the extradition bill and the anger of Hong Kong people due to years of deceitful promises. Ho stated, "Since the handover, we saw our autonomy slowly eroded. Disqualification of six lawmakers, kidnappings of booksellers and activists jailed, are proof of China's tightening grip. Real universal suffrage is still nonexistent, with a Chief Executive Officer appointed and controlled by Beijing, China is preventing our democracy at all costs."⁷⁸ Ho referenced the Joint Declaration, a binding agreement registered with the UN, and how China has denied its obligations after only 22 years. Furthermore, she depicted the "one country, two systems" is nearing its death. In response, the diplomat from China expressed strong condemnation to Ho's remarks. He refuted Ho's claim and stated, "The rights and freedoms of Hong Kong residents have been fully guaranteed according to law," and the protesters "using the so-called freedom of speech or assembly to justify violence is never tenable."⁷⁹ The diplomat stressed that Hong Kong is a SAR of China and urged any organization, individual or country not to interfere, since the affairs of Hong Kong are purely China's internal affairs.⁸⁰

In November 2019, China condemned another Hong Kong pro-democracy activist's visit to Germany. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, said at a news

briefing, “It is extremely wrong for German media and politicians to attempt to tap into the anti-China separatist wave. It is disrespectful of China's sovereignty and an interference in China's internal affairs.”⁸¹ From Hong Kong, Joshua Wong met with the German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, to discuss the Hong Kong protest situation and cause. Wong urged for “the free world to stand together with us in resisting the Chinese autocratic regime.”⁸² Wong called for Germany not to sell and export riot control weapons and equipment to the HKPF. Wong explained the water cannon used by the HKPF to suppress protests against the extradition bill was manufactured in Germany. Wong suggested Germany should not support the HKPF by supplying the HKPF with riot control equipment.

China’s influence on Taiwan’s 2020 presidential election

Aside from China’s response to the Hong Kong protests, China has employed the “carrot and stick” approach through economic, political, and military means to influence Taiwan’s popular view. Within two months before the 2020 Taiwan presidential election, China offered 26 incentive measures, as a carrot, to lure the Taiwan population. In November 2019, China’s Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) and National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced 26 incentive measures “to further promote economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait,” as reported by the Taiwan News.⁸³ Within the 26 incentive measures, 13 were provided for Taiwanese companies to have “equal participation in the investment in and construction of China's major technical equipment, 5G, circular economy, civil aviation, theme parks, and new types of financial institutions.”⁸⁴ The remaining 13 incentive measures were for Taiwanese citizens offering “further facilitation and support in the areas of consular protection, agricultural cooperation, transportation,

communication charges, home purchase requirements, culture and sports, professional title evaluations, and admissions and examinations.”⁸⁵

As a form of economic and political means to influence Taiwan’s popular view, China unilaterally imposed a travel ban on Taiwan in August 2019 when President Tsai was seeking re-election. China intended to upset Tsai’s chances of winning the election due to her support for Taiwan independence. Chinese tourists account for almost one-third of Taiwan’s total visitors in May 2019 according to Bloomberg.⁸⁶ The ban occurred five months before the Taiwan presidential election and would cost Taiwan an estimated \$900.5 million in revenue loss and 700,000 less travelers.⁸⁷ The economic lost was a threat to sway Taiwan voters not to vote for Tsai. In the 2020 Taiwan presidential election, the pro-unification KMT candidate, Mr. Han Kuo-yu, was decisively defeated by the pro-democracy DPP candidate, President Tsai, by a difference of 18.5% of votes.⁸⁸ China’s unilateral travel ban on Taiwan failed to achieve its desired political outcome. Tsai was successfully re-elected for her second term.

Another example of China’s attempt to influence President Tsai’s re-election was through using military means as a “stick.” Two weeks prior to Taiwan’s 2020 presidential election, China sent its newly commissioned aircraft carrier, *Shangdong*, to sail through the Taiwan Strait as a show of force to Tsai and Taiwan.⁸⁹ The display of the aircraft carrier can be interpreted as an intention to intimidate Tsai’s supporters and to caution Tsai of China’s military power if she leads Taiwan closer to independence if re-elected.

Taiwan’s population response

Despite China’s use of economic, military, and political means to influence the 2020 Taiwan presidential election, the undeterred Taiwan population re-elected the pro-democracy candidate, President Tsai. Currently, over 90% of Taiwan’s population was born after the end of

the Chinese Civil War in 1949.⁹⁰ The current younger generation in Taiwan are witnesses to the erosion of “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong, the mass arrests occurring due to Hong Kong protesters’ fight for democracy, and the unfulfilled promise of 22 years in the Joint Declaration that Hong Kong will remain unchanged for 50 years. From June to December 2019, out of the 6,100 people arrested during the Hong Kong protests, 40% or 2,430 were students.⁹¹ Taiwan’s younger population were better able to relate to the student protesters in Hong Kong and was convicted not to elect a pro-unification candidate. Instead, they elected Tsai who supports the cause of the Hong Kong protests and opposes the “one country, two systems” for Taiwan.

Tsai’s public approval rating and the 2020 presidential election results revealed the popular view of the Taiwan population. On January 2, 2010, at the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, President Xi gave a speech to reaffirm China’s policy to reunify with Taiwan under the “one country, two systems” principle.⁹² At the time, Tsai’s public approval rating was at a low point of 24.3% in December 2018.⁹³ According to the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation, Tsai’s approval rating had been on a downward slope starting from August 2018 with 33.3%, September with 31.2% to November with 28.5%.⁹⁴ After Tsai’s opposition response to Xi’s speech, within a month, her approval rating went up to 34.5% in January 2019.⁹⁵ Tsai responded to Xi’s speech by saying Taiwan cherishes its democratic values and Taiwan had never accepted the 1992 consensus. She declared that Taiwan is willing to negotiate with China; however, all cross-Strait negotiations must have the approval of the Taiwanese people since Taiwan is a democratic country. Tsai also stated it is a Taiwan consensus that the majority of Taiwan opposes China’s “one country, two systems.” The

swift 10% increase to Tsai's public approval rating following her rejection to Xi's reunification speech is a clear indicator of the popular view.

President Tsai, the DPP chairman, won the 2020 presidential election with a landslide victory of 57.13% or 8,170,186 votes.⁹⁶ Tsai's received votes broke the record set by President Ma who received 7.23 million votes in 2008.⁹⁷ Tsai's opponent, Mr. Han Kuo-yu, who represented the KMT, received 38.61% or 5,522,119 votes.⁹⁸ During Han's election campaign, he pledged to restart communication with China and called to return to the 1992 consensus with the mainland that there is only one China.⁹⁹ On the contrary, Tsai rejected the 1992 consensus and communication between Taiwan and China had stopped in 2016 when Tsai was elected for her first term.

Another indicator of the popular view of Taiwan is the 2020 presidential election turnout. Beginning from 2000, the turnout in the presidential elections has been on a downward slope. The turnout was 76.04% in 1996, 82.69% in 2000, 80.28% in 2004, 76.33% in 2008, 74.38% in 2012 and 66.27% in 2016.¹⁰⁰ However, more voters went to the polls in the 2020 presidential election and the trend went up to a 74.9% turnout.¹⁰¹ Over 14 million out of 19 million eligible voters participated in the 2020 presidential election.¹⁰²

Conclusion

The official U.S. policy is to be neutral and ambiguous toward Taiwan, while the United States does not support Taiwan independence. The current situation in Hong Kong forces the United States into the position of having to side with the protesters or China. A byproduct of the United States' policy of ambiguity is for the United States to support a peaceful resolution to the cross-Strait conflict while deterring China from coercing Taiwan in order to achieve unification. China's use of political, diplomatic, informational, and military means to suppress the Hong

Kong protests has led to the city's rapid decline. It is contrary to the U.S. interests for Taiwan to become like Hong Kong when under China's "one country, two systems" principle. As stated by the Heritage Foundation, Taiwan is at the front line of the great power competition between the United States and China and the United States cannot afford Taiwan to be taken over by China.¹⁰³ A freer Taiwan brings forth a freer Indo-Pacific which would be a region more friendly to the U.S. interests. By fulfilling its commitment to Taiwan under the TRA, the United States would demonstrate its will to maintain its status quo as the global superpower. Other countries are watching whether the United States can maintain its superiority or get overtaken. Depending on the United States' response in backing Taiwan, these countries could decide to remain on the same side with the United States, to side with China, or to become neutral. If the United States elects to turn a blind eye to China's use of military force against Taiwan, it would lose its credibility and support from its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region and the world. Regionally, member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would increasingly see the United States as an unreliable partner and would likely concede to Chinese demands on trade, reclaimed islands, and possibly the nine dashed line. The U.S. military should continue to maintain its forward deployed posture in the Indo-Pacific region to deter China from using force to unify Taiwan, while the United States should continue to help Taiwan maintain its de facto independence through unofficial and non-diplomatic relations. It is the interests of the United States for Taiwan to maintain its peace, security, and stability.

A consequence of the United States adopting the policy to support Taiwan, China would likely escalate the tensions with the United States. As Taiwan gradually becomes more autonomous, the leadership in China would grow impatient that its unification efforts are not yielding the desired results. China could escalate to a conventional confrontation and conflict,

and even to nuclear escalation. The United States would have to conduct a cost-benefit analysis and then thoroughly consider whether it is feasible to go up the escalation ladder with China or exit off the ladder.

The Taiwan population has demonstrated their preference through Taiwan's 2020 presidential election. The Taiwan population recognized the declined state of Hong Kong could be the future of Taiwan under China's proposed "one country, two systems" when governed by an administration with little legitimacy and rising public distrust. Despite Lam's record low public approval ratings and use of police force to silence the protests, Xi's support of Lam has allowed her to maintain her position and avoid resignation. China's suppression to the Hong Kong protests demonstrated the unfeasibility of "one country, two systems" principle to the Taiwan population and benefited Tsai's landslide re-election victory. As Taiwan witnesses Hong Kong's fight for genuine universal suffrage, the experience would add greater meaning value to their democracy and universal suffrage. Due to age-related similarities, the younger Taiwanese population could better relate to the mass arrests of student protesters. As the new generation replaces the earlier generation, the younger population in Taiwan will increasingly have a greater influence in the future Taiwan presidential elections. Current statistics of the Taiwan population show a shift to prefer democracy, to maintain status quo while move to independence, and to be identified as Taiwanese. As Hong Kong does not have genuine universal suffrage, the Taiwan population elected whom they find would act in the citizens' interests and for the citizens. May the government of Taiwan uphold its democratic values by being a government "of the people, by the people, for the people."

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