

Heightening Sense of Crises over Press Freedom in Hong Kong: Advancing “Shrinkage” 20 Years after Returning to China

April 2018

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*This article is based on the same authors' article *Hong Kong no “Hodo no Jiyu” ni Takamaru Kikikan ~Chugoku Henkan kara 20nen de Susumu “Ishuku”~*, originally published in the December 2017 issue of “*Hoso Kenkyu to Chosa* [The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research]”. Full text in Japanese may be accessed at http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/research/oversea/pdf/20171201_7.pdf

Introduction

Twenty years have passed since Hong Kong was returned to China from British rule. At the time of the 1997 reversion, there were concerns that Hong Kong, which has a laissez-faire market economy, would lose its economic vigor once the territory is put under the Chinese Communist Party's one-party rule. But the Hong Kong economy has achieved generally steady growth while forming closer ties with the mainland.

However, new concerns are rising that the "One Country, Two Systems" principle that guarantees Hong Kong a different social system from that of China is wavering and press freedom, which does not exist in the mainland and has been one of the attractions of Hong Kong, is shrinking. On the rankings of press freedom compiled by the international journalists' group Reporters Without Borders, Hong Kong fell to 73rd place in 2017 from 18th in 2002.¹

This article looks at how press freedom has been affected by a series of cases in the Hong Kong media that occurred during these two decades, in line with findings from the author's weeklong field trip in mid-September 2017. It also examines the current situation of the internet media, which are rapidly spreading among the public to eclipse the traditional media and how far they can contribute to press freedom in Hong Kong. In this article, "press freedom" centers on "freedom on reporting" for news media, but it also discusses "freedom of speech" and "freedom of publishing". The contents are as follows.

I. The overall situation of the Hong Kong media since the 1997 reversion

II. Situations of individual media: Commercial station and public broadcaster

II-1. TVB

II-2. RTHK

III. Recent media trends: Rise of internet media

IV. Conclusion

I. The overall situation of The Hong Kong media since the 1997 reversion

A majority of people in journalism in Hong Kong says the media environment has worsened over the past 20 years. According to their accounts, there have been three "turning points".

Immediately after the reversion, the Chinese government hoped to make the return of the former British colony a milestone for the unification with Taiwan, and tried to show to the world that Hong Kong enjoys freedom and prosperity as part of China. Interference with the Hong Kong media was relatively moderate and China didn't force its way through by ignoring objection by local residents.

One example is the reaction to a remark made in March 1998 by Xu Simin, president of pro-China magazine *The Mirror*, who attended a panel meeting of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing as a representative of Hong Kong. He criticized Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), a public broadcaster funded by government grants, for "using taxpayers' money to express opposition to Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa and the Chinese government".² His remark drew much attention in Hong Kong, for it strongly suggested the intention of putting RTHK under government control like the media in the mainland. RTHK quickly expressed its opposition, saying, "Mr. Xu's view on the role of a public institution is different from that of ordinary Hong Kong citizens." Anson Chan, the

number-two official in the territory at the time, also criticized Xu's remark. Pro-China groups had to withdraw.

This case was an example of the Chinese government's "conciliatory" approach to Hong Kong. But it changed after 500,000 people took part in a protest rally on July 1, 2003, against a proposed national security law drafted by Hong Kong authorities. It's a huge number for the territory with about 7 million residents. Shocked by the scale of the protest, the Chinese government suspected that media organizations in Hong Kong "incited" residents to take to the streets. The government is said to have started tightening control on the Hong Kong media.

So the first turning point was this mass protest. The second one is thought to have occurred around the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Around that time, the Chinese government started appointing most of the owners of the Hong Kong media organizations to honorary posts such as delegates to the National People's Congress or members of the Political Consultative Conference. It also started implementing education programs in Hong Kong to instill the sense of belonging to the People's Republic of China to emphasize nationalism.

The third turning point began when Xi Jinping became the General Secretary of the Communist Party in 2012. Under his leadership, the government issued an order in May 2013 to universities across the country that they must not discuss seven topics, including universal value, press freedom, civil rights and independence of judiciary. In August that year, opinion leaders who had many fans on the internet were detained for allegations of paying for sex or running an illegal business. State-run China Central Television (CCTV) broadcast interviews in which they repented for their actions.³ As media control tightened on the mainland, Hong Kong could not be immune to the impact. Pro-China tendencies are said to have become stronger among leading media organizations.⁴

The next section looks at several cases about press freedom in Hong Kong that occurred over the past 20 years. They had either political or economic factors. The first cases are believed to have caused by the political factor.

Cases caused by political factor

■ Disappearance of Causeway Bay Books officials

The most shocking media-related incident for people in Hong Kong over the past two decades is probably the disappearance of people associated with Causeway Bay Books between 2015 and 2016. Five senior officials at the bookstore that published titles critical of the Chinese government went missing one after another. Four of them later appeared on CCTV or Hong Kong's Phoenix TV while being detained by Chinese authorities. They admitted to have committed criminal offenses and asked for forgiveness. One of them, Lam Wing Kee, held a news conference in June 2016 after he was released and returned to Hong Kong and said his confession was forced. Lam said he had to memorize a script and speak before the camera, and had to reshoot when he made a mistake. He and two others were detained on the mainland, but a fourth person was disappeared in Thailand and the bookshop's de facto owner Lee Po went missing in Hong Kong. Lee's case especially frightened Hong Kong citizens, because they believed that Chinese officials came to the territory and forcibly took him away in violation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle.⁵ The author met Lam during the field trip.



Mr. Lam Wing
Kee

Lam said Chinese authorities took issue with a book about a purported former mistress of Xi Jinping. He said the first five months of his eight-month captivity were particularly tough because he was in

solitary confinement. As for why he took risks and broke his silence, he said he thought long and hard but concluded that if he remained silent, he would give a negative impact on many Hong Kong residents and he would feel guilty about it. He also said he thought this does not concern himself alone. Lam said the capture of Lee in Hong Kong is a big issue that threatens Hong Kong's self-rule.⁶ He expressed concern that if the proposed national security legislation, which was shelved in 2003, will be made into law, freedom of publishing will be scrapped and he won't be able to live in Hong Kong.

■ **Rejection of HKTV's application for license as free-to-air TV station**

In October 2013, the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (hereinafter the Hong Kong government) announced that it will grant the license as free-to-air TV stations to two applicants. The application by Hong Kong TV, formally affiliated with City Telecom, was rejected. TVB and ATV had provided free-to-air terrestrial broadcasting services, but as ATV weakened, TVB had virtual monopoly. Calls from citizens for more diverse services were rising. Four years before the government decision, the three companies applied for license as free-of-charge TV service provider. Two years after the application, a regulatory body recommended that the government grant license to all applicants. But the government did not reach a conclusion on the matter for two more years and ended up excluding HKTV, which had been most actively preparing to start the service. At the news conference where the decision was announced, reporters asked about the reason for not giving license to HKTV. Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Greg So Kam-leung refused to disclose the reason, saying what was discussed at the Executive Council amounts to confidential information. Many media personnel believe that authorities were concerned that if they granted free-to-air license to HKTV, which was seen as an industry maverick, it would facilitate competitions and result in more reports critical of the Chinese government that is disliked by many Hong Kong residents.⁷

Cases caused by economic factor

Following cases are believed to have occurred due mainly to the economic factor. There are several issues common among various media organizations.

■ ***Purchase of Hong Kong media stocks by Chinese investors**

In the 2017 edition of its annual report on press freedom, the Hong Kong Journalists Association says Chinese investors had acquired shares of eight of the 26 main media organizations in Hong Kong and expresses concern that the investors will increase their influence.⁸ The eight are China Daily HK edition, Ta Kung Pao, Wen Wei Po, Hong Kong Commercial Daily, Phoenix TV, Sing Pao Daily News, South China Morning Post (SCMP) and TVB. The first five have ties with the Chinese Communist Party. The problem lies with the other three. TVB has overwhelming presence in Hong Kong as a free-to-air terrestrial TV station. SCMP is an English-language quality paper valued by foreigners who want information about China. The impact of Chinese investment in those organizations is believed be quite significant. In 2017, it came to light that fee-based multichannel service provider i-Cable had accepted investment from the mainland. Chinese investment has been growing in recent years. The owners of TVB and SCMP are business people who prefer closer ties with China, and their reports are said to have become more favorable to China. The Chinese government is apparently aiming for more direct control on the Hong Kong media.

■ *Placing and cancelling advertisements

Hong Kong media organizations earn much of their advertisement revenues from local financial and real estate firms. These firms have deep business ties with the mainland, and placing or cancelling of advertisements apparently reflects the Chinese government's wishes. Between 2013 and 2014, advertisements by major banks including HSBC, Hang Seng Bank and the Bank of East Asia disappeared from Apple Daily, known for its unreserved criticism of the Chinese government. This caused the newspaper to have six fewer pages. Free paper am730 saw advertisements from mainland banks such as the Bank of China, China Construction Bank and China CITIC Bank drop starting the fourth quarter of 2013. Its monthly ad revenues declined by as much as 1.2 million Hong Kong dollars (\$153,000).

■ *Preferential treatment for “friendly media”

During the disappearances of Causeway Bay Books officials, CCTV, Phoenix TV and Sing Tao Daily interviewed the detained people. Phoenix TV is close to the mainland. Sing Tao Daily used to be close to Taiwan's Nationalist Party but changed its stance to pro-China after 1998. The Chinese government has provided these “friendly” media organizations with scoops or exclusive interviews of key government officials. People in the Hong Kong media believe that the government is trying to control the media sector in the territory.

■ *Interference with media personnel affairs

The Chinese government gives preferential treatment to mainland business operations by the owners of Hong Kong media organizations. There have been cases in which it apparently replaced newspaper chief editors with “understanding” people. They include the replacement of the Hong Kong Economic Journal chief editor Chan K1 i4ng-cheung in May 2013 and Ming Pao chief editor Kevin Lau in January 2014. Since the personnel changes, their reports are said to have become more sympathetic to China.

Interviews

The author spoke to media personnel during the field trip to find out how, amid these cases, they see the changes in the media environment in Hong Kong over the past 20 years.

Emily Lau Wai-hing, former reporter for SCMP and TVB, former head of the Democratic Party
“I'm worried because the situation is getting worse and worse”



Ms. Emily Lau
Wai-hing

Many people see Ms. Lau as a politician, for she was a member of the Legislative Council until September 2016 and the president of the Democratic Party until the end of that year. But she spent 15 years in the media industry as a reporter for SCMP and TVB. She was also once the chairperson of the Hong Kong Journalists Association.

As for the media environment over the past two decades, she said she is worried because “the situation is getting worse and worse”. She thinks the disappearances of the Causeway Bay Books officials especially significant. She was the only person who raised the issue when chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, Zhang Dejiang, the third-highest ranking official of the Chinese Communist Party, visited Hong Kong and met prodemocracy legislators and others in May 2015.

Ms. Lau told Mr. Zhang: “This is the darkest time since 1997. You interfere with Hong

Kong's internal affairs and we are very displeased. About the Causeway Bay Books incident, many people in Hong Kong and the international community think that people coming from the mainland and detaining Mr. Lee violates the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. Hong Kong residents are scared. Mr. Lee's case destroyed the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle that had served as a firewall."

At that point, the Legislative Council speaker asked another person to speak, so she couldn't go any further. A Chinese government source later complained to Democratic Party officials that she lambasted Mr. Zhang.

Ms. Lau said China's influence has grown in various media and they don't do anything to upset the Chinese government. Fee-based multichannel broadcaster i-Cable used to frequently report on human rights activists on the mainland. But a pro-China businessperson became its owner after the broadcaster fell into the red, and Ms. Lau said she is not optimistic about its future. As for her previous workplaces, SCMP and TVB, she said they are changing little by little and employees who have become disillusioned quit their job. She is pessimistic about the future of the Hong Kong media.

Chip Tsao, personality at Hong Kong Commercial Broadcasting

"Chinese economy's huge growth influences the Hong Kong media"



Mr. Chip Tsao

Mr. Tsao was born into a journalistic family. His father was a deputy editor-in-chief of the pro-mainland newspaper Ta Kung Pao, and his mother was an editor at the paper. But he has a strong commitment to press freedom because he studied in Britain and worked for the BBC for nine years. Since 2003, he has been hosting a radio program called "Summit" on Hong Kong Commercial Broadcasting five days a week.

He pointed out that TV stations and newspapers in Hong Kong have received funds from China or its proxies over the past 20 years. He said media owners started heeding China's requests and their behavior is affecting reporters as the Chinese economy becomes huge. He added that when companies place advertisement on Apple Daily and other media organizations critical of the Chinese government, the Liaison Office of Central Government in HKSAR immediately calls to the companies to urge them to withdraw the ads. This is causing their business to worsen. He said media organizations can criticize the government over civilian lives in Hong Kong, but they have started avoiding "sensitive" topics such as the future of Hong Kong (whether it should become independent from China, etc.) and power struggles among Chinese political leaders.

Ma Fung-kwok, member of the Legislative Council

"Freedom has expanded with the emergence of internet media"



Mr. Ma Fung-kwok

Although Mr. Ma has no experience as a journalist, he used to work in the film industry and spent two and a half years at Hong Kong Satellite Television. He has been a member of the Legislative Council as a representative of the sports, performing arts, culture and publishing sector since 2012. He belongs to the pro-China group.

He said the sphere of press freedom has further expanded over the past 20 years and he doesn't agree with the view that the media in Hong Kong has less freedom. He said the main factor for the change in the media environment is the emergence of internet media brought by

technological innovation. He suggested that problems with the traditional media stem from the development of internet media, citing the case of all three commercial broadcasters with digital radio operations giving up their license after earnings worsened. He argued that the media environment has not worsened, saying that the internet media can accuse the government or promote their ideologies without regulations. On the other hand, Mr. Ma did not touch on whether the traditional media are becoming “meeker” on their reporting.

II. Situation of individual media: Commercial station and public broadcaster

This section takes a detailed look at how individual media organizations in Hong Kong have worked over the past 20 years and highlights their issues. Featured organizations are TVB (Television Broadcasts), the longtime leading commercial broadcaster, and RTHK (Radio Television Hong Kong), the public broadcaster that is a government organ but its editorial independence is guaranteed like the British Broadcasting Corporation.

II-1 TVB

Launched in 1967, TVB has been Hong Kong's largest terrestrial TV station. Another free-to-air terrestrial TV station ATV began operation in 1973. They used to be the two major commercial broadcasters for a long time, but the latter's business began to worsen in the 1990s, allowing TVB to have a dominant share in the market. During the analog broadcast era, TVB operated Cantonese-language TVB Jade and English-language TVB Pearl. After terrestrial digital broadcasting began in December 2007, three more channels (J2, TVB News Channel and TVB Finance Channel) were added. TVB is popular for entertainment programs. It also operates satellite broadcasting for the mainland and Taiwan. Businessman Sir Run Run Shaw had owned TVB for a long time. But Young Lion, founded jointly by Hong Kong and Taiwanese business people and a U.S. investment firm, acquired a 26% stake in 2011. Later, part of Young Lion's stake in TVB were sold to a mainland company, China Media Capital that invests in the media industry.

Media personnel in Hong Kong share the view that TVB's reporting has become pro-China over the past two decades. Many citizens call the broadcaster “CCTVB” because they think its reporting is not much different from that of China's state-run Central Television (CCTV). Here are some examples that made the broadcaster get such a reputation.

■ *Police violence scene deleted from “Umbrella Movement” report

On October 14, 2014, when the prodemocracy “Umbrella Movement”⁹ was reaching its peak, seven police officers dragged Ken Tsang Kin-chiu, member of the prodemocracy Civic Party and social activist, in handcuffs into a park and beat him. A TVB crew was at the scene and filmed the incident from start to end. The broadcaster initially aired the footage without editing, but after senior editors came to work the following morning, related footage was cut out. Several dozen reporters started a petition to protest the deletion, and key members of the campaign were moved to a research division.

■ ***Person from pro-China party appointed to senior position**

Luk Hon-tak, former secretary general of the pro-China Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, was appointed Managing Editor of the news division in March 2015.

■ ***“Speculation” became top story for Causeway Bay Books case**

During a Legislative Council session on January 5, 2016, Ng Leung-sing read out a text message from a friend that said the five missing Causeway Bay Books officials had gone to the mainland on small boats for sex tourism. Although he said it’s only a speculation, TVB reported the remark as the top item on its evening news bulletin that day and cut out the “speculation” part.

■ ***Refusal to air RTHK’s satire program in breach of regulation**

Under broadcasting regulations, TVB is obliged to allocate part of its primetime slots to programs produced by RTHK, which did not have its own TV channel. RTHK’s satirical current affairs program Headliner was due to go on air from 6 PM on June 30, 2017. But only eight minutes before broadcast, TVB notified RTHK that it will be moved to a late-night slot on another channel to make way for a special program on a speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping who was visiting Hong Kong at the time. But the special program lasted only for several minutes and programs about feng shui and other topics filled the rest of the slot, prompting protest from RTHK. Media industry people believe that TVB paid political heed to China because the Headliner episode in question poked fun at Xi and mentioned Chinese prodemocracy activist Liu Xiaobo.



Mr. Allan Au

An insider who witnessed TVB’s “transformation” published a book in 2017. The title roughly translates as “Freedom under 20 shadows”.¹⁰ The author is Mr. Allan Au, who worked as journalist for the broadcaster for 20 years and now teaches at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The book is based on his own experience and hearings from 69 TV reporters, camera crew, editors and executives (including 37 from TVB and 10 from RTHK) conducted between September 2014 and May 2016. He declines to say which case occurred at which broadcaster, but said it was because he doesn’t want to present the cases as only concerning TVB, acknowledging that most cases occurred there. For details of the book, please refer to an attachment at the end of this article.

His book was introduced on Ming Pao’s Sunday edition as well as internet media Stand News and Initium Media. The author met Mr. Au during the field trip.

Interview

Allan Au, former reporter at TVB

“The Chinese government presides over TVB owner”

Looking back the past two decades, Mr. Au said TVB has undergone big changes especially over recent years. Journalists who have long experience in covering China have quit, and many reporters stationed in such cities as Beijing and Guangdong have only one or two years of work. He also said TVB’s news division used to be a money pit. But after it shifted focus from news to information for programs on new channels created through digitization, the

division started generating profits. Reporters who belonged to the news division have been transferred to information programs, causing a shortage of people who can take charge of journalism. Among Hong Kong broadcasters, he said, i-Cable made the most efforts in journalism. But since the loss-making company was sold to a pro-China businessperson who wants it to focus on the economy, Mr. Au is worried that i-Cable will follow TVB's fate. He also said above the owner of each media organization, the Chinese government presides as an even more powerful owner.

TVB refused the author's request for face-to-face interviews with the company representative or its journalists. But the author was able to speak with Mr. Stephen Chan Chi-wan, former TVB general manager who now serves as a senior advisor to Hong Kong Commercial Broadcasting.

Stephen Chan Chi-wan, former TVB general manager

"TVB has turned into pro-China media"



Mr. Stephen
Chan Chi-wan

Mr. Chan, who worked for TVB for 18 years until 2012, said change was already taking place while he was there. He also said self-censorship has become apparent as in the deletion of a police violence scene from a report on the Umbrella Movement. As mentioned before, a former executive of a pro-China political party became a senior official at TVB's news division in 2015. Mr. Chan criticized the appointment for "raising doubt on the broadcaster's contribution to the public interest and neutrality". He said TVB began to pay heed to the Chinese government because of the need to expand business in the mainland. He concluded that TVB is little different from ATV, the pro-China media that was unpopular among Hong Kong citizens and forced to close down in 2016 after accumulating losses.

TVB

"Editorial independence has been consistently maintained"

After TVB refused the request for an interview, the author asked about its take on the opinion that press freedom in Hong Kong has declined over the past 20 years. The broadcaster replied in writing.

"We disagree with the view that press freedom in Hong Kong has been declining. TVB's news division has consistently maintained its expertise and editorial independence. We instruct reporters to ensure accuracy, impartiality and fairness of their news reporting."

Officials of TVB's relevant divisions accepted the author's request for hearings in November 2008 and January 2013. The refusal this time may have something to do with "changes" in its reporting.

II-2 RTHK

RTHK started broadcasting in 1928, when Hong Kong was a British colony, as a radio station run by the colonial government. The radio division was separated from the public relations division in 1954 and the top post of the Controller of Broadcasting was created. Production of television programs started in 1970 and commercial broadcasters (TVB and later ATV) began airing its programs on some of their time slots. RTHK used to broadcast news stories provided by the government's PR division. But it established the news division in 1973 and started its own news reporting. It was during the time Dr. J. Hawthorne from the BBC, who worked for RTHK between 1970 and 1978, instilled the principle of editorial independence in RTHK. Its corporate culture of "criticizing the government despite being part of it" goes back to this period.¹¹

As for how RTHK's reporting has changed over the past 20 years, media personnel largely agree that RTHK is doing far better than TVB but it has become tame under growing pressure from the Hong Kong government. Here are some of the cases that have led to this assessment.

■ ***"Internal promotion" excluded for top personnel appointment**

Although RTHK is technically a government organ, its editorial independence is stated in an agreement renewed regularly between RTHK and its upper organ, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau. RTHK officials had long been appointed the Controller of Broadcasting. But when a scandal-hit controller was forced to resign in 2007, rumor spread that a government bureaucrat would become a successor. The RTHK trade union and citizens' groups supporting the broadcaster opposed to such an appointment and requested internal promotion. The government eventually appointed media owner Franklin Wong, a former RTHK employee, as new Controller. He had run a Beijing-based documentary production company since 2004 and was seen as a person close to China. When Wong stepped down after one term in September 2011, the government appointed Roy Tang Yun-kwong, the number-two official at the Labour and Welfare Bureau, as his successor. It was the first time in more than 50 years that a bureaucrat became the head of RTHK. The trade union denounced the appointment, saying that it downgrades the broadcaster to a government propaganda machine. On Tang's first day in office, union members rolled out a black carpet at the entrance, wore black clothes and held placards with messages calling for the retraction of the appointment.

■ ***Popular presenter "dismissed" after criticizing the government**

In December that year, it became known that Ng Chi Sum, who had presented a radio program "Open Line, Open View", popular for unreserved criticism of the government had his contract terminated after having hosted the program for eight years.

■ ***Controller criticized program's directing**

In September 2012, popular program City Forum took up "national education", promoted by the Hong Kong government that was following the wish of the mainland government. Hong Kong residents considered national education as an obscurantist campaign to have them praise the Communist Party. Criticism was growing against the education secretary who was trying to introduce it despite public opposition. The secretary refused RTHK's request to appear on the program. So the producers started the program by placing an empty chair in the studio, suggesting that the secretary can join anytime. It was the manifestation of fierce criticism of the

secretary who refuses to engage in discussions. After the broadcast, Tang told the producers that they should ask permission from their superiors when they want to place an empty chair in the studio. “Such directing is seldom done. But we used that for the program on national education because the education secretary never agreed to appear, although we said we would accept a deputy. Demanding that producers obtain permission from superiors is an interference with editorial independence,” Janet Mak Lai-ching from RTHK’s program staff union told the author in January 2013.

■ ***Controller proposed replacing popular program**

In November 2012, Tang disclosed to RTHK officials a plan to end current affairs interview program Legco Review to start a new one that would be similar to TVB’s On the Record, a talk show that invites government bureaucrats. Ms. Mak said On the Record holds back at the guests, and TVB staff doesn’t want to work on it. She said opposition to Tang’s plan erupted among RTHK employees. Legco Review presenter Allen Lee told the author that when the Hong Kong media contacted him over the issue, he said “let’s see if they can”. He said when his comment was reported Tang immediately retracted the plan. Lee cited the opposition from RTHK staff and his program’s high audience ratings for the retraction.

■ ***New headquarters plan put off**

The current RTHK headquarters were built in 1959. The broadcaster drew up a plan to build a new one in Junk Bay in the suburbs to coincide with the shift to digital broadcasting. It planned to move to the new headquarters in 2018 and start terrestrial digital broadcasting on its first original channel. However, pro-China legislators voted down a draft budget at a Legislative Council subcommittee in January 2014, arguing that the construction cost had more than tripled from the original figure. Later in the month, the Hong Kong government announced the retraction of the plan. No revised plan has been created since then. Media personnel largely believe that the government is putting budgetary pressure on RTHK that advocates editorial independence.

Interviews

Here are the author’s interviews with people in the media industry.

Claudia Mo Man-ching, member of the Legislative Council

“Pro-china groups hate RTHK”



Ms. Claudia Mo
Man-ching

Ms. Mo was a member of the Civic Party until 2016 and is now an independent legislator in the opposition camp. Before entering politics, she was a reporter for the English-language newspaper Standard and anchor for TVB and RTHK. As for the basic positioning of RTHK, she said there is a contradiction between being a government organ and a public broadcaster. She also said RTHK’s budget is not government funds but taxpayers’ money, and the broadcaster should work for citizens. The stalled construction plan is stalled “because pro-China groups hate RTHK. It criticized the colonial government when Hong Kong was a British territory and it still refuses to obey the government. Pro-China groups want RTHK to cease to exist,” she said. When she met the last governor of Hong Kong Chris Patten before the reversion, Patten told her that he wanted RTHK to become like the BBC (author’s note: to separate RTHK from the government

and make it an independent public broadcaster), but he couldn't do that because he was at odds with the Chinese government over political reforms.

Gladys Chiu, head of RTHK program staff union

“Organized complaint calls make RTHK cautious”



Ms. Gladys Chiu

Ms. Chiu has worked for RTHK for only about five years, but she has been the union chief since 2016.

She pointed out the impact of the announcement by an advisory committee set up in 2010 to supervise RTHK's management that it will take an interest in public complaint campaigns (i.e. citizens making phone calls to particular companies or organizations to deliver their complaints). RTHK receives about 30 calls a day, many of them accusing the broadcaster. Many of the callers are associated with pro-China organizations such as HKGpao, Silent Majority for Hong Kong and 珍惜群組. She said these verbal attacks and the advisory committee that puts importance on these opinions are making RTHK producers more cautious.

She also said the workload for news production has increased since 2014, such as creating content for mobile phones and around-the-clock updates, but the number of staff has not been increased enough.

As for budgetary restrictions, including the stalled headquarters construction, Ms. Chiu described them as “drying in the shades”. It means that rather than directly ordering RTHK to stop making certain programs, authorities are trying to tame it by putting indirect pressure through cutting budgets or increasing the number of irregular employees. Ms. Chiu said none of the program staff thinks they should become tame to secure budgets, but problems have arisen: producers focus less on news and current affairs that require more costs, and short-term contract workers account for around 60% of the staff. “I sometimes feel powerless because we are unable to make in-depth reports on current affairs, but we can make programs with substantial content on literature, history and philosophy, so we want to win viewers' trust in such programs,” she said.

Former senior executive of RTHK

“New HQ construction stalled after influence of broadcasting fell”

RTHK refused the author's request for a face-to-face interview, but a person who was its senior executive until recently agreed to an unofficial meeting. This person, A, attributed the stalled plan for new headquarters to a change in the macro environment of broadcasting. With the expansion of the internet media and social media, broadcasting has become less influential, making it difficult to win taxpayers' understanding to a large investment. As for the lack of internal promotion to RTHK's top post, A indicated that it cannot be helped because “RTHK is a government organ after all”. The former executive also spoke about the “empty chair” incident mentioned earlier in this article. “Not a small number of guests refuse to come to the studio. If producers use such directing only for a certain guest, it could draw complaints from viewers. Direction like that should be an exception, and producers should consult their superiors beforehand,” A said.

As the end of the interview, the author asked whether public broadcasting is more important as commercial stations have become “meeker” due to various political and economic reasons. “That's why ‘pressure’ is becoming stronger” was the reply.

III. Recent media trends: Rise of internet media

So far, this article looked at how the traditional media such as television and newspaper have become “meeker” due to political and economic factors over the past 20 years. For people working in those media, the emerging internet media are a new frontier. The author reported the overall situation of Hong Kong in 2015.¹² Since then, more new internet media organizations have been established. In June 2015, two journalists – Mr. Tom Grundy and Mr. Evan Fowler – who were concerned about the pro-China tendency at SCMP founded English-language website Hong Kong Free Press that is funded by donations. In the following month, Chinese-language media Factwire started operation. It focuses on investigative reporting and relies on donations. Another internet media Kinliu started in September that year, and a former owner of Ming Pao launched HK01 in January 2016. Kinliu and HK01 are seen as close to pro-China groups. Renowned journalists, including a former editor-in-chief of Ming Pao, launched Citizen News in January 2017 with donations as the main revenue source. Of those new media organizations, two agreed to give face-to-face interviews.

Interviews

Mak Yin Ting, Co-founder of Citizen News

“We supplement the existing media”



Ms. Mak Yin Ting

Ms. Mak has 30 years of experience as journalist. She worked for RTHK from 1993 to 2007 and held the post of the director of the news division. The U.S. nonprofit organization Visual Artist Guild, which advocates freedom of speech and expression, awarded her with the Champion of Freedom of Speech prize. She is also a former chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association. She founded Citizen News with former editor-in-chief of Ming Pao Kevin Lau, Chinese University of Hong Kong Professor Emeritus Joseph Man Chan and former Hong Kong Journalists Association chair Sham Yee Lan and others. Citizen News raised 3 million Hong Kong dollars (\$384,000) in donations. Combined with 2.5 million dollars (\$320,000) at hand, the founders concluded that they have enough funds to run the media for one year and opened the website on January 1, 2017. Regular articles are accessible for free, and Citizen News sends in-depth articles weekly to more than 400 people who have donated 500 Hong Kong dollars (\$64) or more. The media has 10 staff members to cover reporting, editing, design and general affairs. Ms. Mak said Citizen News has journalists with specialized skills. She considers its role as supplementing the existing media because although it exercises a certain level of influence, its small size limits the number of articles it can publish. As for the future, she said they cannot rely on donations forever, expressing hope to create a stable business model.

Ng Hiu-Tung, Factwire spokesman

“News agency-style has advantages”

Factwire, funded mainly by donations, specializes in investigative reporting. It’s a rare type of media in Asia, but Taiwan has a similar internet media organization called The Reporter.¹³

Mr. Ng is the media organization’s founder and now serves as its spokesman. He was a reporter for TVB between 1992 and 2001, covering mainland affairs. After leaving TVB, he



Mr. Ng Hiu-Tung

founded news photo agency Eye Press and joined i-Cable's China team between 2004 and 2007. After that, he rejoined Eye Press. Mr. Ng said people trusted media reports 20 years ago but recently the trust in the existing media is at risk because of media owners' interference with news reporting. He founded Factwire because he wanted to report freely without any political inclinations, create a fair and unbiased media organization that doesn't have an owner and report facts without commentaries. When he started accepting donations, 3,300 people provided 4.7 million Hong Kong dollars (\$600,000), thanks to connections he built while working for TVB and i-Cable. In order to have a quality reporting team, he took up an unpaid position of advisor and

spokesman because he has an income from Eye Press. When Factwire tried to recruit reporters, about 200 people applied in about a month. Mr. Ng checked the applicants' social media posts, shortlisted about 90 of them for a job interview and hired 10 for investigative reporting. He said many of the successful applicants were from major media organizations including Apple Daily, Next Magazine, Ming Pao, Sing Tao Daily, Oriental Daily News, the Hong Kong Economic Journal and RTHK who want to do investigative reporting. Mr. Ng tried to pay them the same wage as they received from their former workplace. But the wage of RTHK employees -- who are civil servants -- is higher than others at 50,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$6,400), so Mr. Ng lowered the salary for a former RTHK reporter to 30,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$3,840) to keep it in line with the others.

Factwire has released about 20 investigative reporting articles. Mr. Ng selected some of the major exclusive stories.

■ ***Young North Korean defector ran into the South Korean Consulate General in Hong Kong, left for South Korea after 80 days in hideout¹⁴**

An 18-year-old male North Korean participant of the International Mathematical Olympiad in Hong Kong in July 2016 fled to the South Korean Consulate General and asked for protection. Media organizations tried to find out what happened to the defector. When South Korea's YTN Television reported in late August that he had already left for a third country, media personnel who had camped in front of the Consulate General withdrew. But Mr. Ng said Factwire learned from diplomatic sources that he was still there, and continued covering the case. It confirmed that he left Hong Kong after having spent about 80 days in hideout, and reported the story as a scoop.

■ ***Singaporean military vehicles seized at Hong Kong customs¹⁵**

In November 2016, Hong Kong customs authorities seized a container ship belonging to the French shipping company CMA CGM Group after Singaporean armored vehicles and military supplies -- whose transport is prohibited -- were found on board. The ship had left Kaohsiung in Taiwan and made a port call at the Chinese city of Xiamen before arriving at Hong Kong, from where it was due to head to Singapore. Mr. Ng says reporters noticed the case after they spotted a photo of the ship's interior a port worker took and uploaded on the internet. Nobody seemed to pay attention to the photo except Factwire. The worker told the reporters that only two or three customs officials board ships for routine inspections, but there were more officials on the day the military vehicles were found. The worker also said the officials went straight to a particular vessel when they arrived at the terminal. The reporters' persistent investigation led to the discovery that the Singaporean vehicles had taken part in a military exercise in Taiwan and were on its way to the city-state. Hong Kong customs seized the vehicles following a tip-

off from their counterparts in Xiamen.¹⁶ The case became a diplomatic issue between China and Singapore, and the news drew international attention.

■ ***“Fabricated” abduction and assault of Democratic Party member¹⁷**

On August 11, 2017, member of the Democratic Party Howard Lam Tsz-kin held a news conference and said that Mandarin-speaking men shoved him into a van in the busy district of Mong Kok the previous day, took him to an unknown location and four or five men intimidated and assaulted him for nine hours. He said the men asked him whether he knows the widow of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and democracy activist Liu Xiaobo, then punched staples into his thighs. With the memory of the Causeway Bay Books incident still vivid, the Hong Kong media reported the case as their top story. But on the night of August 14, Factwire reported that security camera footage at the alleged abduction site and interview with Lam strongly suggest that he staged the attack. He was later arrested and indicted although he has denied fabricating the case. Factwire drew much attention by casting doubt on Lam’s accounts.

However, it initially reported that security camera footage proved that Lam left the purported abduction site alone and unscathed. The report drew criticism that it used definitive wording although the truth had not been found. It corrected the story’s title to a more implicit one and issued an apology. The escalating political confrontation between pro-China and pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong was behind this incident. Mr. Ng said some prodemocracy activists alleged that Factwire receives funds from the Chinese Communist Party.

As for the future, Mr. Ng expressed hope to end depending entirely on donations and earn revenues through a) fee-based subscription for general readers and b) distribution to media organizations. As for a), he plans to set the annual subscription fee at 2,555 Hong Kong dollars (\$327). This translates into 7 Hong Kong dollars (\$0.9) per day because newspapers are sold at this price on the streets, although Factwire has fewer stories than newspapers do. When the author asked what advantage individual readers will have when they can read redistributed stories on other media, Mr. Ng replied that other media may delete parts of the stories, but subscribers can read the whole articles. He said requests from the government, political parties and legislators are especially strong, and more than 1,000 individuals have already signed for subscription.

As for b), he said his organization serves as a news agency. Stories are provided for free in the first year and they will be charged from the second year and on. According to Mr. Ng, Factwire has signed contracts with 90% of the media organizations in Hong Kong. The fee seems to be relatively small. He said annual revenues from media clients remain between 1 million and 2 million Hong Kong dollars (\$128,000 to \$258,000), but running the organization as a news agency has a big advantage. The traditional media impose self-restriction on criticizing the Chinese and Hong Kong governments, as this article has mentioned, but Mr. Ng said they can reprint Factwire stories that are critical of the authorities. The South China Morning Post, which has been acquired by the owner of e-commerce giant Alibaba, carried an article that criticizes the company. Pro-government Sing Tao Daily also uses articles critical of the government. Mr. Ng is highly motivated, expressing hopes to make Factwire stand shoulder to shoulder with Kyodo News, Jiji Press and Reuters.

While many internet media organizations are launched in recent years, one issue has arisen: whether to allow them to attend government news conferences and other events. The Hong Kong government has excluded them from these occasions, but the Hong Kong Journalists Association and other journalist groups are calling on the government to grant them

the same access as the traditional media. Chief Executive Carrie Lam announced on September 2017 that the government will allow access by registered internet media provided that they meet conditions such as;

- Distributing news stories on a regular basis for at least three months
- Updating the websites at least five days a week
- Having at least one chief editor and one reporter

The government warns that it will suspend or cancel registration if an organization's representative makes inappropriate remarks or behavior and that it will review the permission in six months' time. The Hong Kong Journalists Association says the decision came too late but it's welcome nonetheless, adding that it will monitor the registration procedures to ensure that all media organizations will be treated equally. However, ruling-bloc legislators argue that some of internet media organizations are intended for social activism, rather than reporting, and they don't want such organizations to spend much of time at news conferences for self-promotion or attacking the government.



Mr. Jeffrey Au

As the traditional media are becoming weak, it's a good thing in principle that restrictions on the internet media are eased. But in other words, the government is requesting certain discipline for them, and not all internet media organizations are welcoming this. Mr. Jeffery Au is one of the co-founders of internet visual media outlet OurTV. He pointed out that during the 2011 local elections, the Hong Kong government requested that the internet media allocate the same amount of time to all candidates. Mr. Au says the internet media in Hong Kong have emerged because the traditional media started to refrain from reporting opinions critical of the government. Thinking that the government should not control the internet media, he made telephone calls to other internet media organizations to join hands to fight against the government request. He says the internet media is divided into two types: one is the "journalistic" type that aims for fair and neutral reporting in the conventional sense. The other is the "social movement" type that hopes to express their political views more openly. Legal restrictions on the internet media may become more diverse.

The last case of this chapter is Apple Daily, a newspaper that has started internet operations.

Cheung Kim Hung, Apple Daily President

"Most of advertisement revenues go to Google, etc."



Mr. Cheung Kim Hung

Apple Daily is a major newspaper that has consistently criticized the Chinese government and supported Hong Kong's democratization. As reported earlier in this article, newspapers have seen their advertisement revenues drop since around 2013. Apple Daily sped up the shift to the internet. Mr. Cheung was the newspaper's editor-in-chief between April 2011 and December 2014 and is now president. He said the newspaper's online edition has 40 million page views per day, which is two digits larger than the numbers for the internet-only media. Despite the popularity, there have been reports that Apple Daily's business is worsening and the newspaper plans job cuts. The author thought that Chinese authorities are pressuring companies not to place ads on Apple Daily. But Mr. Cheung said advertisement agencies want to obtain user

information such as gender, age and preferences, and they often place online ads through Google and Facebook that have big data. In that case, much of the ad revenues go to Google and Facebook, not to Apple Daily. So the newspaper has started producing videos with clients. When making an advertisement of milk, they produce a short video featuring a pregnant popular TV personality and insert a several seconds' ad at the end. Mr. Cheung said this method significantly raises the likelihood that viewers watch the ad. He also said he is considering introducing subscription fees to the online edition. This doesn't mean the newspaper will block access from non-paying users. If 10% of the roughly 2.3 million to 2.4 million unique users agree to pay one Hong Kong dollars (\$0.13) per day, the newspaper will earn between 230,000 and 240,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$29,300 to \$30,700) per day and that will pay for itself.

Internet media organizations, be they online-only or spinoff from the traditional media, are struggling to establish a stable business model.

IV. Conclusion

This article looked at how the media environment in Hong Kong has changed in the 20 years since its reversion to China.

As for the traditional media such as TV and newspapers, political and economic pressure by the Chinese and Hong Kong governments and the local business sector that reflect the mainland's intentions is becoming more apparent, and "shrinkage" of press freedom seems to be progressing. This tendency is particularly visible in commercial broadcaster TVB. At public broadcaster RTHK, the labor union and production workers are strongly resisting this trend and pushed back the pressure many times. However, it cannot be denied that they are becoming "tamed" by indirect clampdown through budget and personnel affairs.

On the other hand, internet media organizations are being launched one after another as if to counter the "shrinkage" of the traditional media. But they are much smaller and have fewer reporters compared to the traditional media. Although their influence is growing, it's still very limited. Internet media outlets considered to be pro-China, such as HK01 and Kinliu, have emerged and HK01 is making large investment, but it is highly unlikely to be profitable. Media personnel in Hong Kong see this as China's attempt to control the internet media. Under such circumstances, all eyes are on how much the internet media can contribute to maintain press freedom in Hong Kong.

Appendix: Excerpt from "Freedom under 20 Shadows"

The book's author, Allan Au, started working as an intern at the news division of TVB on June 3, 1989, the day before the Tiananmen Crackdown.¹⁸ Later, he covered that 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake in Japan and the Kosovo conflict as a reporter and the anchor of a current affairs program. He received an award for journalistic excellence.

He first experienced what appeared to be "censorship" by his boss in the early 1990s when Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui called the Chinese government "communist bandits" in his speech. When Mr. Au was to broadcast an unedited speech, an editor came and cut the "bandits" part. On another occasion before the 1997 reversion, he was working for a program about Chinese history. He inserted a sound bite of citizens shouting "freedom" in a video

showing the military action during the Tiananmen Crackdown. Although the sound bite lasted only for a couple of seconds, his superior who saw the video became very nervous and cut it out. It was the only part deleted from the finished program. The superior explained that the sound bite was cut because it had nothing to do with the main theme. Mr. Au did not protest at that time. “I may have been ignorant, I may have lacked courage, I may have known that my opinion would be rejected. Or I may have persuaded myself that I would gain more discretion later if I made a compromise on that case,” he wrote in the book. But the issue only got worse over time. The book cites many examples.

*Not interviewing prodemocracy scholars

(Author’s note: TVB is said to have adopted this policy around 2011, but there apparently is no written instruction)

*Senior officials instruct program staff to produce fewer politically “sensitive” stories during major events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the National People’s Congress

*One reporter’s superior said talented reporters won’t be stationed in Beijing

*When reporters propose programs on environmental pollution or ethnic problems in China, superiors reject them, citing a lack of budget. But budgets are granted for a report on China’s manned space mission. The longer a report is, the more superiors welcome it.

When these cases are repeated, reporters start to surmise and give up covering certain topics. Self-restriction has become an issue for the Hong Kong media recently. Mr. Au introduces several examples in his book.

During the Umbrella Movement, a reporter interviewed an economist about the economic impact of the occupation of major roads. The economist answered the movement poses no impact. After pondering, the reporter decided not to use the interview. (Author’s note: The reporter is believed to have surmised that TVB executives have the view that the broadcaster should oppose the movement based on its negative economic impact.)

The book also raises structural problems of news reporting that are not directly linked with the growing influence of China.

TV news production involves a division of labor such as reporting, filming, image editing, subtitles and transmission. Covering a major story often involves several reporters, making each person’s work like one of the processes at a factory. They cease to do journalist’s job that is to take charge of the whole story and looks at it with a critical eye. Also, a growing number of 24-hour news channels are in operation globally. When reporters have to do additional tasks such as regular content updates while the number of staff does not increase much, it becomes difficult to do time- and money-consuming investigative reporting. With these structural problems, the Hong Kong media are losing opportunities to dig deep into China’s various problems.

Mr. Au also compares TVB news reporting with that of other media organizations.

TVB and RTHK both have current affairs interview programs. TVB’s “On the Record” began in 2012. All the guests in the first 13 episodes were people associated with the government, including the Chief Executive and seven secretaries of policy bureaus who are minister-level officials. One reporter recalls that the initial phase of the program was like a “pilgrimage” to senior government officials. The first person associated with the opposition camp appeared in the 21st episode. RTHK started similar program “Face to Face” in late 2012. Mr. Au compared the first 364 episodes of “On the Record” with the first 49 episodes of “Face to Face” that were broadcast by late 2015. He found that people associated with the government appears on 68.2% of the “On the Record” episodes and 44.9% of “Face to Face”. An RTHK employee told Mr. Au that the Chief Executive and some other government officials have refused to appear on the program. This is probably because RTHK interviews involve questions

they don't want to answer. One pro-government member of the Executive Council¹⁹ criticized an RTHK presenter for being rude. Frequent guests of "On the Record" include the Transport and Housing secretary who appeared 12 times, the Development secretary 10 times, the Food and Health secretary 9 times. Five of the six most frequent guests were minister-level officials.

Mr. Au also analyzes words and phrases used in news. A clash occurred in the central district of Mong Kok between a radical self-determination group²⁰ and police in February 2016. The day after the clash, the Chief Executive denounced the residents by using the words "rioters" and "riots (暴乱 *baoluan* in Chinese)". TVB initially used *baoluan*, which indicates brutal violence when reporting the news, but other broadcasters mostly used the Chinese equivalent of "disturbance". The Communications Authority, which oversees broadcasters, received more than 300 complaints over TVB wording. When reporting the Umbrella Movement, the media usually used "occupation movement", but TVB editors requested that reporters use "occupation activities". They also told reporters to use 占中, which means "Occupy Central"²¹, instead of the "Umbrella Movement". One veteran reporter was told that "movement" implies an act of justice, and using the word could give the impression that TVB justifies the protesters' actions.

¹ See <https://rsf.org/en>

² For details, see Shigeo Takahashi, "Henkango Honkon no Genron no Jiyu wa Henka Shitaka: RTHK Hihan wo Meguru Mondai wo Kensho Suru" (Has press freedom in Hong Kong changed since the reversion? Examining issues surrounding the criticism of RTHK), p21-22, Chugoku Kenkyu Geppo, January 1999.

³ For details, see Kenichi Yamada, "Toseishoku Tsuyomaru Chugoku no Media/genron Seisaku" (China's Media and Speech Policy Imposing Tighter Controls), Hosokan Kenkyu to Chosa (NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast and Research), February 2014.

⁴ For details, see Kenichi Yamada, "Hyakka Ryoran Honkon Taiwan no Netto media" ("Hundreds of Flowers Blossoming" in the Internet Media Services in Hong Kong and Taiwan [Part I]), Hosokan Kenkyu to Chosa (NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast and Research), September 2015.

⁵ For details, see "Media Focus" in Hosokan Kenkyu to Chosa (NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast and Research), August 2016.

⁶ After he was freed, Lee denied Lam's argument and said he went to the mainland on his will. But Hong Kong authorities have no record of Lee leaving or returning to the territory. He declines to say how he entered the mainland. Lam said that when he spoke to Lee over the phone, he implied that he was forcibly taken by Chinese authorities. He also said Lee cannot publicly tell the truth because he has relatives in the mainland, adding that he doesn't blame Lee.

⁷ For details, see Kenichi Yamada, "Meiso suru Honkon no 'Muryo terebi' Shinki Menkyo Mondai" (Troubling New Licensing of "Free-to-Air TV" in Hong Kong), Hosokan Kenkyu to Chosa (NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast and Research), August 2013 and "Media Focus" in Hosokan Kenkyu to Chosa, December 2013.

⁸ See https://www.hkja.org.hk/site/Host/hkja/UserFiles/file/Annual_report_2017.pdf

⁹ The movement that demanded "true direct vote" for electing the chief executive started late September 2014 and lasted for 79 days. Protesters, mostly students, occupied roads in busy districts including Causeway Bay, Admiralty and Mong Kok. About 200,000 people are said to have taken part at its peak. As the Chinese government showed absolutely no signs of making concessions, the movement drew criticism for disrupting people's lives by occupying central districts. About two months into the occupation, police began removing protesters. The movement ended without much violence.

¹⁰ Written by Allan Au, published by Chinese University Press.

¹¹ For details, see Kenichi Yamada, "Hakunetsu suru Honkon no Kokyo Hosokan Kaikaku Ronngi (The Hot Debate on the Reform of Public Broadcasting in Hong Kong [Part One])", Hosokan Kenkyu to Chosa

(NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast and Research), October 2007.

¹² See 4.

¹³ For details, see Kenichi Yamada, “Kakudai Suru Taiwan no ‘Koha-gata’ Netto Media (Internet Media Dealing with Serious Topics are Expanding in Taiwan), Hosokawa Kenkyu to Chosa (NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast and Research), July 2017.

¹⁴ See <https://www.factwire.org/single-post/2016/09/28/%E8%84%AB%E5%8C%97%E9%9D%92%E5%B9%B4%E7%95%99%E6%B8%AF80%E6%97%A5%E5%BE%8C%E6%8A%B5%E9%81%94%E5%8D%97%E9%9F%93>

¹⁵ See <https://www.factwire.org/single-post/2016/11/26/%E8%BC%89%E6%96%B0%E5%8A%A0%E5%9D%A1%E8%A3%9D%E7%94%B2%E8%BB%8A%E8%B2%A8%E8%BC%AA%E6%9B%BE%E6%B3%8A%E5%BB%88%E9%96%80-%E5%85%A7%E5%9C%B0%E9%83%A8%E9%96%80%E9%80%9A%E7%9F%A5%E6%B8%AF%E5%BA%9C%E6%89%A3%E6%9F%A5>

¹⁶ Singapore and Taiwan have no diplomatic relations, but Singapore has conducted military exercises in Taiwan because the city-state is too small for drills.

¹⁷ See <https://www.factwire.org/single-post/2017/08/22/%E9%96%89%E8%B7%AF%E9%9B%BB%E8%A6%96%E6%8B%8D%E5%BE%97%E6%9E%97%E5%AD%90%E5%81%A5%E7%8F%BE%E7%A0%B5%E8%98%AD%E8%A1%97-%E5%85%B6%E5%BE%8C%E8%A1%A3%E8%91%97%E6%AD%A5%E5%A7%BF%E8%BF%91%E4%BC%BC%E7%94%B7%E5%AD%90%E6%88%B4%E5%B8%BD%E9%81%AE%E9%9D%A2%E9%9B%A2%E9%96%8B-%E6%9E%97%E5%AD%90%E5%81%A5%E5%8C%AA%E5%A4%B7%E6%89%80%E6%80%9D>

¹⁸ Between the evening of June 3 and early morning of June 4, 1989, Chinese authorities tried to remove students and other prodemocracy protesters who had been occupying the Tiananmen Square. Military tanks fired at civilians while heading to central Beijing. The incident left many people dead and injured.

¹⁹ The Executive Council supports the chief executive’s policy decisions. Its members include the Hong Kong government’s number-two position, the chief secretary of administration, bureau chiefs who are ministerial-level officials and executives of the ruling party.

²⁰ Political groups in Hong Kong are divided into pro-China/pro-government bloc and prodemocracy/anti-government bloc. But the prodemocracy bloc has split into “moderate prodemocracy groups”, “Hong Kong mainland (advocates of self-determination) groups” and “pro-independence groups”. The latter takes a more radical approach than the former.

²¹ 占中 is short for 占領中環, the call to occupy the Central district at the heart of Hong Kong. Although the call was made by scholars, it was student leaders who led the Umbrella Movement.