This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.
THE RISE OF HONG KONG NATIONALISM
ON THE EDGE OF EMPIRES

Justin Chun-ting Ho

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
2020
Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Justin Chun-ting Ho
31st December 2020
Abstract

This study aims to understand the discursive constitution of Hong Kong nationalism. Despite China’s efforts to instil Chinese nationalism among Hong Kong people, recent years witnessed an escalating conflict between Hong Kong and China and the eventual rise of nationalism in Hong Kong. Drawing on data from social media, publications, and archival documents, this study maps the competing discourses of Hong Kong’s past, present, and future. It illustrates how history, culture, social issues, and political crises were appropriated by nationalists to foster the building of the Hong Kong nation. The findings suggest that the idea of China Threat is a key component central to the nationalism discourse. The idea of China Threat includes the threats to freedom, democracy, and Hong Kong’s culture. Hong Kong nationalism, on the one hand, mobilises Hongkongers to resist the threats from China, and on the other hand, projects itself in the international arena as an aspiring member of the free world to muster support.

This study introduces a novel approach that complements sociological research with computational methods to study nationalism. The study employs a mixed methods design; for each chapter, the most appropriate research strategy was devised with consideration of its research aims and the nature of the data. In order to deal with the vast quantity of social media data, computational text analysis was used to reveal patterns within the text corpora and to select relevant texts for qualitative analysis at a subsequent stage.

Sociologically, this study not only contributes new knowledge on Hong Kong society, but also takes advantage of Hong Kong’s unique geopolitical, historical, and cultural context as well as the nascent nature of Hong Kong nationalism to reflect on existing theories of nations and nationalism. Methodologically, this work demonstrates the value of using computational methods to augment social inquiries and proposes a novel research framework that is applicable to a wide range of studies that utilise text as data.
Lay Summary

This thesis explores the notion of Hong Kong nationalism. Specifically, I focused on how the Hong Kong nationalists talked about the idea of Hong Kong nation and how they used history, contemporary political crises, and aspiration about Hong Kong’s future to support their cause and muster support.

In this study, I drew on data from social media, books, and archival documents. Due to the vast quantity of social media data, qualitative analysis is not always manageable. To deal with the issue, I proposed a novel approach that used computational means to extract a subset of data for subsequent qualitative analysis. My approach demonstrates the value of using computer programmes to aid social research, and the proposed research framework is applicable to a wide range of studies that analyse text.

The findings of my analysis suggest that the idea of China Threat is a key component of the discussion around Hong Kong nationalism. In the discussion, China was described as a threat to freedom, democracy, and Hong Kong’s culture. Against this background, the Hong Kong nationalists mobilised Hong Kong people to resist the threats posed by China and also sought to project Hong Kong into the international community as an aspiring member of the free world. My research therefore contributes new knowledge on Hong Kong society and politics. It also takes advantage of Hong Kong’s unique political, historical, and cultural context as well as the nascent nature of Hong Kong nationalism to reflect on existing theories of nations and nationalism.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not be possible if not for the support of many people during the past years. First and foremost, I wish to thank my supervisors at the University of Edinburgh, Ross Bond and Michael Rosie, who have provided me with helpful feedback and endless support, even before I was admitted to the PhD programme. They offered me the freedom to explore my own research direction, the guidance to keep me on track, and timely help in times of need. I also wish to thank the people I met at the School of Social and Political Science. In particular, I would like to thank Karen Gregory and Jonathan Hearn for the constructive feedback during my First Year Review, which has laid the foundation of this thesis; Julie Brownlie, Lynn Jamieson, and Emma Davidson for offering me the opportunity to take part in their research projects; Tod Van Gunten for the many tips and advice on job search; Gëzim Krasniqi for inviting me to the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN) Edinburgh. The School has been a helpful, supportive, and understanding community and I am truly grateful to be a part of it.

My thesis also witnessed my journey from an absolute beginner in programming to an experienced instructor. I wish to thank Edinburgh Carpentries, Digital Scholarship, and the Centre for Data, Culture & Society (CDCS) for offering me the opportunities to learn and later to teach. I am indebted to Giacomo Peru and Lisa Otty for offering me the teaching opportunities; these have not only provided me with important means to keep my head above water, but also the much needed teaching experience to become a well-rounded academic.

I wish to thank the people I met at Mylnes Court, where I spent two and a half years as a Resident Assistant, as well as my friends in my PhD programme and the university, especially Celeste De Blois for the big help in proofreading, Philippe Bartholomew Renton Reekie for being my friend when I needed it the most, Lucia Michielin for witnessing my journey into computational methods and the LaTex template which made formatting my
thesis much less painful, and Jingyi Wang and Elisabeth Cuénod for the company.

Outside Edinburgh, I owe a lot to Brian Fong, who was my teacher when I studied at the Community College of City University and has been my mentor ever since. I wish to thank him for his support, career advice, and the countless reference letters he agreed to write for me. At the time of writing, I have already taken up a Postdoctoral Fellow position at Sciences Po. I wish to thank Caterina Froio, my supervisor, for being supportive and understanding. The flexibility she offered me has made the writing up process a lot less stressful and anxious. I would also like to thank Chung-hong Chan and King-wa Fu for sharing their data in light of Facebook’s restriction, and particularly Hong for the many advice on coding and computational research in general.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their support and understanding throughout these years. Most importantly, I wish to thank Hsiao-Wei, my wife and the light of my life. You met me at the most difficult times in my life and you have been by my side ever since. Thank you for your support, your understanding, your sacrifices, and your love. I would not be the person I am today if not for you.
# Table of Contents

Abstract 4  
Lay Summary 5  
Acknowledgements 7  

1 Introduction 19  
1.1 Research Aims and Questions 21  
1.2 Structure of the Thesis 22  

2 Literature Review 27  
2.1 The Nature of Nationalism 28  
2.2 The Development of Nationalism 32  
2.3 Types of Nationalism 34  
2.4 Chapter Conclusion 53  

3 Contextualising Hong Kong Nationalism 57  
3.1 The Edge of Empires 57  
3.2 Hong Kong Identity Before the Handover in 1997 59  
3.3 Post-Handover Developments 61  
3.4 The Grievances behind the Rise of Hong Kong Nationalism 66  
3.5 Hong Kong Political Landscape 69  
3.6 Chapter Conclusion 73  

4 Methodology 75  
4.1 Data Collection 76  
4.2 Analysis 79
## Table of Contents

4.3 Ethical Considerations .................................................. 82
4.4 Chapter Conclusion ....................................................... 89

5 Nationalism in Colonial Hong Kong ....................................... 91
5.1 Data and Analysis .......................................................... 92
5.2 The First Spark of Nationalism in Hong Kong ......................... 93
5.3 Chinese Language Campaign ............................................. 95
5.4 The Resistance against the Threat to National Culture ............... 97
5.5 The Surrender of Political Domain ...................................... 101
5.6 The Divergences between Two Chinese Nationalisms ............... 104
5.7 Chapter Conclusion ....................................................... 109

6 Invention of the Nation: Period of Scholarly Interest ................... 113
6.1 Data and Analysis .......................................................... 113
6.2 ‘Chineseness’ as the ‘Other’ ................................................. 114
6.3 Official Chinese Nationalism and the ‘Myth of Consanguinity’ ..... 116
6.4 Three Histories of Hong Kong ........................................... 119
6.5 Three Roads to Autonomy ................................................ 134
6.6 Chapter Conclusion ....................................................... 140

7 Facebook as Phase B: National Agitation on Social Media ............ 143
7.1 Data ............................................................................... 144
7.2 Topic Modelling with Latent Dirichlet Allocation ....................... 148
7.3 Count-based Approach ..................................................... 153
7.4 Topic Network Approach ................................................ 158
7.5 Qualitative Analysis ........................................................ 163
7.6 Chapter Conclusion ....................................................... 188

8 Hong Kong of the World: the Internationalism of Nationalism ......... 193
8.1 Introduction ................................................................... 193
8.2 Data and Analysis .......................................................... 196
8.3 Inward-Internationalism ................................................... 197
8.4 Outward-Internationalism ................................................ 208
8.5 Chapter Conclusion ....................................................... 218
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

9 Conclusion ............................................. 221  
  9.1 Summary of Findings ................................ 222  
  9.2 Contributions ........................................ 224  
  9.3 Limitations and Prospects ........................... 226  
  9.4 Epilogue ............................................... 228  

Appendices ............................................... 233  

Appendix A Key Texts Advocating Hong Kong Nationalism 235  

Appendix B Consent Letter ................................ 237  
  B.1 Chinese Original ...................................... 237  
  B.2 English Translation .................................... 239  

Appendix C Technical Notes on Facebook Analysis ...... 241  

Appendix D Technical Notes on Cantonese Text Analysis 243  

Appendix E Technical Notes on Topic Modelling ......... 245  
  E.1 Estimating the Optimal Number of Topics (K) .......... 247  
  E.2 Evaluating Candidate Models .......................... 248  
  E.3 Topic Validation and Labelling ................. 249  

Bibliography ............................................. 250
List of Figures

2.1 Hong Kong People’s National Identity ........................................... 49
3.1 Identities in Hong Kong ................................................................. 66
7.1 Post Count of Facebook Pages by Month ......................................... 146
7.2 Word Cloud of Most Frequent Terms on Facebook Pages .................. 147
7.3 Election and Legislative Council ...................................................... 150
7.4 Disqualification of Lawmakers and Election Candidates ...................... 151
7.5 China Threat .................................................................................. 151
7.6 Political Events .............................................................................. 152
7.7 Protest ............................................................................................ 152
7.8 Localism and Nationalism ............................................................... 153
7.9 Internationalism .............................................................................. 153
7.10 Sport .............................................................................................. 153
7.11 Topic Count ................................................................................... 155
7.12 Post Example: Campaign Booth and Call for Vote ......................... 156
7.13 Post Example: Sport ...................................................................... 157
7.14 Monthly Frequency of Topics on Facebook ....................................... 158
7.15 Topic Network of Hong Kong Nationalism ...................................... 160
7.16 Relative Frequency of Core Topics ................................................. 162
7.17 Youngspiration’s Definition of Hongkonger .................................... 178
8.1 Frequency of Foreign Country Mentions .......................................... 199
8.2 Issue and Genre of International Posts ............................................ 202
8.3 International Post Joint Plot ........................................................... 203
8.4 Example of Local Affairs Post ....................................................... 204
8.5 Issue and Genre of English Posts ................................................... 213
LIST OF FIGURES

8.6  English Post Joint Plot .............................................. 214

E.1  Perplexity .......................................................... 247
E.2  LDA Tuning ......................................................... 248
# List of Tables

3.1 List of Major Political Parties in Hong Kong ........................................ 70  
6.1 Typology of Nationalisms in Hong Kong .............................................. 115  
7.1 Description of Facebook Pages ............................................................... 145  
7.2 Top 30 Terms on Facebook Pages .............................................................. 147  
7.3 Validated Topics ....................................................................................... 149  
7.4 Centrality .................................................................................................. 162  
7.5 Edge Strength ............................................................................................ 162  
8.1 Distribution of International Post across Political Camps ....................... 199  
8.2 Description of International Posts .............................................................. 201  
8.3 Distribution of English Post across Political Camps ................................. 211  
8.4 Description of English Posts .................................................................... 212  
8.5 Oversea Visits of Hong Kong Nationalists ............................................... 217
Chapter 1

Introduction

*Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times.*
— Edward Tin-kei Leung

This is a slogan that changed the course of Hong Kong history, not once, but twice. In 2019, Hong Kong protesters made headlines across the world once again for protesting a proposed bill that would allow the Hong Kong government to send so-called fugitives to China; the protests were commonly referred to as the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (Anti-ELAB) movement. Inscribed on banners, painted on walls, and chanted by the crowds, it is impossible to avoid the slogan ‘Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times’ (‘光復香港時代革命’ when written with Chinese characters and gwongfuk hoenggong, sidoi gaakming when pronounced in Cantonese). Outside Hong Kong, flags bearing the slogan were flown across the world by international support groups, t-shirts were worn by supporters, and tweets were posted on social networking sites. Ironically, the slogan was made even more famous after the Hong Kong government issued a statement in July 2020 ruling the phrase illegal under a new national security law.

While many have heard of the slogan, few are aware of its origin. The slogan was first proposed by Edward Tin-kei Leung, a key leader in another movement that also changed the course of Hong Kong’s history: the Hong Kong nationalist movement. These eight Chinese characters conveyed a political aspiration and a call for action to defend Hong Kong’s future. In his election rally on 28 February 2016, he argued that the future belong to people who believe in liberty, refuse to be subjugated, and long for a government of their own, and and invited the people of Hong Kong to join him in this ‘revolution of the times’ (Yeung et al., 2016). Just as his slogan became a symbol of Anti-ELAB protests,
Leung has become the protests' icon and 'spiritual leader', even though he was imprisoned before the protests began (McLaughlin, 2019; Lin, 2019; Ma, 2020). His image was shared on social media, and his name was frequently mentioned by protesters when they were interviewed by reporters (Lin, 2019). When protesters stormed the Legislative Council building on 1 July 2020, they spray-painted a message on the wall calling for Leung’s release (McLaughlin, 2019). Leung’s political aspirations hinge on protecting Hong Kong from being absorbed by China and resisting Beijing’s control; it is an idea that resonates with both the protesters of the Anti-ELAB protests and the activists of the Hong Kong nationalist movement.

Studying Hong Kong nationalism, the topic of my thesis, is not only beneficial for the sake of understanding current Hong Kong politics; it also helps to advance our understanding of nationalism. Hong Kong nationalism is widely considered to be a novel phenomenon that emerged relatively recently. Despite the fact that the historical roots of Hong Kong identity can be traced back to the colonial times. The nationalist movement began as a series of minor conflicts between Hong Kong and Chinese people in early 2012, fuelled by the controversy around Moral and National Education in mid-2012 and the frustration caused by the Umbrella Movement in 2014.1 It was not until 2015 that the term ‘Hong Kong nation’ became widely used. Examining the nationalism at its early stage serves as an excellent opportunity to reflect upon existing theories about the development of nationalism. As I will show later in the thesis, Hong Kong nationalism contains a range of competing narratives that have undergone rapid transformation in response to the societal context throughout its relatively short history. Hong Kong could therefore serve as a natural laboratory to examine the dynamics of competition between different narratives of nationalism in the earlier stages of a nascent nationalism.

Hong Kong nationalism is worth studying not only because of its novelty but also because the city of Hong Kong is situated between many theoretical constructs; it is the fuzziness that makes Hong Kong an interesting case. Geographically, Hong Kong exists on the edge between the Chinese and British empires; historically, Hong Kong is subject to the influence of both Chinese nationalism and British colonialism; culturally, the people of Hong Kong embrace not only Chinese culture but also western values; politically, it is

---

1 Anti-Moral and National Education movement was a series of protests organised in 2012 to stop the government proposal of a new school subject, Moral and National Education. The curriculum of the new subject was thought to be biased in favour of the Chinese Communist Party; the Umbrella Movement was a 79-day occupy movement with the demand of democracy.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

a hybrid regime consisting both democratic and authoritarian elements, despite the fact that the former is eroding at an unprecedented pace. As a result of the fuzziness, Hong Kong often does not fit comfortably into a single category of typologies; this serves as valuable opportunity for us to reflect on the existing theories of nationalism.

1.1 Research Aims and Questions

The overall goal of this thesis is to understand the discursive constitution of Hong Kong nationalism. Much like all social phenomena, nationalism does not exist in a vacuum; it is constructed against the context of the society in question and situated in relation to other nations and states. In this thesis, I argue that Hong Kong nationalism is best understood through the lens of two dimensions and propose two related research questions correspondingly.

The first is the temporal dimension. As Anderson (1991) argues, a nation is conceived as a continual and coherent people whose past, present, and future are seamlessly connected. A nation that exists merely in the past provides no guidance for the present and future, and one that based solely on the present lacks a basis for values (Keating, 1997). Therefore, a successful nationalism must construct narratives about its past, offer interpretation on present social situation and controversies, and provide aspirations for the future of the nation. Correspondingly, the first research question of my thesis is: how do the nationalists construct competing discourses about Hong Kong’s past, present, and future? The research question can be separated into the following sub-questions:

*RQ 1(a): How does Hong Kong nationalism construct its past?*

*RQ 1(b): How does Hong Kong nationalism interpret the present issues facing Hong Kong?*

*RQ 1(c): To what kind of future does Hong Kong nationalism aspire?*

Another dimension is the geopolitical dimension. If the temporal dimension is imagined as how a nationalism links vertically with its past and future, the geopolitical dimension can be seen as how a nationalism situates horizontally among other nations and states. We live in an interconnected world; nations and states are always under the influence of, and also influencing, each other. This is even more relevant for Hong Kong, as the city has been situated on the edge between the British and Chinese empires (Carroll,
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since its colonisation by the British in 1842, Hong Kong has retained close ties with the two empires. Although Hong Kong may seem peripheral within China, the city earned its unique position precisely because it was not politically a part of China. Hong Kong served as a safe haven for Chinese refugees during wars and political turbulence. It has also been China’s window to the capitalist world after the communists took over the country. On the other hand, Hong Kong remained a part of the British Empire, and the influence of the British colonialism can still be seen today. During the years of colonisation, Hong Kong developed into a metropolis with a vibrant economy, a professional civil service, and a political culture that values the rule of law, freedom, and human rights (Tsang, 2004; Carroll, 2007). Furthermore, as pointed out by McCrone (2001b) and Keating (1996), the contemporary world has increasingly become a globalised one, and to survive and thrive in which, sub-state nations need to project themselves into international arenas (Keating, 1997). Therefore, to fully understand Hong Kong nationalism, it is important to understand how these legacies influenced Hong Kong and how Hong Kong negotiates its relations with other actors in the world. Correspondingly, the second research question of my thesis is: how does Hong Kong nationalism relate to Chinese nationalism, British colonialism, and other actors in the world? It can be separated into the following sub-questions:

*RQ 2(a)*: What are the influences of British colonialism and Chinese nationalism on the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism?

*RQ 2(b)*: How does Hong Kong nationalism negotiate its relations with other actors in the world?

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The relevant bodies of literature will be reviewed at length in Chapter 2. This chapter first addresses the ontology of my research. Combining theories from Gellner, Hobsbawm, Anderson, and Sutherland, I accept the constructed nature of nationalism and suggest an approach for analysis informed by discourse theory. I also discuss the development of nationalism and Hroch’s A-B-C schema. Hroch’s work is instrumental as he introduces the idea of the intelligentsia and his schema helps to identify different actors’ involvement at different stages of nation-building. As informed by Hroch, my study focuses on public intellectuals’ work on Hong Kong nationalism in Phase A and the activists’ involvement
on Facebook in Phase B. Finally, I also review theories about the types of nationalism that are relevant to Hong Kong, including Zhao Suisheng and Wang Gungwu’s work on Chinese nationalism, Chatterjee’s theory on anticolonial nationalism, the idea of peripheral nationalism proposed by Hechter and Brass, and neo-nationalism in stateless nation introduced by McCrone and Keating. These theories provide a lens through which we can understand Hong Kong while Hong Kong’s fuzziness allows us to examine the applicability and generalisability of these existing theories.

As mentioned above, to understand nationalism, it is essential also to understand the context in which it situates. In Chapter 3, I discuss the social, political, and historical context behind the rise of Hong Kong nationalism as well as the geopolitical context of the development of Hong Kong identification and its transformation through time. I also discuss the socio-political roots behind the rise of Hong Kong nationalism and the current political landscape of Hong Kong.

Chapter 4 discusses the details of data collection, justification of research design, and ethical considerations. My work introduces a novel approach to the study of nationalism. In this research, I consult data from a wide range of sources and adopt an interdisciplinary approach that complements my sociological research with computational methods. I employ a mixed methods design: for each of my findings chapter, the most appropriate method is selected given the purpose of the chapter and the nature of the data. For corpora that reach an unmanageable size for qualitative analysis, I augment the analysis with computational text analysis techniques. Computational text analysis draws on methods developed in computer science to transform texts into the quantitative data, rendering it possible to employ well-established statistical and machine learning tools for inference and prediction (O’Connor, Bamman and Smith, 2011; Benoit, 2020). Computational text analysis is useful for describing patterns within the corpora and selecting relevant texts for close reading and therefore amplifying the power of qualitative analysis. The approach proposed in this thesis also demonstrates the value of computational methods to social science research; it applies to a wide range of research that utilises text data as well as the studies of nationalism. In the chapter, I also discuss the ethical considerations that arise from conducted research about a sensitive topic in an authoritarian regime. In particular, I discuss the thought process through which I decided to drop the planned interviews to avoid putting my interviewees at risk. The resulting framework guides the empirical analysis presented in Chapters 5 to 8.

In Chapter 5, I consult archival materials to trace the first moment of nationalism

23
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

in Hong Kong. Drawing on Chatterjee’s theory of anticolonial nationalism, the chapter argues that the key aspects of anticolonial nationalism were exhibited during the Chinese Language Campaign (1964-1971) and therefore argues that the first moment of nationalism in Hong Kong can be traced to as early as the late 1960s. Although the Chinese Language Campaign is not a key focus of this thesis, the case helps to illustrate the complexity of the notion of Chineseness. In particular, it shows the differentiation of cultural Chineseness from political Chineseness. Understanding the distinction is vital for understanding Hong Kong nationalism, given the relevance of Chineseness to Hong Kong nationalism and the fact that the distinction was repeatedly echoed in Hong Kong nationalism discourse.

Chapter 6 turns to books published by the nationalist intellectuals, including Chin Wan, Brian Fong, Eric Tsui, and the student nationalists of the Undergrad Editorial Board. They are the key figures, or intelligentsia to use Hechter’s words, who offer a theoretical foundation for the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism. In this chapter, I focus on how the intellectuals construct and appropriate the history of Hong Kong to address the ‘myth of consanguinity’ propagated by official Chinese nationalism. The chapter identifies and compares three versions of Hong Kong history and three corresponding political aspirations proposed by the intellectuals. The materials studied in the chapter mark the beginning of Hong Kong nationalism discourse. Echoing Phase A of Hroch’s A-B-C schema, most of the materials are studies on the history, language, and culture of Hong Kong as a nation; they tackle the key questions nationalism must address: they seek to construct the idea of a Hong Kong nation based on their interpretations of Hong Kong’s past; they offer a definition of the major issues facing Hong Kong in the present; and they propose future plans for Hong Kong in order to navigate a new way out of the current political crisis.

Given the crucial role of social media in political communication and mobilisation in Hong Kong, the following two chapters consult data from Facebook, the most popular social networking site in Hong Kong. In Chapter 7, I study the nationalism discourse on the Facebook profile of key nationalist organisations and activists. They are the political groups that advocate the idea of Hong Kong nation and invoke nationalism to muster support, including Hong Kong Indigenous, Youngspiration, and Hong Kong National Party. The nationalists’ Facebook activity signifies Phase B in Hroch’s A-B-C schema. It is defined as the period of patriotic agitation and characterised by a range of activities that seek to ‘awaken’ national consciousness among the people. In this chapter,
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I employ an innovative approach that combines computational text analysis with social network analysis to identify the core topics and reveal the dynamics of topic prominence throughout the study period. The chapter shows that the idea of China Threat has been a critical component central to the nationalism discourse. Early Hong Kong nationalism discourse began as a branch of localism, a group of ideas characterised by the commitment to protect Hong Kong’s interests against Chinese threats, and has adopted the rhetoric of nationalism since 2016. By doing so, I illustrate the strategy adopted by the activists to define a crisis of legitimacy in the current political regime and depict Hong Kong’s social problems as a conflict of interests between the Hongkongeses and mainland Chinese.

Chapter 8 engages with the academic debate about the negative connotations associated with nationalism in general by focusing on the relationship between Hong Kong nationalism and internationalism. In this chapter, I situate Hong Kong nationalism within the broader political context of Hong Kong. Drawing on additional data from major Hong Kong political parties, I compare the level of internationalism of the nationalist and other political parties and argue that internationalism is an essential element at the core of Hong Kong nationalism. The case of Hong Kong shows that nationalism does not necessarily reject foreign influence and, in some instances, it is even celebrated. Based on the findings, I argue that the manifestation of nationalism depends on the history, social context, and opportunities in the political market of the nation in question.

At the end of the thesis, I also discuss political development after the study period and reflect on the future of Hong Kong nationalism. Throughout the thesis, I conceptualise the development of Hong Kong nationalism with Hroch’s A-B-C schema; intellectuals’ scholarly inquiry is treated as Phase A, and activists’ Facebook activities are seen as Phase B. Hroch (1993) suggests that Phase C, however, happens only when the majority of the population identifies with the new nation. With the hard-line suppression following the Anti-ELAB movement and the new national security law imposed by China, one key question for both the nationalists and observers is: will Hong Kong nationalism enter Phase C or will it wither away? Due to the ongoing nature of the events, the complexity of the problems, and unpredictability of the authoritarian regime, it is impossible to give a definitive answer to the question. However, this thesis will help provide the context to understand whichever future might be the outcome.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The first section of this chapter addresses the ontology of this research. Following Gellner and Hobsbawm, I argue that nations are discursively constructed. The section then turns to discuss the medium through which nationalism discourse is disseminated and provides a critical reflection on Anderson’s theory, which regards print technology as the key condition that gave rise to nationalism as a capitalist enterprise. This paper argues that the applicability of his theory is questionable for modern digital societies. After that, this section discusses the complexity of nation-building and argues that, instead of a congruent narrative, nationalism is a complex interplay and negotiation among different forces. The second section goes on to discuss the nation-building process and its key actors. Hroch’s A-B-C schema is particularly useful as he introduces the idea of the intelligentsia and his schema helps to identify different actors’ involvement at different stages of nation-building.

The third section discusses the types of nationalism that are relevant to the case of Hong Kong. The section first explores the nationalism related to the two great forces that have been influencing Hong Kong, Chinese nationalism and British colonialism. I trace the changing definition of Chinese nationalism and discuss Hong Kong’s position in relation to this nationalism. I also discuss the relationship between colonialism and nationalism and the notion of the colonial legacy of Hong Kong. After that, I go on to discuss the theories of peripheral nationalism and its applicability to Hong Kong. Finally, I introduce the idea of neo-nationalism in stateless nations and argue that it is the theory that best suited for Hong Kong’s circumstances.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Nature of Nationalism

The idea of the invented and constructed nature of nation has gained wide currency in the past decades. To quote the famous lines of Ernest Gellner (1964):

"Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if, as indicated, these are purely negative (p. 168)."

According to Gellner (1983), nations and nationalism are a sociological necessity in modern industrial societies. Since the mode of production of modern industrial societies depends on an ever-changing division of labour, individuals must be ready to shift from one activity to another, and they have to meet and communicate with large amounts of people they have not previously met. These require universal literacy and, therefore, mass education. Through the monopoly of legitimate education, the state is able to create and sustain a homogeneous high culture, a key condition for nationalism. However, Gellner (1983) believes that the existing cultures in modern societies are sometimes used selectively by nationalism as raw materials:

"nationalism, which sometimes take pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality, for better or worse, and in general an inescapable one (p. 47)"

In short, Gellner sees nationalism as an invention that can be constructed by the state. Hobsbawn shares the same understanding of nationalism. In *The Invention of Tradition*, he puts forward the idea of ‘invented tradition’, defined as:

"a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 1–2)."

He argues that every society accumulates large repositories of ancient materials to construct new traditions for their purposes. In some cases, new traditions are affixed onto old ones while in others, they are created by ‘borrowing from the well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation’ (p. 6). Even historic continuity is also..."
invented by fabricating ‘an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity, either by semi-fiction ... or by forgery’ (p. 7).

According to Hobsbawm, nation and its related phenomena, such as nationalism, national symbols, and histories, all ‘rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative’ (p. 13). Therefore, Hobsbawm believes that the nature and appeal of nations can be best understood by studying national traditions, which is considered one kind of invented traditions. Following Gellner and Hobsbawm, I view nationality, more specifically the Hong Kong nation, as a social construct and seek to investigate how its history and culture are invented by appropriating or fabricating the materials in Hong Kong’s past.

Also viewing nations as ‘cultural artefacts of a particular kind’ (p. 4), Anderson (1991) investigates the medium through which nationalism is constructed. In *Imagined Communities*, he provides his famous definition of the nation: ‘it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’ (p. 6). Rather than being invented, he holds that a nation is ‘imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (p. 6). These imagined communities are the product of the interaction between capitalism, print technology, and the ‘fatality of human linguistic diversity’ (p. 45). Capitalism played a crucial role in assembling local vernaculars into print-languages within the limits of grammar and syntax. These print-languages in turn laid the foundation for the growth of national consciousness. Among the print technologies, the newspaper is the most pivotal. The ephemeral popularity of newspaper creates an extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost simultaneous consumption of the newspaper. It is, on the one hand, performed in silent privacy, but on the other hand, each reader is well aware that the ‘ceremony’ he performs is being replicated simultaneously and unremittingly throughout the year by thousands of fellow-readers. Moreover, the readers are ‘continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life’ (pp. 35-36) by ‘observing the exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours’ (p. 35). The newspaper thus serves not only as a media to exchange and communicate information about the readers’ local society but also a vivid figure to envision the imagined community.

Anderson’s book was originally published in 1983 when the newspaper was one of the major platforms for information exchange. However, as Douglas Engelbart, the inventor of the computer mouse, claimed that ‘[t]he digital revolution is far more significant than
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

the invention of writing or even of printing’ (as cited in Gregory, Cottom and Daniels, 2017, p. xvii). The advent of the internet and especially social media have dramatically changed how people share information and relate to one another. The internet has not only taken over as the most prevailing medium for information exchange in modern societies, but also brought about a fundamental shift in how discourse is disseminated and, more importantly, produced. In the past, the production of discourse was confined to elites who had access to publishing houses or the press while the majority of the population were passive consumers; now, everyone who has access to the internet can be a consumer and also an active producer or, to use a buzzword, ‘prosumer’ of information and discourse. These have created unprecedented dynamics of discourse production and dissemination.

Against this background, it is therefore questionable whether Anderson’s theory, which regarded ‘print communities’ as the basis of nation and nationalism, could explain the rise and spread of contemporary nationalism in modern societies where ‘online communities’ have become so prevalent and central to people’s life. In order to address the issue, it is necessary to broaden the scope of media beyond the limited view of print media and incorporate digital media. Therefore, my research incorporates both print media and social media as sources of data. The detailed methodology will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

While Geller and Hobsbawm discussed the invented nature of nationalism and Anderson examined the medium for the construction of nation, they did not provide an account of the mechanism through which nationalism is constructed. Sutherland (2005) suggests that discourse theory can offer a theoretical basis to understand the construction of nationalism by providing conceptual tools such as hegemony, articulation, and antagonism. She argues that nationalism can be regarded as discourse in general and ideology in particular. Her approach theorises the dynamics of conflicting nationalisms as a discursive struggle for hegemony. She draws on Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) theory of hegemonic rearticulation of the dominant discourse, which defines discourse as ‘the means used to organise a society into a structured totality, in order to give it stability and meaning’, including ‘all social institutions, customs and practices as well as language’ (p. 191). Hegemony is understood as the ‘organisation of consent’. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) believe that some discourses achieve hegemonic status in that they have successfully subdued alternative discourses and therefore are presented as ‘common sense’.

Ideology can be considered one aspect of discourse; it is defined as ‘an adaptable but internally coherent belief system that offers an interpretative explanation of society coupled
with practical measures for maintaining or changing the political status quo’ (Sutherland, 2005, p. 188). So understood, nationalist ideologies can be regarded as ideologies that are organised around the prime concern of the nation. By taking the concept of ideology as the focus of analysis, Sutherland’s approach builds on the scholarly works that explore aspects of nationalism as an ideology (Minogue, 1967; Brass, 1991; Breuilly, 1993; Keating, 1996, as cited in Sutherland, 2005). Such understanding of discourse and ideology is particularly relevant to Billig’s (1995) work of banal nationalism. Banal nationalism refers to the everyday expressions of symbolic markers of belonging to a ‘nation-state’ through which nation-states are reproduced, such as national flags and national anthems. Nationalism is an ideology that defines the everyday ‘social reality’ around a concept of the nation. The ultimate goal of nationalism is to render nationalist symbols identified with and internalised by the population to the point that they constitute common sense and are taken for granted.

Discourse theory is useful in understanding the dynamics between nationalisms, such as the competition between the sub-state nationalism of Hong Kong people and the official nationalism of the central Chinese state. Official nationalisms are nationalist projects that have successfully hegemonised their symbols and their institutions and rhetoric are accepted as common sense. Sub-state nationalism, on the other hand, poses a challenge to this common sense by proposing an alternative national construct to replace the one in place; the ‘nation-state’ can be considered a succeeded hegemonic project while the role of sub-state nationalist parties is to impose an alternative hegemonic project (Sutherland, 2005). Drawing on discourse theory, the competition between official nationalism and sub-state nationalism can be put into perspective: ‘nation-building’ describes the states’ effort to maintain their conceptual hegemony over the nodal point of ‘nation’. On the other hand, sub-state nationalism, while conforming to the same ideological principles, seeks to adapt them to an alternative national construct. They dismantle the link embedded in the term ‘nation-state’ by resorting to ‘crisis of the hyphen’, namely the problematic convergence between nation and state. The crisis is an indication of the battle between antagonistic discourses and ideologies to become the ‘common sense’ (Sutherland, 2005). The implication of such understanding to empirical research will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

While Sutherland focuses on the discursive struggle between nationalisms, Duara (1995) takes a more nuanced approach to look at the complex interplay within the same nationalism. Instead of viewing the nation as a cohesive subject, he argues that
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

‘[n]ationalism is rarely the nationalism of the nation, but rather marks the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other’ (p. 8). He contends that researchers of nationalism have been focused too much on how the nation is constructed through mass-media, but few have acknowledged how the same technology also allows the rivals of the state to construct alternative representations of the nation. The state can never totally eliminate alternative constructions of the nation; the most competent states are able to contain these representations within relatively depoliticised spaces, but overt challenges to the official representation of the nation always exist. Instead of the ‘harmonised, monologic voice of the Nation’, nationalism has been enmeshed in ‘a polyphony of voices, contradictory and ambiguous, opposing, affirming, and negotiating their views of the nation’ (p. 10). Therefore, as Duara argues, the scope of the study of nationalism must be broadened to include alternative narratives of the nation. Duara’s work is complementary to Sutherland’s as they both emphasise the importance of the discursive struggle but in different manners; the latter looks at the dynamics between nationalisms while the former focuses on dynamics within the same nationalism.¹

In short, Gellner and Hobsbawm laid the foundation of my research by showing the constructed nature of nations and nationalism, Anderson informed the research on the means through which a nation is constructed, and Sutherland and Duara explained the mechanism through which a nation is built by drawing on discourse theory.

2.2 The Development of Nationalism

The previous section discussed the nature of nationalism, but did not explain how and by whom nationalism is constructed. In this section, I supplement the above theories with Hroch’s work on the development of nationalism to gain a fuller picture of the nationalism in Hong Kong. According to Hroch (1985), national movements undergo three phases: the period of scholarly interest (Phase A), the period of patriotic agitation (Phase B), and the rise of a mass national movement (Phase C). Phase A is marked by a passionate concern on the study of the language, culture, and history of the nationality in question. These studies were usually carried out by intellectuals and motivated by their affection for the place they lived and a thirst for knowledge. They usually did not even attempt to start a patriotic agitation during this period. Phase B is the period of active patriotic agitation,

¹ I acknowledge the fact that it is not always easy to draw the line between different nationalisms and the variants of the same nationalism.
which refers to activities with the aim to arouse national consciousness. The intelligentsia plays a vital role in driving this period of the nationalist movement and spreading national consciousness among the people is their mission. In this period, scholarly research on the nation’s history and culture is expanded and acquires a function that is ‘as much national as scientific’ (p. 23). In Phase C, national consciousness has become the public’s concern and organised national movements would have spread across the whole territory.

Hroch argues that the intelligentsia is the most critical group in Phase B, which is also considered the most important phase of a national movement. Hroch defined intelligentsia as professionals with high education backgrounds who lived by their intellectual labour. He further distinguishes three strata of the intelligentsia. In line with Hechter and Brass, the first stratum comprises the ruling elites and large business owners. What would provide further insight into Hong Kong’s situation is his second and third stratum: the former comprises professional groups who do not directly share political power or engage in economic enterprises, such as lawyers, doctors, artists, journalists, and scientists; the latter includes teachers, lower officials, and students.

Hroch’s theory could inform the nationalist movement in Hong Kong in two ways. First, it helps to identify the key actors; all of the authors of the major publications on Hong Kong nationalism can be described as intelligentsia using Hroch’s definition: Chin Wan, author of the Discourse on the Hong Kong City-state series, was a folklorist and assistant professor in Chinese literature; On the Hong Kong Nation was written by the students of the editorial board of Undergrad, a campus magazine at the University of Hong Kong; Eric Tsui, the author of A National History of Hong Kong, is a physician and amateur historian; Brian Fong, author and editor of the Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong, is a professor in political science. Second, using Hroch’s A-B-C schema, Hong Kong is arguably at the beginning of Phase B, where a certain amount of scholarly works on local history and culture have already been created and acquired a political function while intelligentsia and activists are striving to instil a nationalism consciousness of ‘Hongkongese’ (vis-à-vis Chinese) among the people.

Should Hong Kong nationalism develop into Phase C, we would observe widespread support for social movements that invoke the idea of nationhood. Although recent years witnessed a vast number of social movements in Hong Kong, the concept of Hong Kong as a nation was not always invoked. Despite the long tradition of pro-democracy protests, many of the pan-democrats do not see Hong Kong as a distinct political community, and they sometimes see democratic movement in Hong Kong as a part of the larger
democratic movement in China (see Chapter 3). When the new security law comes into force in Hong Kong which criminalises secession and other related activities, Phase C will be much harder to observe in Hong Kong (cf. Tsoi and Lam, 2020; further discussion in Chapter 9).

2.3 Types of Nationalism

As discussed above, nationalism is an ideology constructed around the core principle of prioritising the nation. However, as Sutherland (2012) observes, nationalism can take a variety of forms since each interprets the principle differently in accordance with an array of factors, such as the needs of political elites, legacies from colonialism, economic conditions, centre-peripheral relations of the state, and the changing social conditions in a globalising world. The following subsections review the types of nationalism that are relevant to Hong Kong.

2.3.1 Chinese Nationalism

Hong Kong and related historical events have long been central to the nationalism discourse in China. Nationalism only began to permeate Chinese thinking in the nineteenth century when China encountered modern European states. China’s defeat by Britain in the Opium War (1839-1842) and its subsequent humiliation by the imperialist powers catalysed the rise of Chinese nationalism. The Opium War and its consequence, the cession of Hong Kong to Britain, are considered the beginning of the ‘the Century of Humiliations’ and are often referenced in Chinese nationalism discourse. The rise of nationalism in China was further accelerated by a military defeat by the Japanese in 1895. Liang Qichao, in his analysis of the significance of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), argues that the war forcefully awoke the Chinese from their 4000 year dream (Deng, 2000). Only when the culturalism that supported the political culture of the Qing dynasty eventually became a hindrance to China’s incorporation into international society did the Chinese elites realise the value of nationalism as well as other Western ideas.² Having

² Before nationalism, a form of culturalism suffused traditional Chinese thoughts. The Chinese regarded their civilisation as the only one in the universal world (tianxia). The centre of Chinese people’s loyalty was the Chinese culture and anyone who adopted the Chinese thoughts and teachings could be unified into its cultural boundaries (Levenson, 1959)
adopted the norms of the modern nation-state system, China no longer considered itself the centre of the world and Chinese culture was no longer regarded as a universal ideal. Chinese elites began to defend China against imperialism by referencing principles related to nationalism, such as notions of territorial sovereignty and national equality (Zhao, 2004).

The quest for China’s rejuvenation gave rise to nationalist ideals, which triumphed as a new Chinese political ideology and became:

a central theme in the Self-strengthening movement of the late nineteenth century; it inspired the antiforeign xenophobia of the Boxer Rebellion at the turn of the twentieth century, led to the revolution that gave rise to the first Chinese republic in 1911, and blended into the more fully developed May Fourth movement of 1919, with its dedication to anti-imperialism and national salvation (Zhao, 2004, pp. 18-19).

Even the later communist revolution, which resulted in the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), was a movement with strong nationalist characteristics.

Despite the broad aims of national grandeur and prosperity, the construct of Chinese nationalism did not always appear in the same form. Instead, it was subject to manipulation by political elites under different circumstances. The emergence of new threats to national interests or integrity always acts as the critical juncture for the construction and reconstruction of nationalism (Zhao, 2004). Just as Duara (1995) argues, the development of Chinese nationalism has been the product of interactions among different social forces. Its content has been situational and ever-changing in response to the supply and demand in the political marketplace. As this chapter will illustrate, different political actors have chosen different versions of nationalism that serve their purpose depending on the historical conditions while attempting to suppress other kinds of nationalisms (Zhao, 2004).

When Sun Yat-sen and other revolutionaries strove to build a Han ethnic state, ethnic nationalism, defined as ‘a politicised ethnic group defined by common culture and descent, shared historical experiences, and usually a common language’ (Zhao, 2004, p. 21), was the backbone of Chinese nationalism in the early twentieth century. The Manchu rulers quickly became a target due to their failure to fight against Western imperialism and thus their incompetence was construed as directly responsible for the decline of China. More importantly, the Manchu were regarded as alien rulers over the Han. In the name
of saving China, Han nationalists launched a series of revolutions to overthrow the Qing dynasty, in which ethnic content was explicitly reflected in slogans like ‘exterminate the Manchus’ (paiman) and ‘restore Han sovereignty’ (huifu hanzu zhuquan). During the revolutions, revolutionaries mobilised Han Chinese, including overseas Chinese, for the anti-Manchurian cause (Zhao, 2004).

Ironically, the success of the Xinhai Revolution (1911) and the resultant downfall of the Qing dynasty eventually left the revolutionaries in an embarrassing situation. They soon noticed the irreconcilability between Han ethnic nationalism and the desire to retain all Qing territory inhabited by a non-Han population; non-Han ethnic nationalism mushroomed in the frontier territories, which accounted for 64 per cent of China’s land surface and clustered around the strategically significant border regions (Chang, 2001). As argued by Rawski (1996), ‘the revolution of 1911 freed Manchus, Mongols, Uighurs, and Tibetans to create their own independent ethnic states. Loyalty to the Qing dynasty did not automatically translate into loyalty to China’ (p. 840). Eventually, the revolutionaries realised that only by abandoning the narrowly defined Han nationalism could the new republic legitimately retain the territory inhabited by ethnic minorities. As a result, Sun started to construct a new ‘national people’ (guomin) by discarding the anti-Manchurian content from his famous ‘Three People’s Principles’.  

Subsequently, Sun resorted to a form of state nationalism. He reconceptualised the Chinese nation as a ‘republic of five races’ (wuzu gonghe) consisting of Manchus, Han, Mongols, Hui, and Tibetans (Mullaney, 2011) and stressed that their territories should be integrated into one country while their people should be integrated into one nation (Sun, 1981), despite the fact that a large proportion of those territories were only recent additions to the Qing dynasty. He denied the separatist national identities of the non-Han Chinese by claiming that China had been ruled by a single state throughout history and therefore every Chinese person shared the same origins. So understood, Sun blurred the distinction between state and nation and defined Chinese nationalism as ‘the loyalty of the Chinese race to the Chinese state’ (Zhao, 2004, p. 69). In effect, he and other revolutionaries instilled a sense of state nationalism defined by political-territorial terms.

In modern-day China, state nationalism is also championed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); this makes Chinese state nationalism especially relevant to the study

---

3 The Three People’s Principles are political philosophy put forward by Sun Yat-sen. They include The Principle of Minzu (Nation), The Principle of Minquan (Democracy), and The Principle of Minsheng (People’s welfare).
of Hong Kong. As I will show later in this thesis, this form of nationalism is widespread in the official discourse of the Chinese state as well as the Hong Kong government. CCP refers to Chinese nationalism as ‘a form of nationalism that is in accord with the interests of the state’ (Li, 1995, p. 14) while the interests of the state are specified as the ‘collective interests of all the ethnic groups’ (Li, 1995, p. 14). The communist state is portrayed as the embodiment of the will of the Chinese nation. As Jiang Zemin, former President of the PRC, claims in his famous ‘Three Represents Theory’, CCP represents ‘the requirements of the development of China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of the development of China’s advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China’ (China Internet Information Center, 2000; Jiang, 2001). The state thus claimed the loyalty and support of the citizens who are originally bestowed to the nation, sought to construct a sense of nationhood, and demanded that the people subordinate their interests to the interests of the state in the name of the nation. As suggested by a CCP propaganda, ‘[s]ocialist patriotism has three levels. At the first level, individuals should subordinate their personal interests to the interests of the state. At the second level, individuals should subordinate their personal destiny to the destiny of our socialist system. At the third level, individuals should subordinate their personal future to the future of our communist cause’ (Zhao, 2004, p. 28).

Is it worth noting that the legacy of Sun is claimed by both the Republic of China (commonly known as Taiwan) and the People’s Republic of China. In the Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan), it is stated explicitly that:

The National Assembly of the Republic of China, by virtue of the mandate received from the whole body of citizens, in accordance with the teachings bequeathed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in founding the Republic of China, and in order to consolidate the authority of the State, safeguard the rights of the people, ensure social tranquility, and promote the welfare of the people, does hereby establish this Constitution, to be promulgated throughout the country for faithful and perpetual observance by all (Ministry of Justice (Taiwan), 1947).

and the first article of the constitution reads:

The Republic of China, founded on the Three Principles of the People, shall be a democratic republic of the people, to be governed by the people and for the people (Ministry of Justice (Taiwan), 1947).
Despite the vastly different forms of government, the government of both Chinas inherited different aspects of Sun’s nationalist thoughts. This serves as a vivid example of the malleability of nationalism.

Central to the state nationalism of China is what Wang Gungwu called restorative nationalism. According to Wang (1996), restorative nationalism stresses ‘the recovery of sovereignty, the unification of divided territory, and national self-respect’ (p. 8). Therefore, the main goal of the Chinese state is to compensate for China’s Century of Humiliation, resist foreign threats, and restore its past glory and national grandeur (Bhattacharya, 2005), but doing so, as it contends, requires the total support and loyalty of the people. Hence, the interests of the people are subordinated to those of the state in the name of national salvation. The idea is well demonstrated in an account put forward by Peng Yingming, a well-known Chinese scholar, in a journal published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences:

[N]ation and state are closely related. The relationship between the two is one of mutual inclusiveness and mutual penetration... In our country, the state’s interests are higher than everything else; the interests of the nation must serve those of the state... We, therefore, must unite love for nation with love for our state, ... oppose splittism, and together construct the big family of this great Chinese nation. Only in so doing will [China’s constituent] peoples have a future (Peng, 1993, as cited in Chang, 2001, p. 181-182).

Furthermore, the history of humiliation was constantly exploited to galvanise support. As a Chinese commentator stated that the collective memory of the repeated humiliation from defeat in wars, unequal treaties, and losses of territory to Western and Japanese imperialism are ‘like dry tinder and can easily be inflamed’ (Chang, 2001, p. 185). The Chinese government has seized every chance ‘to harp on China’s past humiliations and present glory’ (Chang, 2001, p. 185). Furthermore, a ‘consciousness of suffering’ was forged among Chinese people by China’s national unity campaign, with the hope of arousing resentment towards their historical invaders (Chang, 2001).

The position of Hong Kong needs to be understood within the broader context of the ‘humiliation’ discussed above; as a direct consequence of the Opium War, the cession of Hong Kong has been central to Chinese nationalism discourse. The retrocession of Hong Kong has naturally been regarded as the first step of national rejuvenation. As Li Peng (1997), the then Premier of the PRC, stated in a speech:
In the eve of the retrocession of Hong Kong, we will not forget the history of the humiliation and struggle of Chinese nation in the modern time. For a hundred years, countless excellent daughters and sons of Chinese nation, who fought fearlessly and bravely for the national independence and liberation, have written a bright page in the history of salvation and rejuvenation of Chinese nation. Hong Kong’s return has cleansed China’s hundred years of national humiliation and greatly stimulated the patriotism of all Chinese peoples (para. 3; translated by the author).

Since the handover, an array of initiatives has taken place in Hong Kong under the banner of ‘National Education’. The assumption behind the national education is that, after more than a hundred years of colonialism and the decades of compelled isolation from the PRC, Hong Kong people are uprooted and ignorant of contemporary China, and therefore have become biased. Hence, the Hong Kong government, along with Beijing authorities, have seized every chance to rectify this alleged ‘information deficit’ by granting maximum publicity to incidents manifesting the glory of the Chinese nation (Vickers, 2011). In practice, national education has been implemented both inside and outside the school, including changes in school curriculum and textbooks to highlight the past humiliations and the present ‘national glory’ and organising events to idolise national heroes and showcase national achievements such as the visit of Yang Liwei, China’s first astronaut, to Hong Kong (Mathews, Ma and Lui, 2008; Tse, 2007; Vickers, 2011).

The initiatives of the board national education programme have two main focuses: first, the PRC is depicted as the strong saviour of the Chinese nation through a demonstration of China’s present success (Vickers, 2011); second, Hong Kong is depicted as ‘an inalienable part’ of China from ‘the beginning of time’ (zigu yilai) and stresses that Hongkongers should also make their contribution to the nation like their Chinese compatriots (Leung, 2007; Vickers, 2011; Vickers and Kan, 2005).

Due to China’s considerable effort to instil a sense of Chinese identity in Hong Kong, influence from, reaction to, and competition with Chinese nationalism is inevitable for Hong Kong nationalists. This point will be further discussed throughout the thesis.

2.3.2 Anticolonial Nationalism

Apart from Chinese nationalism, British colonialism is another force that has had a profound influence on Hong Kong and its people’s identification. Therefore, to fully
understand Hong Kong nationalism, it is essential to review the literature on anticolonial nationalism.

The early superiority in wealth and technology of European powers allowed them to engage in colonialism from the sixteenth century onwards. However, the next few centuries after that witnessed the rise of educated native elites expelling their alien rulers in the name of nationalism. Since then, colonialism has been a popular explanation for nationalism (Smith, 1971). One version of the anticolonial nationalism theory follows the Marxist framework of capitalist imperialism. It suggests that colonies were established as ‘outlets for investments, markets and sources of raw materials and cheap labour’ (Smith, 1971, p. 68). Nevertheless, colonisation led to the creation of a communication network, the increase of literacy, and the birth of urban bourgeoisie and intelligentsia; this laid the groundwork for nationalism and social revolution. Sparked by the shared experience of ‘white, capitalist domination’, nationalism arose to serve the needs for independence, decolonisation, and development (cf. Worsley, 1964). Another version of the anticolonial nationalism theory relies on the ‘interest group’ thesis. Kautsky (1962) focuses on the independent actions and desires of the intellectuals, who have absorbed the skills and values of the advanced countries but are frustrated by under-employment and displacement of their traditional culture. Nationalism is, therefore, an opposition to the colonial economic and cultural status quo. Such an account echoes Anderson (1991) as he argues that the creoles, American-born European descendants, played a decisive role in the rise of nationalism in the Americas. The creoles were frustrated by the discrimination they faced as a result of their birthplace and became the pioneer of nationalism in the colonies in the Americas.

In the above theories, nationalism is seen as a political movement aimed at overthrowing colonial regime. So understood, anticolonial nationalism theories seemingly fail to predict the situation in Hong Kong. During more than 150 years of British rule, the colonial government had faced little political opposition. Not only had the government been well regarded by the local population, Chinese businesspeople even collaborated with the colonial government to help sustain colonial rule (Carroll, 2005, 2007; Tsang, 2004). One possible explanation is that the anticolonial nationalism mentioned above sought to redress underdevelopment and the fact that Hong Kong economically flourished under the colonial regime offered little incentive for the emergence of nationalism.

However, nationalism is not seen as a political movement from its onset by all theorists. Chatterjee (1993b) argues that theorists on nationalism ‘have all taken the claims of
nationalism to be a political movement too literally and much too seriously’ (p. 5). He argues that ‘anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power’ (p. 6). Social institutions and practices are divided into two domains: the material and the spiritual. The former refers to the domain of economy, state-craft, and science and technology. In this domain, the superiority of ‘the West’ has been acknowledged, and ‘the East’ studied and replicated its accomplishments. The latter refers to the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity. This domain is considered sovereign territory by nationalism and intervention in matters affecting ‘national culture’ by the colonial power is strongly resisted. According to Chatterjee, the second domain can also be regarded as nationalism, even if political opposition is absent. Language is one example of the spiritual domain (cf. Chatterjee, 1993a). As Chapter 5 will show, even though political opposition has virtually been absent during colonial times, the resistance in spiritual domain began as early as the 1960s. This was exhibited through a series of social movements defending Chinese language and culture vis-à-vis the British colonial regime, most notably of which was the Chinese language movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. However, as argued later in this work, the activism during the Chinese language movements was limited to language and culture and posed no direct challenge to the colonial rule.

In fact, British colonialism is in general regarded highly by both the local population and academics. The influence of the 156 years of British colonial rule is often described as the ‘colonial legacies’ of Hong Kong. Shortly after the handover of Hong Kong, Chikuen Lau, a veteran journalist and the Public Policy Editor of South China Morning Post, published a book titled Hong Kong’s Colonial Legacy listing various contributions of British colonialism, including the rule of law, respect for personal freedoms, and a sense of fairness (Lau, 1997a). Steve Tsang (2004), a leading scholar on Hong Kong history, also documents a list of the contributions of British rule, including the political framework and social stability that enabled Hong Kong’s economic prosperity; the high integrity and standards of the judiciary; the professional, efficient, and politically neutral civil service and administration; the Independent Commission Against Corruption which instilled in the local population a public hostility towards corruption; and a first-hand experience, albeit a limited one, of how politicians behave in a democracy thanks to Chris Patten, the last governor. John Carroll (2007), a well-known Hong Kong historian, adds the English language to the list of Hong Kong’s colonial legacies. As Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 will show, British colonialism was mentioned extensively by nationalists, and it is thought to
have helped the development of liberal values such as the freedom and preservation of Chinese culture in Hong Kong.

The year 1997 marked the end of British rule; nevertheless, it did not give Hong Kong a new beginning in terms of the city’s political structure, as China was committed to keeping Hong Kong’s political institution unchanged (Carroll, 2007). It is even argued that the colonial governance apparatus has simply been ‘frozen’ and prolonged into post-handover times (Lui, 2015). This has led some Hong Kong nationalists to criticise the post-handover Hong Kong government as essentially a form of ‘Chinese colonialism’ (see Chapter 7).

Ironically, the political opposition of the Hong Kong people against their sovereign master happened only after Hong Kong supposedly ‘returned’ to the motherland, as China claimed. While it is questionable whether the situation of post-handover Hong Kong constitutes colonialism, anticolonial nationalism theories still provide a mechanism to link economic grievances with national agitation. Since 2012, many of the organisations that have become the backbone of the nationalist movement initially gained their popularity by taking part in the protests caused by economic grievances. The Reclaim Sheung Shui is one example. On the 15 and 16 September 2012, around 100 people gathered in Sheung Shui, a border town neighbouring China, to protest against cross-border parallel traders. For years, parallel traders had been buying goods, including milk powder and groceries, in Sheung Shui to smuggle into China where they would sell them without authorisation (Ng and Nip, 2012). The parallel trading business has not only created a nuisance but also distorted the local economy by pushing up rent and therefore driven out local shops and restaurants as more and more parallel goods distribution centres moved in. Hong Kong Indigenous, an important nationalist organisation, organised a series of protests for the same cause in other regions suffering from parallel trading activities during the early days of their establishment in 2015, including Reclaim Tuen Mun, Reclaim Shatin, and Reclaim Yuen Long. These economic issues will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

2.3.3 Democracy and Nationalism

Due to the importance of the issues around democracy in Hong Kong politics, it is worthwhile to review the literature on democracy and nationalism. Democracy and nationalism have a complex relationship. While nationalism is seen as detrimental to democracies in some cases (further discussion in Chapter 8), in other cases it is consid-
ered a vital force that goes hand in hand with democratic transition. First of all, the philosophical underpinnings of democracy, namely the doctrine of popular sovereignty, is thought to promote the expression of nationalism. Yack (2004) argues that the doctrine of popular sovereignty imagines the people as a single body that authorises, constitutes, and deconstitutes the government. It introduces the idea of political community but fails to provide a basis for the bonds among the people. Nationalism in turn fills the gap by encouraging the people to treat historical and cultural roots as the basis to bind individuals into a community. The idea of nationhood thus provides the necessary bonds for a democracy to function (Nodia, 1992; Miller, 1995).

Similarly, Nodia (1992) argues that the demands of democracy-building provide incentives for the rise of nationalism, as the defining of ‘We the People’ is a necessary precondition for building a democracy. He also points out that democratic movements are often concomitantly nationalist movements; both of them act in the name of ‘self-determination’, the idea that ‘We the People’, rather than an absolute monarch or foreign power, will decide the fate of the people.

On the other side of the coin, nationalism also plays a crucial role in the diffusion of democracy. In the modern world, the level of democracy becomes a measurement of political maturity while only sovereign states that have a liberal democratic government are regarded as ‘advanced’ or ‘modern’ and treated with genuine respect. Failing to create democratic institutions or abide by liberal democratic principles is often considered a shameful ‘national disgrace’, especially by the cosmopolitan elites. The long for national pride therefore becomes the incentive for the call for democracy (Nodia, 1992).

### 2.3.4 Peripheral Nationalism

While theories of colonialism look at the unequal and often exploitative relationship between an alien ruler and the native society, theories of peripheral nationalism explore the effect of the unequal relationship in the rise of nationalism under a different context, namely between a centralising state and a resisting periphery (cf. ‘internal colonialism’).

In *Containing Nationalism*, Hechter (2000) argues that many kinds of social conditions are necessary, but not sufficient, for the emergence of nations. He claims that direct rule is the condition that gives rise to nationalism. Prior to the advent of modern communications technology, indirect rule was the only possible means of controlling large territories and population, under which the majority of governance is delegated to local authorities.
In indirect rule regimes, subjects tend to be ruled by their own kind; thus, sovereignty is unlikely to be part of their political demands. Also, since local authorities are essentially sovereign, pursuing greater self-determination is largely unprofitable. On the other hand, direct rule, characterised by the high scope of state provision and high penetration of the central state’s control, concentrates power in a single centre of authority. In order to secure the loyalty of culturally distinctive groups, direct rule regimes often resort to assimilationist state-building nationalism, a type of nationalism that manifests in ‘the attempt to assimilate or incorporate culturally distinctive territories in a given state’ (Hechter, 2000, p. 15), to transform them into a culturally homogeneous population. Similarly, Mann (2012) also points out that ‘the modern state added routine, formalised and rationalised institutions of wider scope over citizens and territories’ (p. 56) and sought to become the representation of citizens’ internal sense of community. In response to state-building nationalism, peripheral nationalism takes place when people of a culturally distinctive territory resist assimilation into and the expansion of the centralising state by attempting to secede and establish their own government.

Brass (1991) also views nationalism as a resistance against the penetration of a centralising state; he argues that nationalism arises out of the regional elite’s endeavour to protect their interest and gain political and economic advantages (Brass, 1991; Hashmi and Majeed, 2015). In line with Gellner and Hobsbawm, who consider nationalism a social construct, Brass believes nations are forged by the elites, who ‘draw upon, distort and sometimes fabricate materials from the culture of the group they represent’ (p. 8). The difference between Hechter and Brass lies in their assumption of the social conditions that precede the nation; Brass argues that these factors include inequality, relative deprivation, and unequal opportunities to rise along the social ladder between members of social groups; Hechter also recognises the role of such social conditions in his earlier works (cf. Hechter, 1999), but later shifted focus to the condition of ‘direct rule’.

2.3.4.1 Hong Kong Peripheral Nationalism

There are two studies that seek to explain the rise of nationalism in Hong Kong with Hechter and Brass’s theories. Fong (2017b) argues that, in the early years of the post-handover period, Beijing adopted a non-interventionist policy in Hong Kong and allowed the city a high degree of autonomy. Such a policy effectively concealed the tension between central Beijing and periphery Hong Kong. However, after 2003, Beijing has gradually adopted a ‘new Hong Kong policy’, which emphasises increasing central
government involvement and intervention in Hong Kong’s public affairs (Cheng, 2009). Fong (2017b) thus argues that the shift demonstrates that Beijing has embarked on an ‘assimilationist state-building nationalism’, defined as ‘an incorporation strategy aimed at subjecting Hong Kong to greater central control on the political, economic, and ideological fronts’ (p. 528). In response, Fong claims that the ‘Hongkongese’ identity has transformed from a sense of socioeconomic superiority over mainland Chinese to a sense of resistance against Chinese ‘invaders’; it is considered a counter-mobilisation that ‘aims at defending Hong Kong’s autonomy, core values, lifestyle, and language (Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters) against Beijing’s incorporation strategies’ (Fong, 2017b, p. 541).

Similarly, Wu (2016) argues that China–Hong Kong relation after 1997 can be considered a situation where ‘a centralising state penetrated into the new peripheral territory and threatened the preexistent identities and interests of the peripheral society’ (p. 5). Wu then outlines several social conditions that gave rise to Hong Kong nationalism. Politically, Hongkongers have been denied direct and popular elections for the legislature and the head of government. Also, native collaborators, known as ‘the second ruling team’, were nurtured as the proxy for Beijing’s rule. Economically, Beijing managed to co-opt Hong Kong’s business class and induced a gradual economic dependency on China. Culturally, Beijing attempted to assimilate Hongkongers through various ideological control measures; the freedom of the press has been suppressed in recent years while various forms of patriotic ‘national education’, both within the curriculum and outside classrooms, were put forward. Therefore, Wu concludes that Beijing has adopted an assimilationist official nationalism to dissolve Hong Kong’s uniqueness and absorb it into the Chinese state. However, these initiatives exerted a significant impact on the resource allocation, governance, and culture of Hong Kong, and therefore inevitably triggered resistance from the Hong Kong people.

2.3.4.2 The Problems of Peripheral Nationalism

While Hechter and Brass’s theories correctly describe a tension between the central state and a peripheral territory, they do not, I argue, fit the circumstances in Hong Kong. Their theories are problematic in three senses. First, Hechter’s theory of peripheral nationalism is an extension of his analysis of the British Isles from 1536 to 1966 (Hechter, 2000, p. 71), in which he proposes the framework of ‘internal colonialism’. He argues that an exploitative and unequal relationship was developed between the Celtic peripheries and the core. The internal colonies, namely Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, are excluded from
superior social and cultural positions because of their distinctive cultural characteristics such as religion, language or ethnicity. He also argues that there is a ‘cultural division of labour’, where high-status occupations are concentrated in the core while the colonies are left with the low-status ones. However, as McCrone (1998) has pointed out, Hechter’s account does not fit historical evidence. Peripheral regions that develop nationalism, such as Scotland, Catalonia, and Quebec, are in a relatively privileged position, rather than a disadvantaged one, in their relationship to the centre in question and they are all more affluent regions instead of the poorest as Hechter’s theory would predict. In the case of Hong Kong, Hong Kong has developed an economic superiority over China since the 1970s (Tsang, 2003). Despite China’s rapid economic growth in the recent years, Hong Kong has a GDP per capita of US$46,194, five times higher than China’s US$8,827 in the year of 2019 (World Bank, 2019).

The second disparity in Hechter and Brass’s theories concerning Hong Kong’s situation is their emphasis on local elites. According to Hechter (2000), as a result of direct rule, the centre assumes rights and resources that were held by local authorities and therefore increases the local population’s dependence on the centre. In response, the local elites instigate or lend their support to peripheral nationalism in order to retain their privileged positions. Similarly, Brass (1991) also sees nationalism as the regional elite’s endeavour to protect their interest and gain political and economic advantages. In contrast to their predictions, the Hong Kong government is widely believed to be ‘doing Beijing’s bidding’ and serve merely as an extension of Beijing’s ruling arms while the local capitalist class have partnered with Beijing for governing Hong Kong (Fong, 2014; So, 1999; Wu, 2016; Goodstadt, 2009).

There is a third problem related to the goal of nationalism. According to Hechter, the main goal of peripheral nationalism is to seek secession from its host state (Hechter, 2000, p. 70). In the case of Hong Kong, the goals of the nationalist are much more ambiguous. For example, one of the key figures, Chin Wan, is a vocal opponent of Hong Kong independence, even though he was nicknamed ‘the father of Hong Kong independence’ by pro-Beijing newspaper and some academics (cf. Cheung, 2015b). Instead, he proposes the idea of ‘perpetual Basic Law’ to sustain the de facto separation between China and Hong Kong. Similarly, Brian Fong invents the notion of ‘perpetual autonomy’, seeking to prolong the current constitutional arrangement beyond 2047 when the Basic Law is expected to expire (further discussion on Chin and Fong in Chapter 6).
2.3.5 Neo-nationalism in Stateless Nations

The previous section argues that the theories of peripheral nationalism fall short of explaining Hong Kong’s circumstances. The following paragraphs introduce the concept of neo-nationalism in stateless nations and discuss how it better fits the case of Hong Kong.

McCrone (1998) points out that the recent years witnessed the emergence of a new form of nationalism that is significantly different from the varieties found in the 19th century and cannot be readily explained by conventional nationalism theories, which he calls neo-nationalism in stateless nations. The term ‘neo-nationalism’ was originally coined by Tom Nairn (1977) in *The Break Up of Britain*, in which he describes neo-nationalism as a new political movement that is ‘in a number of ways analogous to historical or mainstream nationalism. But a more careful consideration shows its different place in history and its different character and potential. It deserves to be called “neo-nationalism” rather than nationalism’ (p. 127).

Keating (1996, 1997) makes a similar point by arguing that this is a new form of nationalism that appeals to historical traditions and identities but manifests differently than its classical counterpart. These are nation-building projects that arise in response to the need for collective action within the new international economy and political order of the contemporary world. Instead of aspiring to create a classic nation-state, they attempt to build a ‘stateless nation’ and find its niche within the globalising world.

The following paragraphs summarise several key features of stateless nationalism and discuss their applicability to Hong Kong’s circumstances.

2.3.5.1 Civil Society

Stateless nationalism tends to emerge in territories where there are distinct and robust civil societies, which foster the development of distinct national identities and therefore feed the political forms of nationalism (McCrone, 1998). According to McCrone (2001a), institutional distinctiveness is a major driving force behind such distinctiveness. Distinctive institutions set apart space within which different rules are in play, and this, in turn,

---

4 The term neo-nationalism has been used to describe the right-wing populist nationalism in the recent years (cf. Badie, 2019; Eger and Valdez, 2015; von Beyme, 2019; Bergmann, 2020). Despite the name, these cases of neo-nationalism are vastly different from those described by McCrone, Keating, and Nairn. To avoid ambiguity, I will use stateless nationalism and stateless nations to refer to the neo-nationalism in stateless nations.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

helps to naturalise social processes to the point that people take it for granted that there is a distinctive way of doing things. In other words, differences are not only sustained and routinised but also generated by institutional distinctiveness. This echoes Billig’s (1995) study of banal nationalism, in which he argues that nationalism is widely but mundanely reproduced as common sense and national identity that is embodied in the common habits of thinking and language use in social life.

As mentioned earlier, the introduction of immigration control at the border between Hong Kong and China in 1950 has turned Hong Kong into a distinct civil society (Tsang, 2003). In the early post-war period, even though open opposition and political movement could still be suppressed, there was ample personal, economic, and social freedom outside the formal political arena. In the 1970s, the emergence of student and pressure groups was commonly seen as the beginning of Hong Kong’s civil society. This period witnessed the birth of a new class of locally born educated youth, who were more eager to take part in public affairs than their immigrant parents while, as an aftermath of the 1967 leftist riots, the colonial government became more willing to listen to public opinion from Hong Kong’s Chinese population (Ma, 2008). Although civil society organisations have had different areas of concern, they shared the main common theme of decolonisation and regime reform. In the 1980s, seeing China as the future sovereign master, the key focus of the civil society organisations switched to democratisation with of hope of establishing a democratic system to protect Hong Kong’s civil society, freedom, and lifestyles (Chiu and Lui, 2000). Hong Kong’s civil society continues to be vibrant after the handover to China. 1 July 2003, for instance, witnessed the largest rally in Hong Kong history, when half a million took to the streets to protest the legislation of the National Security Bill, which was regarded by many as a threat to the civil liberties of Hong Kong (Ma, 2005). In September 2014, the Umbrella Movement, a 79-day occupy movement which demanded a genuine election, captured the world’s attention; the movement was seen by many as the continuation of the campaign for democracy in Hong Kong that had been ongoing since colonial times (Chan, 2014b; Ortmann, 2015). Hong Kong has even been nicknamed the ‘city of protest’ by the international media (Fong, 2017a). In the year of 2015 alone, there were 1142 public processions, more than three per day (Dapiran, 2017).

The proliferation of social movements in Hong Kong echoes Keating (1996) as he observes the rise of localist social movements in other stateless nations that seek to use local consciousness and local action against the state and large corporations.
2.3.5.2 Plural and Shifting Identities

Stateless nationalism is also characterised by plural and shifting identities, instead of a single and homogeneous national identity that classic models of nationalism often predict (McCrone, 1998). Classic nationalism theories often conceptualise a cultural identity as a single, unified entity constructed in response to a common historical past and shared cultural root (Hall, 1990; McCrone, 1998). As McCrone (1998) and Keating (1996, 1997) both argue, identity in the contemporary world is far less clear-cut. There is no single and exclusive representation but multiple representations. We should not see identity as something fixed, but as something that undergoes constant transformations and is used differently under different circumstances. By seeing national identities as multifaceted and plural, we can recognise the social power that shapes these identities as well as the competition among them (Hall, 1990; McCrone, 1998). Keating (1997), for example, reports growth of multiple identities in Scotland, Quebec, and Catalonia. He argues that people in these cases mobilise different identities for different purposes in different contexts.

Figure 2.1: Hong Kong People’s National Identity

![Figure 2.1: Hong Kong People’s National Identity](image)

Source: Source: Public Opinion Programme, the University of Hong Kong

In the Hong Kong case, we can also observe a mixed identity among Hong Kong people. Figure 2.1 summaries the result of the surveys conducted by the University of Hong Kong Public Opinion Programme, in which respondents were asked to identify themselves as one of ‘Hongkonger’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Chinese in Hong Kong’, or ‘Hongkonger in China’. The green line represents the percentage of respondents who identified as solely ‘Hongkonger’, the red line represents the percentage for solely ‘Chinese’, and the blue line represents the
joint percentage for ‘Mixed identity’ combining ‘Chinese in Hong Kong’ and ‘Hongkonger in China’. Except for the years before and shortly after 2008, when the Beijing Olympic took place, people in Hong Kong, in general, prioritise their Hong Kong identity over a Chinese identity. However, despite the alternating lead between the two, approximately 40 per cent of the respondents have adopted a mixed identity throughout the survey period, making it the most prevalent category in most data points. The result is indicative of a complex interplay between the identities.

2.3.5.3 Ambiguity in the Political Goal

The ambiguity of identity is also echoed in ambiguity in the political goal of stateless nationalism (McCrone, 2001a; Keating, 1996). The goals of stateless nationalist movements are often equivocal. For instances, Home Rule of Scottish nationalism, Autonomisme of Catalan nationalism, and Sovereignty-Association of Quebec nationalism could allow for multiple interpretations, rather than clear-cut traditional independence. Such interpretations could offer them the flexibility to adapt and maximise political autonomy in an interdependent world (McCrone, 2001a). In Hong Kong’s case, as mentioned earlier, instead of clear-cut independence, ambiguous terms such as ‘perpetual Basic Law’ and ‘perpetual autonomy’ were used to muster support. The low support of independence is also observed among the people. In a survey conducted by the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, merely 11.4 per cent of respondents support Hong Kong independence. In another question querying the probability of Hong Kong independence, 83.5 per cent believe it is impossible. The most supported option regarding Hong Kong’s future is the ‘Maintenance of one country two systems’ (71.2 per cent) (Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey, 2017). However, studies also observe a striking difference between university students and the general public. In another survey conducted by Undergrad, the campus magazine that published On the Hong Kong Nation, 61 per cent of University of Hong Kong students would support independence even with China’s opposition (Cheng, 2016a). Despite the issues in sampling and small sample size, the result is suggestive of the influence of age and education attainment.
2.3.5.4 Economic Conditions

Another feature of stateless nationalism is that it emerges in regions that are economically privileged rather than disadvantaged. There exists a sentiment of ‘beggar my neighbour’ among stateless nations, although much less explicit in some cases, which sees their movement as opposition to ‘poor and parasitical’ central states (McCrone, 1998). In the case of Hong Kong, as mentioned previously, a sense of superiority was generated among Hong Kongers during colonial times due to the disparity in economic development and standards of living between Hong Kong and China. It was later reinforced by the stereotype of ‘backward China’ (Tsang, 2003, 2004). The contempt for China is most vivid in the ‘anti-locust’ advertisement in 2012 which ran in the Apple Daily, a major Hong Kong newspaper. The full-page advertisement features a locust looking down at Hong Kong with associated text referring to the Chinese mothers, who came to Hong Kong to give birth so that their children could obtain Hong Kong citizenship and the associated benefits, as ‘locusts’. The advertisement was paid for by an online fund-raising campaign on Facebook and an online discussion forum, which raised more than HK$100,000 in less than a week (South China Morning Post, 2012; The Wall Street Journal, 2013).

Thanks to Hong Kong’s geopolitical situation and interactions with the international community, Hong Kong has transformed from a few fishing villages to an entrepôt and later a global financial centre. Since the 1910s, Hong Kong served mainly as an entrepôt in the ‘triangular trade’ between China, India, and Britain. As a result of the 1951 United Nations trade embargo on China, Hong Kong shifted its economic focus to light industry and export. The colony produced and exported a wide variety of manufactured goods such as textiles and plastics. By the end of the 1950s, Hong Kong’s exports surged from 30 to 80 per cent of GDP (Carroll, 2007; PBS, 2002). Hong Kong’s rise to a global financial centre began in the 1950s. During that time, the colonial monetary system provided currency stability when the international monetary system became increasingly regulated in the post-war period while Hong Kong’s colonial status increased the city’s economic competitiveness vis-à-vis the political instability in other parts of East Asia, allowing Hong Kong to eventually become an international financial centre (Carroll, 2007). This has added a new dimension to economic privilege of Hong Kong.
2.3.5.5 Internationalism

As argued by McCrone (2001b) and Keating (1996), the contemporary world has increasingly become a globalised one. The international dimension cannot be fully addressed by classic theories of nationalism that seek to explain the process of 19th century European state-building against the context of the industrial revolution and the breakdown of agrarian society (Sutherland, 2012). As Keating (1997) suggests, a key aspect of stateless nations’ nation-building project is the projection of the nation into international arenas. Instead of a comprehensive foreign policy resembling traditional diplomacy, the strategy of stateless nations often focuses on specific actors in the world and serves specific goals.

Hong Kong has been a global city and closely connected with the international community (Sassen, 2005; Skeldon, 2003). Fong (2019) attributes the projection of Hong Kong’s territorial representation into the international arena in the post-war British-Hong Kong period (1945–1997) to the British colonial government. According to Fong, the colonial regime catapulted Hong Kong into the international arena through bilateral agreements with other nation-states, membership in international organisations, and the establishment of Economic and Trade Offices around the world. The agenda advanced by the British colonial government is, however, limited to economic. This dimension is the focus of and will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

2.3.5.6 Recent Origins

McCrone (2001a) and Keating (1997) also observe that stateless nationalism is a recently emerged phenomenon that has grown out of the former political movements of a longer history, pre-existing territorial fault line, and historical identities. In Hong Kong, the Umbrella Movement is considered a continuation of Hong Kong’s protracted democratic movement, its origin can be traced back to the 1970s (Ortmann, 2015). The crackdown and futile end of the Umbrella Movement in December 2014 inspired the creation of two major nationalist organisations in Hong Kong amid the mushrooming of new political groups, commonly known as ‘post-umbrella groups’ or ‘umbrella troops’ (Jiang, 2018). Hong Kong Indigenous was founded in January 2015 by approximately 50 core members who met during the occupy movement (Choi, 2016). Youngspiration, on the other hand, was founded when Baggio Leung, the convener of the group, called a secret meeting in a Karaoke room on the eve of the crackdown (Post852, 2015).
2.3.6 Summary

In short, I argue that Hong Kong nationalism belongs to the sub-set of nationalism referred to as neo-nationalism by McCrone, Keating, and Nairn (and stateless nationalism in this thesis to avoid ambiguity). This is not to argue that the classical theories, such as Gellner, Hobsbawm, Hechter, and Brass, are irrelevant. This is only to suggest that nationalism nowadays operates in a different context, and therefore has a distinct dynamic that separates it from nationalism of the 19th century. However, although stateless nationalism can offer a better explanation of Hong Kong’s case, it also has its shortcomings. Unlike the democratic countries that the theory of stateless nationalism sought to explain, Hong Kong is a hybrid regime situated within an authoritarian host state, China. Apart from economic concerns, the changing political environment could also influence the stance of the political groups. Even though nationalism groups in Hong Kong might share a similar outlook with those in Scotland, Quebec, and Catalan, the non-democratic situation adds another layer of complexity behind their political calculations. The lack of democratic representation could also change the manifestation and goals of nationalism.

2.4 Chapter Conclusion

The works reviewed in this chapter are useful in suggesting an approach to the empirical study of nationalist movements. Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Brass all agree that traditions, histories, and myths are constructed and used by nationalism selectively and instrumentally in accordance with their political usefulness. Such an understanding of nationalism complements the goal of my study: to understand the strategies used by the nationalists to construct a discourse on Hong Kong nationalism. It is important to note that the idea of the constructed nature of nationalism does not suggest that nationalism is entirely fictional. In fact, many modernists would recognise that certain pre-existing factors could influence and limit the construction (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983; Sutherland, 2012). In addition to constructing a common past, I also showed how nationalism uses the past to inform its future. The literature, therefore, informs the following research questions:

*RQ 1(a)*: How does Hong Kong nationalism construct its past?

*RQ 1(b)*: How does Hong Kong nationalism interpret the present issues facing Hong Kong?
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

RQ 1(c): To what kind of future does Hong Kong nationalism aspire?

In the chapter, I also showed the two major factors that contribute to the repositories of historic materials, which could, in turn, be appropriated and repurposed by the nationalists: Hong Kong’s colonial past and influences from Chinese nationalism. Hence, the review of literature around Chinese nationalism and colonialism help elucidate both the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism itself and also its relationship with other factors in play.

RQ 2(a): What are the influences of British colonialism and Chinese nationalism on the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism?

The discussion on stateless nationalism focuses on the different contexts, and therefore different outlooks of nationalism, in the contemporary world as opposed to that of the 19th century, against which classic nationalism theories were developed. As discussed above, the contemporary world is increasingly globalised and interdependent, and projecting the nation in international arenas has become a key task for stateless nations in order to thrive in the new political and economic order. The literature, therefore, informs the following final sub-question:

RQ 2(b): How does Hong Kong nationalism negotiate its relations with other actors in the world?

Anderson’s work is useful in considering the medium through which nationalism is constructed. In his work, he argues that newspaper serves as a medium to communicate information and also a vivid symbol to envision the imagined community. As mentioned earlier, the newspaper is no longer the primary platform for information exchange following the advent of the internet. Therefore, I include social media as a major source of data on top of print media due to its importance in political communication and mobilisation in Hong Kong.

Another vital objective for the study of nationalism is to identify the key actors, for which the works of Hechter, Brass, and Hroch are useful. Their works all highlight the importance of the elite’s involvement, but Hroch’s work is instrumental in that he introduces the idea of the intelligentsia and discusses different actors’ involvement in different phases. Following Hroch’s schema, I focus on the academics and their writings on Hong Kong nationalism in Phase A and the activists’ involvement on Facebook in Phase B. Furthermore, Hong Kong’s case allows us to further understand of the process
of nation-building since, unlike the cases examined by Hroch, Hong Kong’s nationalist movement is still ongoing, and it may or may not eventually reach Phase C. Studying an unfinished nation-building project is crucial as it could avoid the bias of sampling on the dependent variable, namely the academia’s tendency to put more focus on cases of nationalist movement that were able to reach more successful stages.

Finally, throughout the chapter, I have also reviewed the applicability of the theories in Hong Kong. It is crucial to identify the disjunction between the case of Hong Kong and the context against which the theories were developed. The non-democratic context of Hong Kong also allows us to reflect on the applicability of the stateless nationalism theory, which was developed based on sub-state entities in liberal democracies, such as Scotland, Quebec, and Catalonia.
Chapter 3

Contextualising Hong Kong Nationalism

In this chapter, I argue that Hong Kong is situated between two great forces, British colonialism and Chinese nationalism, and discuss how Hong Kong’s geopolitical context shaped the identification of the Hong Kong people. I also discuss the developments of the Hong Kong identity before and after the transfer of sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997 (‘the handover’) and the significance of critical events, such as the Moral and National Education controversy and the Umbrella Movement, to the development of Hong Kong nationalism. Against this background, I present the socio-political roots that gave rise of Hong Kong nationalism, as suggested by the literature. Lastly, to help understand the political context within which Hong Kong nationalism developed, I offer an overview of the political landscape of Hong Kong, with a special focus on the idea of localism.

3.1 The Edge of Empires

Hong Kong was ceded by the Qing dynasty to Great Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking after the Opium War. Although it was not the ‘barren rock’ with ‘a handful of fishermen and pirates’ as described by British historians and colonial officials, there were only a few villages and a small population (Carroll, 2007). Over time, Hong Kong has developed into one of the largest metropolises in the world. After 156 years of colonisation, the colony was eventually handed over to China in 1997. The geopolitical and historical background of Hong Kong’s development can be best described by the well-known title of John Carroll’s book, The Edge of Empires. According to Carroll (2005), Hong Kong
has been situated on the edge of the Chinese Empire and the British Empire.

From China’s perspective, Hong Kong may seem peripheral politically when compared to Beijing and commercially when compared to Shanghai, but the city earned its unique position within China precisely because it was not politically a part of China. Since the beginning of its colonial days, Hong Kong served as a safe haven for refugees from China during wars and times of political turbulence. Hong Kong has also been a crucial link between China and the rest of the world. Until recently, 90 per cent of all Chinese emigrants and most of the return immigrants from North America and Southeast Asia passed through Hong Kong. After the Communist revolution in 1949, Hong Kong served as China’s window to the capitalist world; Hong Kong was a centre for remittance for oversea Chinese and an entrepôt for goods that China could not produce. The geographical proximity and the racial similarity with China means that Hong Kong’s history has been affected heavily by China’s events (Carroll, 2007).

On the other hand, Hong Kong was also a part of the British empire and the influences of colonial rule are still prominent today. Since its establishment, Hong Kong has had a strong relationship with other British colonies. The Hong Kong government had a structure typical of British colonies; until the 1970s, governors were selected from the British Colonial Service and had served in other colonies before serving Hong Kong. In the 1950s and 1960s, a significant number of colonial officials from other newly independent British colonies transferred to Hong Kong (Carroll, 2007). More importantly, it is widely believed that Hong Kong would not have become the metropolis it is today had it not been colonised by Britain. During the years of colonisation, despite the lack of democracy, Hong Kong developed a vibrant economy, a professional civil service, an independent judiciary and the rule of law, a relatively high degree of personal freedom, and a credible and honest police force, as well as the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Together these are referred as the British legacies and commonly believed to be the key to Hong Kong’s success (Carroll, 2007; Tsang, 2004; Lau, 1997a).

Situated in the intersection between these two great forces, Hong Kong, on the one hand, is bound to be influenced by them, but on the other hand, has followed its own unique developmental trajectory.
3.2 Hong Kong Identity Before the Handover in 1997

Hong Kong nationalism is widely considered in the literature to be a newly emerged phenomenon. So (2016) claims that Hong Kong nationalism only emerged in 2015 and is still under construction. Wu (2016) pushes the emergence date back to 2011, when Chin Wan, an intellectual and folklorist, published Discourse on the Hong Kong City-state. Fong (2017b) construes Hong Kong nationalism as a peripheral nationalism which emerged in 2009 as a response to Beijing’s assimilation efforts. Zheng (2008) believes that a strong sense of Hong Kong political identity arose in the latter years of colonial rule when educated elites and middle classes began to demand democracy and this political participation gradually evolved into ‘a unique form of nationalism’ after the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Beijing in 1989 (further discussion in Chapter 5).

However, despite the ethnonym of ‘Hong Kong nation’ has never been widely used before 2014 when the On the Hong Kong Nation was first published, a distinct Hongkongese identity has existed since long before the handover. It is argued by Tsang (2003) that the origin of the Hong Kong identity dates back to the end of the Chinese Civil War (1945–49) (cf. Carroll, 2007; Kwong and Yu, 2013; Tsang, 2004). Before the Chinese Communist Party came into power, the governments on both sides of the China-Hong Kong border had permitted Chinese people to freely enter and exit Hong Kong without restrictions. There had been recurring influxes of refugees who fled to Hong Kong to escape from the chaos, political repression, and economic hardship in China. After the victory of the Chinese Communist Party, the colonial government introduced permanent immigration restrictions at the China-Hong Kong border in 1950 while the communist government later imposed its own border control programme in response. These acts have greatly reduced the movement of people between Hong Kong and China and turned the Hong Kong population into a comparatively settled one. The separation provided room for Hongkongers to nurture a public culture and an identity of their own (Tsang, 2003).

By the end of the 1970s, the colonial government had turned into ‘an efficient, effective, fair, non-intrusive and basically honest administration which responded to the needs and wishes of its people’ (Tsang, 2003, p. 224). At that time, the government generally performed well while, in a sharp contrast, China (PRC) was still plagued by chaos and lawlessness under the leadership of Mao (Tsang, 2003). Therefore, Hongkongers in general could comfortably identify the colonial government as their own. This is despite the fact that the Hong Kong constitutional framework remained a Crown Colony system, it was
not a democracy, but an an autocracy that served British interests (Tsang, 2004). Until
the 1980s, the members of the Legislative Council, Hong Kong’s legislature, were almost
all non-Chinese. The governor of Hong Kong was appointed by Britain and the legislature
was set up merely as an advisory body to the governor. Before the first indirect election
in 1985, half of the members of the Legislative Council were government officials and the
another half were appointed by the governor; there was no political representation for the
Chinese subjects in the legislature and almost all members were non-Chinese (Carroll,
2007).

Furthermore, the rapid growth of the Hong Kong economy in the 1970s in comparison
to the economic stagnation in mainland China created a huge gap between them in terms
of levels of development and standards of living (Tsang, 2003). This disparity generated a
sense of superiority among Hongkongers, which was further reinforced by the stereotype
of a ‘backward China’ (Lau, 1997b; Tsang, 2003). In the 1980s and 1990s, Hong Kong
developed a distinct identity that rested upon Hong Kong’s comparatively liberal, albeit
far from democratic, institutions and Hongkongers’ exposure to liberal values such as the
rule of law, freedom of speech, and human rights. This identity was further consolidated
by political controversies in the 1980s (Bhattacharya, 2005). In 1982, the governments
of the United Kingdom and China announced the commencement of negotiations over
the future of Hong Kong. The negotiations remained a bilateral affair between London
and Beijing without the involvement of any Hong Kong representative. Even the pro-
posed participation of the then Governor Sir Edward Youde to represent Hong Kong
was pointedly rejected by Beijing. Out of the frustration of not having a say in their
own future, a new political activism calling for democratisation was born. Despite this
new-born activism, the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed in 1984 spelling out the
transfer of sovereignty from Britain to the PRC in 1997. Under the ‘One Country, Two
Systems’ principle, the capitalist system of Hong Kong and its ‘way of life’ would remain
unchanged for a period of 50 years until 2047. The Basic Law, a constitutional docu-
ment which stipulates the basic government principles of Hong Kong after the handover,

---

1 The British only began the democratisation in Hong Kong during the Sino-British negotiations in the
1980s as a measure to secure Hong Kong’s way of life before handing Hong Kong, and its Hong Kong-born
British subjects, over to a communist regime (Tsang, 2004). However, as this chapter will further discuss,
the democratisation was never completed.

2 The One Country, Two Systems principle suggests that there is only one China (One Country), but
within which Hong Kong could retain their own economic and government system while the rest of China
maintains its socialism system (Two Systems).
CHAPTER 3. CONTEXTUALISING HONG KONG NATIONALISM

was then drafted by a drafting committee appointed by Beijing. Furthermore, the brutal image of the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre vividly reminded Hongkongers of the difference in political culture and the fate of freedom and human rights across the border, which further substantiated their distinctive identity (Bhattacharya, 2005; Carroll, 2007; Tsang, 2003).

In short, this section showed that the political status of Hong Kong as a separate political entity and its disparate path of political and socioeconomic development when compared to China have contributed to rise of a Hongkongese identity (cf. Fong, 2017b). It is important to note that, although Hong Kong people have developed a distinct identity at this point, it is different from the national identity as described by the literature. The identity at that time is best understood as a sense of belonging to the place the people live in. It was a form of ‘place identity’ similar to that of the ‘Londoner’ or ‘New Yorker’. The common features of national identity, such as the notion of nationhood and the call for independence or self-government, were absent. In fact, such ideas would arguably have been unthinkable at that time (see Mathews (1997) for a thorough discussion on the Hong Kong identity on the eve the handover).

3.3 Post-Handover Developments

The handover in 1997 was followed immediately by Beijing’s attempt to instil a sense of Chinese nationalism among Hong Kong people (See Tse, 2007; Mathews, Ma and Lui, 2008). Under the banner of National Education, an array of initiatives has taken place since then. The programme is officially named National Education in English but Guomin Jiaoyu (literally means Citizenship Education) or Guoqing Jiaoyu (National Situation Education) in Chinese. The use of the latter term is significant in the sense that it reflects the central premise behind all the initiatives under the name of National Education (Vickers, 2011). It is perceived that, after more than a hundred years of colonialism and the decades of compelled isolation from the PRC, Hong Kong people are uprooted and ignorant of contemporary China, and therefore biased against the communist regime. Therefore, the Hong Kong government and Chinese officials have been eager to rectify this anticipated information deficit by granting maximum publicity to incidents manifesting the glory of the Chinese nation (Vickers, 2011).

Beijing’s enormous efforts to instil Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong have led the majority to believe that the ‘Sinicisation’ of Hong Kong people is only a matter of time,
scholars even asserted that ‘Hong Kong identity came into being in the shadow of its own demise’ (Mathews, Ma and Lui, 2008, p.12). However, the year of 2012 caught everyone unawares, as the year witnessed the outbreak of a series of incidents with an anti-China tone. First, it was the Dolce & Gabbana photo ban incident in January. It was reported that Hong Kong citizens were barred from taking photos of the window displays while mainland Chinese were allowed to do so, since the latter was considered the main customer group of the store. The incident prompted thousands of Hongkongers to protest in front of the brand’s Tsim Sha Tsui flagship store (Lui, 2013). The conflict was then further fuelled by a video showing two Hongkongers complaining about a Chinese tourist for eating on the train. Kong Qingdong, a Peking University professor, denigrated Hongkongers as ‘dogs’ when commenting on the row. In February, a group of netizens ran a full-page advertisement condemning Chinese visitors as ‘locusts’, as more than 40,000 mainland Chinese mothers crossed the border in 2011 to give birth in Hong Kong so that their children could obtain the right of abode in Hong Kong as well as its associated benefits (The Wall Street Journal, 2013). In July, a Facebook group titled We are Hongkongese, not Chinese was created, which had attracted over 35,000 members before it was removed by Facebook in August 2013 since it was alleged to have violated Facebook’s Community Standards. Along with the members from the Hong Kong Autonomy Movement, another Facebook group created to advocate the right to autonomy granted by the principles of the Basic Law, members of the two groups brandished the British colonial flag and the ‘Lion and Dragon flag’, a flag modified from the design of the colonial flag, in public marches (Lui, 2013; Tong, 2013).

The anti-China sentiment was further strengthened by the Moral and National Education controversy. The controversy dates back to 2011 when the curriculum of a new subject, Moral and National Education, was put forward to be carried out across all local schools (Hung, 2013; TimeOut Hong Kong, 2013). The curriculum attracted the public’s attention when the China Model National Conditions Teaching Manual, a teaching guide published by the government-funded National Education Services Centre, was alleged to be biased in favour of the Chinese Communist Party. In the manual, the Chinese Communist Party is depicted as an ‘advanced, selfless and united ruling group’ while democracy in the United States is condemned to be a ‘fierce rivalry between parties that makes the people suffer’. Meanwhile, the teaching materials produced by a primary school with reference to the materials from the Education Bureau, in which a worksheet asked students to be ‘proud to be a Chinese and move to tears when listening to the national anthem’,
was shared onto social media and attracted extensive criticism (Singtao Daily, 2012).

In response, a group of secondary school students established the political group Scholarism to fight against the implementation of the curriculum and became the leading group throughout the protests. In July 2012, another main protest group against national education, the National Education Parents’ Concern Group, was also formed, and initiated a petition to oppose national education, which was co-signed by over 1100 parents (National Education Parent’s Concern Group, 2012). Later on, Scholarism, along with Parent’s Concern Group, Hong Kong Professional Teacher’s Union, Civil Human Rights Front, and other organisations formed the Civil Alliance Against the National Education. In the first major march against national education, over 90,000 people took to the streets (Apple Daily, 2012). On 1 September, 40,000 citizens attended an assembly outside the government headquarters (Moore, 2012). On 7 September, up to 120,000 protesters joined the demonstration outside the government headquarters (TimeOut Hong Kong, 2013). The curriculum was eventually shelved in October 2012.

As argued by Dupré (2020), the Moral and National Education controversy was a ‘transformative event’ for the development of Hong Kong’s identity and civil society. First, a substantial portion of Hong Kong’s youth became deeply concerned with identity issues, many of them would otherwise be apathetic to identity issues if not for the controversy (Lecours and Dupré, 2020). Second, the movement provided a training ground for the subsequent Umbrella Movement in 2014. In fact, some of the Scholarism leaders such as Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow went on and became student leaders in the Umbrella Movement in 2014 (Dupré, 2020).

The Umbrella Movement in 2014 is another event that has fundamentally changed Hong Kong’s political atmosphere (Kwan, 2016). The Umbrella Movement was a 79-day city-wide occupation and blockage demanding genuine universal suffrage. The debate about universal suffrage in Hong Kong can be traced back to colonial times. Although there were plans for democratisation by the British officials towards the end of colonial rule, they were brought to an end by opposition from Chinese officials, who saw the plans as the British’s attempt to continue running Hong Kong after the handover (Tsang, 2004). As shown by recently declassified documents in the British National Archives, the Chinese even threatened to take over Hong Kong by force if the colonial government had allowed full democracy to take place (Ortmann, 2015). Although Chris Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong, pushed forward modest democratic reforms after he came to office in 1992, those reforms were later overturned by the Chinese government after the handover.
(Ortmann, 2015). As stipulated by the Basic Law, Hong Kong’s post-handover mini-constitution, the Chief Executive is elected by an election committee consisting of 400 members (later expanded to 800) while only half of the Legislative Council is appointed by direct election, the other half is elected by functional constituencies comprised mainly of business and professional elites (Hong Kong Basic Law Drafting Committee, 1990; Ma, 2007, 2016). Most of the votes in the functional constituencies are cast by owners of organisations and business firms instead of individual citizens, and traditionally pro-China candidates have enjoyed an advantage in the functional constituencies, therefore guaranteeing them a majority in the Legislative Council (Kaeding, 2017; Ma, 2007, 2016).

Although the Basic Law suggested an ‘ultimate aim’ of selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage, the Chinese government repeatedly demonstrated its opposition to the full democratisation of Hong Kong (Ortmann, 2015). After multiple delays, the Chinese government finally promised in 2007 to implement universal suffrage for the Chief Executive by 2017. However, in 2014, Beijing put forward a proposal that ruled out genuine universal suffrage. Under the proposed arrangements, all candidates of the Chief Executive election have to be nominated by a nomination committee controlled by Beijing and therefore allowing China to bar candidates with unfavourable political stances (Ortmann, 2015; Kaeding, 2017).

In response to the proposal, student organisations launched a boycott of classes and protested on 26 September 2014, which eventually escalated into the Umbrella Movement, a city-wide occupation of key sites in Hong Kong. However, after 79 days of occupation, the occupation was dissipated by the police. Until the end of the movement, no compromise had been made by the government and no progress toward genuine democracy was achieved (Kaeding, 2017).

In the frustration from the failure to obtain any reforms or concessions from Beijing, Hong Kong people, especially the youths, started to believe that they could no longer put any hope in the Beijing officials and that peaceful protests could not bring democracy to Hong Kong (Chan, 2016). This has resulted in the shift towards localism/nationalism and radical means of protest (Chan, 2016; Kwong, 2016; Kaeding, 2017).³ In January 2015, less than a month after the end of the Umbrella Movement, two nationalist political parties, Youngspiration and Hong Kong Indigenous, were founded. The Hong Kong National Party was founded later in March 2016. The members of these organisations consisted

---

³ Both localism and nationalism are constructed around the idea of prioritising Hong Kong’s interest, with latter evoking the concepts of nations and nationalism (further discussion below).
of youths who participated in the Umbrella Movement and their manifestos revealed their dissatisfaction towards the student leadership of the Movement and traditional pan-democrats (Chan, 2016; Kwan, 2016; Mok, 2016; Choi, 2016).

In September 2016, these nationalist groups ran in the election for the Legislative Council. Traditionally, the voters have been split between the pan-democrat and pro-China by 60 per cent to 40 per cent since the first direct election in the 1990s. The 2016 election was a watershed in Hong Kong politics as the localist/nationalist camp joined as a third force. In the election, localist/nationalist candidates were able to win 6 out of 30 seats in geographical-constituency and their votes mostly came from pan-democrats voters. Smaller parties across the pan-democrat camp were hit particularly hard with the defeat of several of their incumbents. The election signified the arrival of a new generation of activists, with many of them having played important roles in the Umbrella Movement, and also the institutionalisation of localist as a political force in Hong Kong politics (Kaeding, 2017).

Furthermore, 2016 also witnessed a ‘localism turn’ across all political camps in Hong Kong, including the pro-China camp. Many young members of the pan-democrat groups sympathize or even identify as localists (Kaeding, 2017). On 21 April 2016, Brian Fong and several collaborators of Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong cosigned a Resolution on Hong Kong’s Future with around thirty young members of pan-democrat groups, including the Democratic Party and the Civic Party. The Resolution argues that the people of Hong Kong should develop their ‘subjective consciousness’ (Fong et al., 2016), defined as the identification towards Hong Kong’s core values and culture, and fight for ‘internal self-determination’, a concept from international law that refers to people’s right to freely choose its form of government and formulate its policies, with or without secession (cf. Summers, 2007).

These events underline the trends in Figure 3.1, which comprises the measurement of various identity indexes over time conducted by the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong. A few observations can be made: identification as a Hongkonger as represented by the blue line has increased gradually while all three Chinese related identities have declined in the past decade. Identifications with both Chinese and ethnic

---

4 The relationship between the the localist/nationalist and the pan-democrat will be further discussed below.

5 But not the nationalist as they were later disqualified and effectively wiped out by the Hong Kong and Chinese governments.
Chinese, as represented by the orange and the grey lines respectively, decreased steadily throughout the period; and the identification as a citizen of the PRC plunged, as shown by the yellow line. The opposite trends of Hong Kong identity and Chinese identifications led Dupré (2020) to conclude that, while Hong Kong and Chinese identities were thought to be complementary, they are increasingly dissociated from one another, with Chinese identifications becoming less prevalent.

Figure 3.1: Identities in Hong Kong

3.4 The Grievances behind the Rise of Hong Kong Nationalism

The previous section discusses the trends and changes of identifications in Hong Kong. This section focuses on nationalism in particular and discusses the grievances of Hong Kong people that have contributed to the rise of nationalism. As Fong (2017b) argues, Hong Kong nationalism has developed against a new backdrop of ‘us’ (Hongkongese)
resisting the ‘invaders’ (mainland Chinese). The current literature suggests that there are at least four grievances contributing to the conflicts between Hong Kong and China:

3.4.1 Scepticism towards Mainland Chinese Immigrants

Under current arrangements, 150 mainland Chinese will get one-way entry permit to live in Hong Kong each day (So, 2016). The permits are supposed to be issued for family reunion purposes. However, since all of the permits are issued by the Chinese government without prior screening by Hong Kong officials, it is feared that the system would be abused. The fear is not entirely ungrounded, as the Panama Papers, the files leaked from the database of a large offshore law firm, revealed that at least seven relatives of top Chinese political figures have obtained Hong Kong resident status (Cheng, 2016b), while it is also reported that local pro-Beijing organisations have been making efforts to organise the Chinese immigrants into loyal voting blocs (Hung, 2014). This has also given rise to the fear of the Tibetisation of Hong Kong, a fear that China will ‘sinicise’ and ‘dilute’ Hong Kong population by sending immigrants into Hong Kong. As Martin Lee, a veteran opposition leader, expressed the fear that the migration policies would turn the native Hongkongers into a minority in the long run and destroy Hong Kong’s core values and culture (Lee, 2012). As revealed by recent reports, mainland immigrants already made up 12 per cent of Hong Kong’s population in 2015 and they are the main driving force behind Hong Kong’s population growth (Zeng, 2015). It is also found that these Chinese immigrants are in general more supportive of the pro-Beijing candidates in local elections (Wong, Ma and Lam, 2016).

The hostility against mainlanders is also fuelled by the fear for the competition of scarce resources. For many years, tens of thousands of mainland mothers came to Hong Kong to give birth so as to take the advantage of the better medical facilities and to make their children eligible for all the welfare benefits accorded to permanent residents in Hong Kong. The large amount of children born to non-Hong Kong parents has led to outcry about the invasion of mainlanders and the fear that they would drain public resources in the future (So, 2016).

3.4.2 Influx of Mainland Tourist

The Individual Traveller Scheme was introduced in 2003, which allows mainland Chinese to visit Hong Kong independently without joining any tour. The Scheme was meant
to boost tourism and consumption in Hong Kong so as to help the city to recover from the SARS epidemic. However, as the number of individual tourists increased tenfold from 4.3 million in 2004 to 47 million in 2014, the massive influx of tourists eventually sparked new social tension (Ma, 2015). First of all, a large number of mainlanders went to Hong Kong to purchase luxury goods, including jewellery and brand name products, causing the mushrooming of high end boutiques and that in turn drove up rents and eventually caused small local shops to go out of business (So, 2016). Apart from luxury products, basic necessities such as drugs and milk powder were also affected. Believing that Hong Kong had better quality control, a large number of Chinese tourists purchased drugs and groceries in Hong Kong and created temporary shortages. The ‘hot money’ from China also pushed property prices to record high, rendering many workers and middle-class professionals unable to afford buying houses (So, 2016).

### 3.4.3 Violations of Rights and Freedoms

Scepticism against the Chinese government was also strengthened by its increasing influence on Hong Kong affairs, repeated denial of genuine democracy, and the shrinking of freedom and liberty in Hong Kong. In 2002, the government put forward a draft of the National Security Bill in response to the Article 23 of the Basic Law, which stipulates that the Hong Kong government shall enact laws to prohibit acts of treason against the PRC government. It has raised concerns over the potential erosion of freedom of speech. On 1 July 2003, more than 500,000 people took to the street and eventually caused the government to shelve the pending bill. However, after that, Beijing ended its laissez faire approach and decided to intervene directly in Hong Kong affairs (Cheng, 2009; Ortmann, 2014). China’s dominant role was further reaffirmed in Beijing’s 2014 white paper, *The Practice of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*. The paper states openly that the Beijing government has ‘comprehensive jurisdiction’ over Hong Kong and requires officials, including local judges, to ‘love the country’, which was widely conceived as an interference in Hong Kong’s judicial independence (Ortmann, 2014). Such endeavours echo Hechter’s (2000) condition of direct rule: the penetration of the central state to the peripheral to maintain control, but also threatened the preexisting identities and interests of the peripheral territory and therefore provokes the rise of nationalism.

Furthermore, despite the large amounts of pro-democracy protests since the handover,
the demand for democracy has been repeatedly denied. One of the major frustrations in
the recent years is the Umbrella Movement in 2014. However, even when the movement
was dissolved, no compromise had been made by the government and no progress toward
genuine democracy was achieved. In addition, press freedom also declined as the media
has generally become more conservative as a result of Beijing’s effort to co-opt and induce
self-censorship and the prominent business firms’ effort to boycott advertising in pro-
democracy newspapers (Ortmann, 2014). Journalists, news outlets, and booksellers were
harassed or even brutally assaulted. Kelvin Chun-to Lau, a well-respected journalist, was
attacked with a beef knife, leaving him with six deep wounds on his back and legs and
he was kept in hospital for almost five months (Chu, 2015). In 2015, Lam Wing-kee, a
bookseller, was kidnapped at the border and put through eight months of mental torture
in China. He also revealed that Lee Bo, his colleague, was abducted from Hong Kong to
China and went through the same torture (Ng, 2016).

3.4.4 Economic Grievances

The above grievances are complicated by an underlying grievance that is more long-
standing in nature. Since its establishment, Hong Kong has been characterised by its
laissez faire capitalism. Prior to the Handover, the colonial government could generally
legitimise itself by its capacity to foster economic growth and development. After the
handover, as economic interests became institutionalised strongly around pro-Beijing el-
ements, Hong Kong’s economic model has lost its appeal in Hong Kong’s wider society;
it is generally believed that economic integration with China will not benefit the average
Hong Kong citizen. Furthermore, Hong Kong is one of the most unequal societies in the
world. To Hong Kong youths, genuine democracy and autonomy are considered the only
hopes for a more equal allocation of resources and opportunities (Dupré, 2020).

3.5 Hong Kong Political Landscape

This section discusses the changing political landscape in Hong Kong so as to pro-
vide a context for understanding Hong Kong nationalism. Traditionally, the impetus
for democratisation is the main political cleavage dividing the major political parties in
Hong Kong into two camps: pan-democrats and pro-China. Notable pan-democrat par-
ties include the Democratic Party, the Civic Party, and the Labour Party. They are
characterised by their progressive attitude towards democratisation in Hong Kong. They advocate election of the Chief Executive and the entirety of Legislative Council by universal suffrage and emphasise liberal values such as human rights, freedom, and rule of law (Ma, 2012a). In a sharp contrast, the pro-China camp takes a more conservative attitude towards democratisation. They stress stability, prosperity, and the need to ‘seek consensus’ when it comes to the transition to full democracy promised by the Basic Law. The pro-China parties in general have a better relationship with the Chinese government and the Hong Kong government. Major pro-China parties include the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, the Liberal Party, and the New People’s Party (Ma, 2012a; see Table 3.1 for a list of major political parties in Hong Kong and their political camp).

**Table 3.1: List of Major Political Parties in Hong Kong**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist</td>
<td>Hong Kong Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong National Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youngspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localist</td>
<td>Democracy Groundwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demosistō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-democrat</td>
<td>League of Social Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-China</td>
<td>New People’s Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned above, the Umbrella Movement and other clashes between Hong Kong and China have accumulated into the shift towards localism. One study has counted more than 45 localist organisations formed in the two-year period after the Umbrella Movement (Lam, 2018). These organisations fall broadly into three categories: community-oriented organisations, professional organisations, and political organisations. However, the localist camp consists of ‘a multitude of groups with different goals’ (Kwong, 2016, p. 63) and there is no consensus, both among academic researchers and the political groups themselves, on what localism means exactly (Ng and Kennedy, 2019). This led Veg (2017) to
describe localism as ‘a confusing galaxy of ideas’ (p. 327). To most observers, at its core, the term localism denotes ‘a commitment to protecting the interests and identity of Hong Kong’ (Kaeding, 2017, p. 158). The demands of the localist revolve around defending the markers of Hong Kong identity such as the Cantonese language, history, and lifestyle; core civic values such as freedom and the rule of law; and the economic and political interests of Hong Kong (Kaeding, 2017).

While the localists and pan-democrats share certain common agendas, such as democracy and liberal values, they differ vastly in their attitude towards Hong Kong-China relationship. The pan-democrats believe that the fate of Hong Kong and China are essentially linked and the democratic movement in Hong Kong is sometimes viewed as a part of the larger democratic movement in China. Some of them believe Hong Kong people have a moral responsibility to foster the building of ‘democratic China’ while others believe that Hong Kong can only become democratic after China has been democratised (Kwong, 2016). Such arguments are strongly opposed by the localists as they see Hong Kong and China as two separate political communities. Hence, the localists are waging a two-front battle; they attack both the pro-China and the pan-democrat camp for their commitment to and affiliation with China (Kaeding, 2017; Kwong, 2016). The ideological differences between localists and pan-democrats is especially vast on the issue of mainland immigrants. Mainland immigrants were generally welcomed by pan-democrats on the grounds of compassion and inclusiveness while the localists see mainland immigrants as part of China’s plan to ‘dilute’ Hong Kong’s population (Lee, 2020b; So, 2016). The pan-democrats were criticised by the localists as ‘leftards’ (zuojiao)\(^6\) for their ‘blind’ insistence on tolerance and inclusion. On the other hand, some pan-democrats criticised the localists for promoting a form of ethnic nationalism that is prone to xenophobia (Lee, 2020b), although both the question of whether Hong Kong nationalism is a form of ethnic nationalism and whether nationalism is prone to xenophobia are subject to debate, as Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 will show.

On top of ideological differences, the localists and pan-democrats also diverge in terms of preference in protest tactics. The peaceful and non-disruptive protests championed by the pan-democrats were criticised as ineffective, carnival-like, and ritualistic. The localists, on the other hand, adopted more confrontational means of protest, such as the ‘reclamation actions’ where they directly confronted mainland Chinese tourists and

---

6 A derogatory term made up by combining ‘left’ and ‘retards’. 

parallel traders (Lee, 2020b).

As the scope of the localists’ demands continued to evolve, they also adopted the ideas of nationalism and self-determination (Kaeding, 2017). Similar to the definition of localism, there is no consensus on how to categorise localist organisations. For the purpose of analysis, in this thesis I further categorise the localist organisations into the nationalists and the self-determinationists. The nationalists are political organisations that invoked the conception of nationhood in their discourse, including Hong Kong Indigenous, Youngspiration, and the Hong Kong National Party. The concept of nationhood invoked by these nationalist organisations will be explored throughout the later chapters of this thesis.

Self-determinationists, on the other hand, are political groups that support the idea of self-determination without directly addressing the question on whether Hong Kong is a nation (Lam, 2018). Major self-determinationist groups include Demosisto, Land Justice League, and Democracy Groundwork. For example, Demosisto, a political party founded by Umbrella Movement student leader Joshua Wong and Nathan Law, proposes the idea of democratic self-determination. They propose to draft ‘a Charter of Hong Kong’ to spell out the constitutional arrangement for Hong Kong when the Basic Law expires after 2047 and validate it with an internationally recognised referendum (Demosisto, 2018). Similarly, Civic Passion proposes the idea of ratification of a constitution by de facto referendum (wuqugongtou quanminzhixian), namely achieving a constitutional reform by a de facto referendum, a by-election triggered by the resignation of one lawmaker from all five geographical constituencies (Lam, 2018).7

In general, the self-determinationist appears to have a better relationship with and more co-operation from traditional pan-democrats while the relationship between the nationalist and traditional pan-democrat is almost hostile. One example is the 2016 Mong Kok civil unrest,8 in which violent clashes broke out between the police and protesters led by Hong Kong Indigenous. After the incident, both the Democratic Party and the Civic

---

7 Civic Passion is widely considered ambivalent in articulating its stance in relation to self-determination and independence (Lim, 2017; Ng and Kennedy, 2019). Tsui (2017) even refers them as ‘opportunistic populist politician’ (p. 519); he argues that they only turned localist when they sense it is a profitable political niche. For the purpose of analysis, Civic Passion is categorised as a self-determinationist due to the absent of nationhood and the use of self-deterministic referendum, a stance that shared by the self-determinationist, in their discourse.

8 On the Chinese New Year day of 2016, dozens of people gathered to defend street food hawkers, a local tradition during Chinese New Year, from the officials of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. The event escalated into violent clashes after the police involved.
Party issued a statement to condemn the protesters for using violent means (Democratic Party, 2016; Civic Party, 2016).

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

As mentioned in Chapter 1, nationalism does not exist in a vacuum. To fully understand nationalism, it is vital to understand the context in which the nationalism was constructed.

In this chapter, I discussed the geopolitical and local context of the rise of nationalism in Hong Kong. On a geopolitical level, I argued that Hong Kong has been situated between two great forces, British colonialism and Chinese nationalism, and discussed how they influenced the development of the Hong Kong identity and nationalism. I also discussed the critical events that have exerted a profound influence on Hong Kong’s political landscape. I argued that the year of 2016 represents a watershed of Hong Kong politics and identification, with the arrival of localism and later on nationalism as the third political force. These events provide important context for the interpretation of the analysis in the thesis.

I also presented the socio-political roots that gave rise of Hong Kong nationalism suggested by the literature, including the scepticism towards mainland Chinese immigrants, the controversy around the influx of mainland tourist, violations of rights and freedoms by Chinese and Hong Kong governments, and economic grievances.

To help understand the political landscape in which Hong Kong nationalism was developed, I also discussed the major political camps and parties in Hong Kong and their relationships with the nationalists.
Chapter 4

Methodology

This thesis aims to understand the discursive constitution of Hong Kong nationalism. As informed by the theories introduced in Chapter 2, the research goal can be divided into the following subquestions:

RQ 1(a): How does Hong Kong nationalism construct its past?

RQ 1(b): How does Hong Kong nationalism interpret the present issues facing Hong Kong?

RQ 1(c): To what kind of future does Hong Kong nationalism aspire?

RQ 2(a): What are the influences of British colonialism and Chinese nationalism on the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism?

RQ 2(b): How does Hong Kong nationalism negotiates its relations with other actors in the world?

Against this background, this chapter sets out to do three things. The first aim of the chapter is to discuss the data collection. This research consulted three sources of data: textual documents, social media data, and archival materials. The second aim of the chapter is to discuss the strategies of analysis. This research project follows the idea of methodological eclecticism and adopts a mixed methods design. The final goal of the chapter is to address the ethical considerations. Considerations around the complexity of doing internet research and the sensitivity of the research topic within Hong Kong are addressed.
CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data Collection

This research will consult three kinds of materials: textual document, social media data, and archival documents.

4.1.1 Textual Document

Due to the heavy emphasis of discourse theory on language, textual documents, as one of the major component of human language, has long been a key medium for the spread of nationalism discourse. Anderson (1991), for example, stresses the role of printing technology in forming new circles of readers, which could be mobilised for political purposes and also allowed them to relate themselves to one another and crystalised into an ‘imagined community’.

Key texts advocating Hong Kong nationalism published in the recent years will be analysed. Several key texts are identified: *Discourse on the Hong Kong City-state* and related works by Chin Wan; *On the Hong Kong Nation* by the student nationalist of the Undergrad Editorial Board; *Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong* by Brian Fong; and *A National History of Hong Kong* by Sing-yan Tsui (See Appendix A for the full list). The texts were selected based on their popularity, media coverage, and political influence; they were all best sellers in local bookstores,1 deemed the most important books that contributed to the discussion of Hong Kong nationalism by previous research (cf. Wu, 2016; Cheung, 2015b; Fong, 2017b), and widely mentioned by local media and in public debate.

It is worth noting that one important medium of Anderson’s theory, newspaper, is not included in the study. This is due to the fact that the mainstream media in Hong Kong tends to adopt a pro-government stance as a result of China’s co-optation and efforts to induce self-censorship, and thus alternative views, including that of the Hong Kong nationalist, are often censored (Yung and Leung, 2014). In Anderson’s theory, on top of the function of exchanging local news and information, newspapers serve a ‘ceremonial role’ as readers are assured repeatedly that the same newspaper is consumed by an imagined body of fellow-readers every day. However, as Anderson himself recognised, the role of

---

print-media has been supplemented and overtaken by other novel media, such as radio and television, as communication technology advances (Anderson, 1991, p. 135; Smith, 1998, p. 139). As the following section will argue, in Hong Kong, this ceremonial role can be performed by social media. Similar to newspaper, social media are consumed daily, if not hourly, by people from all walks of life, who even become the producers of content as they habitually share local news and their daily lives on their social media pages. More importantly, the imagined community is not only envisioned by people observing the same post ‘being consumed by [their] subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours’ (Anderson, 1991, p. 35), but also by the ‘likes’ they have received, the comments under the threads in their newsfeed, and the interactions with the fellow members of the online community. In this sense, the community is not only imagined, but also vividly visualised. Therefore, this study includes social media as a data source in place of newspaper.

4.1.2 Social Media

Social media is an important medium for political communication and mobilisation in Hong Kong. Among all the platforms, Facebook is the most popular with a penetration rate of 60% (Chan, Chen and Lee, 2017). It was ranked as the third major source of political news, following TVB (a major television station) and Apple Daily (a major newspaper), and its importance is particularly clear among younger generations, as a survey shows that 47.9% of the respondents aged between 15-29 uses Facebook for political news (Lee, So and Leung, 2015). Facebook is also an important platform for mobilisation (Chan, Chen and Lee, 2017; Chen, Chan and Lee, 2016; Lee and Chan, 2016; Tang and Lee, 2013). During the Umbrella Movement in 2014, for example, Facebook served as the major medium through which the protesters mobilised and acted against the state (Lee, So and Leung, 2015). It also serves as a major site where anti-establishment views spread across the population, such views are usually censored in mainstream media, which tends to maintain a pro-government stance (Chan, Chen and Lee, 2017; Yung and Leung, 2014). Due to its importance in political communication and political mobilisation in Hong Kong, Facebook has been selected as a source for this research.

All posts on the major nationalist organisations’ Facebook page between the creation date of the Facebook pages and 31 January 2018 were harvested. A Facebook page is a public profile created for businesses, causes, and other organisations. All posts on pages are public and pages can gain a wider audience and cultivate followers when users
choose to ‘like’ a page. A total of 7 Facebook pages were selected, including Hong Kong Indigenous (HKI) and its then spokesman Edward Tin-kei Leung, Youngspiration (YP) and its then convener Leung Chung-hang and election candidate Yau Wai-ching, and Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) and its then convener Chan Ho-tin. The organisations are selected based on their popular support and activities in the nationalist movement: they are the most influential and active nationalist organisations in Hong Kong; all of them sought to take part in the Legislative Council election in 2016: Hong Kong Indigenous’s candidate, Edward Tin-kei Leung, was supposed to be able to win a seat had he not been banned from running (Cheung, 2016b); Youngspiration won two seats before they were disqualified by the government for their support of Hong Kong independence; the Hong Kong National Party was barred from running at the very beginning. Also, they were the most active nationalist organisations in protests and other forms of political mobilisation: the Hong Kong National Party organised the first pro-independence rally in Hong Kong history while Hong Kong Indigenous and Youngspiration took to the streets regularly (Fitzpatrick, 2016). While there are numerous Facebook pages devoted to Hong Kong politics and public affairs, my research focuses on these 7 pages since they are the most relevant to the goal of this thesis: to study the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism. Limiting the research to a small number of pages also has the benefit of making qualitative analysis much more practical and manageable.

4.1.3 Archival Documents

Although it is not the main focus of this research, Chapter 3 seeks to trace the first spark of nationalism in Hong Kong. Such analysis could serve as a foundation for the discussion of the relationship between the discourses of contemporary Hong Kong nationalism and its precursor in colonial times. Due to the historical nature of the research aim, archival materials from two sources are consulted. First, declassified government documents on the use of Chinese as official language in Hong Kong in the National Archives (United Kingdom) was investigated. The collection includes correspondence between the colonial Hong Kong government and local advocacy groups, between the officials of the British and Hong Kong government, and the Hong Kong government’s internal reports and information bulletins. Second, copies of The 70’s Biweekly was analysed. The mag-

2 Although Chin Wan is regarded as one of the key figures of Hong Kong nationalism and is active on Facebook, he only has a personal account which is irretrievable through Facebook’s Graph API; there is currently no legitimate channel to extract data from his personal account.
azine was founded on 1 January 1971 and was shut down in 1972. The editorial board consisted of a group of young anarchists and Trotskyists and the magazine took up an active role in mobilising the readers into social movements. Despite its short lifespan, it was an influential magazine among the youths and also one of the key leaders in the Chinese Language Campaign (Cheng and Wong, 2014; Lam, 2004; Law, 2015).

4.2 Analysis

In this research, I adopt a mixed methods design and follows the idea of methodological eclecticism, which involves selecting and mixing the most appropriate methods from a reservoir of qualitative and quantitative techniques for a given research task (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010). This research project is not bounded to any particular methodological paradigms; for each analysis chapter, the ‘best’ method is selected given the purpose of the chapter and the availability and nature of the data. This has resulted in adopting a wide range of qualitative, quantitative, and computational methods.

The analysis strategies adopted by this work falls into two broad categories: discourse analysis and computational text analysis.

4.2.1 Discourse Analysis

As argued in Chapter 2, discourse theory serves as a solid theoretical basis for the empirical study of nationalism by providing conceptual tools such as hegemony, articulation, and antagonism. Following Sutherland’s suggestion, this work employs a branch of discourse theory, namely critical discourse analysis (CDA), as the basis of analysis. CDA focuses on everyday communication in the media, politics, or other fields of society and views both written and spoken discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough and Wodak, 2011). It assumes a dialectical relationship between discourses and social structures in which they are embedded; discourse shapes social practice and, at the same time, is shaped by it (Wodak et al., 1999). Due to the context sensitive nature of discourse, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that there are no universal laws that can explain all discourses; instead, discourses are contingent in the sense that they are always in a process of formation and deformation. The aim of discourse analysis is therefore not to discover an ‘objective reality’, but to discern how power relations are made ‘normal’ through discursive means in the times and places in question (Chronaki and Kollosche,
Essentially, CDA aims to reveal prevalent and often concealed power structures and dominance and seeks to intervene discursively in social and political practices due to its traditional commitment to an emancipatory and socially critical approach. Adopting an analytical approach instead, I aim at revealing the discursive struggle and unveiling the strategies employed by the intelligentsia and activists to rearticulate the nodal point of the nation. As suggested by Sutherland (2005), an empirical study using a discourse approach could first investigate the nationalist ideology’s articulation of the nation and its quest for conceptual hegemony. The investigation could then be supplemented by an analysis of the dynamics of antagonism, most notable as nationalism’s relationship to the ‘Other’. Sutherland’s suggestion can be expanded using Wodak et al.’s (1999) guideline. They delineate the analysis into two closely interwoven dimensions: Contents and Strategies. My analysis of Content will follow the five major thematic areas identified by Wodak and his coauthors (p. 30):

1. the linguistic construction of the homo [nationalis]
2. the narration and confabulation of a common political past
3. the linguistic construction of a common culture
4. the linguistic construction of a common political present and future
5. the linguistic construction of a ‘national body’

These thematic areas refer respectively to the construction of inter-national and intra-national difference; the founding of nation myths, mythical figures, and the ‘golden past’; the invention of a common culture with regard to topics such as language, religion, art, and also everyday culture; the issues around citizenship, political aspirations, national achievements and crises; and the boundary of the nation.

The Strategy dimension focuses on the manoeuvre of the intelligentsia. Wodak et al. (1999) identify four macro-categories, which are analytically distinguishable, but more or less simultaneous and interwoven in practice:

1. Constructive strategies attempt to construct and perpetuate national identity by stimulating unification, identification, solidarity, and also differentiation from the outsiders.
2. Strategies of justification seek to justify a societal *status quo ante* by con-
structing a legitimate ‘we-group’ in the past, which has been somehow
‘tainted’ and therefore needs to be restored and defended.

3. Strategies of transformation attempt to transform a relatively well-established
national identity and its elements into another identity conceptualised by
the speaker.

4. Dismantling or destructive strategies seek to dismantle or destroy certain
components of an existing national identity construct, without providing
any new identity to replace the old one.

Instead of treating these categories as *a priori* and imposing them on the data, this
study considers them as the starting point and examines if they are present in the data
and, if present, how they are carried out.

The Content dimension is particularly relevant to discerning the principal elements in
the discursive constitution of Hong Kong nationalism. The Strategy dimension is useful in
understanding the intelligentsia’s effort to appropriate Hong Kong’s history and culture.

### 4.2.2 Computational Text Analysis

CDA’s tendency to use small samples and the allegedly unsystematic manner of applying
analytical procedures attract the criticism of lacking generalisability and risk merely
bolstering the researchers’ preconceptions (Koller and Mautner, 2004; McEnery and Wil-
son, 2001)

In response, I augment the analysis with computational text analysis techniques. Com-
putational text analysis draws on techniques developed in natural language processing,
information retrieval, and machine learning to analyse textual documents (O’Connor,
Bamman and Smith, 2011).³ While there are a wide range of different methods, computa-
tional text analysis typically follows this workflow: raw texts are processed and converted
into a quantitative form, which is then analysed using the statistical tools. Computational
text analysis therefore transforms text into the quantitative data, rendering it possible to
employ well-established statistical and machine learning tools for inference and prediction
(Benoit, 2020).

³ Computational text analysis is also called quantitative text analysis, automated content analysis, text
as data, and text mining.
CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

Following the recommendation of Grimmer and Stewart (2013), computational text analysis is not used to replace close reading, but to amplify and augment qualitative analysis. Computational text analysis is most useful for social media data when its tremendous volume render analysing every single piece of text unmanageable. In this work, I employ computational text analysis to serve two main purposes: to describe the general pattern of the texts in the corpus and to offer a purposeful way to select a manageable subset of texts for further analysis.

4.2.3 Analysis Strategy of each Chapter

As mentioned above, this work follows the idea of methodological eclecticism. It manifests in this research on two levels. First, due to the variety of selected data sources, different strategies of analysis with are employed according to the data source in question. Second, mixed methods design is employ for selected chapters due to research needs.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 analyse archival materials and publications respectively. They are analysed qualitatively; CDA is employed. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 resort to social media data. Due to the volume of the data, computational text analysis techniques are employed to aid qualitative analysis. These chapters thus employ a mixed methods design. An Explanatory Sequential Design is followed (Creswell and Clark, 2018): the analysis begins with the quantitative phase, quantitative (computational) techniques is used to discern the overall pattern from the data; in the subsequent qualitative phase, qualitative method is then employed to gain a deeper understanding of the data so as to interpret to result from the quantitative analysis. Detailed methodology will be further discussed at the beginning of each chapter.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

4.3.1 Social Media

Due to the complexity of internet research, the following paragraphs are devoted to the ethical considerations surrounding the process. When planning a research project that involves human subjects or private information about individuals, university-based researchers in the United States are required to gain approval from the Institutional Review Board (Diesner and Chin, 2015). However, some scholars hold that research projects extracting publicly available data are not considered human subject research, and thus
it is not necessary for researchers to gain approval (Schrag, 2010; Solberg, 2010; Wilson, Gosling and Graham, 2012). Kosinski et al. (2015) agree with the analogy that ‘mining public data is an equivalent to conducting archival research’ (p. 31) and contend that participant consent is not necessary if the information was knowingly made public by the individuals, anonymised and without identifiable user information or if there is no contact with the individuals. In the United Kingdom context, the British Psychological Society’s (2013) Ethics Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research specifies that consent should be obtained when online data cannot be reasonably considered ‘in the public domain’, implying that consent is not necessary if the online data in question is public. In 2017, the British Sociological Association (2017) revised their ethics guidelines to incorporate digital research, suggesting that ‘situational ethics’ and issues should be resolved by dialogue with the people being researched.

According to the Facebook’s Data Policy, pages are considered public space while the data collected in this project, posts with the ‘Public’ privacy setting, are also defined as public information. The Data Policy also suggests that public information is available to anyone through legitimate means, including online search engines and application programming interfaces (API) (Facebook, 2016a,c). And according to the Facebook’s Terms of Service, the users agree with this Data Policy by using or accessing Facebook Services (Facebook, 2016b). So understood, it appears that the data collected by this project could be considered as public domain and thus participation consent is not necessary. However, such views might faultily neglect the heart of the debate: the private/public distinction of online space. One challenge of making ethical judgements about online research is that the boundaries of public and private spaces in online forums are usually blurred. Online spaces in the public domain, spaces that anyone could gain access to without seeking permission, may feel private to users, who might have different expectations of privacy, yet they are still readily accessible by the general public. For example, the comments below a friend’s public photo are easily read by others. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the expectations of the users as well as the intention of the author of the text (Markham and Buchanan, 2012; Orton-Johnson, 2010).

Following Association of Internet Researchers and British Sociological Association’s recommendations, I argue that, instead of blind adherence to rules and regulations, ethical judgements should be contextual and reflexive (British Sociological Association, 2017; 4 An Application Programming Interface (API) is a platform for building applications. The Facebook API allows users to extract information on Facebook.
Markham and Buchanan, 2012). Due to the sensitive nature of this research topic, a prudential approach was taken with the following measures:

### 4.3.1.1 Consent from Page Administrators

Although the content of the page can be reasonably believed to be produced with a public audience in mind, to avoid ambiguity, consent was sought from the administrators of the nationalist organisations’ Facebook page. Following the recommendation of the UK Data Service (2016), the consent request contained the information about the purpose of the research; data requested; benefits and risks; terms for withdrawal; usage, storage, and sharing of data; procedures for ensuring confidentiality and anonymity; and details of the research (a sample letter can be found in Appendix B).

In the ideal situation, informed consent should be sought from every participant without jeopardising the validity of the data. However, the fluctuating, unknown, and disembodied nature of Facebook users made seeking consent from every one of them impractical, if not impossible (Orton-Johnson, 2010). Therefore, alternative measures will be taken to protect their anonymity (see below).

### 4.3.1.2 Data Collection through API

All Facebook data were extracted through Facebook’s API, the official channel to extract data from Facebook. The importance of using API is not only that it allows easy access, but also that it ensures the data extraction is in line with Facebook’s Terms of Service and protection to users’ rights. For example, the Facebook API will not allow researchers to extract data from private groups while such information can be accessed in Facebook’s user interface (Diesner and Chin, 2015). The reason why machine access needs to be treated differently from the user interface is that the former paves way for much more systematic forms of high speed and high volume data extraction (Rieder, 2013), which, in general, could pose higher risk and cause greater harm to the users than manual surveillance. So understood, API could serve as the first layer of protection for the users’ privacy (Diesner and Chin, 2015). I used Netvizz, an API-based application, to extract data so as to ensure that only permissible data were collected.
4.3.1.3 Measures to Ensure Anonymity

Although users’ data is not the focus of this study, their information might nevertheless be collected unintentionally. Several measures will be taken to ensure the anonymity of these users. First, as a built-in function of Netvizz, all of the usernames and identifiers collected are encrypted with Secure Hash Algorithm 1 and cannot be reverted (Rieder, 2017). When a screenshot is taken, the captured usernames, profile pictures, and comments are either masked or cropped out.

In addition, since the use of API and Netvizz requires the researcher to sign in with Facebook credentials, which also determines the scope of data that can be extracted (Rieder, 2013), private data that would not otherwise be accessible by another researcher might accidentally be retrieved if the researcher’s friends have shared it. To avoid such a situation, an empty ‘research account’ with the sole purpose of data collection is created. The account has joined no group and added no friend so as to avoid tapping into anyone’s private data (Diesner and Chin, 2015).

4.3.2 Conducting Research in an Authoritarian Context

Another ethical consideration concerns the sensitive nature of the research topic. China is an authoritarian regime and separatism is considered a crime under Chinese laws. Hong Kong is technically within Chinese jurisdiction, despite the promise of separate legal systems under one country two systems.

Under democratic regimes, even without reading all the laws in detail, we often have a reasonable account of what is allowed and what is forbidden by law. However, authoritarianism is plagued with arbitrariness; it is never certain what is legal and what is criminal since many laws are not consistently applied while executive behaviour can be applied without legal basis. Therefore, it is important to gauge the ‘red line’ and special considerations should be given, as the safety of both the researcher and the subjects is a genuine concern (Glasius et al., 2018).

Throughout the years, it has not been uncommon for the state and pro-China supporters to harass the nationalists. For example, Edward Tin-kei Leung claims that he has been

---

5 The crime of ‘inciting subversion of state power’ is stipulated under Article 105(2) of the Chinese Criminal Code. The crime carries a possible sentence of over ten years.

6 China officially criminalised advocating separatism under the new national security law adopted on 30 June 2020.
stalked by reporters of Tai Kung Pao, a newspaper controlled by the Chinese government, for over a month (Ji, 2016); activists of the Hong Kong National Party were called ‘Han traitors’ and assaulted by a pro-China group during their Taiwan visit (Cheung, 2016a).

Originally, I planned to conduct in-depth interviews with the key figures of the Hong Kong nationalist movement. However, in September 2018, the Hong Kong government issued a ban on the Hong Kong National Party on the grounds of ‘national security’ (Cheng, 2018). After the ban, anyone who associates with the party, participates in gatherings, or provides financial assistance could face a jail sentence of up to three years (Cheung and Su, 2018). It was the first organisation to be prohibited from operation on such grounds since the 1997 handover and it marked the tightening of the political sphere in Hong Kong.

Due to the fact that they are all high-profile activists and intellectuals, anonymisation will not be feasible. Out of concern that the content of the interview could be used as evidence to press charges in the future, I decided to drop the interview portion from my research so as to protect the subjects and myself (further discussion on this under the context of the new security law below).

4.3.3 Positionality Statement

Positionality can be understood as a self-understanding of the identities of a researcher in relation to the context of the study (Rowe, 2014). It reveals how a researcher’s identities affect his or her understanding of the social phenomenon in question (Medzani, 2020). Positionality is informed by the researcher’s personal beliefs, values, and moral stances and it affects every stage of the research process. Positionality can be unveiled by reflexivity, the examination of one’s beliefs, research practices, and their potential influence on the research. Reflexivity involves scrutinising one’s own taken-for-granted assumptions (Corlett and Mavin, 2018). In the following section, I will discuss my positionality regarding my status as an insider researcher and the impact of the new national security law.

4.3.3.1 Doing Research as an Insider

I was born and raised in Hong Kong. I myself identify as a Hongkongese, but that has not always been the case. When I was young, I had always been told, both at school and at home, that I was a Chinese. Such a view, that Hong Kong people are Chinese, is so
CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

deeply rooted and taken for granted to the point that I simply cannot recall seeing anyone challenging it. For a long period of time, I genuinely considered myself to be Chinese, I was fascinated by Chinese culture, I cheered for the Chinese team during Olympics, and I felt connected with the Chinese people, despite the fact that I did not even speak Mandarin, the official language of China (PRC), and that I could always feel the difference when I interacted with people from China. The series of Hong Kong-Mainland conflicts in 2012 (documented in Chapter 3) exerted a huge impact on my identification, as it did on many other Hongkongers; it was the first time I realised someone born in Hong Kong can be something other than Chinese. Before then it was unthinkable to be anything else, at least to me. I remember witnessing the events unfold and I have had first-hand experience on the grievances documented previously in this thesis. These not only informed my political stance, but also first sparked my interest into the issue of Hong Kong nationalism.

Concerning my position on the Hong Kong nationalist movement, I not only sympathise with nationalism, but also can be considered an ‘insider-researcher’ due to my personal experience, social network, and identification with the subject of my research. There are various benefits to being an insider-researcher, such as gaining access, building trust and rapport, and identifying the gatekeepers and key informants (Wiederhold, 2015). My insider knowledge was beneficial in identifying the key actors and making sense of the key moments in the movement. But there are also challenges brought about by my insider status. Insider-researchers inevitably come with their own interpretation of key events and people. As noted by Geer (1964, as cited in Wiederhold, 2015), familiarity with research subjects tends to colour researchers’ interpretation with empathy and advocacy. I already had a high level of familiarity with the movement even before I started my research and this could cloud my judgement and diminish critical analysis. To avoid my personal knowledge and presumptions from dictating the questions and scope of my research, I relied on other academic works to aid my case selection, most notably Wu (2016) and Fong (2017b). To distance myself from the subject, I used quantitative metrics and measures to identity key materials for further analysis and inform my judgement when possible (as demonstrated in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8). For qualitative analysis, I thoroughly scrutinise my presumption and drop any claims that cannot be backed by empirical evidence.
4.3.3.2 The Impact of the New National Security Law

As discussed above, Hong Kong nationalism is a sensitive topic in Hong Kong’s context. The situation has deteriorated further since 30 June 2020 when China imposed a strict national security law on Hong Kong, under which secession and subversion activities are punishable with potential life imprisonment (HKSAR Government, 2020b). Two days later, the Hong Kong government issued a statement declaring the slogan ‘Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times’ illegal (HKSAR Government, 2020a). There have been reports of arrest for simply possessing items bearing the words. At the time of writing, at least 26 people have been arrested on the basis of the new security law, including a student nationalist (further discussion in Chapter 9).

Not surprisingly, the new security law had a huge impact on freedom of speech and academic freedom in Hong Kong, and it also raised issues around the legality of my work. Most of the subjects of my studies are supporters of Hong Kong independence and the mentions of Hong Kong independence are widespread throughout my work. Under the new security law, my research would be considered ‘illegal’ and there is no meaningful way to carry out my research ‘legally’ under Hong Kong’s legal framework in which the mere discussion of secession is already considered a ‘crime’ and the simple act of possessing a copy of my thesis, which contains the ‘illegal’ slogan, could also be deemed ‘criminal’. It is often suggested by research guidelines to avoid engaging in illegal activities and there are good reasons behind them (cf. ESRC, 2015; UK Research Integrity Office, 2009). However, the situation in Hong Kong is complicated due to the authoritarian nature of the government. The issues of legality, I argue, warrants critical deliberation rather than a blind following of the law, especially when it goes against common beliefs in freedom and human rights (as stipulated by, for example, international conventions).

Regarding the law’s impact on me, although I am surprised by the speed of the erosion of freedom and rights in Hong Kong, the situation we see now is not totally unexpected. Hong Kong’s freedom and rights have been on a downward path since as early as 2003 when the first national security law was proposed (but put on hold later the same year due to various reasons). Before I left Hong Kong for my studies in Scotland, I was warned about what pursuing a sensitive topic would mean to my future and career prospects in Hong Kong; embarking on this research was an informed decision that I made. While the security law and the deterioration of freedom and rights in Hong Kong undoubtedly had a great impact on me (as a Hongkongese) and my future plans (it is unlikely that I
will set foot in Hong Kong again), the security law’s impact on what I have and have not written in this thesis has been minimal, thanks to the mental preparation.

On hindsight, it appears that the choice to drop the interviews was correct. If the interviews were conducted as originally planned, my interviewees could have revealed information that would incriminate themselves under the new security law. Dropping the interviews relieves me from the risk of exposing information that will put them in danger, which is not always easy to predict due to the arbitrary nature of authoritarian regimes. It also frees me from the burden of handling the information, which is not always easy given the track record of the government’s attempt to obtain such information through legal and illegal means (Marlow and Leigh, 2019; Mozur, 2020), and the risk of being compelled by the police or courts to disclose my research record, thereby breaking the confidentiality commitment. As Feenan (2002) suggests, the risk of being compelled is real even in liberal democracies such as the United States and the United Kingdom. It is only reasonable to expect the situation to be worse for Hong Kong. Basing my research solely on public information is, in effect, a protection for my subjects and for myself.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the details of data collection, justifications for the research design, and the ethical considerations. I introduced a novel approach that consults data from a wide range of sources and combines techniques from multiple disciplines to study nationalism. I discussed the potential shortcoming of discourse analysis and proposed to supplement my research with computational techniques.

I also addressed the ethical considerations around conducting social media research and studying a sensitive topic in an authoritarian regime. I discussed the measures I have taken to ensure research ethics and protect myself and my research subjects.

The proposed framework will guide the empirical analysis in Chapters 5 to 8.

---

7 For example, it was legal for the Hong Kong National Party to organise a pro-independence rally on 5 August 2016, it has then become illegal to associate with the party on 24 September 2018, and after 30 June 2020 it is illegal to even possess items bearing their slogans.
Chapter 5

Nationalism in Colonial Hong Kong

The following four chapters (Chapters 5 to 8) present the findings of my empirical analysis. The present chapter sets the scene by tracing the first moment of nationalism in Hong Kong. While a historical study of nationalism during colonial times is not the focus of this thesis, this study helps illustrate the complexity around the notion of Chineseness and offers a rich historical background to understand contemporary Hong Kong nationalism. Chapter 6 turns to key texts published by the nationalist intellectuals. These publications laid the theoretical foundation for the nationalist movement. The chapter shows how the nationalists constructed the past and future of the nation as a response to the influence of Chinese nationalism. Their works represent the period of scholarly interest in Hroch’s schema. Chapter 7 focuses on the Facebook activities of the nationalist activists. They are the political groups that seek to ‘awaken’ national consciousness among Hong Kong people and represent the patriotic agitation phase of nation-building. The chapter shows the strategy employed by them to interpret current affairs, construct the idea of China threat, and muster support. Chapter 8 further discusses the character of Hong Kong nationalism. Against the academic debate on the negative associations of nationalism, the chapter examines the relationship between Hong Kong nationalism and internationalism. I argue that internationalism rather than xenophobia, as suggested by some literature, is a key element at the core of Hong Kong nationalism.

As a society consisting mainly of Chinese immigrants, it is perhaps unsurprising that Chinese nationalism prevailed in Hong Kong during the early stages of the city’s history. However, I argue that there existed an unique branch of Chinese nationalism in colonial Hong Kong. Drawing on Chatterjee’s theory of anticolonial nationalism, I argue that, during the Chinese Language Campaign (1964-1971), two key aspects of anticolonial na-
nationalism were exhibited, namely the resistance against threats to Chinese culture and the surrender of the political domain. The Campaign aimed to defend Chinese culture by making Chinese an official language. Even though Britain was the key target of ‘othering’, the Campaign posed no political challenge to the British colonial government.

Against this background, I also discuss the complex relationship between the anticolonial nationalism in Hong Kong and the Chinese nationalism in China. I acknowledge the fact that the anticolonial nationalism was associated with a pan-Chinese identification, but argue that divergences between the nationalisms in Hong Kong and China were demonstrated by the former’s antipathy towards the Chinese state and emphasis on Cantonese. And therefore I conclude that Hong Kong anticolonial nationalism cannot simply be reduced to an extension of Chinese nationalism, but is a branch of Chinese cultural identification that has localised, transformed, and taken on its own path of development in Hong Kong in response to the city’s unique geo-political situation. This was also the first instance of nationalism in Hong Kong.

This chapter addresses the research question of ‘What are the influences of British colonialism and Chinese nationalism on the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism?’ (RQ 2(a)) by offering a rich historical background of the national identification in Hong Kong.

5.1 Data and Analysis

My analysis in this chapter draws on archival materials from two sources. First, I investigate declassified government documents on the use of Chinese as official language in Hong Kong in The National Archives (United Kingdom). The collection includes correspondences between the colonial Hong Kong government and local advocacy groups, correspondences between the officials of British and Hong Kong government, and the Hong Kong government’s internal reports and information bulletins. Second, copies of The 70’s Biweekly was analysed. The 70’s Biweekly was founded on 1 January 1971 and was discontinued in 1972. The editorial board consisted of a group of young anarchists and Trotskyists. The magazine took an active role in mobilising the readers into social movements. Despite its short lifespan, it was an influential magazine among the youths and the editorial board was one of the key leaders of the Chinese Language Campaign (Cheng and Wong, 2014; Lam, 2004; Law, 2015).

The archival analysis focuses on the Chinese Language Campaign in the 1960s and 1970s. Particular emphasis is put on the materials from the Hong Kong Federation of
Students (HKFS) and *The 70’s Biweekly*, both of them were key players in the Campaign. The former was a major student organisation in Hong Kong that consisted of the student unions of eight higher education institutions. It represented the conservative wing of the Campaign and was responsible for the negotiation with the Hong Kong and British governments while the latter represented the radical wing and took up a major role in mobilisation. Focusing on both of them gives us a comprehensive view of the Campaign. Other secondary sources are also used to provide context and triangulate the result, including publication by HKFS and transcripts of interview of the leaders and participants conducted by Ma (2012b).

### 5.2 The First Spark of Nationalism in Hong Kong

While it is widely agreed that a distinct Hong Kong identity has existed since the 1970s (see discussion in Chapter 3), it was not generally considered a uniquely Hongkongese form of nationalism. In fact, the Hong Kong population during colonial times has often been described as politically apathetic and possessing a nationalism of their own would be unthinkable (Lam, 2004). Even though a wave of student movements began in the early 1970s, they were often seen as an extension of the corresponding movements in China. The students were believed to ‘not only [take] the existing communist regime for granted, but also wholeheartedly endorsed the Maoist version of Chinese socialism’ (So and Kwitko, 1992, p. 34) and the their movements, including the Chinese Language Campaign, were thought to be infused with Chinese nationalism. This led Mathews, Ma and Lui (2008) to conclude that:

> Despite the salience of this sense of separate Hong Kong identity in recent decades, few have ever seriously advocated that Hong Kong become independent. No one, not even the most fervent advocate of Hong Kong, has seriously suggested at any time over the past forty years that Hong Kong people should be willing to ‘sacrifice their lives for Hong Kong’ – such a cry would have been seen as insane (p. 12).

---

1 It is evident that some movements organised by the students at the time, for example the protest against the Japanese takeover of the Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands), were informed by Chinese nationalism. However, as I will argue in this chapter, the anticolonial nationalism observed in the Chinese Language Campaign is more complex than it seems.
CHAPTER 5. NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL HONG KONG

According to the authors, the call for independence, a common goal of classic nationalism, is virtually absent and the requirement to sacrifice for Hong Kong is even considered ‘insane’.

Against this background, when speaking of a nationalism unique to Hong Kong, many observers considered that it is a new phenomenon that emerged around the time of the handover as a result of unfavourable interactions with China. So (2016), for example, claims that Hong Kong nationalism has gained widespread attention only since 2015 but its roots can be traced to the 2000s. He argues that before 2015, Hong Kong was pervaded with multi-layered identities, consisting of a distinct Hong Kong identity and a Chinese ethno-cultural identity. Wu (2016) pushes the emergence date earlier to the 2010s when Hong Kong nationalism rapidly grew into a well-formed structure comprised of four major discourses with the publication of keys texts. Fong (2017b) construes Hong Kong nationalism as a peripheral nationalism that emerged from 2009 onward in response to Beijing’s assimilation efforts. Zheng (2008) pushes the emergence date of Hong Kong nationalism even earlier to the late years of British colonial rule. He suggests that the Hong Kong people then developed a strong sense of a distinct political identity and thus it is inevitable that educated elites and middle classes call for democracy and political participation. The feeling of difference between Hong Kong and China was strengthened by the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre in China and the democratisation movement in colonial Hong Kong. Hongkongers’ political identity continued to grow despite Hong Kong’s rapid economic integration with and economic dependency on China after the transfer of sovereignty. Therefore, Zheng (2008) claims that Hong Kong at that time has ‘to a great degree’ developed ‘a unique form of nationalism’ (p. 40).

It is important to note that, in all of the above-mentioned literature, nationalism is regarded as a political movement demanding democratic participation, self-autonomy, or independence. So understood, it is reasonable to consider nationalism as a recent development that came in existence in the late 1980s when the Hongkongers began to call for democracy. This proposition echoes the fact that the colonial government had faced little political opposition during its 156-year rule. Not only had the government been well regarded by the local population, Chinese businessmen even collaborated with the colonial government to help sustain colonial rule (Carroll, 2005, 2007; Tsang, 2004). Only in the 1980s did democratisation movements arise. Therefore, most of the literature contend that the Hong Kong people did not have a nationalism of their own during colonial times while Zheng (2008) was the only one to trace the first spark of nationalism to the late
1980s.

Furthermore, in all of the accounts of Hong Kong nationalism presented by the literature, PRC was the ‘significant Other’; Hong Kong nationalism was constructed through ‘othering’ China and depicted as the reaction to Chinese centralism.\(^2\) However, as I argue in this chapter, there existed an anticolonial nationalism that saw Britain as the ‘significant Other’ and was provoked by the perceived threats of British colonialism. Drawing on Chatterjee’s theory, I argue that the views of nationalism as a political movement demanding changes in political institutions should not be taken for granted and the first moment of nationalism in Hong Kong can be traced back even further; certain fragments of nationalism indeed date back as early as the late 1960s. It is also important to reiterate that, by the first moment of nationalism, I mean a unique nationalism of the Hong Kong people, instead of an extension of Chinese nationalism in China (despite the fact that same ethnonym was used; further discussion below).

5.3 Chinese Language Campaign

The Chinese Language Campaign was a series of protests between 1964 and 1971 demanding that the British government make Chinese an official language. In the 1960s, even though Hong Kong’s population was overwhelmingly Chinese, English was the only official language. Government correspondences, application forms, and utility bills were predominantly handled in English. Hence, at that time, sending parcels at the post office required one to fill out forms in English, bookings made in English for public recreational facilities received priority, information leaflets in hospitals were mostly in English, and complaints about the government would only be dealt with if they were written in English. All of this caused many discontentment among and difficulties for the Chinese population, many of whom were not English speakers.

The Campaign started in 1964 when Brook Bernacchi, a liberal Urban Councillor and the chairman of the Reform Club of Hong Kong, put forward a formal motion advocating Chinese’s official language status.\(^3\) It climaxed in early 1970s when a united front con-

---


\(^3\) The Reform Club of Hong Kong was founded by expatriates who were concerned about the Young Plan proposed by Governor Mark Young in 1949. The Reform Club was active in the Urban Council elections and was considered the closest to an opposition party in colonial Hong Kong. Urban Council was a municipal council in Hong Kong.
sisting of university student organisations, student magazines, worker groups, and elected councillors was formed (Lam, 2004). Thereafter, a coalition of workers and students was also founded by the editors of *The 70’s Biweekly*, which later grew to 5000-strong. The Campaign gained enormous popularity as a territory-wide signature campaign organised by the united front successfully collected over 300,000 signatures, almost one-tenth of the entire population at that time (Lam, 2004). The Campaign eventually led the colonial Hong Kong government to recognise Chinese as an official language. It is important to note that, although the word Chinese (*zhongwen*) commonly refer to Mandarin today, it can actually refer to at least two spoken languages, Cantonese and Mandarin, depends on the context. While Mandarin and other dialects of the Chinese language family were sometimes mentioned, the Campaign put a strong emphasis on Cantonese and, accordingly, Cantonese was recognised as an official language by the colonial government.

The Chinese Language Campaign bears special significance to the discussion of Hong Kong nationalism since Cantonese is often considered a marker of Hong Kong identity and a key feature that distinguishes Hongkongese from Chinese. As this thesis will discuss, the importance of Cantonese to Hong Kong identity was mentioned by various nationalist intellectuals (see Chapter 6) and the threat to the survival of Cantonese was used as discursive resources to mobilise Hong Kong people (see Chapter 7). Another important feature of the Campaign is that it took place under a colonial setting. In contrast with the nationalism observed in Hong Kong today, in which China is the ‘significant Other’. The nationalist sentiment during the Campaign was centred around ‘othering’ the British colonial ruler. In its essence, it is a Han nationalism that put heavy focus on protecting Chinese language and culture. However, as this chapter will discuss, it also differs from the Chinese nationalism widely expressed in China. In this sense, the nationalism during the Campaign was an unique nationalism of Hong Kong.

The following paragraphs focus on two aspects of anticolonial nationalism and explain how they were demonstrated during the Campaign: resistance against the threat to national culture and the surrender of the political domain.
5.4 The Resistance against the Threat to National Culture

Along with the practical demands such as bilingualism and simultaneous translation in councils, committees, and courts; the provision of Chinese translations of laws and government correspondence; and the removal of English as a requirement for public sector jobs, the demand that focused on the official recognition of Chinese was mostly symbolic. This demand aimed to place Chinese on an equal footing with English and was especially supported by young participants. The demand was demonstrated in a position paper of HKFS, as it stated that:

The Hong Kong Federation of Students, believing that the mother tongue of the Chinese population should be given a respectable status as an official language alongside English [emphasis added], considers the matter one deserving serious deliberation by the Government. 4

To the participants, the official language status of Chinese was more than a practical issue of communication, but considered a matter of recognition. This point was made clear in a joint statement by seventeen student unions of higher education institutions, editorial boards of youth magazines, and student social service groups published in The 70’s Biweekly:

Undeniably, both Chinese and English are used in many government documents and correspondences recently, but this is just a trick to ease the people’s discontent. The legal recognition, through legislation, is still absent ... Formatively adding Chinese in correspondences and granting Chinese an official status are two different matters. One must not confuse them (The 70’s Bi-weekly, 1970; translated by the author).

The petition letter sent to Anthony Royle, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, by James Wing-cheung Chui, the Chairman of the Chinese Language Action Committee of HKFS, also echoed this view as he separated the issue into two aspects:

4 James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
CHAPTER 5. NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL HONG KONG

The administrative aspect concerning the usage of the Chinese language in local Councils, communications of government with the public and law; and the political aspect on the status of the language.\(^5\)

To him, the most important matter was not equal usage in every instance, but equal status:

We believe that status, which is a matter of respect, should be absolutely equal [emphasis added], whereas in the light of practicability and technical difficulties, it may very well be true that Chinese cannot attain the same level of usage [sic] as English.\(^6\)

Chui made clear that the Campaign was not merely about the language of communication but a matter of respect and that the status of Chinese and English should be equal.

More importantly, fighting for the equal status of Chinese was considered a means to rectify English cultural superiority, as they explicitly stated:

The tendency to neglect Chinese has become a serious crisis in Hong Kong. To tackle the crisis, we must do our best to fight for the legal status of Chinese. Only in this way can we change the unreasonable phenomenon of ‘Look up to English, down to Chinese’ (The 70’s Biweekly, 1970; translated by the author)

According to the leaders of the Campaign, the lack of official legal status of Chinese has led to the ‘look up to English, down to Chinese’ (zhongying qingzhong) phenomenon. Chinese was considered inferior when compared to English and there was a fear that Chinese culture would decline as a result. This fear was succinctly illustrated in a special issue of *The 70s Bi-weekly*, titled *Hong Kong: The Dark Side*:

Currently, English is the sole official language. It means everyone must learn English if they want to become successful. To the many students who want

\(^5\) James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.

\(^6\) James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
to join the civil service, English is of vital importance. In fact, English is also the compulsory subject in all schools. ... The strong emphasis on English has led to the situation that a university student knows only the history of Anglo-Saxon or the stories of the House of Tudor but nothing about modern China (Walker, 1971, p. 8; translated by the author).

To the author, the inferior status of the Chinese language might be detrimental to the survival of Chinese culture, as the younger generation would be ignorant of Chinese history. The author even put forward a more radical view, describing the situation as ‘cultural imperialism’:

[The Campaign] also aims to end the discrimination of the Westerners to the non-English speaking Chinese and to oppose the situation of English being the prerequisite for education and well-paid jobs. In short, the Campaign is to end the ‘cultural imperialism’ carried out by a small group of British rulers (Walker, 1971, p. 10; translated by the author).

Therefore, the author defined the Campaign as ‘Chinese people demanding their own culture to be acknowledged as equals by the rulers’ (Walker, 1971, p.10; translated by the author). So understood, on top of the practical issues such as difficulties in communication, the real grievance for the young leaders lay in the feeling that their own language was inferior.

It is important to note that the letters from the HKFS were written in fluent English while the second half of The 70’s Biweekly traditionally comprised of English content, it is reasonable to believe that many of the young leaders were English speakers and therefore they were not the ones who were affected the most by the difficulties in communication. What drove them into the Campaign was indeed the inferior status of their language and the fear of the demise of their culture. Their desire to protect and revive Chinese culture was demonstrated in The 70’s Biweekly. In an article titled My Views on Chinese to Become an Official Language, the author stated that:

I long for the success of the Chinese Language Campaign, so as to revive the thousands years of magnificent culture of my country through the promotion of Chinese characters (Yao, 1971, p. 3; translated by the author).

To the participants, the resistance against the threat to their culture was also a matter of their national dignity:
The contempt for Chinese in Hong Kong is caused directly and intentionally by the colonial regime, it is an undeniable fact, no matter how the colonial regime tried to argue their way out of this, they can never hide their ‘fox face’. Every Chinese must do their part in defending national dignity and developing our excellent national culture (To, 1970, p. 2; translated by the author).

The Chinese Language Campaign was thus regarded as the effort to protect and revive Chinese language and therefore Chinese culture. It is important to note that, the terms ‘my country’ and ‘every Chinese’ refer to China and its people. However, as I will further discuss, the word China here refers to the ‘Cultural China’, a pan-Chinese cultural identification, instead of the ‘Political China’, the Chinese state which Chinese nationalism is associated with (see discussion below and also in Chapter 6).

In response to the concern over the demise of Chinese culture and the desire for its rejuvenation, the preservation of Chinese culture was also mentioned as a reason for granting Chinese official language status in the position paper of HKFS:

> The cultural heritage of the Chinese civilization has a history of over 4,000 years. It is a great asset to the whole community. Preservation and development of the Chinese culture would be greatly facilitated and encouraged by giving Chinese an official status.  

In short, the Campaign could be seen as an attempt of the ethnic Chinese to resist perceived threats to their culture. In response to the English cultural superiority, there was a fear that the Chinese language and the associated ‘national culture’ would deteriorate as a result. Therefore, the participants fought for the official language status of Chinese with the hope of rectifying the contempt of and the inferiority associated with the Chinese language.

Drawing on Chatterjee’s framework, Chinese language can be considered an essential mark of the Chinese population’s cultural identity. The colonial government’s language policy was believed to be a threat to the survival of Chinese language and culture. In response, resistance was launch from within the cultural domain. In Chatterjee’s framework, such resistance within the cultural domain can already be regarded as (anticolonial).

---

7 Hong Kong Federation of Studies, Position Paper of the Hong Kong Federation of Students on the Matter of Recognition of Chinese as an Official Language of Hong Kong Presented to the Government Chinese Language Committee on the 16th July 1971, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
nationalism. It is also important to note that while the nationalism is seemingly a Chinese nationalism, it bears significant difference from the Chinese nationalism in China. Therefore, it should be considered a distinct national identification, despite their use of the same *ethnonym* of ‘Chinese’ as a descriptor for their own identity.

### 5.5 The Surrender of Political Domain

According to Chatterjee, unlike classic nationalism which often launches political opposition towards the foreign ruler, anticolonial nationalism surrenders its material domain, consisting of economy, state-craft, and science and technology, to the West. In other words, anticolonial nationalism does not seek to overthrow the foreign rule but limit its opposition to the cultural domain. This trait was also exhibited during the Chinese Language Campaign.

In James Wing-cheung Chui’s petition letter, he mentioned that:

> During our recent meeting with the [Chinese Language] Committee, one of the members, while pledging full support to our proposition, raised the question of uncertainty on the recognition of the Chinese language as an Official Language in Hong Kong, *a British Colony.* [emphasis added] Our position is that we view the whole matter a local issue, and that the Legislative Council in Hong Kong is in the right position to deal with the matter *without any changes in the Letters Patent and Royal Instructions* [emphasis added].

This paragraph is significant in two ways. First, Chui reiterated that Hong Kong was a British Colony, an obvious fact at that time. Second, he also emphasised that there would be no change in the Letters Patent and Royal Instructions. The Letters Patent were the principal constitutional documents of British Hong Kong while the Royal Instructions were formal instructions issued to the colonial governors. Chui’s word in effect meant that the HKFS will not seek to change the constitutional arrangement of Hong Kong as a British colony; in other words, it meant that HKFS did not see the Campaign as a form of outright political opposition that challenged the colonial rule. Instead, they sought to safeguard Chinese culture without bringing major change to the political domain. This

---

8 James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
position was further emphasised in a letter sent to F. K. Li, Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Hong Kong Government on 30 August 1971 and in a return letter sent to Royle on 9 October 1971, pressing them to give an opinion on the matter.\(^9\)\(^,\)\(^10\)

Instead of a revolution to end colonialism, as some nationalisms might advocate, the Campaign was described as a participation of the younger generation in local affairs:

```
Significantly the Chinese Language Campaign marks the participation of the younger generation of Chinese in Hong Kong ... in local affairs. Any further delay of the Government will only lead to a loss of confidence in the authorities and will only invite troubles to all parties concerned. I hope you would agree that an enlightened and liberal attitude of the Hong Kong and British Governments is essential in the promotion of the wellbeing of the community at large.\(^11\)
```

Rather than a political opposition, HKFS merely demanded the Hong Kong and British governments to adopt ‘an enlightened and liberal attitude’ so as to avoid the ‘loss of confidence in the authorities’, and even went on to acknowledge the liberal attitude of the government in the past:

```
Though the political set-up of Hong Kong is not a democracy, it has proved in the past not too unwilling to take note of public opinion.\(^12\)
```

In addition, the Campaign was described as a means for the government to promote the stability of Hong Kong:

```
Language is an object of emotion. When the governed feel that their mother tongue is respected as one of the official languages of the place, it would
```

---

\(^9\) James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to F.K. Li, Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Secretariat for Home Affairs, Hong Kong, dated 30 August 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.

\(^10\) James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 9 October 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.

\(^11\) James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.

\(^12\) Hong Kong Federation of Studies, Position Paper of the Hong Kong Federation of Students on the Matter of Recognition of Chinese as an Official Language of Hong Kong Presented to the Government Chinese Language Committee on the 16th July 1971, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
CHAPTER 5. NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL HONG KONG

strengthen their sense of belonging to Hong Kong, and thus promote stability of Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{13}

And the Campaign was also seen as a means to foster cooperation:

A government administered in the language of the majority is closer to the governed than one administered in a foreign language. This would mean greater ease and greater inducement to co-operating with the Government.\textsuperscript{14}

In short, even though HKFS was aware of the lack of democracy in Hong Kong, they merely demanded that the government display a liberal attitude. The colonial government was acknowledged, instead of challenged, by the student leaders, the Campaign was even depicted as a means to strengthen the governance and stability of the colony. The evidence presented above shows that the opposition towards the colonial regime was limited to the cultural domain while the political institutions, namely the material domain, remained unchallenged.

Among the radical wing, anticolonial rhetoric was sometimes employed and the colonial regime was often criticised. For example, the Campaign was described as ‘the prelude of anticolonial revolution’ and colonialism as ‘cultural invasion’ in an article published in *The 70’s Biweekly* (Tsoi, 1971). However, they never launched any substantial opposition against the colonial rule, despite their active role in other social movements such as the Protect Tiao-yu Tai Movement, a social movement that asserts Chinese sovereignty over the disputed Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands). Moreover, in another article printed on the same page of the above-cited critique, Hong Kong people were described as ‘obedient citizens’ (*shunmin*) and ‘the law’ was merely a tool to rule them (Chan, 1973). Therefore, the author argues that the government would permit the legalisation, as granting legal status to Chinese language was harmless to the colonial rule and their legal status would not be raised.

In summary, even though the leaders of the Chinese Language Campaign were aware of the undemocratic situation of the colonial regime, they did not mobilise any substantial

\textsuperscript{13}Hong Kong Federation of Studies, Position Paper of the Hong Kong Federation of Students on the Matter of Recognition of Chinese as an Official Language of Hong Kong Presented to the Government Chinese Language Committee on the 16th July 1971, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.

\textsuperscript{14}Hong Kong Federation of Studies, Position Paper of the Hong Kong Federation of Students on the Matter of Recognition of Chinese as an Official Language of Hong Kong Presented to the Government Chinese Language Committee on the 16th July 1971, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
movement to challenge the colonial rule. On the contrary, the Campaign was pitched as a measure for the colonial government to improve its governance and the stability of the colony. This led HKFS to describe the Campaign, in a review published ten years after, as a ‘reformist movement’ which focused only on culture but not on Hong Kong’s future and statehood (Hong Kong Federation of Students, 1983). The Chinese Language Campaign was therefore in line with Chatterjee’s theory of anticolonial nationalism where threats to national culture are strongly resisted while political institutions are surrendered.

5.6 The Divergences between Two Chinese Nationalisms

In addition to the defence of national culture and the surrender of material domain, what was more interesting was the fact that the Chinese Language Campaign was also described as a nationalist movement by the participants. In the petition letter, James Wing-cheung Chui mentioned:

The Chinese Language Campaign and Protect Tiao-yu Tai Movement are in fact manifestations of the sentiments and loyalty of the Chinese towards the fatherland, and the nationalism [emphasis added] must be given due respect by the Hong Kong government (as the British government did).\(^5\)

The Campaign was not only described as nationalism, but also associated with the Protect Tiao-yu Tai Movement. At first glance, the Campaign seems to be merely an extension of China’s Chinese nationalism into Hong Kong. However, as I argue in this section, the ‘China nationalism’ exhibited in the Campaign was significantly different from that in China, even though the same ethnonym of ‘Chinese’ was used.

To fully understand the Chinese Language Campaign, it is important to be aware of the social context in which the Campaign took place. Although the call for making Chinese an official language appeared as early as 1964, the Campaign developed into a full-fledged social movement only after the Hong Kong 1967 leftist riots.

Inspired by the Cultural Revolution in China and orchestrated by the local branch of the Chinese Communist Party, a dispute over wages and working hours had escalated

---

\(^{15}\) James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
rapidly into a series of violent riots in 1967 which lasted more than six months. Pro-Beijing nationalists attacked the colonial police, burned cars, and made bombs in the science laboratories of pro-Beijing schools. By the end of the riots, the official death toll was 51, including 10 police officers. At least 800 were injured in the riots and more than 300 others were injured by bombs (Carroll, 2007).

Ironically, the radical activities of the pro-Beijing nationalists failed to mobilise the majority of Hong Kong people, but instead gave the colonial government new popularity and legitimacy. The year of 1967 served as a proof that life in Hong Kong was better than in China and that any anti-British campaign would only do more harm than good. The riots and associated violence confirmed what the Hong Kong people heard from the media about the extremism of the Cultural Revolution. When the Hong Kong people were forced to choose between the PRC and colonial Hong Kong, most of them identified the latter as their government. Meanwhile, they increasingly considered themselves members of a community that was separated from the Chinese in mainland China (Carroll, 2007).

Against this social backdrop, the participants of the Chinese Language Campaign were careful to distance themselves from the pro-Beijing nationalists. One case in point was their emphasis on peaceful means of protest. As Chui stated in the petition letter:

One significant aspect of the movement is that all along, only peaceful means, such as public poll, forums, signature campaign etc, were employed.\textsuperscript{16}

The tendency to dissociate from the communist was also displayed in \textit{The 70's Biweekly}. In an article titled ‘The Declaration before Action’, the author explicitly stated that they were not a comrade of the communist:

\begin{quote}
If we are comrades of the communist, ‘how to act’ is not a problem at all. Because ‘all capitalism, colonialism, fascism regimes are reactionary evil force’, because ‘all reactionary evil force are paper tigers’, because ‘we have to unite all the oppressed in the world and eradicate the paper tigers’, we can therefore claim that our action is revolution. \textit{But are we comrades of the communist? At least I am not} [emphasis added] (Hanmin, 1970; translated by the author).
\end{quote}

The declaration went on to disapprove the violent means employed by the communists:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16}James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 22nd July 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
\end{flushright}
If we are believers of violence, we can easily decide to assassinate some high-rank officials, kidnap some prominent figures and terrorize the government into compromise. But nowadays, do we have no choice but to use violent means? At least to me, my answer is a clear ‘No’ (Hanmin, 1970; translated by the author).

As a result, the declaration concluded:

The door to revolution has been closed, the path to violence has ended, the remaining path is the hardest one: the path of non-violent civil rights (Hanmin, 1970; translated by the author).

The leaders of the Campaign not only explicitly denied any association with the communist, but also showed disapproval towards the means adopted by the pro-Beijing rioters. Moreover, they also showed antipathy towards the two Chinese states in China and Taiwan, as it was stated that:

Taiwan is not ideal; mainland China is worse. We are forced to stay on this barren island. Today, no one would doubt the evilness of colonialism. But on this barren island, even if we admit it, we cannot destroy it. Just because we want a more comfortable life. Therefore, among Taiwan, mainland China, and Hong Kong, I chose Hong Kong. We can say, *I am willing to be colonized* [emphasis added] (Hanmin, 1970; translated by the author).

So understood, despite the frequent reference to the rhetoric of Chinese nationalism, the desire to unify with China was absent among the leaders of the Chinese Language Campaign, at least in the 1970s. If nationalism was considered the desire to form a state with co-nationals so that ‘political and the national unit should be congruent’ (Gellner, 1983, p. 1), or in Anderson’s words, to form a community as ‘the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson, 1991, p. 7), the nationalistic sentiment exhibited by the leaders of the Chinese Language Campaign was clearly different from that in China, even though the same *ethnonym* of ‘Chinese’ was used; not only did they show reluctance to form a single state with mainland Chinese, they explicitly denied the comradeship between themselves and the communist party.

It is worth noting that although politically there was widespread antipathy towards the Chinese governments, culturally the Chinese Language Campaign was associated with a pan-Chinese cultural identification (Lam, 2004; Veg, 2017), an identification shared by
CHAPTER 5. NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL HONG KONG

not only mainland Chinese, but also Taiwan Chinese and the Chinese diaspora. Such identification even developed into the ‘democratic reunification (minzhu huigui) agenda in the 1980s, which advocated Hong Kong’s reunification as a means to democratise China (Veg, 2017). The agenda gained support from student leaders and local elites as many younger people were convinced that the PRC had changed after the end of Cultural Revolution and the introduction of Deng Xiaoping’s, the then paramount leader of the PRC, reform in the late 1970s (Carroll, 2007; Ma, 2012b). Their optimism came to a bitter end with the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989. As Mathews (1997) argues, the Hong Kong people would find little difficulty in embracing the ‘Cultural China’; their unwillingness in embracing Chinese nationalism came from their reluctance towards the ‘Political China’. He predicts that the distinct Hong Kong identity, and therefore Hong Kong nationalism, would ‘fade into history’ (p. 13) if China were to become more liberal. In this sense, Hong Kong anticolonial nationalism was likely a product of political contingency, rather than a result of ethno-cultural difference.

It is also important to note that, under the umbrella of pan-Chinese cultural identification, there were still significant differences between the identities; Chineseness was localised, blended with Western values and colonial experience, and transformed into a distinct cultural identity in Hong Kong (Kaeding, 2017; Mathews, 1997). Some of the differences were also exhibited in the Chinese Language Campaign.

From a language perspective, the Chinese Language Campaign placed a different focus on the Chinese language. The word Chinese (zhongwen) in the Chinese Language Campaign can refer to at least two spoken languages, Cantonese and Mandarin. While they share the same written form, their spoken forms are vastly different. In contrast with the PRC’s policy on promoting Mandarin, the official language in not only China but also Taiwan, the Chinese Language Campaign put a strong emphasis on Cantonese.

As an appendix of the petition letter, a draft ordinance proposed by HKFS was sent to the British government, which provided a definition for ‘Official Language’:

‘Official Language’ or ‘法定語文’ (Fat Ting U Man) means a language authorised for communication between Government and the public that can be demanded as of right in areas specified in this Ordinance. ‘Chinese’, in its

---

17 PRC issued the State Council Instruction concerning Spreading Putonghua, which aims to promote the usage of Mandarin which based on ‘Beijing pronunciation as standard pronunciation, northern speech as basic dialect, and with model modern vernacular prose writings as grammatical standard’ (Zhou, 1956).
oral form, means the Cantonese dialect and Mandarin.\textsuperscript{18}

A close reading of the material reveals that, first, contrary to PRC’s instructions on promoting Mandarin, the Romanisation of the term ‘法定語文’ was in Cantonese (‘Fat Ting U Man’ is the Cantonese Romanisation written by HKFS, the words within the quotation marks were originally written in Chinese characters). Also, ‘Cantonese dialect’ was named first while ‘Mandarin’ was only the second. Moreover, although Mandarin was also mentioned in the definition, in terms of usage in court proceedings, only Cantonese was meant to be guaranteed:

The Chief Justice shall have power to make all arrangements necessary to ensure that presiding officials of tribunals mentioned in S. 7 wishing to conduct proceedings in Cantonese [emphasis added] are fully competent to do so.\textsuperscript{19}

Among the radical wing, the priority of Cantonese was stated even more plainly in The 70’s Biweekly:

The government asked, if Chinese were to be adopted, which dialect should be used? Before we made a decision, how can Chinese become official language? But we all know, when they need to speak in Chinese, they will undoubtedly speak in Cantonese, even the Governor learnt Cantonese. Meanwhile, no matter which dialect you speak, the written form is the same. Therefore, it is simply exaggeration (Walker, 1971; translated by the author).

So understood, to the leaders of the Chinese Language Campaign, it was actually a Cantonese language campaign. Instead of demanding Mandarin to be made an official language, the priority was given to Cantonese. While this decision may not be the result of political considerations, but of practical reasons as Cantonese was the most spoken Chinese dialect in Hong Kong, it indicated the differences in the language preference of the two nationalisms that both used Chinese as the ethnonym.

Due to the antipathy displayed towards the PRC government and pro-Beijing nationalists as well as the priority of Cantonese, even though the ethnonym of ‘Chinese’ was

\textsuperscript{18} James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 9th October 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.

\textsuperscript{19} James Wing-cheung Chui, Letter from Hong Kong Federation of Students to Antony Royle, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 9th October 1971, The National Archives (Kew) FCO 40/341.
frequently used to describe their national sentiment, the ‘Chinese nationalism’ exhibited during the Chinese Language Campaign cannot be simply reduced to an extension of Chinese nationalism from China. Instead, the activists had displayed a unique (anticolonial) nationalism of Hong Kong.

### 5.7 Chapter Conclusion

Although the literature agrees that a distinct Hong Kong identity existed as early as the 1970s, it is not regarded as nationalism due to the absence of political aspiration; the call for independence or self-determination was virtually absent at that time while the democratisation movement only appeared from the 1980s onward. Drawing on Chatterjee’s theory of anticolonial nationalism, in this chapter I argued that the Chinese Language Campaign exhibited two key aspects of anticolonial nationalism, namely a resistance to threats to Chinese culture and the surrender of the political domain. Hence, I argued that the first moment of nationalism in Hong Kong can be traced back to earlier than what many researchers believe, as a unique (anticolonial) nationalism existed in Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s.

I also demonstrated the complex relationship between the two nationalisms during the Chinese Language Campaign. On the one hand, the ethnonym of ‘Chinese’ was widely used and the Campaign was associated with a pan-Chinese identification. On the other hand, divergences between Hong Kong and Chinese nationalism were shown by the former’s antipathy towards the Chinese state and emphasis on Cantonese. Therefore, I argue that Hong Kong anticolonial nationalism cannot be simply reduced to an extension of Chinese nationalism; it can be best described as a branch of Chinese cultural identification that has localised, transformed, and took on its own path of development in Hong Kong in response to the city’s unique geo-political situation. The willingness of the student leaders to embrace Chinese nationalism in the 1980s when China was considered liberalising, regardless of the enduring linguistic and cultural differences, also suggests that, at least up to the 1970s, nationalism in Hong Kong was likely a product of political contingency, rather than the result of ethno-cultural differences with China.

While this chapter traced the first moment of nationalism in Hong Kong, it is also worth considering if there is any similarity between the anticolonial nationalism during the Chinese Language Campaign and the contemporary nationalism in Hong Kong. Interestingly, the dissociation between the political and cultural dimension of Chineseness is
also a recurrent theme in one of the major discourses of contemporary Hong Kong nationalism. In *Discourse on the Hong Kong Adherents*, Chin (2013) portrays Hongkongers as ‘the adherents of orthodox Chinese culture’. He claims that the Chinese culture in mainland China is not authentic but ‘deformed’ and ‘corrupted’. According to Chin, on the top of destructive events such as the Cultural Revolution, communist China has abandoned orthodox religious customs, traditional written Chinese, and the classical pronunciation of local Chinese languages, especially Cantonese, while these have been preserved in Hong Kong due to the colonisation and the resulting isolation from the Chinese state. In this sense, Hong Kong nationalism is not necessarily a total rejection of Chinese culture and pan-Chinese identification (further discussed in Chapter 6). The analysis of chapter shows that such a complex relationship with Chineseness is not unique to contemporary Hong Kong nationalism, it has been a feature of Hong Kong identification since colonial times.

Even though Chatterjee’s theory of anticolonial nationalism is helpful for understanding Hong Kong’s identification during the 1960s and 1970s, the case of the Chinese Language Campaign begs the question: is it possible to separate the cultural from the political, or in Chatterjee’s words, the spiritual from the material? Even though the aim of Campaign was non-political, namely to resist the threat to Chinese culture, many of the actions were political; it was a political movement that involved protest and petition in order to put forward a new legislation. James Chui, a student leader of the Campaign, even explicitly stated that the status of the language was a political matter. Due to the intertwined nature of the cultural and the political and the fact that many of the cultural issues in modern societies are to a large extent matters of policy, it is questionable whether one can protect a national culture without resorting to any political means. The separation between the material and the spiritual might not be as rigid as Chatterjee seems to suggest. Furthermore, the definition of politics itself can be fuzzy and problematic. According to some definitions, collective action is in its essence political regardless of the goal and therefore an apolitical nationalism movement is by definition impossible. Instead of focusing on drawing the line between the material and spiritual, one more fruitful way to make use of Chatterjee’s theory is to focus on its emphasis on the lack of intention to overthrow the current regime, which is often the goal of classical nationalism. Chatterjee’s theory is significant to the study of Hong Kong nationalism since this trait resembles certain versions of nationalism proposed by the nationalist intellectuals. For example, Fong proposes a form of self-governance that seeks to maximise autonomy without changing Hong Kong’s current constitutional arrangements (see Chapter 6). In a sense, the idea
of anticolonial nationalism resembles that of the stateless nationalism in terms of their political goals, with the exception that the former takes place under colonial setting while the context of the latter is the globalising world. In the case of Hong Kong, both of the conditions, arguably, applies.

In summary, this chapter traced the first moment of nationalism in Hong Kong to the 1960s and offered a rich historical background of Hong Kong identification during colonial times. It also illustrated the complexity around the notion of Chineseness. The next chapter will further unpack the complexity and discuss how the nationalists react to it.
Chapter 6

Invention of the Nation: Period of Scholarly Interest

In Hroch’s A-B-C schema, the first phase (Phase A) of nation building, the period of scholarly interest, is characterised by a proliferation of studies on the history, language, and culture of the nation carried out by intellectuals and motivated by their affection for the place they lived (see Chapter 2). In this chapter, I first discuss the exploration of Hong Kong history by the nationalist intelligentsia. In particular, I explore how they construct an alternative origin of the Hong Kong people to tackle the ancestral myth of Chinese nationalism. The second half focuses on their aspirations for Hong Kong’s future in the shadow of the current political crisis. This chapter therefore addresses two main sub-questions of my research: ‘How does Hong Kong nationalism construct its past?’ ($RQ 1(a)$) and ‘To what kind of future does Hong Kong nationalism aspire?’ ($RQ 1(c)$).

6.1 Data and Analysis

This chapter draws on the key texts advocating Hong Kong nationalism published in recent years (full list in Appendix A). The texts were selected based on their popularity, media coverage, and political influence. Several key texts are identified: *Discourse on the Hong Kong City-state* by Chin Wan and his related works; *On the Hong Kong Nation* by the student nationalist of the Undergrad Editorial Board; *Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong* by Brian Chi-hang Fong; and *A National History of Hong Kong* by Eric Sing-yan Tsui (See Appendix A for the full list).

Due to the manageable volume of the materials, the analysis of this chapter follows
the strategy of analysis presented in Chapter 4. The texts will be analysed qualitatively using discourse analysis. Following the framework suggested by Wodak et al. (1999), I read closely through all the materials and identified the thematic areas engaged with and discursive strategies employed by the nationalists.

6.2 ‘Chineseness’ as the ‘Other’

Defining the ‘Other’ is a common strategy for a nation to define itself, as Stuart Hall (1991) argues ‘[o]nly when there is an Other can you know who you are’ (p. 15). Anthony Smith (2010) also regards the nation as ‘members’ perceptions of difference and distinctiveness vis-à-vis other [emphasis added] national communities and their members’ (p. 20). Likewise, Triandafyllidou (1998) introduces the idea of ‘significant others’ in nation formation. In discourse theory, the Other, or the homo externus, is important in the construction of inter-national difference and intra-national similarity, two often adopted discursive strategies to construct the nation, homo nationalis (Wodak et al., 1999). So understood, the process of nation-building has two layers; to construct a nation is not only to address the question of ‘who we are’, but at the same time the question of ‘who we are not’.

It is often argued that the Hong Kong identity was first developed in the 1970s with a ‘backward and inferior China’ as the ‘Other’, as the sharp contrast of rapid socio-economic development in colonial Hong Kong and chaos in mainland China have generated a sense of superiority among Hongkongers (Chan, 2014a; Fung, 2001; Ma, 2006; Ma and Fung, 1999; Tsang, 2003). The othering of China continues into the years after the transfer of Hong Kong’s sovereignty from Britain to China (‘the handover’), although the post-handover years featured a re-nationalisation project consisting of various initiatives that aimed to instil Chinese nationalism among Hong Kong people, most notable of which was the introduction of compulsory national education in primary schools. However, in recent years, the sense of superiority of Hong Kong people has transformed into antagonism between Hong Kong and China due to sustained conflicts over Hong Kong’s autonomy and democratisation and growing Chinese influence in Hong Kong affairs (Chan, 2014a). Against this background, theories of Hong Kong nationalism were proposed to promote a distinct national identity among Hongkongers. A common goal of these theories, according to the nationalists, is to counter Chinese influence and safeguard Hong Kong’s interests. It is therefore inevitable for theories about Hong Kong nationalism to address
the relationship with the concept of Chineseness.

It is important to note that, Chineseness is not a unified concept. Rather, it is multifaceted and comprises two dimensions. In its (geo)political form, Chineseness refers to a political affiliation that entails obligations and loyalties to the Chinese state. On the other hand, cultural Chineseness indicates a common ancestry and a shared cultural background (Tu, 1991). Based on the association with Chineseness, nationalism discourses that treat China as the ‘Other’ can be categorised along these two dimensions into four possible types (Table 6.1). While this chapter focuses on nationalism in Hong Kong, the typology could be applied to other nationalisms such as Taiwan’s. On the Political China dimension, theories could either support unification, such as the restorative nationalism mentioned in Chapter 2, or to demand certain forms of autonomy. It is important to note that autonomy here encompasses various forms of political arrangements, including full autonomy such as national independence but also arrangements that maintain a certain degree of autonomy such as autonomous regional government. On the Cultural China dimension, theories could maintain association with Chinese culture, including but not limited to language, traditions, customs, national myth, and so on, or seek to disassociate with it.

Table 6.1: Typology of Nationalisms in Hong Kong

<p>| Cultural China |<br />
|----------------|----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Disassociation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Chinese Nationalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political China</th>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Disassociation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unification</td>
<td>(1) Official Chinese Nationalism</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>(2) Chin Wan, Brian Fong</td>
<td>(3) Eric Tsui, Undergrad Editorial Board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Hong Kong, we can observe three types of nationalism. The first type is the official Chinese nationalism. This type of nationalism supports the Chinese rule over

---

1 Note that the notion of Chinese state is itself contested, namely the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China. For the purpose of analysis, the term Chinese state and China refer to the People’s Republic of China.
Hong Kong and assumes cultural and consanguineous ties between Hong Kong and China. The second type is reflected in the theories proposed by Chin Wan (2011; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016) and Brian Fong (2015), which accept the notion of common ancestry and shared culture between Hong Kong and China but support the political separation between them. The third type includes Eric Tsui’s (2015; 2017) and the student nationalists of the Undergrad Editorial Board’s (2014) theories, which reject both the cultural and political dimensions of Chineseness. These three types of nationalism will be analysed in length in this chapter. Theoretically, it is possible to construct a fourth type of nationalism that seeks to disassociate with Chinese culture but support unitary Chinese rule. However, such account is not observed in Hong Kong, and therefore omitted in the following analysis.

It is vital to emphasise that the categories should be considered ideal types. They do not constitute a definite descriptive taxonomy. Certain theories and visions of Hong Kong’s political arrangement might not fit perfectly into one category. In this sense, the dimensions can also be best understood as spectra. One example would be the political arrangement of One Country, Two Systems: the original version of One Country, Two Systems can be thought of as case (2), as it assumes the cultural association between Hong Kong and China but retains the capitalist system within a communist state. However, the autonomy guaranteed by One Country, Two Systems is limited and subject to change; under the ‘new Hong Kong policy’, we can observe heavier Chinese influence in Hong Kong’s public affairs while Hong Kong still enjoys a certain degree of political autonomy (see discussion in Chapter 2). One Country, Two Systems now lies in the area between case (1) and (2). As the autonomy of Hong Kong continues to diminish, we can expect One Country, Two Systems to move from case (2) to (1). This example demonstrates that, first, the position of a political arrangement in the typology can change overtime given the changes in its interpretation and implementation, and second, political arrangement do not always fit perfectly within one single category. That said, the typology still serves as a useful tool to explore the idea of Chineseness.

6.3 Official Chinese Nationalism and the ‘Myth of Consanguinity’

As discussed above, nationalism is constructed against an ‘Other’ and it is important for the nationalism to address the question of ‘who we are’ as well as the question of ‘who
we are not'. Since Hong Kong nationalism is developed against Chinese as the ‘Other’, to suggest ‘we are Hongkongese’ is, at the same time, to suggest ‘we are not Chinese’. Hence, before discussing the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism, it is important to first discuss its key rival, Chinese nationalism. This section discusses the appropriation of history by Chinese nationalism and the next section will illustrate how the Hong Kong nationalists respond to it.

The process of nation-building entails the construction of collective identities. However, as Keating (1997) argues:

> A collective identity rooted merely in the past (whether a real or fictive past) provides no basis for coping with the present and future. A collective identity based purely on present considerations lacks a basis for values. (p. 694)

Therefore, he suggests that a successful nationalism must connect the past with the future. A common strategy to achieve such linkage is to emphasise presumed descent ties. The nation is depicted as a fictive ‘super-family’ and nationalists often make use of ancestry, lineage, and genealogy to support their claims (Smith, 1991). By depicting the nation as a family, nationalism seeks to foster a sense of brotherhood among the nation’s members and thus instil a sense of unity and solidarity. The territory is seen as an ancestral land. History is used to inspire a sense of continuity, shared memory, and collective destiny (Smith, 1991; Tse, 2014). The continuity of nations throughout history also echoes Anderson’s notion of the nation ‘moving calendrically’ through time. According to Anderson (1991), a nation is conceived as a continual and coherent people whose past, present, and future are seamlessly connected, or in Anderson’s words, ‘moving steadily down (or up) history’ (p. 26).

Not only is the past important for defining a nation, it is also a powerful source of legitimacy for its capability of evoking a future imaginable throughout the past. In the telling of national cultures, ‘discursive strategies’ are significant:

> The ‘narrative’ of the nation is told and retold through national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture, which together provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals. Through these stories national identity is presented as primordial, essential, unified and continuous (McCrone, 1998, p. 52).

Such a national ‘story’ often encompasses a ‘foundation myth’, which traces the origin of the nation back to mythic times. In Smith’s words, these myths serve as the mythomoteur
of a nation, namely an overall framework of meaning that ‘makes sense’ of its experiences and defines its ‘essence’ (Smith, 1988, p. 24).

In the official Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong, the ethnocultural and genealogical concept of the ‘Chinese nation’ (zhonghua minzu) is often defined as a generic and uniform people which supposes Han common ancestors (Tse, 2014). The official Chinese nationalism seeks to construct a ‘myth of consanguinity’, a fiction of blood kinship best demonstrated by the metaphor of ‘nation (guo) as family (jia)’ and ambivalent notions used in official statements such as ‘siblings’ (tongbao) and ‘blood is thicker than water’ (xuenong yushui) to describe the relation between Hong Kong and Chinese people (Chow, 1993). Chinese nationalism also appeals to folklore such as ‘all people with yellow skin, black hair, black eyes are Chinese’, ‘descendants of the Yan and Huang Emperors’ (yan-huang zisun), and ‘heirs of the Dragon’ (long de chuanren). It is often depicted as a ‘common sense’ by propaganda that all Hong Kong people are Chinese by origin, and therefore any distinct local identity (Hongkongese) should be subordinated to a national one (Chinese) (Tse, 2014).

The official Chinese nationalism strives to foster a sense of connectedness between Hong Kong and China. Hong Kong’s culture is argued to be rooted in traditional Chinese culture. Hong Kong is often depicted as ‘a child who has been separated from its mother since birth’ and therefore ‘must return to capture nutrition from the mother’s body’ (Tse, 2014, p. 194). The metaphor has been used in various occasions related to Hong Kong’s handover (cf. Wen et al., 2017; Xi, 2017; Xinhua News, 2018).

As McCrone (1998) argues, national museums, in which the nation’s history could be told to its best form, are obvious expressions of a nation’s ‘story’. Therefore, one useful way to study the discourse of official Chinese nationalism is to look at how it is presented in museums. Vickers (2005) offers a comprehensive review of the Hong Kong Museum of History. Due the need for expansion to cover the transfer of sovereignty, the colonial Urban Council decided to build a large new museum, which was due to open in 1998. However, the opening was eventually delayed until 2001 due to the request for last-minute revisions of the exhibition content from Beijing-appointed members of the Provisional Urban Council after the handover. The original plan was considered ‘too Westernized’ and ‘not celebrating the handover to the mother land and China’s history enough’, and therefore the Council urged the museum to consider ‘how to enrich the part

---

2 The folklore depicts China as the dragon and Chinese people as the heirs of the dragon.
relating to the Reunification of Hong Kong with China’ (Vickers, 2005, p. 58). As a result, a range of modifications was made. One of the most surprising features of the museum was the considerable attention devoted to archaeology, in which archaeological finds in Hong Kong were hailed as evidence of ‘Chinese’ occupation of Hong Kong from prehistoric times, even though international scholars widely believe Hong Kong’s prehistoric inhabitants were likely to be related closer to Malays, Vietnamese, or Polynesians than to the Han Chinese (Vickers, 2005).

Bhabha (1990) and Renan (1996) both argue that a nation’s narrative involves forgetting as much as remembering. As Renan’s famous claim suggests:

> Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation and it is for this reason that the progress of historical studies often poses a threat to nationality. (Renan, 1996, p. 45)

What was forgotten in the museum’s account of Hong Kong’s story was the prehistoric ethnic conflict. Although the original inhabitants of Lantau Island were effectively ‘ethnically cleansed’ in 1197 when the Chinese moved in, there is no mention of the ethnic conflict anywhere in the museum (Vickers, 2005). Furthermore, the content about the British’s role in Hong Kong is also disproportionately limited. The British seem to virtually disappear from the picture, with the exception of their role in World War II allowing for the general impression that the British and Chinese suffered together under Japanese imperialism, another often-used villain in China’s discourse, and the Sino-British negotiations, which paved the way for Hong Kong’s ‘reunification with China’. Vickers (2005) therefore concludes that the museum’s narrative is consistent with official Chinese nationalism’s central dogma that the Chinese nation is racially and culturally homogeneous and Hong Kong has been part of it since the beginning of time. On the other hand, the British presence is reduced to merely an episode and a passing influence, rather than having any fundamental or long-lasting effect.

6.4 Three Histories of Hong Kong

The previous section demonstrated how Chinese nationalism constructed a *mythomoteur* to forge the connectedness between Hong Kong and Chinese people by a selective appropriation of history, as demonstrated by the case of the Hong Kong Museum of History. However, the state is not the only actor who seeks to use selected fragments of
Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as when they seemed engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis, they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and borrowed language (Marx, 1852, p. 2)

According to Marx, the appropriation of history is most often done when people call for change. History is used to muster support and provide justification.

Renan was correct in pointing out the importance of forgetting in nation-building, what is subject to debate was the second half his sentence, that ‘the progress of historical studies often poses a threat to nationality’ (Renan, 1996, p. 45). As the following will show, historical studies can be used to construct an alternative version of Hong Kong history to justify a nation and demand changes in the political sphere. Historical studies are not always a threat to nationality, it can also be used to build the nation or support one nation over another. In Hong Kong’s case, historical studies are used to construct the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism over the competing discourse of Chinese nationalism. While different approaches are taken, a common goal among the Hong Kong nationalist intellectuals is to tackle the ‘myth of consanguinity’.

### 6.4.1 Eric S.Y. Tsui and the Baiyue legacy

*A National History of Hong Kong* seeks to propose an alternative ethnocultural history for the Hongkongese. Eric Sing-yan Tsui (2017) declares at the outset his intention for writing the book:

A nation without history is a nation without future. Most of the books on the general history of Hong Kong on the market is not written by Hong Kong people. I took the liberty to write this book in order to counter the mainstream
discourse on Hong Kong history, in which Hong Kong people are absent, and establish the historical status of the Hong Kong nationality. (p. 37; translated by the author).

He goes on to problematise the current situation in Hong Kong. On the one hand, he suggests that during the British colonial times, Hong Kong was depicted as a barren island and therefore the later development and success of Hong Kong were attributed to the British. But Tsui argues that even before the British came, Hong Kong’s ancestors had been living in the region. On the other hand, after the handover, most narratives about Hong Kong history treat Hong Kong simply as the appendage of China so as to ‘serve Chinese imperialism and legitimise China’s invasion of Hong Kong’ (p. 37).

To counter the ‘myth of consanguinity’, Tsui traces the origin of the Hong Kong people to Africa 200,000 years ago, when *homo sapiens* first appeared. He goes on to describe the migrations of *homo sapiens* since the last glacial period around 110,000 to 120,000 years ago. He claims that 33,000 to 19,000 year ago, a group of *homo sapiens* entered East Asia through Myanmar and split into two branches. One branch settled around the Yangtze River and the Yellow River and became the ancestor of the Han people. Another branch followed the Xi River to Lingnan, a region that covers modern northern Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan, and became the ancestor of the Baiyue people. The Han and Baiyue people started trading in early times, but they developed their civilisations separately and they are politically independent from one another (pp. 50-52).

According to Tsui, the Lingnan region, including Hong Kong, has not been a part of the Chinese empire since the beginning of time. For thousands of years, the territory and border of the empire have been constantly changing. After the collapse of the Qin dynasty (204 BC), a short-lived kingdom that covers the Lingnan region, Nanyue, was established. After the fall of the Nanyue kingdom in 113 BC, Lingnan eventually fell under the rule of the Chinese empire. However, for a long period of time, Lingnan was considered a ‘barbarian land’ (*huawai zhi di*, literally ‘land outside culture’) by Han people. It was generally avoided by Han people and was a well-known destination of demotion for the people who lost in court power struggle. Up until the Tang dynasty (618-907), most inhabitants in the region were indigenous Baiyue, many of them refused to Sinicise and their culture remained vastly different from Han: they were not influenced by

---

3 Baiyue literally means ‘Hundred Yue’. Yue was the name of the region and Baiyue was used as a collective term for the indigenous peoples inhabited in the region.
Confucianism and filial piety was not stressed; they were very superstitious, and paganism was popular; and they also have different dietary habits from Han as they often consumed raw meat and ate with their hands instead of using chopsticks. Due to the cultural differences, the Chinese empire relied on co-opting indigenous leaders and power sharing to exercise indirect rule. Sinicisation was only completed around the end of the Ming dynasty in 1644 (pp. 53-67).

On top of historical evidence, Tsui also cites a genetics research to show that most Lingnan people today have inherited more genes from the Baiyu than from the Han (p. 73). He even claims that the consanguineous relationship between modern Lingnan people and Han Chinese is as close as that of Lingnan people and Vietnamese (550).\footnote{Note that the Viet in Vietnam and Yue in Baiyue were interchangeable in ancient Chinese. The name Vietnam came from the fallen kingdom of Nanyue, the former means ‘Yue South’ while the latter means ‘Southern Yue’.} Tsui also cites works from Linguistics. He argues that around one-fifth of modern Cantonese words originated from the ancient Baiyue language. Even though Cantonese largely follows the grammar of Han languages, some grammatical rules are very similar to Zhuang and Hmongic, two popular language families in the Lingnan region. He also claims that even though the indigenous people switched to ancient Han languages around the 11th century, certain tones and grammatical rules remained unchanged and therefore Cantonese and Mandarin today are not mutually intelligible (pp. 82-83).

Tsui utilises the above materials to support the main claim of his book that ‘Hong Kong is situated outside of and located next to China’ (p. 561). He believes that for thousands of years, Hong Kong was beyond the reach of the Chinese empire and that the Hong Kong civilisation is a mix of Baiyue, Chinese, and western influences. According to Tsui, due to historical reasons, Baiyue culture became intertwined with Han culture in terms of language, dietary habits, and religious beliefs; even though many of them have taken up a Han guise, they are in their essence Baiyue’s legacy.

In Tsui’s writing, we can observe two kinds of discursive strategy in play. First, we can observe the strategies of dismantling. One strategy of dismantling used by Tsui is the emphasis on dissimilation. He emphasises the dissimilarity between the Chinese and Hongkongese by depicting Han and Baiyue as two separate peoples, which are even regarded as decedents of two different branches in the migrations of \textit{homo sapiens}. He counters the ‘myth of consanguinity’ by proposing an alternative lineage for the Hongkongese. Second, we can also see Tsui’s account of Baiyue as a constructive strategy; he attempts
to construct a common past and propose a new ancestor of the Baiyue by highlighting the long political separation between the Lingnan and the Chinese empire. Tsui’s notion of Baiyue resembles Smith’s idea of *ethnie* (Wu, 2016), defined as ‘named human populations with shared ancestry, myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity’ (Smith, 1988, p. 32). It serves as an alternative national ‘story’ that contains an alternative myth and origin of Hong Kong.

### 6.4.2 Brian C.H. Fong and the Promised Land of Freedom

One month after Tsui published the first edition of *A National History of Hong Kong*, Brian Chi-hang Fong and his co-authors published *Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong*. The book is regarded as a mild example of Hong Kong nationalism as the authors avoided the more explicit nationalist rhetoric but referred to Hong Kong as a self-governing community. This led Wu (2016) to argue that the book proposes ‘a Hong Kong nationalism disguised as Hong Kong self-government’ (p. 701). When compared to other nationalism discourses, the version of nationalism proposed by Fong is comparatively well received by the traditional pan-democrats. The key ideas of the book were further developed into the *Resolution for Hong Kong’s Future*, a declaration jointly signed by over 30 young pro-democracy politicians, including elected legislators of the pan-democrat camp, demanding the right to determine Hong Kong’s affairs internally in accordance with the principle of ‘internal self-determination’ (Fong et al., 2016).

Similar to Tsui, Fong and his collaborators also addressed the question about the origin of the Hong Kong people. However, they depicted it in a totally different light. The first chapter of *Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong*, titled *Awaken the Free Soul of my City: Writing the Hong Kong’s Story of Freedom*, is devoted to the construction of a national myth. At the beginning of the chapter, Alan Wong (2015a) describes the premise of their theory vividly:

Hong Kong is the promised land of freedom. From the establishment of the colony to late Qing, from the Chinese Civil War to the founding of communist China, the 170 years of history of the colony is comprised of stories of Chinese seeking freedom during troubled times (p. 3; translated by the author).

He traces the origin of the Hong Kong people to the early years of the colony and argues that, due to the corruption and incompetence of the Qing dynasty, Hong Kong became the promised land for the Chinese who wanted to seek a new life. In the second half of the
19th century, as the gold rush began in various countries, Hong Kong has become a hub for Chinese workers who wanted to work on the other side the Pacific Ocean. The coolie trade and related business such as brokers, ship building and repair, shipping supply, and rope manufacturing have contributed to the growth of Hong Kong’s economy. The population of the city increased from around 30,000 in 1853 to more than 160,000 in 1881. As the Chinese diaspora settled around the world, they created a huge demand for local Chinese commodities as well as financial services as they tried to send money home. These have contributed to the rapid development of trading, finance, and related industries such as law, banking, insurance, and medical. Wong argues that these developments not only laid the foundation for Hong Kong to become a global entrepôt and financial centre, but also made Hong Kong ‘the centre of the Chinese world’.

Apart from migrant workers seeking job opportunities, Wong also argues that Hong Kong has been a safe haven for people during troubled times. On top of being a major destination for war refugees throughout history, he also highlights the Chinese revolutionaries who fled to Hong Kong during the late-Qing period, including Sun Yat-sen, Kang Youwei, and Yeung Ku-wan. After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), Hong Kong also became the destination for entrepreneurs who wished to continue their business. The final phase of Chinese Civil War (1945–1949) and the founding of communist China in 1949 sparked another wave of migration. Hong Kong has become the destination for people from all walks of life to escape from communism and search for freedom of business, freedom of education, freedom of expression, and freedom of creativity, including businessmen, scholars, practitioners of the cultural industry, and even kung fu masters.

Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong captures perfectly Smith’s idea of the foundation myth (cf. Smith, 1999). According to Smith, ‘the sense of “whence we came” is central to the definition of “who we are”’ (Smith, 1991, p. 22). Fong and his co-authors address Smith’s question by pointing out the migration waves that have made up a large portion of Hong Kong’s population.

On top of tracing the origins, they also attempt to define the character of the nation based on the migrations. In the conclusion of the chapter, Wong states that:

Hongkongers are different from other Chinese; the story of Hong Kong is written by the tears and blood of the generations after generations of Chinese who refused to accept their fate. These insistence and desire for freedom is the soul of Hong Kong culture (p. 8; translated by the author).
Instead of proposing a different lineage like Tsui, Fong and Wong do not deny Hongkongers’ ancestral relationship with the Chinese and therefore the ‘myth of consanguinity’; they recognise the fact that most Hongkongers are either immigrants from China or descended from immigrants from China. They seek to differentiate Hongkongers from Chinese by stressing their longing for freedom. In the chapter titled *Hong Kong-style Nationalism: from Ethnic Nationalism to Civic Nationalism*, Chan (2015) seeks to bring liberal values into the construction of the *homo nationalis*. He argues that ‘Hong Kong-style nationalism’ does not reject the ‘myth of consanguinity’ proposed by Chinese ethnic nationalism, but it also incorporates elements from civic nationalism, namely the emphasis on core liberal values such as freedom, rule of law, and integrity. He maintains that it is a mixed nationalism consisting of both civic and ethnic elements, with the former being the core while the latter is supplementary. He concludes that Hong Kong people are not susceptible to official Chinese nationalism due to the conflict between the authoritarianism nature of Chinese government and the civic elements in Hong Kong people’s identification.

In a discursive strategy sense, Fong and his collaborators adopt a strategy of unification for Hong Kong: they emphasise a common unifying feature among Hong Kong people, the desire for freedom. Instead of rewriting the story of the nation’s origin like Tsui, they attempt to modify the official narrative by adding an epilogue to the story of the ‘descendants of the Yan and Huang Emperors’, in which the ‘descendants’ have been transformed into the ‘free spirits’ who travelled to Hong Kong in pursuit of freedom.

Tsui and Fong therefore occupy the two ends of the Cultural China dimension in the typology introduced earlier (Table 6.1). On the one hand, Tsui seeks to dissociate with Cultural China by proposing an alternative origin of the nation; on the other hand, Fong takes a ‘bite the bullet’ approach, accepting the cultural association but proposing modifications to justify political autonomy.

### 6.4.3 Chin Wan and the Adherents of Chinese Culture

The previous sections presented Tsui’s attempt to dissociation with Cultural China and Fong’s approach to add liberal elements to the notion of Chinese culture. Chin Wan (2011; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016) employed a completely different strategy to counter the ‘myth of consanguinity’ than Tsui and Fong. Instead of rejecting the connection between Hong Kong and Chinese culture, he not only embraces it, but also aspires to
take over Chinese culture from the mainland Chinese. He portrays Hongkongers as ‘the adherents of orthodox Chinese culture’ and argues that the Chinese culture embraced by mainland Chinese is ‘deformed’ or even ‘corrupted’. According to Chin, on the top of destructive events such as the Cultural Revolution, communist China has abandoned orthodox religious customs, traditional written Chinese and the classical pronunciation of local Chinese languages like Cantonese while these have been preserved in Hong Kong due to the colonisation and the resulting isolation from the Chinese state. While Tsui seeks cultural separation from China by dissociating Hong Kong from Cultural China, Chin achieves the same goal by doing the opposite, as he seeks to dissociate the Chinese state (PRC) from Cultural China; his approach in effect denotes an attempt to compete for the ownership of Cultural China.

In the beginning of the book, Discourse on the Hong Kong Adherents, Chin (2013) vividly expresses his stance:

My Hong Kong compatriots, we now have to forgo the name of ‘Chinese’, we will no longer be Chinese. Many mainlanders are not Chinese, they don’t deserve to be called Chinese, they are but barbarians under Chinese colonial rule. Since these barbarians have stolen the name of Chinese, and used it to oppress Hong Kong people, enslave Hong Kong people’s spirit, and invade Hong Kong people’s interest, we must give up being Chinese.\(^5\) (p. 5)

To distinguish Hong Kong people from mainland Chinese, Chin proposes an alternative origin of the Hong Kong people. Chin traces the origin of the Hong Kong people to two sources. He argues that Hong Kong Chinese society is the convergence of the adherents and the refugees. There were two waves of adherents migrating to Hong Kong. The first wave of the immigrants were during the period from Southern Song (1127-1279) to early Qing dynasty (around 1644). They settled in the rural area of the New Territories region, such as the Tangs in Ping Shan, the Lius in Sheung Shui, and the Mans in San Tin. Another wave came during late Qing and they were mostly from the upper class, had mixed ethnic heritage, and engaged in the comprador business, such as Sir Robert Hotung. Most of them settled in affluent residential areas like the Mid-Levels of the Hong Kong Island. While the adherents in the New Territories adhered to Chinese culture, those in Hong Kong island also adopted British culture. According to Chin, they were the

---

5 Barbarian (\textit{manyi}) was the ancient name for non-Han ethnic groups around ancient China. These terms were largely neutral in ancient Chinese, but became derogatory during modern times.
‘explorers’ who were nostalgic about the past and scornful of barbarian rule, and therefore came to Hong Kong to lead their lives. Chin’s notion concerning refugees is similar to the ‘free spirits’ described by Fong and his collaborators, they are depicted as the people who migrated through smuggling or legal means after the introduction of a border control between Hong Kong and China in the 1950s. Chin describes them as ‘freedom seekers’ who abandoned the communist regime to search for freedom and opportunities in Hong Kong. They were not indoctrinated by communist education but were educated during republican times. The fact that they strove to seek asylum in the free world already denotes their difference from the those who remained in mainland China.

What is interesting about Chin’s narrative on the origin of Hong Kong people is that it is analogous to the ‘racial myth’ of English history as suggested by MacDougall (1982). MacDougall outlines the four postulates of the English myth:

that German peoples as a result of unmixed origins and their universal civilising mission were inherently superior to others; that the English were mainly of German origin, and their history begins with the landings of Hengist and Horsa in Kent in AD 449; that the qualities of English political and religious institutions, the freest in the world, derived from its Germanic forebears; and finally, that the English, more than other Germanic peoples, represented the traditional genius of their ancestors, and so have a special burden of leadership in the world community (as cited in McCrone, 1998, p. 57).

Instead of Anglo-Saxon values, Chin’s theory champions the orthodox Chinese culture. While the English became more ‘Germanic’ than the Germans in the myth, Hong Kong people became more ‘Chinese’ than the Chinese in Chin’s theory. While Norman despotism was a major threat for the English, Chinese centralism is the counterpart for the Hongkongers. While the English myth suggests that the English should become the rulers due to their Anglo-Saxon values, Chin also believes Hong Kong should become the leader of the Chinese confederation, a political arrangement Chin aspired for Hong Kong’s future (it will be discussed later in the chapter).

While Discourse on the Hong Kong Adherents puts heavy emphasis on Chinese culture, Chin later further develops his theory in Discourse on City-state Sovereignty to a much more multicultural view. Chin (2015) expands the scope of adherents and refugees to include British and South Asian immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia (Nanyang). The British and South Asian immigrants were brought to Hong Kong by the British
colonial government, including British officers of the colonial government, European missionaries, South Asian opium traders and coolies, and even Persians. The refugees include the ethnic Chinese who fled to Hong Kong from Indonesia during the turmoil in the 1950s and the Vietnamese and Vietnam Chinese displaced by the Vietnam War. He goes on to claim that Hong Kong people are not defined by blood. Among the Hong Kongers, there are ethnic Chinese, Westerners, and people of mixed ethnicity; Both Chinese and English are spoken. However, they share the same legendary, faith, and history, and also shaped the shared culture of the Hong Kong nation.

To reconcile the Chinese focus of his theory and the later addition of non-Chinese elements, in the section titled *Mainstream and branches, all-embracing*, he defines Hong Kong people as a hybrid ethnicity, but the mainstream society is comprised of Han Chinese, most notably people from the Canton region. During colonial times, as he argues, the government adopted a segregation strategy that settled different ethnic groups apart from each other, instead of attempting to assimilate them into British culture or to foster the convergence of their cultures. As a result, different ethnic groups could preserve their distinct culture, custom, and religion. While Chinese culture is the mainstream, other ethnic groups could choose to fuse with the mainstream culture or to distance themselves. However, even though Chin used the term ‘multicultural’, his understanding of which is different from what is commonly understood in the field of political theory. Instead, he sees multiculturalism as a modern-day analogy of dynastic China. He argues that, when it comes to democratic movements, the participants comprised mainly of ethnic Chinese, but not people from other ethnic groups, and thus only the ethnic Chinese demonstrated the spirit of ‘being the masters of the homeland’ (*dangjiazuozhu*). Although the people from other ethnic groups also see Hong Kong as their home, they, as Chin argues, know that they are not the mainstream and therefore refrain from engaging with public affairs. He therefore concludes that Hong Kong society is shaped in accordance with the worldview of the ancient Chinese dynasties:

> In ancient China (*huaxia*), aliens can swear allegiance to the Chinese, but the Chinese did not require the aliens to naturalise. Just as ‘the king does not govern barbarians’, we can only see outsiders coming to us to learn Chinese culture, but never see us going to them to teach them (Chin, 2015, p. 46).

He believes that, while there exists a mainstream Chinese culture, the Hong Kong Chinese

---

6 An ancient Chinese proverb by Su Shi, a well-known poet and politician during the Sung dynasty.
have not forced the outsiders to assimilate but coexist with them in harmony.

Chin believes that colonialism helped Hong Kong to preserve authentic Chinese culture. On the one hand, the British empire adopted indirect rule and avoided assimilation, Hong Kong people were not required to learn British history or swear allegiance to Britain. On the other hand, Hong Kong was under colonial rule when the Republic of China was founded. Therefore, Hong Kong people were not nationalised by the republican regime. The colonial government also deliberately prevented the influence from Chinese nationalism: the colonial government boycotted the New Literature Movement and Mandarin Movement, which sought to promote written vernacular Chinese (baihuawen) over classical Chinese (wenyanwen) and to promote a common national language based on the Beijing dialect (Mandarin). Classical Chinese education was preserved in local schools. After the communists took power, in an attempt to break the cultural connection between Hong Kong and mainland China, the colonial government avoided Mandarin education and even cancelled Mandarin radio broadcast services. In the 1950s, the Hong Kong colonial government adopted Cantonese, instead of Mandarin, as the official Chinese language and it was used in radio broadcast, school, and other public places. In 1974 when Chinese became an official language alongside English, Cantonese was deemed the default language for the government’s communication with the public and the government intentionally adopted a quaint style for written Chinese to distinguish it from the vernacular Chinese used in mainland China. In terms of cultural preservation, Chinese customs, which were destroyed and spurned during republican and communist rule, were modernised and continued to flourish in Hong Kong.

Chin argues that, thanks to British colonialism and the adherent and refugee heritage, there are three vague cultural identifications among contemporary Hongkongers: The first one is what Chin calls ‘local belongingness’, it is based on vague ideas of civic virtue such as care for public property, law-abiding, and public order. The second one on the ‘mentality of world citizen’ as a consequence of the diversity of culture and English education in Hong Kong. The third one is that the ‘mentality of Cultural China’. As adherents of Chinese dynasties, the morality and folklore of ancient Chinese culture are preserved among Hongkongers. Against this context, Chin argues that Hongkongers must nurture a ‘local consciousness’ and develop their own political establishment so as to protect Hong Kong’s interests in the conflict with China.

In sum, Chin argues that the mainland Chinese, especially the communists, are barbarians who destroyed Chinese culture and therefore lost their legitimacy to claim the
name Chinese. On the other hand, Hongkongers are the true heir of Chinese culture and political separation with China is necessary for not only Hong Kong's interests, but also Chinese culture's survival. It is also important to note that, Chin views Cultural China as a concept that can be detached from China (the state and its territory) and Chinese (the people). It is a standalone cultural ideal that is anchored in the past and has nothing to do with the culture embraced by modern Chinese people. It does not suggest a common culture across contemporary Hong Kong and Chinese people; it is in effect cultural separation, only the Hongkongese are now the 'authentic Chinese' while the Chinese are, to use Chin's words, 'barbarians'. It is in this sense that Chin embraces the notion of Cultural China.

That said, Chin appears to believe in the notion of 'Chinese culture' as a uniform and unchanging entity and has not recognised the fact that the history of the Chinese civilisation is full of invasion and foreign influences. For example, the Qing dynasty was established by the Manchu, a foreign conquer who had their own language and cultural traditions. The Manchu rulers were not completely 'Sinicised' and there is evidence suggesting a complex interplay between Qing and Han cultures (R.J. Smith, 2015). It is therefore questionable that an ancient cultural ideal would have survived in the adherents and refugees as Chin suggests.

6.4.4 Reconsidering the intellectuals' Positions

The intellectuals position raised an interesting point about the invented nature of history suggested by Hobsbawm as well as the idea of neutrality and subjectivity in social sciences and postcolonial studies.

Although Chin and Tsui both utilised historical sources, they did not claim to be 'neutral' nor 'impartial'. Chin claims that rediscovering cultural traditions could involve fabrication and imagination. He resorts to the case of the Han dynasty to justify his claims. He argues that Chinese culture during the Zhou dynasty was destroyed by the rule of its successor, the Qin dynasty.\(^7\) When the Han dynasty took over from the Qin, it gathered the remaining Confucians and rebuilt Chinese cultural traditions. Even though he believes a large portion of the classics were fabricated, he considers it a necessary step to save Chinese culture from disappearing. He therefore analogises the Zhou dynasty to

\(^7\) The Qin dynasty is often portrayed as a tyranny which destroyed many philosophical treatises except legalism (fajia), its official governmental philosophy. The most notable incident was the supposed burning of texts in 213 BC and live burial of 460 Confucian scholars in 212 BC.
Hong Kong and argues that it is the responsibility of the Hong Kong people to reconstruct Chinese culture from the China’s destruction. Chin even cites d’Azeglio’s famous phrase, ‘we have made Italy; now we must make Italians’, to argue that intellectuals should ‘make Hong Kong people’ after Hong Kong becomes autonomous, but not the other way round. Tsui (2017) even admits that he has no intention of being ‘impartial’ and that, when facing power inequality, historical works with humanistic concerns should not strive for neutrality, but to speak for the subaltern, those who are invisible in the historical discourse. Only by standing with the powerless could the true picture of history be discovered within the debate (p. 42).

Their confessions are significant in three senses: first, they capture nicely the idea of ‘the invention of tradition’ proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), who argue that historical accounts are used as tools to create national identities, and history, rather than a product of the past, is a response to the needs of the present. Second, it also echoes the debate in the social sciences about neutrality: should social research be ‘value free’? Their confessions echo Becker’s (1967) suggestion to ‘take sides as our personal and political commitments dictate’ (p. 247), although he also suggests to avoid distorting theoretical and technical resources, to which Chin’s example of fabrication is clearly a violation. Third, not only do they invoke theoretical concepts such as subaltern from postcolonial studies, the goals of their writings are in line with the socio-political and social justice agendas of postcolonialism, namely to expose the nature of the subjugation and oppression of colonialism (Burney, 2012) and to bring subaltern into speech (de Kock, 1992). According to Gayatri Spivak, subaltern refers to ‘everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism’ (as quoted in de Kock, 1992, p. 45) and it is important to clear the space to allow the subaltern to speak. While it is debatable whether Hong Kong people could be considered subaltern, as Spivak herself has made it clear that not all oppressed are subaltern (de Kock, 1992), the intellectuals’ intentions to make use of postcolonial theories to support their claims are obvious.

On top of subaltern, the intellectuals also invoke other postcolonial concepts such as subjectivity from postcolonial studies. Chin (2013) defines subjectivity as a four-fold concept:

1. A shared identity: An identity constructed vis-à-vis other communities or nations.

2. Cultural autonomy: A group’s ability to define the origin of their culture and their myth of ‘destiny’ on their own, rather than being defined by
outsiders.

3. Autonomous morality: A shared moral view, obeying the laws and customs made by their own.

4. Subjective affirmation: Being able to introspectively affirm one's own view rather than relying on external experience or observation. (pp. 117-118)

Chin argues that Hong Kong has developed a high level of subjectivity, except in the aspects of cultural autonomy and subjective affirmation. Chin attributes the underdevelopment of these aspects to the colonial Hong Kong government. He argues that the colonial government hindered the development of subjectivity in the Hong Kong people for the fear that it might become an obstacle for their colonial rule, and Chin argues the purpose of his publications is to awaken the Hong Kong people's subjectivity and therefore become autonomous.

The concept of subjectivity can also be found in other intellectuals' writing, Fong and collaborators use a similar term, subjective consciousness, throughout the book. In the introduction, Fong claims that:

To respond to the challenges of the times, Hong Kong people must respect and strengthen ourselves. We do not need to remember the former rule of the colonial monarchs, nor should we expect that when the monarchs of today will tolerate compassion, only the *subject consciousness* [emphasis added] of Hong Kong people will achieve it. This is the most important foundation for democracy and autonomy. (Fong, 2015, p. XV)

However, Fong does not provide a clear definition for subjective consciousness. In the first chapter of the book, Alan Wong (2015a) further elaborates on the concept:

What is Hong Kong? Where does Hong Kong come from? Now that our city’s *subjective consciousness* [emphasis added] is awakened, this seemingly simple question is no longer easy to answer. When the people who live on this land no longer follow the label given by ‘the Other’, but use the perspective of ‘the self’ to retrace the origin of our city and reflect on our ‘subjectivity’ [emphasis added], Hong Kong is no longer the same. (p. 3)

As the above example shows, the term subjective consciousness is in fact used interchangeably with subjectivity. And the term is used not for academic analysis, but to support
In the introduction of their book, Fong (2015) uses the term in an attempt to distinguish Hongkongese from the Chinese in light of shared ancestry and culture:

Although Hong Kong people and mainlanders share common origins in ancestry, culture and history, the ‘subjective consciousness’ of Hong Kong people is fundamentally reflected in the acceptance of our city’s core values – any Hong Kong resident, whenever he comes to Hong Kong, as long as he identifies with Hong Kong’s land and the core values, he is a Hongkongese (p. XIV).

In the conclusion of their book, Max Wong (2015b) defines subjective consciousness as follows:

Hong Kong youth’s subjective consciousness hopes to have their own destiny, strive for a democracy, freedom and human rights, and recognise Hong Kong’s values. (p. 243)

He argues that Beijing’s attempt to influence Hong Kong affairs, narrow the right to freedom, and accelerate Hong Kong’s economic dependence on China have clashed with the Hong Kong youth’s subjective consciousness. In response, he maintains that Hong Kong people must further develop and protect their subjectivity.

The student nationalists of Undergrad also use the term subjective consciousness, as they argue that:

The urgent task for Hong Kong intellectuals is to re-examine, select and interpret the local history and culture of Hong Kong, and construct a national discourse that comprises subjective consciousness so as to provide theoretical basis for political movement. (Undergrad Editorial Board, 2014, p. 11)

The above examples show that the idea of subjectivity is widely used by the intellectuals. However, they do not use the idea as a theoretical device to aid academic analysis like post-colonialist researchers do. The concept is generally considered a tool to defend Hong Kong’s interest against China’s influence.

In summary, the above examples of Hong Kong histories demonstrate that, instead of the availability of the raw historical materials, it is the way history is used that matters. They show that a new conception of Hong Kong nation was forged out of fragments of historical events. The notion of ‘Hongkongness’ characterised by the pursuit of freedom,
democracy, or orthodox Chinese, as the intellectuals argued, goes back to early colonial
times, or even prehistoric times in Tsui’s case when the idea of Hong Kong as a distinctive
society did not even exist. It is very unlikely that the historical actors had the intention or
conception of Hongkongness in mind when the historical events cited by the intellectuals
happened. New meanings were assigned retrospectively to historical events to suit political
needs and circumstances.

On top of historical materials, the intellectuals also appropriated theoretical concepts
from the field of post-colonialism. The idea of subjectivity is used as a tool to safeguard
Hong Kong from China. It is considered a consciousness that Hongkongers must develop
in order to survive the threat from China.

6.5 Three Roads to Autonomy

The previous section discussed how the intellectuals threaded together past events to
construct narratives of Hong Kong’s history. While all nations have histories, histories
do not necessarily have a future. There are ‘dead’ histories that do not connect with
the present or future and therefore are considered irrelevant to current times. Therefore,
nationalism needs to reconnect history with contemporary and future concerns (McCrone,
1998). While the past offers the nation a sense of continuity, it must also evoke an
imaginable future to become a source of legitimacy and mobilise action. The following
section discusses what kinds of future have been imagined by the intellectuals and what
are the plans they propose in response to Hong Kong’s challenges.

It is important to note that, although all of three theories discussed below belong to the
autonomy end of the Political China dimension (Table 6.1), their plans for Hong Kong’s
future span the whole spectrum of autonomous political arrangements, with the student
nationalists of the Undergrad Editorial Board on the radical end demanding independence
and Brian Fong on the conservative end supporting internal self-determination. Chin
Wan’s grand plan for a Chinese confederation lies somewhere between the two. These
aspirations for Hong Kong’s future represent three different kinds of nationalism suggested
by the literature.

8 The rise of Hong Kong identity was discussed in Chapter 3.
6.5.1 An Independent Hong Kong

In *On the Hong Kong Nation*, the student nationalists of the *Undergrad* Editorial Board (2014) support their call for independence by arguing that Hong Kong can be considered a nation. They cited an article written by Joseph Yi-zheng Lian (2015), a well-known commentator on Hong Kong affairs, that adopts Stalin’s definition of a nation to argue for the case. They hold that Cantonese and English provide Hong Kong people with a common language; Hong Kong has a clear border and a clearly delineated economic system from that of China; and Hong Kong people have different values and mentalities than the Chinese. The authors also condemn Chinese nationalists for confusing nation and race. They argue that the Chinese nationalists define the Chinese nation based on ethnic features, such as skin colour, race, and lineage. To rebut the Chinese nationalist, the student nationalists therefore attempt to draw a distinction between ethnic and nation by claiming that not all ethnic Chinese are a part of the Chinese nation and not all Hongkongese are ethnic Chinese; ethnic minorities could also become Hongkongese. They also make use of the classic civic and ethnic nationalism dichotomy and argue that the Hong Kong nation is closer to Ernest Renan’s idea of civic nation. According to the student nationalists, ‘any Hong Kong residents, no matter when they started living in Hong Kong, as long as they recognise Hong Kong’s values, support Hong Kong’s priority, and are willing to protect Hong Kong, they are Hong Kong people’ (*Undergrad Editorial Board*, 2014, p. 30). They argue that, since the Hong Kong nation is open to everyone and not defined by ethnicity, it is closer to the notion of civic nationalism described by Renan (cf. Renan, 1996).

The student nationalists attribute Hong Kong’s lack of national self-determination and democracy to China. They point out that the *Charter of the United Nations* recognises the rights to self-determination for all peoples and that both the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* specify ‘[a]ll peoples have the right of self-determination’ in their first article. How-

---

9 The student nationalists include Brian Kai-ping Leung, Keyvin Chun-kit Wong, Hiu-nok Tso, and Jack Kai-dik Lee.

10 Stalin (1913) defines nation as ‘a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.’

11 For clarity, this work uses ‘Hongkongese’ to refer to the Hong Kong nation and ‘Hongkonger’ to refer to the people in Hong Kong.
ever, even though China is a member of United Nation and signatory of both covenants, it has never fulfilled the obligation, but instead prevented the Hong Kong people from realising their rights to self-determination through political and diplomatic means. After the People’s Republic of China replaced the Republic of China as the legal representative of China in the United Nation, it requested the removal of Hong Kong and Macau from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, thereby blocking the development of the cities’ self-government. The student nationalists also cite the incident during the 1982 meeting between Deng Xiaoping, China’s then paramount leader, and Margaret Thatcher, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in which Deng threatened to take over Hong Kong ‘within one afternoon’ so as to block the proposed democratic reform in Hong Kong (cf. Gittings, 1993).

The student nationalists believe that it is vital to fight for the right to national determination. They argue that under One Country, Two Systems, the Chief Executive is appointed by Beijing and policy formulation is restrained by China. Hong Kong cannot put its interest first and this frustration feeds the conflict between Hong Kong and China. They also believe that, if Hong Kong becomes independent, it can be free from the interference of outside forces; Hongkongers could write their own constitution and adopt any form of government; the judiciary can claim back the power of judicial interpretation from China; Hong Kong can oversee the immigration applications, which are currently approved unilaterally by Chinese officials; and Hong Kong can finally be an equal member in the international community.

The version of nationalism put forward by the student nationalists is the one that matches peripheral nationalism the best, which defines nationalism as the resistance against the assimilation of the centralising state and seeks to secede from its host state (see Chapter 2).

6.5.2 A Democratic Hong Kong within China

On the other end of the spectrum, Fong and collaborators have the most conservative plan of all. In the introduction of Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong, Fong explains that there exists three ‘imaginations’ of Hong Kong’s future. The first imagination is the ‘Democratic Reunification Theory’, which presumes that China will gradually become more democratic over time, and that would in turn provide more room for Hong Kong to democratise. The second imagination is independence and state-building, he argues
that both Chin’s and the student nationalists’ theory presume the Chinese communist regime will eventually collapse, and therefore Hong Kong could break free from Beijing’s control and pursue self-determination. However, Fong believes that the first imagination was crushed by the Beijing in 2015 when the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress ruled out all possible means to genuine democracy while the second imagination remains a political prophecy. It is therefore important to seek a third way, namely internal self-determination.

Hong Kong is currently a special administrative region within the People’s Republic of China. In accordance with China’s commitments in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, Hong Kong shall implement One Country, Two Systems following the principles of ‘the Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong’ with ‘a high degree of autonomy’. Fong believes that the broadest consensus among Hong Kong people is not to change the constitutional status, but to achieve democratic self-government. Fong therefore proposes a ‘dual leadership system’ to deal with the problem of ‘dual accountability’. Under the current system, the Chief Executive is accountable to both the Hong Kong people and Beijing, but the former and the latter often have irreconcilable differences in values, political understandings, and preferences. He argues for a new system in which the Chief Secretary for Administration has to acquire mandates from the legislature, be accountable to Hong Kong people, and be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the government while the Chief Executive will become a non-partisan leader, selected by and accountable to Beijing, and responsible for the ‘high politics’ such as constitutional issues, national security, Hong Kong-China relations, and foreign affairs.

Out of the three political futures aspired by the intellectuals, Fong’s proposal is the closest to the political goals of stateless nationalism described by Keating and McCrone; it is best understood as an autonomous political arrangement within the central state rather than a clear-cut independence (see discussion in Chapter 2). On the one hand, the Beijing selected Chief Executive represents the acceptance of Chinese rule; on the other hand, the Chief Secretary for Administration elected by the legislature resembles the Prime Minister in parliamentary systems. His proposal can be thought of as a pragmatic approach to

---

12 In the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, while allowing universal suffrage, the committee rules that ‘the Chief Executive shall be a person who loves the country and loves Hong Kong’ and requires that ‘the method for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage must provide corresponding institutional safeguards for this purpose.’ It states that a nominating committee, consisted of pro-Beijing members, must be formed to filter the candidates before they can join the election (NPCSC, 2015)
maximise democratic elements within an authoritarian state, instead of breaking free.

In 2017, Fong and his collaborators published a sequel, *Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong II: Thinking about the future of Hong Kong from the world*, in which they collectively analyse seven autonomous entities to provide insight into the possible future of Hong Kong, including Scotland, Quebec, Catalonia, Åland Islands, Greenland, South Tyrol, and Norfolk Island (Fong, 2017c). As the book title has already suggested, the book has an obvious purpose:

By placing Hong Kong-China relations under the centre-periphery framework, we can consider Hong Kong’s future from a comparative perspective – the struggle between the centre and the periphery is not a unique phenomenon in the world. From a comparative perspective, we can reflect on Hong Kong-China relations by observing the cases of autonomous entities around the world, broaden the imagination about Hong Kong’s future, and find a way to maximise Hong Kong’s autonomy (Fong, 2017c, p. 10).

Fong distinguishes the concept of self-determination into external self-determination and internal self-determination, the former refers to the right of a people to determine their own political status, including succession, while the latter refers to the right of a people to govern themselves without outside interference. Fong and his collaborators argue that Hong Kong people should strive for the rights to internal self-determination.

Fong and his collaborators’ intellectual effort captures the intelligentsia’s role as described by Hroch. Not only did they attempt to spread national consciousness, but their works are also ‘as much national as scientific’ (Hroch, 1985, p. 23). Although they follow certain academic practices in their writing such as the use of citation and academic language, the final goal of their work is not academic output in tradition outlets, for example academic journals. Although all the authors are young political scientists and sociologists, none of their original research interests are related to the country they investigated. For example, Brian Fong, Max Wong, and Chan Chi Kit are faculty members of the Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong University, and the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong respectively, their research focuses on Hong Kong; Victor Hoi-yu Ng is a lecturer at the Education University of Hong Kong and his research focuses on Hong Kong and Singapore. They have not done any data collection in their studies of self-governing entities and most of the findings come from secondary sources. In this sense, the book can be best regarded as comprehensive literature reviews of the countries than original...
academic outputs. As the authors have admitted in the introduction of the book, the main purpose of their scholarly work is to gain insight on Hong Kong’s future, rather than producing original academic findings.

### 6.5.3 The Chinese Confederation

Chin Wan’s grand plan for Hong Kong’s future lies somewhere between two extremes as represented by Fong and the student nationalists’ theory. His plan encompasses two stages. In the short term, Chin argues that Hong Kong should seek to perpetuate the Basic Law. In the long term, Hong Kong should found a Chinese Confederation with China, Taiwan, Macau, and other Asian countries that were historically subjected to ancient China’s cultural influence, such as Singapore, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia.

Even though Chin (2015, 2016) repeatedly uses the term state-building (*chengbang jianguo*). He explains that he is not seeking for independence, but a gradual process to obtain tacit understanding with Beijing so as to consolidate the self-rule of Hong Kong and expand the autonomy of Hong Kong as a vassal state of China.

In *Discourse on City-state Sovereignty*, Chin (2015) outlines three steps for his short-term plan for Hong Kong’s future. According to Chin, the core issue of Hong Kong’s problem is the ambiguity surrounding its autonomy: it is not clear if Beijing sees Hong Kong as a quasi-nation, vassal state, or direct-controlled municipality. To solve the problem, since a constitution with an expiration date is inoperable, Hong Kong must renegotiate with Beijing to substantiate the border and perpetuate the Basic Law. Therefore, the first step is to negotiate with Beijing to define Hong Kong’s sovereignty so as to resolve the conflict between Hong Kong and China’s interest. Chin’s grand plan does not stop at Hong Kong’s border. After consolidating Hong Kong’s sovereignty, Hong Kong should negotiate with China to expand its jurisdiction beyond Hong Kong’s border and gradually take over Shenzhen, Dongguan, and Huizhou, three cities located north of Hong Kong. These cities should adopt Hong Kong’s legal system and common law similar to the One Country, Two Systems in Hong Kong. The third and final step is to define Hong Kong citizenship, including clearing the questions around citizenship, taxation, and civic allegiance. Hong Kong should levy tax on foreign income and impose residence and taxation requirements for obtaining Hong Kong citizenship and the rights to social welfare. Chin’s ambitious plan can be regarded as a state-building nationalism in the sense that, on top of substantiating Hong Kong’s autonomy, he seeks to assimilate culturally distinc-
tive territories into the Hong Kong state. He thus subverted the peripheral nationalism understanding of Hong Kong nationalism (cf. Fong, 2017b; Wu, 2016), in his theory Hong Kong is seen as the new centre and China the new periphery.

A year after, Chin published a sequel, Discourse on City-state Sovereignty II: The Politics of Hope, in which he further elaborates his idea of statehood and spells out his long-term plan. He argues that after 1997, the Hong Kong state has ‘already been founded’ since the Basic Law has already warranted Hong Kong the de facto sovereignty to become a ‘quasi country’. He also argues that the relation between Hong Kong and China is a special state-to-state relation. The purpose of his theory is to point out that the Hong Kong-China relationship is similar to a confederation. However, he claims that such status is not openly acknowledged by Beijing, but remains a tacit agreement, and this is the purpose of the renegotiation. As a first step, Hong Kong should seek to consolidate the confederation relations with China by revising the Basic Law. According to Chin, due to preservation of orthodox Chinese culture, Hong Kong can rejuvenate Chinese culture and become the leader of the new Chinese Confederation. He believes that the Confederation should starts with four countries: Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and Macau. And it can even expand to include other Asian countries historically under China’s cultural influence, such as Singapore, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia. It is important to note that, even though Chin calls himself a ‘realist’, much of the ‘grand plan’ seems more fanciful than realistic. Although he pictured a bright future for the Chinese Confederation, there is no mention of how the Confederation would actually operate and how to persuade these separate sovereign states to join.

6.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that, even though all the representations of Hong Kong nationalism operate under the same societal context, with the access to the same corpus of historical materials, and against the same significant other of China, their construction of the ‘Hongkongese’ nation differs significantly. From the descendants of the Yue kingdom that lived generations next to the Chinese empire, to the free spirits who left home for

13The same term was used by Lee Teng-hui, the former President of the Republic of China, to define the relations between China and Taiwan. Lee also argued that there was no need for Taiwan to declare independence since the Republic of China had always been an independent country since its founding (Sheng, 2002)
CHAPTER 6. INVENTION OF THE NATION

the promise of freedom, and the adherents of Chinese culture who preserve the authentic culture while it was corrupted elsewhere, intellectuals have adopted different strategies to assign new meaning to fragments of history.

On the aspirations for the future, the political plans proposed by the intellectuals span the whole spectrum of autonomous political arrangements echoing different kinds of nationalism; we can observe the clear-cut independence implied by peripheral nationalism, the autonomous regional governance supported by many stateless nations, and the unprecedented Chinese Confederation that echoes the assimilationist features of state-building nationalism.

These observations echo Duara’s (1995) assertion that nationalism is never the sole representation of a nation, but it is the site where different representations of the nation compete, negotiate, and interact with each other. Using Hroch’s (1985) A-B-C schema as a lens for understanding the movements, the intellectuals’ endeavour correspond with Phase A. After the theoretical groundwork has been laid, the next key task of nation-building is to propagate the discourse constructed by the intellectuals to the wider public, namely Phase B. With so many conflicting discourses in play, the question is therefore which of them can permeate across different actors of the whole nationalist movement. In next chapter, I will attempt to address this question by exploring the discourse of nationalism that is adopted by the nationalist activists.
Chapter 7

Facebook as Phase B: National Agitation on Social Media

In Hroch’s (1985) A-B-C schema, he divided national movements into three Phases. Phase A, the period of scholarly interest, is characterised by the devolution of scholarly enquiry into and the advocacy of linguistic, cultural, historical attributes of the non-dominant group. Phase B, the period of patriotic agitation, features a range of activities that seek to ‘awaken’ national consciousness among the members of the non-dominant social group. Only when national identity become well-received by the majority of the population can a nationalist movement enter Phase C, defined as the rise of a mass national movement (Hroch, 1993; Maxwell, 2010). In addition to the schema, Hroch (1993) also suggests three preconditions that are crucial for the formation of a nation, namely memory of a common past, linguistic or cultural ties that pave ways for strong social communication within the group rather than outside it, and a conception of civil society.

In Chapter 6, I discussed the nationalist intellectuals’ inquiry into Hong Kong’s past and how they make use of history to promote nationalism. Their endeavour can be considered Phase A. The present chapter shifts the focus to the nationalist activists and their activities on Facebook and analyses how they attempt to promote nationalism among Hongkongers. As discussed in Chapter 4, Facebook is selected as a data source due to its importance in political communication and mobilisation in Hong Kong: it has a high penetration rate; it is a major source for Hong Kong people to receive political news (Chan, Chen and Lee, 2017; Lee, So and Leung, 2015); and it is also an important platform for political mobilisation and served as the primary channel for mobilisation during Umbrella

Using Hroch’s schema, the activists’ endeavours to awaken Hongkongers’ national consciousness through Facebook can be regarded as Phase B. Due to the linguistic barrier and China’s Facebook ban, Facebook also serves as a platform where social communication among Hongkongers can take place, as many mainland Chinese would have difficulty understanding the activists’ posts, which are often written in Cantonese, or even accessing Facebook. This chapter will analyse the strategy adopted by the activists to instil Hong Kong nationalism and discuss how their discourse resembles the key elements of successful nationalist movements as observed by Hroch (1993), particularly the crisis of legitimacy and nationally relevant conflicts of interest. This chapter therefore addresses the following sub-questions of my research: ‘How does Hong Kong nationalism interpret the present issues facing Hong Kong?’ (RQ 1(b)).

In this chapter, I will first offer an overview of the activity of the Facebook pages throughout the study period. The main focus of this chapter will be using Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) to identify the major elements of the discursive constitution. After that, I will discuss the count-based approach employed by many social studies and its limitations in identifying the core concepts of the online discourse. Instead, I propose a topic network approach. Instead of topic frequencies, the topic network approach draws on the centrality measurement of social network analysis to identify the core topics within the topic network. In order to gain understanding about the nuances of the discourse, texts of the key topics are analysed further with qualitative content analysis.

7.1 Data

The data comprises the Facebook pages of three major nationalist organisations in Hong Kong and their key figures. A total of 7 Facebook pages were selected, including Hong Kong Indigenous (HKI) and its then spokesman Edward Tin-kei Leung, Youngspiration (YP) and its then convener Leung Chung-hang and election candidate Yau Wai-ching, and Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) and its then convener Chan Ho-tin. The selection was based on the key actors identified by literature on Hong Kong nationalism (See

---

1 A Facebook page is a public profile created for businesses, causes, and other organisations. All posts on pages are public, and pages can gain a wider audience and cultivate clients or supporters people choose to ‘like’ a page.
Chapter 3) and the availability of the data. All posts between the creation date of the Facebook pages and 31 January 2018 were collected.

Table 7.1: Description of Facebook Pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Post Count</th>
<th>Avg. Char.</th>
<th>First Post</th>
<th>Last Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Indigenous</td>
<td>4135</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>2015-01-21</td>
<td>2018-01-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leung Tin-kei</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2016-07-23</td>
<td>2017-07-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngspiration</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>2015-02-07</td>
<td>2018-01-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leung Chung-hang</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>2016-08-10</td>
<td>2017-08-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yau Wai-ching</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>2016-05-16</td>
<td>2018-01-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong National Party</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>2016-03-16</td>
<td>2018-01-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chan Ho-tin</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>2016-07-24</td>
<td>2018-01-24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1 summarises the descriptive statistics of the corpus. The figures revealed different patterns of posting behaviour on Facebook. Among the organisations, Hong Kong Indigenous is the most active with 4135 posts in total and was also the first to establish their online presence. Hong Kong National Party is the newest in terms of Facebook presence and the least active in terms of post count, but they also have the longest average post length of 89.9 characters per post. All the key figures are less active than their organisations on Facebook.

Figure 7.1 shows the trend line of their post count aggregated by month. Two patterns can be observed: the first is the rise and fall of the post counts in response to the political events in Hong Kong. The Facebook activities of the nationalists peaked in February 2016 during the ‘Fishball Revolution’, a civil unrest triggered by the government’s crackdown on unlicensed street hawkers, and the 2016 Legislative Council by-election. The post count surged again in August when the first pro-independence rally in Hong Kong was organised after five nationalist candidates were barred from running in the election. However, the post count declined drastically after the Oath-taking Saga, during which two elected nationalist lawmakers were disqualified due to their political stance.

In order to offer a quick glimpse into the corpus, a word cloud of the most frequent terms was generated (Figure 7.2(a)), the font size is determined by the frequency of the term; the higher the frequency, the larger the word. A corresponding word cloud of

---

2 Although Chin Wan is regarded as one of the key figures of Hong Kong nationalism and is active on Facebook, he only has a personal account which is irretrievable through Facebook’s Graph API; there is currently no legitimate channel to extract data from his personal account.
CHAPTER 7. FACEBOOK AS PHASE B

Figure 7.1: Post Count of Facebook Pages by Month

![Graph showing post count of Facebook pages by month.]

the translated terms was also generated (Figure 7.2(b)). All the 17,224 terms in the corpus were translated into English using the Google Cloud Translation API. The top 30 terms and their frequency are shown in Table 7.2. ‘China’ is the most frequent term in the corpus. Along with the frequent occurrences of ‘government’, ‘CCP’ (Chinese Communist Party), and ‘regime’, the result seems to provide support to the theories that regard Hong Kong nationalism as a peripheral nationalism triggered by the Chinese state. ‘Election’ is the third most frequent term in the corpus, echoing the trend observed in Figure 7.1 in which the post count peaked during election times.

As the activists are all nationalists who seek to pursue national self-determination or independence, it is not surprising to see ‘independence’, ‘native’, and ‘nationality’ among the top terms. ‘Colonial’ is also one of the top terms, but it might require further investigation since it could not only mean British colonialism but also ‘Chinese colonialism’, a term used by the nationalists to describe China’s assimilation effort.

Top term table and word cloud allow us to gauge the overall frequency of each word’s occurrence, they, however, are limited in revealing the context of how a term is actually used. Therefore, the following sections will focus on topic modelling. Simply put, instead of the overall frequency, topic modelling clusters words around topics, which will allow us

---

While the translations were not perfect, it is the best available solution deal to the vast quantity. All the analysis was conducted with original Chinese text, and therefore the errors in the translation will not affect the estimations below.
CHAPTER 7. FACEBOOK AS PHASE B

Figure 7.2: Word Cloud of Most Frequent Terms on Facebook Pages

Table 7.2: Top 30 Terms on Facebook Pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>中國</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>1561</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>民族</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>政府</td>
<td>government</td>
<td>1227</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>港人</td>
<td>Hong Kong people</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>選舉</td>
<td>election</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>選民</td>
<td>voter</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>支持</td>
<td>stand by</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>民族黨</td>
<td>National party</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>獨立</td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>民主</td>
<td>democracy</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>政治</td>
<td>political</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>光復</td>
<td>recovery</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>問題</td>
<td>problem</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>抗爭</td>
<td>Fight</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>議員</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>繼續</td>
<td>carry on</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>本土</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>組織</td>
<td>organization</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>立法會</td>
<td>Legislative Council</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>時間</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>市民</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>政權</td>
<td>regime</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>社會</td>
<td>society</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>自由</td>
<td>free</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>希望</td>
<td>hope</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>參與</td>
<td>participate</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>街站</td>
<td>Street Station</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>殖民</td>
<td>colonial</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>中共</td>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>社區</td>
<td>community</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to reveal the themes within the text by analysing what those clusters of words represent.

7.2 Topic Modelling with Latent Dirichlet Allocation

Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) was first introduced by Blei, Ng and Jordan (2003). It is one of the most popular algorithms for topic modelling, a computational text analysis technique that can be used to reveal the ‘hidden’ thematic structure of a corpus (Blei, 2012; Maier et al., 2018). LDA is useful in identifying the recurring themes within text corpora. The objective of the LDA algorithm is to model a comprehensive representation of the corpus by inferring latent content variables, referred to as topics. Topics in this sense can be imagined as latent categories of the content. The key advantage of LDA is that topics are inferred from a given collection of documents without the need for any prior knowledge about the content. Since topics are latent, no information about them is directly observable in the data. The LDA algorithm overcomes this problem by inferring topics from recurring patterns of word occurrence in documents. In LDA, a document can be conceptualised as a random mixture of latent topics (Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003). In other words, LDA assumes that all documents in the corpus share the same set of topics, but each document exhibits each topic in different proportions depending on word usage (Ambrosino et al., 2018). A topic, on the other hand, is defined by the words that co-occur with high probability. For the sake of illustration, below is a topic extracted from the model (see Appendix E for details on model estimation and selection):

Hong Kong Nation: Nationality, China, colonial, sovereignty, Nationalism

The top five words of the topic ‘Hong Kong Nation’ include ‘Nationality’, ‘China’, ‘colonial’, ‘sovereignty’, and ‘Nationalism’. Therefore, if a significant amount of these words exist together in the same text, the text is probably about the topic of the Hong Kong Nation. It is important to note that this is a simplified view of the topic. In the topic model, all words of each topic are ranked by a probability score ($\beta$), and some words are more important than the other for distinguishing a topic. By considering the probability of all the words within a document and their corresponding topics, we can estimate the most probable topic of a given document. To account for situations where a common word (for example, Hong Kong) exists in most of the documents and therefore is not useful in distinguishing the topics, a relevance score is calculated by considering a word of a given topic’s prevalence in other topics. In other words, how relevant is the word to the topic.
Table 7.3: Validated Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Label</th>
<th>Translation of Top Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Election and Legislative Council</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Campaign Booths</td>
<td>Street Station, Export, Tai Po, Sha Tin, Tseung Kwan O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Election Ad</td>
<td>To understanding, Election advertisement, The people, pages, Election donation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Call for Vote</td>
<td>recovery, Time revolution, vote, team, New Territories West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Community Work</td>
<td>community, Huangpu, District council, Tsing Yi, Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Vote Count</td>
<td>Monitoring, Claim, Counting, vote, Ticket station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Volunteer</td>
<td>Volunteer, recruit, Year, Channel, All together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 LegCo</td>
<td>Member, Legislative Council, Chairman, meeting, Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voter Registration</strong></td>
<td>voter, Registration, remember, friend, By the side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disqualification of Lawmakers and Election Candidates</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Rule of Law</td>
<td>Oath, Rule of law, appeal, Interpretation, Judicial review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Freedom &amp; Rights</td>
<td>free, right, file, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Publish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 Election Interference</td>
<td>election, candidate, Candidate, Nomination, Legislative Council election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>China threat</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Genuine Election</td>
<td>CPC, democracy, Chief executive, general election, Self-determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Causeway Bay Books</td>
<td>Lin Rongji, Causeway Bay Bookstore, Safety, Li Bo, Kidnapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Political Prosecution</td>
<td>regime, Hong Kong, government, Suppress, Hong Kong people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Cultural Invasion</td>
<td>student, school, culture, Language, Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protest</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Police</td>
<td>Policemen, Police officer, defendant, riot, Assaulting police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 FEHD</td>
<td>Mong Kok, Citizen, night market, Hawker, turn up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Protest &amp; Rally</td>
<td>assembly, attend, time, date, General Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Support for the Arrested</td>
<td>support, Arrested, provide, Pay attention, assist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Action &amp; Protest</td>
<td>member, organization, action, Solidarity, Demonstrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 Struggle &amp; Resistance</td>
<td>Fight, peace, success, force, technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Events</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Network Article 23</td>
<td>Concern group, Tuen Mun, The internet, attention, power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 University</td>
<td>Student union, the University, Hong Kong university, School committee, professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Medical Council</td>
<td>Doctors, profession, Committee, Independence, government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Public Transportation</td>
<td>High-speed rail, airport, Minibus, engineering, mainland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 MPF</td>
<td>retirement, Protection, Accumulation, An old, Surrender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 June 4</td>
<td>Six four, democracy, Federation, Meditation, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Economy</td>
<td>society, economic, Disparity, income, Features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Localism and Nationalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Battle of Hong Kong</td>
<td>history, commemorate, Heavy light, defense, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Localism</td>
<td>Native, Immigration, interest, thought, culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 Hong Kong Nation</td>
<td>Nationality, China, colonial, sovereignty, Nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internationalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 UK &amp; Colonial HK</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Beijing, Chinese, autonomy, Yang Muqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 International Support</td>
<td>National party, independent, Taiwan, Independent, Advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 China &amp; the World</td>
<td>China, United States, International, country, world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sport</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sport</td>
<td>football, Hong Kong team, Live broadcast, Come on, Congratulations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All validated topics are described in Table 7.3. For the presentation’s purpose, I have grouped the topics into eight categories. The following figures show the most relevant words of each topic within the corresponding categories. The y-axis shows the words and the x-axis the relevance score, the lower the value, the more relevant the topic to the topic in question (see Appendix E for details about the validation process and calculation of relevance score).

Election and Legislative Council (Figure 7.3) is the largest category with 8 topics centred around the Legislative Council election. These topics revolve around the election campaign, voter mobilisation, and recruitment of volunteers. Related to the Election and Legislative Council category is the Disqualification of Lawmakers and Election Candidates category (Figure 7.4), which concern the election ban on nationalist candidates and the later disqualification of elected nationalist lawmakers. The category China Threat (Figure 7.5) also touches on the issues concerning genuine election, but it extends the concerns to Causeway Bay Books disappearances and the idea of cultural invasion in general.\(^4\)

---

\(^4\) Five staffs of Causeway Bay Books went missing in 2005. They were found out to be detained in mainland China. The bookstore was frequented by mainland Chinese tourist, and it sold a large number of political books forbidden in China.
The category Political Events (Figure 7.6) consists of seven political events that are less central to the discursive constitution of Hong Kong nationalism (further discussion on the centrality below), including the Memorials for the June 4 Massacre, Internet Article 23, University of Hong Kong pro-vice-chancellor selection controversy, the reform of the Medical Council of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Express Rail Link controversy, Mandatory Provident Fund reform, and poverty.

Protest (Figure 7.7) is another sizeable category, with six topics centred around protests and rallies as well as discussions about the police and Food and Environmental Hygiene Department officers, who were responsible for the crackdown on the hawker’s market that triggered the civil unrest in 2016.
CHAPTER 7. FACEBOOK AS PHASE B

Figure 7.6: Political Events

Figure 7.7: Protest

The category Localism and Nationalism (Figure 7.8) includes the discussions on Hong Kong as a nation, the idea of localism, and the Battle of Hong Kong. Internationalism (Figure 7.9) includes discussions about the United Kingdom, international support for Hong Kong nationalism, and also China’s relationship with the world. Sport (Figure 7.10) is a single topic category that covers Hong Kong’s appearance in international sports events and athlete’s success.

The Battle of Hong Kong was a battle took place in Hong Kong between Japanese and British (and later joined by Canadian) forces during World War II (cf. Kwong and Tsoi, 2014; Tsang, 2004). The soldiers were commemorated by the nationalists as heroes who died protecting Hong Kong.

---

5 The Battle of Hong Kong was a battle took place in Hong Kong between Japanese and British (and later joined by Canadian) forces during World War II (cf. Kwong and Tsoi, 2014; Tsang, 2004). The soldiers were commemorated by the nationalists as heroes who died protecting Hong Kong.
This section briefly introduced the content of the topics found in the text corpus. The next task for understanding overall discourse is to identify the ‘key’ topics. In the next two sections, I will first introduce the widely employed count-based approach and discuss its limitations and propose an innovative approach that could avoid the potential drawbacks.

### 7.3 Count-based Approach

The chapter thus far has shown what the nationalist activists interpret the present issues facing Hong Kong to be. To fully achieve the overall goal of understanding the discursive constitution of Hong Kong nationalism, it is essential to gauge the relative importance of these issues within the discourse and reveal what concepts or issues are in
the central position connecting various elements of the discourse into a coherent whole.

Content analysis, defined as ‘the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics’ (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 1), is widely employed in social sciences and also in studies of nationalism. It includes both human-coded analyses and computer-aided text analysis and can be used on a wide range of research materials. The main goal of quantitative content analysis is to produce counts of key variables (Neuendorf, 2017; Curtis and Curtis, 2011; Fink, 2009). These variables can be the presence of frames (cf. Herzog, 2009), media coverage (cf. Schenk, 2012), or pre-defined terms (cf. Fong, 2019, 2017b; Lauenstein et al., 2015). Following the same logic, techniques from content analysis can also be used on the counts of topics.

A common technique of content analysis is to look at the overall prevalence; the more prevalent the topic, the more important the topic is assumed to be. In this section, I will first explore top topics in terms of their overall prevalence. I will then discuss the limitation of the count-based approach and introduce an alternative in the next section.

Figure 7.11 shows the total count of each individual topic. It is observed that the topics in the Election and Legislative Council category are accountable for the most posts within the whole corpus, with Campaign Booths being the most prevalent single topic of all. Figure 7.12(a) is an example of the post within the Campaign Booths topic. The post was posted by HKI on 21 July 2016; the caption goes ‘HKI will go to North District, Tai Po, Ma On Shan, Shatin, and Tseung Kwan O to set up campaign booths this weekend to promote the philosophy of our organisation. If you are passing by, please feel free to come and chat with our volunteers! See you at the station!’ It also contains a ‘campaign booths schedule’ which lists all the times, dates, and locations of planned campaign activities.

Figure 7.12(b) is an example of the post of the Call for Vote topic. It features a photo of Leung Chung-hang, a candidate of the Legislative Council election. The post text urges voters to go to vote.

Sport is the third most prevalent single topic within the whole corpus. Given the political nature of the Facebook pages, the result is somewhat surprising. Figure 7.13 is two examples of the Sport topic. Figure 7.13(a) was a post before the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification match, in which Hong Kong was playing against China. The post calls the audience to mark the date. Figure 7.13(b) was posted after the 2016 Summer Olympics. The post was titled ‘Hong Kong athletes are not rubbish, but undefeated lions’, the former part of the title was adopted from Lee Lai-shan’s famous phrase, who declared in an interview that ‘Hong Kong athletes are not rubbish’ after she won the historic first
Figure 7.11: Topic Count
Olympic gold medal in windsurfing for the Hong Kong team in 1996. The post presented the record made by Hong Kong athletes during the Olympic games and listed the names of all athletes representing Hong Kong.

The above analysis has identified Campaign Booths, Call for Vote, and Sport as the three most prevalent topics while the amount of posts related to Localism and Nationalism is comparatively small. However, as I will go on to argue, despite their relatively small amount, they are indeed the central concept of the discourse.

Before turning to the topic network approach, I will further explore another strategy of content analysis: looking at trends over a certain period. The strategy is frequently adopted to study social phenomenon. For example, changes in the mentions of pre-defined terms by newspapers are used to show the growth of self-determination rhetoric in the public sphere in Hong Kong (cf. Fong, 2019) and the rise of peripheral nationalism in Hong Kong (cf. Fong, 2017b).

Figure 7.14 shows the monthly frequency of the topics. In order to identify the top topics, all the topics with post count over 50 in a single month are highlighted. Among the highlighted posts, almost all of them are related to the elections. Election Ad peaked during the Legislative Council by-election in February 2016 while Call for Vote and Campaign
Booths peaked during the Legislative Council election in September 2016. Similarly, the topic Community Work peaked in November 2015 during the District Council election, an election for the local councils in Hong Kong. The election ban and the later disqualification of the elected lawmakers mentioned in the last section also led to a surge in the topics of Election Interference and Oath-taking Saga in August and November respectively.

Based on the analysis of overall prevalence and trend, one might be tempted to draw the conclusion that elections and campaigns are the most important elements in the discourse, as a count-based approach would suggest. However, such an approach treats all topics as isolated entities and therefore neglects the relationship among them. The trend analysis also shows that some of the topics are only disproportionately prevalent during very specific periods of time and a simple count-based approach will direct the analysis to focus on these periods, which is not the most appropriate way to achieve the goal of understanding the overall discourse across time.

Furthermore, it is vital to recognise the fact that texts, including social media posts, are not created for the purpose of being researched, but to communicate (Benoit, 2020). The purpose of a post can be to issue a response, ask a question, call for support, discuss an idea, and so on. Based on the purpose, some posts are more relevant than others to the
discourse. The count-based approach assumes all texts matter to the discourse equally, and this assumption is problematic and potentially misleading. It will not allow us to identify the core topics, and therefore core texts, for further investigation.

Hence, the next section will move beyond the count-based approach and adopt a network approach. I will show that the core concepts of the discourse are not necessarily the most abundant topics, and the most prevalent topics only employ fringe positions within the topic network.

### 7.4 Topic Network Approach

Political discourse can be understood as a network of interconnected concepts (Sutherland, 2012); the concepts within a discourse do not exist in isolation; they are dependent on each other in various ways. Seeing discourse as a network will allow us to gain understanding about political discourse using techniques from social network analysis (Leifeld, 2016). Social network analysis concerns a set of nodes and the relation among them, referred to as edges. For discourse networks, nodes can be defined at various levels including actors (cf. Leifeld, 2016; Hurka and Nebel, 2013; Wagner and Payne, 2017; Bail, 2016), frames (cf. Hurka and Nebel, 2013; Wagner and Payne, 2017), concepts (cf. Leifeld and Haunss, 2012), and terms (cf. Rule, Cointet and Bearman, 2015) while edges denote the discursive similarity between them. Like nodes, there are various ways to measure
discursive similarity, including co-occurrence of frames, concepts, and terms as well as common statements between two actors.

In this section, I propose a novel method that combines social network analysis and topic modelling. The topics identified by the topic model are represented as nodes and the discursive similarity between the topics are represented as edges. To construct the network, first of all, the beta values, namely the probability of a word occurring in a topic, of all terms were extracted from the word-topic assignment matrix (see Appendix E for description). Afterwards, Pearson’s correlation coefficients between the beta values of all topics were estimated, and a correlation matrix was generated. Statistically speaking, if two topics are likely to use the same set of words, the beta values of these words will be high in both of the topics, resulting in higher correlation coefficient between these topics. So understood, the values in the correlation matrix can be regarded as the semantic distance between the topics.

Figure 7.15 displays the network representation of the correlation matrix. As mentioned above, every node represents one topic, and the edges between them denote the semantic association. The strength of the edges is determined by the value of the correlation coefficient. Since the correlation matrix will only yield a complete graph, in which all nodes are connected with every other node, a cut-off point has to be specified so that weak edges (weak correlation coefficients) can be removed. Once again, there is no established rule to select the optimal value. I adopted the value at the 80th percentile since it provides the best interpretability for identifying the core concepts within the discourse; the graph produced with a higher cut-off value will be too sparse to discern any pattern while that with a lower value will be too dense to interpret. Due to the nature of the cut-off point, only the strongest 20 per cent of the edges will remain. The size of the nodes was determined by degree centrality, namely the number of nodes a node is connected to (Scott, 2000). Nodes with higher degree centrality will be larger. The position of the nodes was determined by the Fruchterman-Reingold algorithm (Fruchterman and Reingold, 1991), a force-directed layout algorithm; two nodes with a stronger edge between them will be closer together while a densely connected group of nodes will cluster around the same area. The strengths of the association between topics are visualised by the colour of the edges. The edges above 99th, 95th, 90th, and 80th percentile are coloured red, dark red, grey, light grey respectively.
Figure 7.15: Topic Network of Hong Kong Nationalism
In a discourse analysis sense, the network can be seen as a visual representation of the Hong Kong nationalism discourse constructed by the nationalists through their Facebook pages. The nodes can be seen as different themes in the discursive construction, and the edges between them can be interpreted as their associations; the closer the nodes, the stronger the association. Themes with higher degree centrality, therefore presented by a larger node, are more central in the discourse in the sense that these themes have strong relationships with more themes. In other words, they are the key concepts that connect all other concepts into a big coherent picture.

The network exhibits a core-periphery structure in which the topics within the core are closely connected while the connection between those at the periphery are sparse. Although the count-based approach above has shown that topics related to election are the most prevalent topics in terms of post count (for example, Campaign Booths, Call for Vote, Community Work, Election Ad, and Volunteer), these topics only occupy a periphery position in the discourse network with the exception of Election Inference. In other words, although election-related topics are frequently mentioned by the nationalist, they are not the key issues that unite the nationalism discourse.

To identify the core topics, Table 7.4 lists the top 10 topics based on degree centrality. The higher the amount of the connection, the more central the node in the discourse network. Election Interference is the topic with the most edges of 18; it also serves as the bridge between election-related topics and the main cluster. Other core topics include Rule of Law and Freedom & Rights with a degree of 17, followed by Localism and International Support with 16, Hong Kong Nation and Economy with 15, Genuine Election and Political Prosecution with 14, and finally Struggle & Resistance with 13. The measure of degree centrality is in line with the observation from the network visualisation, as these topics all occupy a core location in the network.

Table 7.5 lists the strongest edges in the whole network. It can be observed that Localism has the strongest edges with Economy and Hong Kong Nation, which in turn is strongly associated with International Support, Genuine Election, and June 4 Massacre. Rule of Law is also strongly connected with Freedom & Rights. These topics form a strongly connected cluster at the core of the network.

The above analysis has identified the core topics. While social network analysis offers us a holistic view of the discourse as at the date when the data are collected, the anal-

---

6 The June 4 Massacre is the brutal crackdown of the 1989 Chinese democracy movement by the Chinese government in which hundreds (some estimated thousands) were killed (Hong Kong Free Press, 2020).
The core topics can be roughly divided into four groups. The top-left panel (a) shows the topics belonging to the category of China Threat. They are recurring narratives.
of Hong Kong, accountable for around one-fifth of the core posts throughout the study period. These topics discuss issues that are conceived as the root of the recurring problems facing Hong Kong and also the background against which the Hong Kong nation is constructed.

The top-right panel (b) also contains discussions about social issues. Unlike the issues discussed in the category of China Threat which have a recurring nature, the issues are one-time incidents (although its effect can be long-lasting). The discussions in these topics are often framed in relation to relevant liberal values, such as freedom, political censorship, and the rule of law. The overlapping pattern also denotes the changing focus of discussion over the years.

The bottom-left panel (c) concerns the discourse on Localism and Nationalism. The topics concern the overarching goal of the thesis, the construction of ‘Hongkongese’, the homo [nationalis] of Hong Kong nationalism. As we can observe in the figure, there is a decreasing trend of Localism and an increasing trend of Hong Kong Nation. The opposite direction denotes the gradual transformation of the discourse around localism into that of nationalism.

The bottom-right panel (d) shows the posts related to Protest and Internationalism. They can be regarded as the actions the nationalist suggested to take in order to promote Hong Kong nationalism. We can once again observe a gradual transition. Throughout the study period, the focus on street protests was gradually shifted towards seeking international support.

The core topics will be further analysed with qualitative content analysis below.

### 7.5 Qualitative Analysis

Topic modelling allows us to discern the overall structure of the discourse and identify the issues and incidents mentioned within the corpus. However, quantitative analysis is limited in showing how these issues and incidents were used as a discursive resource by the nationalists. To achieve the research aim of revealing how Hong Kong nationalism interprets the present issues facing Hong Kong, I will turn to qualitative content analysis to reveal what strategies are employed by the nationalist to articulate responses to social issues. To do so, I take a census approach and analyse all Facebook posts of all the core topics qualitatively. The following sections present my findings.
CHAPTER 7. FACEBOOK AS PHASE B

7.5.1 China Threat

The notion of foreign threat is a crucial element of nationalism, as suggested by the literature. Hroch (1993) identifies three critical processes during Phase B: first, a crisis of the old order as well as new political or social tensions; second, the rise of popular grievances; and third, loss of faith in the values that sustained the old order. He argues that future research should direct attention to these aspects and discusses how the nationalists articulate responses in national terms. Echoing Hroch, this section discusses how the activists depict social problems as, to use Hroch’s term, a nationally relevant conflict of interests between Hongkongese and mainland Chinese.

Another body of literature relevant to the early Hong Kong nationalism discourse is the idea of peripheral nationalism. As discussed in Chapter 2, Hechter (2000) and Brass (1991) view nationalism as a resistance against the penetration of a centralising state. Following their theories, Wu (2016) and Fong (2017b) argue that China after 1997 can be considered a centralising state that threatens the identities and interests of a peripheral Hong Kong and eventually triggered a sense of resistance among Hongkongers against ‘Chinese invaders’. As this section will demonstrate, the idea of threats from China is a key component central to the nationalism discourse throughout the study period.

The following subsections will investigate two core topics that are relevant to the category of China Threat: Genuine Election and Political Prosecution.

7.5.1.1 Genuine Election

The discussion on Genuine Election was set against a protracted debate over the electoral reform of Hong Kong’s Chief Executive election. In the ruling issued in 2007 by National People’s Congress, the highest organ of state power of the People’s Republic of China, universal suffrage may finally be introduced in 2017 in Hong Kong for the election of the Chief Executive. If universal suffrage were implemented, the Chief Executive would be elected by a popular vote. However, the nomination process soon became the focal point of debate. There were widespread concerns that the nomination process would bar candidates regarded unfavourably by Beijing and therefore turning the election a ‘fake universal suffrage’ (jia puxuan). On 31 August 2014, the National People’s Congress issued a ‘decision’ that spelt out the arrangements for the 2017 Chief Executive election: a nominating committee comparable to the existing election committee must be formed. However, the election committee responsible for electing the Chief Executive under the
current arrangement has long been criticised for over-representing Beijing’s interests and the business sector. The decision also requires the candidate to secure support from more than half of the nominating committee members. The decision was widely seen by pro-democracy supporters as a blatant denial of ‘genuine universal suffrage’ (*zhen puxuan*) (Yuen, 2015). The debate about genuine election remains central to Hong Kong’s discussion on democratisation.

Against this background, the early posts of the topic revolved around two key points. First, the activists condemned the 31 August Decision as a violation of political rights, Basic Law, and international covenants. Second, it was depicted as an interference from China on Hong Kong’s autonomy.

The proposal for political reform under the 31 August Decision was seen as a ‘fake election’:

Universal suffrage means universal and equal elections; it means that everyone has the right to ‘vote’ and ‘to be elected.’ Under the 31 August Decision, Hong Kong people simply do not have the ‘right to be elected’. This is a screening, a fake election!7,8

On the eve of the voting for the 2015 Hong Kong electoral reform, YP further claimed in a post that:

The political reform proposal under the ‘31 August Decision’ violates Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that elections ‘must be popular and equal’. It severely suppresses the right of nomination and election in Hong Kong. It is a shame that the CCP and the Hong Kong Government formulated the plan!9

and that:

Both the decision of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress in 2004 and 2014 are acts of brutal trampling of the Basic Law by foreign political institutions.10

---

7 Unless specified otherwise, all quotations in this chapter are translated by the author.
10 *ibid.*
They also resorted to the Annex I of Basic Law, which stipulates the amendments of the Chief Executive selection method must obtain endorsement from the Legislative Council, to argue that Hong Kong’s democratisation should be within the scope of Hong Kong’s autonomy and should not be interfered with by Beijing.

The later posts on the topic condemn the undemocratic nature of the Chief Executive election. Following the rejection of political reform in 2015, the fifth Hong Kong Chief Executive election was held on 26 March 2017 using the original 1,200-strong election committee. Eventually, Carrie Lam, former Chief Secretary for Administration, defeated John Tsang, former Financial Secretary, and Woo Kwok-hing, retired judge. Despite the huge lead in the polls, Tsang struggled to secure enough nominations from the onset and eventually received only 365 votes and failed to beat Lam’s 777 votes (Connor, 2017). The incident was used by the nationalists to demonstrate the undemocratic nature of the Chief Executive election. They warned that, under the current election system, all the candidates need to earn Beijing’s trust so as to be elected:

John Tsang must win the trust of the CCP in order to defeat Carrie Lam. Therefore, Tsang must show that he will follow the direction of the CCP on issues such as the 31 August Decision and Article 23. His position is even clearer than that of Lam.  

Furthermore, they also pointed out the irrelevance of public opinion:

John Tsang is indeed the candidate with the greatest support from Hong Kong people; but in the presence of the CCP, the public opinion of Hong Kong people is irrelevant at all. ... If Hong Kong people so wish to have a government that values public opinion, then the government must be formed by Hong Kong people. When the Chinese government has no intention of opening up its ruling power, Hong Kong must gain independence in order to established a government that belongs to Hong Kong people. Only a country founded by Hong Kong people can protect Hong Kong people. Whether it is a simple and stable life or basic human rights and freedom, everything should start from this.


12 ibid.
According to the activists, under the current political system, there will never be a Chief Executive that values public opinion. Therefore, unless China begins to share its ruling power in Hong Kong, gaining independence is the only way to achieve genuine democracy.

7.5.1.2 Political Prosecution

Political Prosecution is another topic in the category of China Threat. The discourse of political prosecution began as early as 2015. In the wake of the conviction of four protesters of the Reclaim Yuen Long movement, HKI claimed that:

Since Umbrella Movement and Reclaim Movements, many protesters have been unreasonably arrested and prosecuted by the police, and they were convicted even though there were doubts or when there was evidence sufficient to show their innocence. On the contrary, many CCP thugs and black cops were repeatedly released and ran free... Is this the rule of law we have been guarding? When this core value has become a political tool that suppresses dissidents and becomes rotten, and when the system can no longer maintain fairness and justice, should we blindly believe, follow, and then waiting to be slaughtered?\(^{13}\)

The post went on to depict the police as well as the Hong Kong government as the puppets of the Chinese Communist Party. The arrests and convictions were deemed unreasonable and considered a breakdown of the rule of law. Since then, such narratives have been a recurring theme in the activists’ discourse.

When Leung Chung-hang and Yau Wai-ching were arrested for their attempt to force their way into the legislative council chamber in November to repeat their oaths after their first oath was ruled invalid, YP issued a statement calling the Hong Kong government an evil puppet of the Chinese government:

In this grave hour, Youngspiration wishes to send a message to all Hongkongers and all freedom-loving people in this world: over and over again, Hongkongers have tried to find a peaceful way to achieve what was promised in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which is to achieve democratic autonomy in Hong Kong, but it has been in vain. If we have to use one word to describe [the]

actions of the PRC government and its puppet in Hong Kong, we would say: EVIL. [The] pure evil of authoritarianism, which persecutes every dissenting voice, is against all values that Hong Kong holds dear.\textsuperscript{14}

The arrested were also referred to as political prisoners. For instance, when a YP member was arrested during the 2016 Mong Kok civil unrest, they announced that:

Man Man of Youngspiration was arrested at around midnight on 9 February. At the time of his arrest, large-scale clashes between the Police and members of the public had not yet broken out; therefore, the charge against him of taking part in a riot under Section 19 of the Public Order Ordinance (CAP 245) is downright ridiculous. Man Man and other Hongkongers are unreasonably turned into political prisoners, at which Youngspiration is extremely indignant. Again, we strongly condemn the Hong Kong Government for disregarding the anger of the people and for attempting to politically discredit the Hongkongers who simply stood up in support of the Mong Kok hawkers. We also deplore the Police’s actions in flaring up the conflicts, which led to even more serious clashes.\textsuperscript{15}

In response to the government and the pro-China politicians’ effort to label the protesters as ‘mob’ (baotu), they published a series of posts in an attempt to ‘clear their names’:

The government and pro-Beijing always try to mould public opinion and label protesters as ‘mobs’ and accuse them of ‘disrupting Hong Kong’; in fact, Hong Kong youths are not for their own personal benefit, but to defend the living space of Hong Kong people. Even in the face of a government with armed force and legal means, they are put their future on the line to resist. Therefore, we must clear their names, get justice for them, and carry on with their determination to pursue democracy and justice, so as to not waste their contributions.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14}Youngspiration (2017) 26 April. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/754643994627238_1309947179096914 (Accessed: 20 November 2020); Originally English.

\textsuperscript{15}Youngspiration (2016) 11 February. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/754643994627238_941716125920023 (Accessed: 20 November 2020); Originally English.

In another post, HKI also invoked the idea of political prisoners:

In recent years, more and more protesters have been severely imprisoned for participating in social movements. For example, the protesters of the ‘Fishball Revolution’ was jailed for three to four years because of the ‘riot’; students convicted of the Legislative Council trash can explosion were sentenced to two years in prison; the sentence of 13 protesters against the development of Northeast New Territories was reviewed by the Department of Justice and was sentenced to eight to thirteen months in prison; the Department of Justice also reviewed the sentence of the protesters in the Civic Square case, and they were sentenced to six to eight months. They are all political prisoners in Hong Kong.\(^\text{17}\)

And they attributed the situation to Chinese influence:

The rule of law in Hong Kong is just an illusion. Even if Hong Kong practices the common law, the final interpretation power of Hong Kong’s Basic Law is still in the hands of China, which has the power to override the common law. In short, after the National People’s Congress interprets the law, the relevant common law provisions will become invalid. ... According to The Practice of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region white paper published in 2014, those who govern Hong Kong must be ‘patriotic’, in other words, judicial personnel must prioritise China’s interests, and ‘judicial independence’ exists only in name. Hong Kong seemingly has the rule of law and separation of powers, but in reality, the system is controlled by China. When the people challenge the regime, the regime can make use of the so-called ‘system’ and arbitrarily interpret legal provisions to make up groundless conviction and oppress the people.\(^\text{18}\)

According to the activists, the judiciary system was a tool which could be used by the Chinese government to make arbitrary arrests and convictions. China’s interference presented a crisis to judicial independence and eventually led to the demise of the rule of law in Hong Kong.


\(^{18}\) \textit{ibid.}
In summary, the topics in this section show that China was depicted as an outside invader and the Hong Kong government was seen as a mere extension of China’s ruling arm, instead of a government of Hong Kong people’s own. They also attributed the issues of stalled democratisation and protest arrests to China’s interventionist policy. These observations echo Hechter’s (2000; 2006) theory of peripheral nationalism and the role of direct rule in inciting nationalism as well as the observations of Fong (2017b) and Wu (2016), in which they see Hong Kong nationalism as a resistance of a peripheral territory to a centralising state.

In addition, we can observe that the nationalists employed a strategy of justification (Wodak et al., 1999; see discussion in Chapter 4). They seek to construct a status quo ante in which democracy was promised and core values such as the rule of law were practised (despite that might not actually be the case), the promise is now broken and the core values destroyed after the Chinese came (further examples of this strategy below).

### 7.5.2 Political Controversies

The previous section introduced the idea of China Threat and the recurring issues that underpin the idea. This section shows how the nationalist further substantiated the narrative of threat using various political controversies that happened throughout the study period.

As illustrated above, Figure 7.16(b) contains the topics related to four political controversies throughout the study period. The events were articulated as China’s grand plan to destroy Hong Kong’s liberal values, such as freedom, human rights, and the rule of law. The overlapping pattern denotes the changing focus of discussion over the years. The Hong Kong nationalism discourse focused on Economy in late 2015; it was quickly replaced by Free & Rights in the first quarter of 2016, as the Legislative Council by-election took place on 28 February 2016. The topic of Election Interference became prominent in the third quarter of 2016 during the 2016 Legislative Council election. After the disqualification of lawmakers happened in the fourth quarter of 2016, the topic of Rule of Law has become the most prevalent among the core topics until the end of the study period.

This section will provide an overview of the topics and discuss how they contribute to different aspects of the idea of China Threat.
7.5.2.1 Economy

The early discussion of Economy concerned the issue of an excessively uniform economic structure. It was argued that the economic structure in Hong Kong has placed too much emphasis on business related to China. As YP suggested:

[F]or sustainable economic growth, diversified development is critical. We cannot just focus on earning small profits in front of us, blindly expanding pharmacies, gold shops, and luxury stores, and wiping out small shops with local characteristics to the point that Hong Kong people have to fight for milk powder.  

The mention of ‘pharmacies, gold shops, and luxury stores’ and ‘fight for milk powder’ was a reference to the alleged distortion of the local economy by Chinese tourists and cross-border parallel traders. As a result of the influx of Chinese tourists, it was argued that Hong Kong’s economic structure has shifted towards catering for the Chinese tourists and losing its local uniqueness. YP, therefore, proposed that the blueprint for long-term economic development must include localist thinking, which involves three aspects: First, policies must give priority to the locals and the labour regulations should also provide appropriate protection for people in different industries to avoid the domination of a single industry. Second, Hong Kong must retain its own characteristics, such as protecting historical buildings that show the integration of local Chinese and Western cultures. Third, the economy should develop in accordance with the competitive advantages of local people, such as (English) language ability, international vision, and innovative touch, instead of blindly following China’s development path and leading Hong Kong down a dead end.

Subsequently, HKI expanded the discussion to include economic inequality. In a post titled Twenty Years after the fall of Hong Kong, it argued that there are four sources of inequality: the functional constituency, uniform economic structure, oppression of the employers, and taxation system. According to HKI, because of the existence of functional constituency in the legislature and its association with the business, many policies

---


20 ibid.


22 See Chapter 3 for further discussion on functional constituency.
that can benefit the people’s livelihood and reduce income disparity were blocked by the business class (cf. Fong, 2014). HKI also agreed with YP’s argument on uniform economic structure, but they expanded the discussion to include the monopoly of the financial industry. It went on to condemn the neoliberalist policies adopted by the Hong Kong government for allowing the business class to exploit employees and the ‘simple taxation system’ for failing to redistribute wealth.

The discourse of Hong Kong nationalism in the early stages resembles the classic nationalism that emphases economic conditions and inequality (Gellner, 1981; Wallerstein, 1979; Frank, 1971) and also the early theories of neo-nationalism and internal colonialism (Nairn, 1977; Hechter, 1999). It is interesting that even though the neoliberalist policies and taxation system are the legacy of British colonialism (cf. Goodstadt, 2009), HKI decided to blame the post-handover Hong Kong government for ‘lacking sincerity’ in addressing inequality, instead of directing the criticism to the British who established the colony and its neoliberalist economic structure. It argued that:

If the problem [of inequality] is resolved, the big business will not able to make huge profits and will therefore reduce their support for the SAR government and CCP. ... This makes it difficult for the CCP to China-ise Hong Kong, force Hong Kong people to swear loyalty, and colonise Hong Kong. This makes it hard for the CCP to use Hong Kong as a stepping stone to expand its evil power.  

So understood, to HKI, the problem of economic inequality was not itself economic, it was considered a part of the grand plan of the CCP to subjugate Hong Kong people and therefore adding an economic aspect to the narrative of China Threat.

7.5.2.2 Freedom and Rights

The prominence of the topic Economy was quickly overtaken by the discussion on Freedom and Rights. On 28 February 2016, a by-election was held after a lawmaker of New Territories East constituency resigned from the Legislative Council, in which Edward Tin-kei Leung was one of the candidates representing Hong Kong Indigenous. In Hong Kong, it is a common practice for the Registration and Electoral Office, which oversees the elections, to send campaign materials on behalf of the candidates to the voters. However,

---

23 ibid.
the Registration and Electoral Office refused to send campaign materials for Leung since he has ‘fundamentally breached’ the Basic Law for mentioning ‘sensitive’ terms. Terms such as ‘autonomy’ and ‘self-rule’ were listed as sensitive and were urged to be deleted (Mingpao, 2016). The incident sparked outrage across the nationalist camp, and the nationalists published a series of posts to condemn the Registration and Electoral Office for violating the freedom of speech, the right to vote, and the right to stand for election. In a post, HKI denounced the Registration and Electoral Office:

HK Indigenous believes that this is in equivalence to pronouncing the diminishing and vanishing state of Hong Kong’s ‘One Country Two Systems’ and the freedom of speech and of publication protected by laws, trampling Leung’s political right in expressing his political opinions and destroying the right of the electorate from New Territories East in a democratic election.24

YP also issued a statement, quoting Article 27 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, to condemn the political censorship:

‘Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, of the press and of publication; freedom of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration; and the right and freedom to form and join trade unions, and to strike.’

Youngspiration is extremely indignant at the REO’s disregard for the freedom of speech and publication guaranteed by the Basic Law as a means of political censorship and suppression.25

While the topic of Freedom and Rights concerns the controversy around the 2016 Legislative Council by-election, the topic of Election Interference, which gained prominence later the same year, concerns the 2016 Legislative Council election.

7.5.2.3 Election Interference

During the nomination period of the 2016 Legislative Council election, the Electoral Affairs Commission carried out a new measure to require all candidates to sign an additional ‘confirmation form’ to declare that they understand ‘Hong Kong is an inalienable part of China as stipulated in the Basic Law’.


Chan Ho-tin, the convener of Hong Kong National Party, refused to sign the form and was barred from running in the election. Leung Tin-kei, even though he signed the form, was also barred from running in the election, along with four other localist candidates. Once again, this sparked strong opposition across the nationalist camp. For instance, YP cited various articles of the Basic Law to condemn the censorship:

Article 25 of the Basic Law states that ‘Hong Kong residents shall be equal before the law.’ Article 27 states that ‘Hong Kong residents shall enjoy freedom of speech, press and publication.’ Candidates have the absolute right to advocate different political opinions. Article 26 clearly states that ‘Permanent residents of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall have the right to vote and the right to stand for election in accordance with law.’ Political censorship not only deprived candidates of their right to be elected but also the general public’s right to vote. This is a serious matter; Hong Kong independence can be censored today, democracy or even party membership can be censored tomorrow. The building is hard while the destroying is easy, and there is no return. The rule of law in Hong Kong is now lost forever.26

In the quotation, we can once again observe a strategy of justification employed by the nationalist. They depicted a Hong Kong where various freedoms and rights were protected by the Basic Law, a status quo ante, but that was destroyed by the government and became ‘lost forever’. The controversies surrounding the nationalist candidates continued after the end of the election, as the next subsection will show.

7.5.2.4 Rule of Law

The topic Rule of Law was inspired by the disqualification of lawmakers incident in late 2016. The topic has soon become the most prominent among core topics after the incident and remained prevalent throughout the study period.

In the same Legislative Council election in which various nationalist candidates were disqualified, Yau Wai-ching and Leung Chung-hang, both members of Youngspiration, managed to secure nomination and eventually won two seats. During their oath-taking sessions in October 2016, they displayed a banner bearing the words ‘Hong Kong is not China’ and pronounced China as ‘Chee-na’ (Zhao, 2017). The act was labelled by the

government as ‘offensive’ and ‘hurting feelings of Chinese’ (Cheung, 2016c). After that, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying took an unprecedented step of filing the lawsuit aiming to disqualify the duo (Ng et al., 2016). On 7 November 2016, the National People’s Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) adopted an interpretation of the Article 104 of the Basic Law, reinstating that the lawmakers need to swear allegiance to Hong Kong as part of China when they take office and that a person ‘who intentionally reads out words which do not accord with the wording of the oath prescribed by law, or takes the oath in a manner which is not sincere or not solemn’ (NPCSC, 2016, p. 6) should be banned from taking their office and retaking the oath. A week after Beijing issued the interpretation, Hong Kong’s High Court disqualified Leung and Yau on 15 November (Ng et al., 2016; Haas and Cheung, 2017). They took the case to the Court of Appeal and later the Court of Final Appeal, which eventually refused to grant them permission to move forward with the case on 25 August 2017. This put a bitter end to the disqualification saga for the nationalists (Cheung, 2017).

Before the disqualification lawsuit, it was widely believed that judicial independence existed and that the judiciary was often considered a gatekeeper against the violation of freedoms and rights despite the undemocratic nature of Hong Kong’s political institutions. However, after the defeat of the lawsuit, the nationalists argued that the rule of law no longer existed in Hong Kong:

The Hong Kong government, which is an executive organ, interfered with the legislature through judicial procedures, and the Chinese Communist Party did not even hesitate to fabricate new laws using NPCSC interpretation. At this point, the electoral system in Hong Kong has lost all meanings. Before the election, the Electoral Affairs Commission screened candidates based on political opinions. During the election, there was electoral fraud. After the election, they even defied the will of Hong Kong people and robbed them of elected lawmakers.27

The year 2016 witnessed a series of political incidents in which the Hong Kong government prevented the nationalists from running in the elections and taking up office in an attempt to suppress the nationalist movement. In the nationalists’ responses, a consistent pattern can be observed: first, the nationalists often reference a status quo ante in which

---

the various liberal values were embraced. For example, YP suggested in a post that:

When we were a student, we learned that we are equal before the law. But in Hong Kong without a democratic system, the law will probably only protect the regime, but not human rights.\(^{28}\)

The reference to a ‘better’ past is often followed by attributing the corruption of the *status quo* to the arrival of the Chinese regime. The idea is best demonstrated with YP’s words:

The values of the rule of law and judicial independence that we embrace have gradually disappeared under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party and Hong Kong communist.\(^{29}\)

and HKNP’s post:

The colonial Chinese government has recklessly made an interpretation of the Basic Law in an attempt to restrict the court’s power in ruling on relevant cases. This is the first time since the establishment of Hong Kong in the 1840s that the judiciary faces a case of [the] decision before trial evidencing the fact that under illegitimate Chinese sovereignty even judicial independence cannot be maintained in Hong Kong.\(^{30}\)

In line with the observations in the previous section, in this section, we once again observe the depiction of China as a threat to the liberal values and the way of life that Hong Kong people hold dear. The political incidents and the eventual corruption of the ‘good old days’ were attributed to Chinese rule.

### 7.5.3 Localism and Nationalism

Related to the narrative of China Threat are the narratives of Localism and Hong Kong Nation. In the previous section, we discussed how the nationalists constructed a crisis, the China Threat. Against this crisis, the topics in the category Localism and

---


Nationalism seek to construct the idea of the nation; they seek to answer the key question of ‘who are the Hongkongese’. In discourse theory’s sense, the materials presented in this section deal with the thematic area of the construction of the homo [nationalis], in particular the key features that make Hongkongese Hongkongese.

As discussed above, we can observe a decreasing trend of Localism and increasing trend of Hong Kong Nation, suggesting that the rhetoric of nationalism was rarely employed at the beginning of the study period (see Figure 7.16(c)). The discussion around ‘who are the Hongkongese’ started as a discourse on localism and gradually transformed into a discourse on nationalism. The content of localism and Hong Kong nationalism, as well as their relationship, will be discussed in this section.

7.5.3.1 Localism

Localism (bentu, can also be translated as nativism) is a political movement started in 2012 which gained significant support after the dissipation of the Umbrella Movement in 2014. Although the term is used loosely to refer to a group of political organisations with the broad aim to protect Hong Kong’s interests and identity (the localist camp, bentupai), there has been a heated debate concerning the actual meaning of localism, even among the localists themselves (Kaeding, 2017).\(^\text{31}\)

In a post titled Localism and Hong Kong People, YP sought to provide a definition for localism:

‘Localism’ is a perspective; it is based on viewing the social problems and conundrums of Hong Kong from Hong Kong people’s perspective, so as to reflect on and review Hong Kong’s policies.\(^\text{32}\)

According to YP, since ‘localism’ is a perspective of ‘Hong Kong people’, it is therefore inevitable to first define who are the ‘Hong Kong people’. They argued that Hong Kong and China have been two separate political entities since the ratification of the Treaty of Nanking 170 years ago, which formalised the cession of Hong Kong. The separation has contributed to the vast cultural difference between the two places. Against this background, they offered a hierarchical definition of the Hong Kong People (Figure 7.17),

---

\(^{31}\) The activists selected in my study are a subset of localists who invoked the concepts of nationalism in their discourse (See discussion in Chapter 3)


---
which can be translated as (from bottom to top): 1. Recognition of Hong Kong values; 2. Willingness to become Hong Kong People; 3. Prioritising Hong Kong’s interests; 4. Willingness to protect Hong Kong; and 5. Subjective consciousness.

Figure 7.17: Youngspiration’s Definition of Hongkonger

According to YP, the key element of being a Hong Kong people is ‘subjective consciousness’, an idea also used by the intellectuals discussed in Chapter 6. However, instead of resorting to postcolonial theories like Chin Wan, the ‘subjective consciousness’ was later defined as the understanding of Hong Kong’s autonomy. HKI also invoked the idea of subjective consciousness and defined ‘localist consciousness’ as the history, geography, culture, and subjective consciousness of a community.\(^{33}\)

Echoing the discussion of China Threat in the last section, a narrative of threat was a common theme across the posts of both HKI and YP and localism was regarded as a response to such threats. According to YP:

In the past few years, ‘localist’ thoughts have become more and more important, mainly because Hong Kong people have deeply felt that their living

space has been eroded and invaded in all aspects.\textsuperscript{34}

Likewise, HKI also claimed that:

After the reunification with China, Hong Kong people felt that their interests were eroded or deprived in various ways. Therefore, they gradually advocated localist ideas to emphasize Hong Kong’s own value.\textsuperscript{35}

On top of the threat to liberal values and economic life, the following paragraphs show how the nationalists added another dimension to the discourse of China Threat: the threats to Hong Kong’s culture.

In a series of posts, the activists attributed the root of the problem to the so-called ‘one-way permit system’. Under the current system, the Chinese government can issue one-way entry permits, at a quota of 150 each day, for Chinese immigrants to permanently reside in Hong Kong while the Hong Kong government has no power to screen the applications or alter the quota (So, 2016). YP argued that:

The shortcoming of the one-way permit is that the holders of the permits are guaranteed to become a Hong Kong permanent resident after living in Hong Kong for seven years. Therefore, they can enjoy Hong Kong’s success without having to work hard to integrate into the local culture of Hong Kong. After coming to Hong Kong, they can continue to speak Mandarin and write simplified Chinese characters. There is no motivation for them to integrate into the local society of Hong Kong, and there is no incentive or necessity for developing subjective awareness.\textsuperscript{36}

They also claimed that the Hong Kong government has not helped the immigrants to integrate into Hong Kong’s culture, but instead added fuel to the problem by pushing forward a range of ‘cultural invasion’ initiatives, such as Mandarin education and accepting simplified Chinese characters in replace of traditional Chinese characters.

In another post, YP further illustrated their claims of cultural invasion:


The split between traditional and simplified Chinese characters began after the Chinese Communist Party stole the country. Since then, Hong Kong has become one of the few places that use traditional characters, both the graphemes and phonemes of which have evolved from ancient times. ... The popularity of traditional Chinese characters in Hong Kong has a lot to do with Hong Kong’s historical development. Hong Kong has not pushed forward any large-scale simplification and Chinese characters have retained the original scripts, which also reflects the uniqueness of Hong Kong. Until the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, the boundary between traditional and simplified Chinese characters became more and more blurred, and it was not uncommon for them to be mixed with each other, but this did not mean that simplified Chinese could replace the traditional Chinese characters. Replacing traditional Chinese characters with simplified Chinese is not evolution but invasion.  

In the above posts, traditional Chinese characters were depicted as a symbol of Hong Kong’s distinctiveness from China. The measures put forward by the Hong Kong government that threatened the survival of traditional Chinese characters was thus seen as a threat to Hong Kong’s culture. The post went on to speculate the intention behind such measures:

‘To conquer a nation, first disintegrate its culture; to disintegrate its culture, first replace its language and words.’ ... In the beginning, the promotion of simplified Chinese may be really to improve the literacy rate. But in Hong Kong, a society that has been implementing free education for decades, the purpose behind advocating the use of simplified characters is self-evident. Have you ever heard the French radically reform the French language? At least I have not. I only heard that when Prussians attacked Alsace, they forced French students to abandon French and study Germanic.  

The quotation in the post was allegedly taken from a speech of Adolf Hitler. This is interesting in the sense that activists sometimes make an analogy between China and Nazi Germany. According to the activists, the promotion of Mandarin education and simplified Chinese characters was a part of a great plan to destroy Hong Kong’s culture.

---


38 ibid.
and therefore, the Hong Kong nation. The discussion on localism added the dimension of the cultural threat to the discourse of China Threat.

7.5.3.2 Hong Kong Nation

It is not surprising that the anti-Chinese rhetoric of localism has attracted criticism from both the pro-China camp and pan-democrat camp for being racist and discriminating against immigrants. In response, we can observe a shift in the discourse of both YP and HKI to incorporate the rhetoric of civic nationalism, an idea that was first brought into Hong Kong’s public discussion by the student nationalists of Undergrad. In a post posted by YP, which has also been shared by HKI, they openly acknowledged the influence of On the Hong Kong Nation, the publication that first brought the idea of civic nationalism into Hong Kong’s public discussion (see Chapter 6):

Youngspiration and Hong Kong Indigenous both see On the Hong Kong Nation as our guideline. Although our strategies of resistance are different, our goals are always the same. Nineteen years after the transfers of sovereignty, Hong Kong people have been living as second-class citizens, surviving at the expense of our dignity. Today, even our basic human rights are also violated, Hong Kong people should strengthen ourselves, fight against colonialism, and regain the dignity that Hong Kong people deserve as a nation.\(^{39}\)

Instead of localism, YP started to adopt the rhetoric of nationalism and argues that:

Localism is the prerequisite of democracy; nationalism is the core of localism.\(^{40}\)

In a post titled Hong Kong Nation, Self-determination, YP advocated that:

We advocate the construction of the Hong Kong nation with civic nationalism: anyone who agrees with Hong Kong’s values, is willing to join the community, is willing to put Hong Kong’s interest first, has the desire to protect Hong Kong, and has the subjective consciousness of Hong Kong, is a member of the Hong Kong nation.\(^{41}\)


In another post, YP further distinguished their concept of nationalism from race and ethnicity:

After the transfer of sovereignty, Hong Kong people are brainwashed every day by the CCP’s patriotic education. Notions such as ‘everyone is a Chinese’ and ‘blood is thicker than water’ makes the public often misunderstand that ‘nation’ necessarily refers to an ethnic or racial group. In fact, the Hong Kong nationalism we advocate has nothing to do with race or place of birth, but a community based on the unique history, common struggle experience and values of Hong Kong people.\(^{42}\)

The critic of Chinese nationalism by the Hong Kong nationalists resonates with Gellner (1983), who argues nationalism is constructed through the monopoly of legitimate education (further discussion in Chapter 2). They also referenced the ‘myth of consanguinity’ (see Chapter 6) and argued that it propagates an ethnic variant of nationalism, which was depicted as being inferior to the civic nationalism the Hong Kong nationalists sought to promote (further discussion on the civic/ethnic dichotomy below).

In the wake of a controversy in which Edward Tin-kei Leung, spokesperson of HKI, was found to be born in China, HKI made use of the opportunity to reiterate their non-exclusive definition of a Hong Kong nation:

Hong Kong Indigenous has always followed the idea of civic nationalism and accepted foreigners to integrate into Hong Kong and learn Hong Kong’s culture and language, but we also resist locusts from abusing Hong Kong’s public welfare and defending the public resources that Hong Kong people deserve.\(^{43}\)

They argued that even though Leung was originally born in China, he has already been integrated into Hong Kong. He was even willing to take to the streets to defend Hong Kong’s national dignity and fight for the rights of Hong Kong people. Therefore, he is a total Hongkongese and there is no point in discussing his birthplace. HKI further iterated that:


The identity of Hong Kong people is open. As long as they are willing to understand Hong Kong culture and integrate into us, speak Cantonese, identify with freedom, the rule of law, protect Hong Kong, and value the things Hong Kong people want to protect, they are Hong Kong people, not new immigrants. On the contrary, since we are all suppressed by the tyranny, they will feel that we are a community, and they will join and become a member of our struggle.\(^4\)

The post further explained that the real enemy is not all new immigrants, but only those who refuse to integrate:

To those who refuse to integrate, Hong Kong people must take action to force them to integrate or leave. If someone insists not to integrate and support the Chinese Communist Party in destroying Hong Kong. He is an outsider.\(^5\)

In its essence, the ‘civic nationalism’ proposed by the nationalists can be reduced to a single tenet: anyone can become a Hongkongese as long as he or she accepts Hong Kong’s ‘core values’. It is non-exclusive in the sense that the acceptance of the values is a voluntary choice which can be made regardless of ethnicity and birthplace, as demonstrated by Leung’s case. Such understanding of civic nationalism is shared among not only the activists but also the nationalist intellectuals such as the student nationalists of Undergrad and Brian Fong (see Chapter 6). However, it is important to point out that such usage of the term deviates from, or overly simplifies, the common understanding in the field of nationalism studies.

The dichotomy of civic/ethnic nationalism originates from Kohn’s (1945) pioneering work, in which he depicts a ‘liberal, civic Western’ and an ‘illiberal, ethnic Eastern’ nationalism. The former arose as a response to the formation of the modern state where the cultural nation coincided with the political territory while the latter presupposed no such correspondence (McCrone, 1998). Hence, nationalism is often used to reinforce state boundaries in the West while it is used to disrupt and redraw borders in the East. In this sense, the sociopolitical context of Hong Kong nationalism is closer to ethnic nationalism than civic nationalism, as the intention to separate Hong Kong from the Chinese state is

\(^4\) ibid.
\(^5\) ibid.
essentially redrawing the Chinese state border to not include Hong Kong.\footnote{Note that the separation does not always equal seeking independence, it can be some sorts of autonomous arrangement. See full discussion in Chapter 6.}

Furthermore, the strong assimilationist assumption held by the activists is also at odds with the philosophical underpinnings of civic nationalism. According to Stilz (2009), civic nationalism is meant to be a political identity based on shared citizenship in a liberal-democratic state. Hence, it requires citizens to uphold their political institutions and accept the underlying political principles, but it does not presuppose the protection of a particular national culture. In a version of civic nationalism defended by Barry (2001), he also argues that the state should provide people with equal opportunity to make free choices but not privilege one national culture over another.\footnote{It is important to note that Stilz and Barry’s account of civic nationalism is also arguable. In Brubaker’s (1992) famous study, the French tradition is posited as both civic and assimilationist.} Instead of civic nationalism, the views of the Hong Kong nationalists are closer to that of liberal culturalism, which argues that the state ought to privilege particular national cultures that have historical ties with a given territory (Kymlicka, 2001). Although the nationalists stress civic values such as democracy and freedom in their discourse, they share a clear intention to privilege the culture of Hong Kong over others.\footnote{I use the term ‘the culture of Hong Kong’, instead of Hong Kong culture, to accommodate the fact that some intellectuals, namely Chin, believes the Chinese culture is, in fact, a culture embraced by people in Hong Kong; see Chapter 6 for further discussion.}

Keating (1996) points out that even ethnic nationalists ‘may use the language of civic nationalism language in order to acquire international legitimacy or establish their liberal democratic credentials’ (pp. 7-8). Brubaker (1999) also observes that the language of civic nationalism is often used by states and separatist movements to highlight their ‘good’ and ‘legitimate’ nature as well as to distinguish themselves from their ‘illegitimate’ neighbour. In line with their observations, the usage of civic nationalism rhetoric by the Hong Kong nationalists is more political than analytical: civic nationalism in Hong Kong is used as a rhetorical device to distinguish Hong Kong nationalism from Chinese nationalism which put heavy emphasis in lineage and ethnicity, even though many ‘values’ proposed by the Hong Kong nationalists, such as culture and language, are often considered more ‘ethnic’ than ‘civic’ by the literature (cf. McCrone, 1998; Stilz, 2009; Kymlicka, 2001). Civic nationalism rhetoric is used to highlight the ‘good’ nature of Hong Kong nationalism \textit{vis-à-vis} the ‘bad’ Chinese nationalism, although the use of derogatory terms such as ‘locust’ reveals the very limiting ‘civic-ness’ of the online discourse.
It is important to note that the rhetoric of civic nationalism was not agreed by all activists. Opposing the idea of civic nationalism, HKNP claimed that:

Civic nationalism only talks about the common values and culture among the members of the nation; it ignores and does not explain how the oppression of the external environment promotes national consciousness. It is the biggest limitation of civic nationalism, and it can only be applied to an existing independent sovereign state.⁴⁹

HKNP acknowledged the benefit of adopting the rhetoric of civic nationalism in avoiding the stigma of racism, but argued that civic nationalism is only applicable for peaceful countries that have established sovereignty. Therefore, due to the dire situation of Hong Kong, HKNP argued that the rhetoric of civic nationalism was detached from the history and reality of Hong Kong. It argued that the key element in the rise of Hong Kong nationalism, the enemy, was missing in the rhetoric of civic nationalism and that nations only exist vis-à-vis an ‘enemy’. It is the difference between self and the other that allows the formation of nations. According to HKNP, Hong Kong nation’s enemy is China. It argued that China is colonising Hong Kong:

At present, the Hong Kong Communist colonial government uses one-way permits and doubly non-permanent resident children to cleanse the Hong Kong nation and replace Hong Kong people with Chinese. Before the Hong Kong people regain sovereignty, any immigration approved by the Hong Kong Communist Party is equivalent to a tool for colonisation.⁵⁰

Against this context, they defined Hong Kong nation as follows:

Hong Kong nation is living in Hong Kong, feeling dissatisfied with China’s colonial oppression, and the wish to end this oppression.⁵¹

HKNP believes that shared living experience, language, and culture, as well as universal values such as human rights and liberty, are the characteristics of Hong Kong nationalism. However, it was the oppression from China that provoked the birth of Hong Kong

---

⁵¹ ibid.
nationalism, and the survival of the Hong Kong nation depends on Hong Kong people’s ability to defend these characteristics from Chinese oppression.

HKNP’s discourse echoes the studies about the importance of the ‘other nation’ in nation-building (Smith, 2010; Triandafyllidou, 1998; Wodak et al., 1999; Hall, 1991) as well as the idea of ‘China as Hong Kong’s other’ suggested by the literature (Wu, 2016; Fong, 2017b; Chan, 2014a) (discussed in Chapter 6). The notion of Hong Kong nation is anchored on the notion of China as the invader, and the purpose of the Hong Kong nation is, therefore, to defend Hong Kong from such invasion.

In this section, I have discussed the adoption of civic nationalism rhetoric by the activists and pointed out the deviation of their usage of the term from the common usage within the field of nationalist studies. It is also important to clarify that, although I pointed out the limited civic-ness of the activist’s online discourse, I did not mean that the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism is necessarily xenophobic or exclusionary as some observers might argue. This aspect will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 8.

7.5.4 Internationalism and Protest

The following paragraphs turn to the final panel of core topics (Figure 7.16(d)). The topics discussed in this section can be regarded as the actions the nationalist suggest should be taken to take in order to promote Hong Kong nationalism. At the beginning of the study period, much focus was put on street protests. The focus has gradually shifted towards seeking international support.

7.5.4.1 Protest

The topic of Struggle & Resistance should be understood against the debate of protest strategy in Hong Kong. On the one hand, traditional pan-democrats insisted that their protests to be ‘peaceful, rational and non-violent’ (wohleihfei in the Cantonese shorthand), and they believed that Hong Kong people detest any violence. On the other hand, there was the rise of the so-called valiant struggle (jungmou kongzang). The non-responsive attitude of the government towards peaceful protests led many activists to criticise the approach as too conciliatory (Ramzy, 2019). The debate continued to until today, and it has been a major difference between the pan-democrats and localists.

HKI was one of the political groups that first advocated the ‘valiant style’ of protest, which has attracted criticism from the pan-democrats for being too violent (see Chapter 3
and Chapter 9 for further discussions). The posts in the topic of Struggle & Resistance seeks to provide justification for adopting the strategy. HKI recognised that many Hong Kong people find peaceful means easier to be accepted. However, it also pointed out the ineffectiveness of peaceful protests:

> Peaceful means are easier to be accepted and supported by the public than militant means and can increase potential audiences. However, now that after the Umbrella Revolution, Reclaim Movements, and Mong Kok Civil Unrest, if the centrist can win, they should have won already.\(^5^2\)

In the above quote, the term centrist referred to the supporter of ‘peaceful, rational and non-violent’ protests. In the same post, HKI further suggested that:

> I propose to use non-violent means first whenever there is a new issue because we do not know whether peaceful means will succeed ... But when non-violent means fail, we have to escalate without hesitation.\(^5^3\)

In another post, HKI argued that there is a synergistic relationship between peaceful and violent protests. They made use of the relationship between Martin Luther King and Malcolm X to justify their claims. They argued that when Martin Luther King took the path of non-violent resistance, there were indeed countless violent resistances organised by Malcolm X. They contended that it was the violence that led the then US President John F. Kennedy to put forward the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and therefore concluded that ‘non-violent resistance must be supported by violent resistance’.\(^5^4\) Even though HKI has suggested a possible synergistic relationship as early as 2015, the relationship between the localists and the pan-democrats has been hostile throughout the years. The reconciliation only happened in 2019 during the 2019 Hong Kong protests (see detailed discussion in Chapter 9).

As shown in Figure 7.16(d), the topic of Struggle & Resistance became less prevalent over time and was overtaken by International Support in 2016.


CHAPTER 7. FACEBOOK AS PHASE B

7.5.4.2 International Support

The topic of International Support is comprised mainly of posts by HKNP. One notable feature of the posts in this topic is that most of the posts are bilingual; they are written in Chinese, followed by an English translation. In a sharp contrast to the posts discussed in this chapter which focus mainly on local issues, the content of the posts in this topic mainly contains HKNP’s international outreach with the aim of calling the international community to support the democracy and autonomy of Hong Kong.

However, although it can be observed that the topic International Support seems to have taken over Struggle & Resistance as the most prevalent action-related topic, the findings have to be digested with a grain of salt. The growing prevalence of International Support coincides with the plummeting of posting activists of HKI (see also Figure 7.1), which has been the foremost advocate of ‘valiant struggle’.

Due to the importance of internationalism in Hong Kong nationalism, it deserves more than a brief mention, and therefore it will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

7.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I employed a mixed methods approach combining topic modelling and critical discourse analysis to gain insights from a large corpus of Facebook data. In order to identify the core topics, a topic network approach was proposed in replacement of the traditional count-based approach. Texts of the core topics were extracted and analysed qualitatively.

The analysis reveals that the Hong Kong nationalism discourse of the nationalist activists revolves around the narrative of China Threat, which contains three dimensions. First, at the beginning of the nationalist movement, we can observe the economic dimension as the nationalists focused on the neoliberalist policies and economic inequality in Hong Kong. However, instead of tracing the problem to colonial times, when most of Hong Kong’s economic structures were established, the nationalists attributed the problem to the Hong Kong SAR government’s lack of motivation to alleviate the issue. They argued that the Chinese government allowed the business class to gain huge profits in Hong Kong in exchange for their support, therefore causing grave income inequality. Second, we can also observe the political dimension. Political incidents happened throughout the study period were used by the nationalist as evidence to substantiate the narrative of China
Threat; China was repeatedly depicted as a threat to the liberal values and the way of life embraced by Hong Kong people. The discourse was often constructed by juxtaposing the ‘good old days’ prior to the arrival of the Chinese and its collapse under the Chinese rule. Third, the nationalists also suggested a threat to Hong Kong’s culture. They argued that there is no incentive for new Chinese immigrants, who were let in by the Chinese government instead of Hong Kong officials, to integrate into the local culture of Hong Kong. Furthermore, the situation was aggravated by the Hong Kong government’s ‘cultural invasion’ initiatives that helped to destroy Hong Kong’s culture, including Mandarin education and replacing traditional Chinese characters with simplified ones.

In this chapter, we can observe a wide range of theoretical themes reflected, or even directly cited, by the activists in their discourse. The heavy emphasis on democracy and genuine election reflects the literature on the synergy between democratic transition and nationalism (see discussion in Chapter 2). The depiction of Hong Kong as a distinct political community that is under the threat of a centralising state and the call to defend the nation’s culture against assimilation reflect the theories of peripheral nationalism. The use of the term ‘subjective consciousness’ resembles the idea of subjectivity from postcolonial studies (as discussed in Chapter 6). Moreover, in response to the criticism of being racist and discriminating against immigrants, the activists adopted the rhetoric of civic nationalism. However, as this chapter has shown, the word ‘civic’ was used as a normative term to denote the emphasis of liberal values, and the civic nationalism proposed by the Hong Kong nationalists can be described as the single tenet of ‘everyone can become a Hongkongese as long as he or she accepts Hong Kong’s “core values”’. However, this version of ‘civic nationalism’ is far from the ‘civic’ in an analytical sense; the strong assimilationist assumption of Hong Kong nationalism deviates from what is commonly understood as civic nationalism by academic researchers. The manifestation of Hong Kong nationalism presented in this chapter does not fit comfortably in the description of a single theory. Rather, we can observe elements of multiple theories reflected concurrently in the discourse during the nationalist mobilisation. Nationalism theories can better be understood as the ideal types while the reality is far more complex and nuanced, as the evidence from Hong Kong has shown.

In this thesis, I analysed the Hong Kong nationalist movement through the lens of Hroch’s (1985) influential A-B-C schema. The Hong Kong nationalist movement serves

---

55 Yet, as mentioned above, it is also debatable if civic nationalism entails no assimilationist assumption, as the French tradition has shown.
as a valuable opportunity to reflect on his theory. In last chapter, I discussed how the nationalist intellectuals used scholarly enquiry to construct the histories of the Hong Kong nation. Their endeavours can be regarded as the Phase A while their profiles are in line with Hroch’s description of the intelligentsia, namely professionals with high education backgrounds who lived by their intellectual labour: Chin Wan was an Assistant Professor at the Lingnan University when he published his *Discourse on the Hong Kong City-state* series; Brian Fong is an Associate Professor at the Education University of Hong Kong; *On the Hong Kong Nation* was written by students at the University of Hong Kong; Eric Tsui is a physician by trade and was also a doctoral student (although he did not finish his studies). This echoes the fact that universities in Hong Kong have traditionally been a cradle for dissidents and social movements, including the Chinese Language Campaign discussed in Chapter 5 and the Umbrella Movement mentioned in Chapter 3.

This chapter conceptualised the Facebook activities of the nationalist activists as Phase B in Hroch’s A-B-C schema. While much of the work in Phase A was done to lay the theoretical groundwork for Hong Kong nationalism by reconstructing the past and imagining the future, Phase B is characterised by its heavy focus on the present social and political issues. This is likely due to the fact that the nationalist activists are political parties that participate in elections and it only makes sense for them to comment on contemporary issues, especially when they are the key figures involved in the controversies.

On one hand, there are continuities from Phase A to Phase B, as we can observe fragments of the intellectuals’ theories exhibited in the activists’ discourse: Chin Wan’s idea of cultural threat from China and the importance of Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters resonated in the activists’ discourse, although the latter framed it as a Hong Kong local culture instead of ‘the authentic Chinese culture’; we can observe the same emphasis on liberal values such as freedom, human rights, and the rule of law in both the activists’ discourse and the theory developed by Brian Fong and his collaborators; the idea of ‘subjective consciousness’ used by Chin and Fong was central to the activists’ discussion on localism; the activists openly acknowledged the influence from *On the Hong Kong Nation* and adopted the rhetoric of civic nationalism. Instead of developing a coherent theory of their own or fully adopting one single version of Hong Kong nationalism, the existing theories were used as discursive resources by the activists to cater to the needs

---

56 Discussions about the past do exist in the discourse, for example, the topic Remembrance, but they do not occupy a central position in the discourse network.
of the times.

On the other hand, we can observe disconnections between Phase A and B. Instead of a linear transition from the former to the latter, this chapter revealed that nationalist mobilisation is a dynamic and nuanced process. Evidences presented above illustrated how the nationalist activists made use of the discursive opportunities created by various political events during the study period and also how they adjusted their discourse in response to the public reactions. While Phase A was concerned with constructing nationalism as a coherent ideology, the manifestation of nationalism observed in Phase B is better understood as the result of discursive practices. Instead of fully subscribing to one intellectual’s discourse, elements of the discourses constructed by different intellectuals were invoked selectively and purposefully by the activists in response to the available discursive opportunities and the need of the times. The relationship between the construction of nationalism discourse and the expression of nationalism in nationalist movement may be less continuous than what many theories seem to suggest (cf. Hroch, 1985, 1993).

Another implication to Hroch’s A-B-C schema is its seemingly linear and unidirectional configuration. Instead of transiting from Phase A to Phase B and then Phase C, Hong Kong’s case reveals that Phase A and B can be concurrent, or even an iterative process. After the beginning of Phase B, the scholar inquiry did not put on halt. Instead, the nationalist intellectuals published multiple works inspired by, and also in response to, the experience during the nationalist agitation. One example would be the Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong II: Thinking about the future of Hong Kong from the world published in 2017, as the main focus of the book was to learn from the experience of other stateless nations in order to overcome the impasse in Hong Kong’s Phase B. In some cases, intellectuals of Phase A can also play an active role in Phase B. Chin Wan, for example, pledged support to Edward Leung during the by-election of Legislative Council in 2016, he even went on to run as candidate in the election later the same year (although defeated). Brian Fong co-authored the Resolution for Hong Kong’s Future with a group of young pan-democrat politicians, which arguably (at least partially) inspired the ‘localist turn’ of the pan-democrat camp discussed in Chapter 3. As the example of Hong Kong has shown, the relationship between Phase A and B is far from clear-cut and linear, it is contingent on political opportunities available and influenced by the complex interactions among political actors.

Last but not least, Hroch’s A-B-C schema seems to see Phase C as the final destination for nationalist movements. While it is true that all nationalist movements seek to inspire
support from the members of the nation, not all movements are successful in doing so. The realisation of Phase C depends not only on how the people react to the appeal of the proposed nationhood, but also on the response of the state. Even if there are widespread identification with the newborn nation (which is not always the case), the state’s response can significantly increase the cost of expressing the nationalist sentiment. As a result, even though many preconditions of nationalism might have been fulfilled, the nationalist movement might never reach Phase C (see Chapter 9 for further discussion on the future of Hong Kong nationalism under increasing state repression). Hroch’s linear view of nationalist movement might as well be the result of the known bias of the literature to focus more on the nationalist movements that are successful than those that are fruitless.

In the next chapter, I will further discuss the international aspect of Hong Kong nationalism and reflect on the nature of nationalism in general.
Chapter 8

Hong Kong of the World: the Internationalism of Nationalism

Abstract

Nationalism has long been seen negatively by social science and humanities researchers. It is often associated with isolationism, protectionism, and xenophobia in academic literature, and the negative image of nationalism has been further strengthened by the electoral success of far-right political figures across the world. However, treating all nationalism as a uniformly negative phenomenon risks over-simplification, as nationalism might manifest differently given the different social context and rhetorical resources available. Drawing on datasets of major Hong Kong political parties’ Facebook page, this chapter examines the alleged negative association of nationalism and explores the international dimensions of Hong Kong nationalism. This chapter shows that Hong Kong nationalism exhibited a high level of internationalism in both inward and outward dimensions, theorised as the willingness to accept foreign influence and to invite international cooperation respectively, and therefore provides evidence against the alleged association between nationalism on the one hand, and xenophobia and isolationism on the other.

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, I discussed the major elements of the Hong Kong nationalist discourse. It was observed that the narrative of ‘China Threat’ was considered an
important component of the Hong Kong nationalism discourse by both the intellectuals and activists. It is therefore tempting to treat the Hong Kong nationalists’ antipathy towards Chinese, especially their scepticism towards Chinese immigrants, as xenophobia or exclusivism, as some observers have already argued (further discussion below and also in Chapter 7). Against this background, the purpose of this chapter is to investigate the relationship between Hong Kong nationalism on the one hand, and xenophobia and isolationism on the other. I argue that the Hong Kong nationalists are more international than other political camps in Hong Kong and internationalism is an important element that rests at the core of Hong Kong nationalism.

Nationalism has long been seen negatively by many scholars in the social sciences and humanities. One notable example is George Orwell (1945). In *Notes on Nationalism*, he claims that nationalism is ‘power hunger tempered by self-deception’ (para. 5) and considers nationalist thoughts obsessive, unstable, ignorant, malignant, dishonest, and even lunatic. In less extreme examples, nationalism is often associated with isolationism, protectionism, and xenophobia in academic literature (Herrera and Butkovich Kraus, 2016; Kersting, 2009; Anderson-Nathe and Gharabaghi, 2017; Hjerm, 2004; Mayerfeld, 1998). De Matas (2017), for example, asserts that the fundamental belief in a common past and shared values have prompted the growing prominence of isolationism and protectionism in the twenty-first century. He also suggests that nationalist ideology rejects globalisation and foreign influence, and that national consciousness should be replaced by global consciousness. Nationalism is also blamed for inciting wars and other great evils of our time (Mann, 2004; Brubaker, 2004) and thought to indoctrinate the members of a nation to see foreigners as inferior and bad (de las Casas, 2008). In addition to the predominantly negative views, nationalism was even said to be ‘the starkest political shame of the 20th century’ (Dunn, 1979, p. 55), and there was a widespread belief that we lived in a post-national era (Brubaker, 2004).

Since the surge of academic interest in cosmopolitanism in the 1990s, nationalism has been constructed as its opposition; nationalism is often considered particularistic, exclusionary, and backwards-looking while cosmopolitanism universalist, inclusive, and progressive (Brett and Moran, 2011). In her influential essay, *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism*, Martha Nussbaum (1994) argues that universalist outlooks, such as cosmopolitanism, are ethically superior to particularist outlooks, such as nationalism. While cosmopolitanism is regarded as the future of the globalising world, nationalism is regarded as the enemy of cosmopolitan societies, if not humanity (Beck, 2002).
This oppositional construction has been further strengthened by the electoral success of Donald Trump and far-right parties across the world. When nationalism is covered in the news, it is often associated with isolationism, protectionism, and xenophobia (Bieber, 2018). This assumption also informs much of the public debate in Hong Kong. Policy initiatives advocated by the nationalists, such as assuming full responsibility for the vetting of ‘one-way permit’ application and combating parallel trading activities, were criticised as forms of ‘xenophobia’ and ‘discrimination’. Some pan-democrat activists also criticised nationalists for advocating a form of ethnic nationalism that is prone to xenophobia (Lee, 2020b). For example, Au Loong-yu, a well-known left-wing veteran activist, even regarded localism and nationalism as fascism and ‘demonic’ (Ho, 2015).1

However, readers of nationalism studies will immediately point out the risk of oversimplification in treating all nationalism as a uniform phenomenon. As Brubaker (2004) points out:

Patriotism and nationalism are not things with fixed natures; they are highly flexible political languages, ways of framing political arguments by appealing to the patria, the fatherland, the country, the nation.

While it is true that some forms of nationalism are closely associated with xenophobia and isolationism, other nationalisms might frame their arguments differently given a different social context and available rhetorical resources. It is therefore important to understand the claims of nationalism in context. This chapter sees Hong Kong nationalism as a particular kind of nationalism, a stateless-nation within a non-democratic regime, and investigates the ‘character’ of Hong Kong nationalism against the background of the central-periphery conflict. In this chapter, I theorise internationalism as a two-fold concept and show that Hong Kong nationalism exhibited a high level of internationalism in both inward and outward dimensions. Therefore, the findings provide evidence against the alleged association between nationalism and xenophobia and isolationism. The analysis of this chapter therefore addresses the research question of ‘How does Hong Kong nationalism negotiate its relations with other actors in the world?’ (RQ 2(b)).

1 The relationship between localism and nationalism was discussed in Chapter 3.
8.2 Data and Analysis

This chapter will consult two data sources. First, I will continue examining the corpus of Facebook pages of nationalist organisations and their key figures investigated in Chapter 7 (‘Nationalist Dataset’). Second, I also supplement the analysis with an additional corpus of Facebook posts from other political parties (‘Comparison Dataset’). The additional data is added because of the political culture of Hong Kong: throughout the course of history, Hong Kong has developed into a ‘global city’; Hong Kong people have a high affiliation to the identity of ‘global citizen’ (Chan and Tang, 2019; HKUPOP, 2019); and the international elements found in the Hong Kong identity is a major component that distinguishes it from the Chinese identity (Ma, 2007; Fung, 2008; Kaeding, 2001; Bhattacharya, 2005). Therefore, the political parties in Hong Kong can serve as a baseline for internationalism and cosmopolitanism. Comparing the nationalists with other political parties in Hong Kong allows us to assess the effect of nationalism while holding the factor of political culture constant. By comparing multiple political camps operating within the same society, we will be able to tell whether nationalism has made the discourse less global regardless of the general political context. The Comparison Dataset comprises of Facebook pages of all major political parties in Hong Kong. A total of 16,823 posts posted between 1 January 2015 and 31 January 2018 were extracted using NetVizz on 17 August 2018 (Rieder, 2013).

The following will first discuss the inward aspect of internationalism by looking at the posts that mention other countries. Inward-internationalism is defined as the willingness to accept foreign influence. It is inward in the sense that foreign ideas and experience are brought inwardly into the nation. After that, I will turn to the outward aspect of

---

2 A total of 7 Facebook pages were selected, including Hong Kong Indigenous (HKI) and its then spokesman Edward Tin-kei Leung, Youngspiration (YP) and its then convener Leung Chung-hang and election candidate Yau Wai-ching, and Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) and its then convener Chan Ho-tin. The organisations are selected based on their popular support and activities in nationalist movement. All posts posted on their Facebook page between its creation date and the 31 January 2018 were harvested.

3 Major political parties are defined as parties that have at least one legislator in the Legislative Council. A total of 13 Facebook pages were selected, spanning across the whole political spectrum of Hong Kong, including the nationalists (Hong Kong Indigenous, Hong Kong National Party, and Youngspiration), other localists (Democracy Groundwork, Civic Passion, and Demosistō), the pan-democrat (League of Social Democrats, Democratic Party, Civic Party, and Labour Party), and the pro-China (New People’s Party, Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, and Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong). The key characteristics and positions of different camps were discussed in Chapter 3.
internationalism by looking at the English posts. Outward-internationalism is defined as the nationalists’ attempt to project the nation in international arenas and invite international cooperation. It is outward in the sense that the nation is proactively going outward to foster cooperation and seek support.

8.3 Inward-Internationalism

Xenophobia refers to the dislike of foreigners and the fear of incorporating outsiders into one’s own group. In some cases, xenophobia is used to describe the disposition to avoid foreign influence on society. So understood, there could be two layers of xenophobia, demographically, xenophobia entails the rejection of foreign immigrants; ideologically, it entails the rejection of foreign influence (Page and Sonnenburg, 2003). In the context of colonialism, xenophobia is often exhibited as nativist reactions against the coloniser (Page and Sonnenburg, 2003).

In Chapter 7, it is observed that the nationalists’ discourse entails scepticism towards China and Chinese immigrants. It was feared that the Chinese immigrants would refuse to integrate into Hong Kong’s culture. Hence, the nationalists’ antipathy towards Chinese immigrant can be understood as a fear that their culture would be in jeopardy. It is therefore tempting to regard these discourses as xenophobic in nature.

However, before drawing such a conclusion, we must put the antipathy and scepticism in context. Ever since the transfer of sovereignty, Hong Kong has been subjected to increasing pressure from China to ‘become more Chinese’ and China is an authoritarian regime with a history of human rights violations and cultural cleansing (BBC, 2020). In a sense, the nationalists’ antipathy towards China is not entirely groundless, at least to them, and we must not confuse such reactions, which are informed by past grievances and motivated by a sense of threat, with the xenophobia caused by cultural chauvinism. Conceptually, we must also distinguish the scepticism towards one outsider group in particular from the scepticism towards all outsiders in general.

To fully understand the international aspect of Hong Kong nationalism, I will investigate the Hong Kong nationalists’ attitude towards other non-Chinese foreigners to determine whether Hong Kong nationalism is xenophobic in general or if the seemingly

---

4 While the localist camp shares the scepticism towards Chinese immigrants, the pan-democrats generally advocate tolerance even when some immigrants’ behaviour causes inconvenience for Hong Kong people.

5 The national education saga is one example. See Chapter 3 for detailed discussion.
xenophobic elements are instead a result of other factors in play. This chapter will also investigate the aspect of colonialism, a foreign force in its essence, by looking at the nationalists’ attitude towards the British coloniser.

If Hong Kong nationalism entails general xenophobia, it is reasonable to assume that Hong Kong nationalists are less inclined to accept foreign ideas or learn from international experience. In the following section, I will first compare the mentions of foreign countries across political camps to see if the nationalists are less likely to mention foreign countries. Second, I will analyse the texts with mentions of foreign countries to gain understanding about their attitude towards foreigner and foreign ideas. Based on the evidence presented below, I argue that the xenophobic element is not present in the texts concerning non-Chinese foreigners. As the following section will show, the nationalists not only accept foreign influence, they also actively seek cooperation and even intervention on Hong Kong affairs.

8.3.1 Comparison across Political Camps

This section measures the level of inward-internationalism by counting the mentions of foreign countries. A list of country names and their variants were extracted from the Common Locale Data Repository Project. The list was then used to match against the text of the Facebook posts to count how many countries were mentioned in each post. Figure 8.1 offers a quick glimpse of the frequency of country mentions in the corpus. China is the country with most mentions across all political camps, followed by the United Kingdom, Taiwan, the United States, and Japan. The result can also serve as a check for the face validity of the measurement. Due to the political and geographical proximity between Hong Kong and China, it is reasonable to assume that there will be more mentions of China than other countries. The result observed in Figure 8.1 agrees with the expectation, and therefore it seems to have achieved face validity.

Table 8.1 summarises the count of international posts, defined as posts that mention other countries. Since the purpose of this chapter is to explore how the foreign countries other than China were discussed by the nationalists, China is excluded in the international mentions and counted separately. Hong Kong mentions are also displayed for reference.

---

6 Common Locale Data Repository is a project of the Unicode Consortium to provide locale data for computer applications.

7 See Chapter 3 for further discussion on the geopolitical situation of Hong Kong and Chapter 6 for the discussion on China as the ‘significant Other’ of the Hong Kong nationalism.
CHAPTER 8. HONG KONG OF THE WORLD

Figure 8.1: Frequency of Foreign Country Mentions

If nationalism entails isolationism, it is reasonable to expect the nationalists to mention foreign countries less frequently than other political camps (I acknowledge it can also be argued that those motivated by xenophobia might be more likely to mention ‘others’ so as to criticise them, I will further discuss this in later sections). However, the evidence suggests the contrary; nationalists have a higher percentage of posts that mention foreign countries. Over 4 per cent of nationalist posts mentioned at least one foreign country while only 2.62 per cent of the pan-democrat posts do the same. It appears that the nationalists are more likely to invoke foreign countries in their discourse. The figure also demonstrates the noticeable differences between the nationalists and the other localists, despite the fact that some literature would treat them as one single category. Another striking observation is the pro-Beijing parties; they mention other countries less frequently than all the other camps.

Table 8.1: Distribution of International Post across Political Camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Camps</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>HongKong</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist</td>
<td>104 (4.07%)</td>
<td>165 (6.46%)</td>
<td>578 (22.63%)</td>
<td>2554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localist</td>
<td>112 (2.95%)</td>
<td>159 (4.19%)</td>
<td>1041 (27.42%)</td>
<td>3796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-Democrat</td>
<td>191 (2.62%)</td>
<td>259 (3.55%)</td>
<td>1412 (19.36%)</td>
<td>7295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Beijing</td>
<td>50 (1.57%)</td>
<td>29 (0.91%)</td>
<td>374 (11.77%)</td>
<td>3178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 8. HONG KONG OF THE WORLD

However, even though it is observed that foreign countries appear more frequently in the nationalist posts, it does not necessarily mean that their discourse is less xenophobic. For example, the nationalists can mention more foreign countries but show a high level of antipathy towards them, just as when they mention China. Therefore, it is vital to analyse the content of posts qualitatively so as to interpret the references to other countries in context.

8.3.2 Content Analysis of the Nationalist Dataset

To gain a full picture of the nationalism discourse, this section turns to the Nationalist Dataset (the corpus of Facebook pages of nationalist organisations and their key figures). The same procedure was applied to identify the posts with mentions of foreign countries. A total of 176 posts were identified. It is worth noting that the number of international posts in the Nationalist Dataset is higher than the Comparison Dataset as described in Table 8.1. This might be due to two reasons: first, the Nationalist Dataset includes Facebook pages of key figures as well as the political parties while the Comparison Dataset only includes latter; second, a new limitation on Facebook page post collection was imposed in 2017, and therefore some posts might have been filtered out when the Comparison Dataset was harvested while the Nationalist Dataset was collected before the limitation and therefore was not affected.\(^8\)

Content analysis is used in this section to gain an understanding of the nationalists’ international mentions. The text of all posts that mention at least one foreign country was extracted, read by the researcher, and then coded in terms of the issues and also the genres of the posts.

Figure 8.2(a) shows the total count of the issues and Table 8.2 shows a brief description of each issue. Selected issues relevant to the internationalism of the nationalists will be discussed further below. Figure 8.2(b) shows the distribution of genres. It can be observed that the majority of posts comprised unformatted text. These are texts that contain no notable formatting, such as Facebook status updates and captions of photos and links. The second popular genre is news, namely texts that contain short extracts from news articles, often followed by a link to the news outlet’s site. There is also a significant amount of excerpts; these are short extracts from commentaries or other forms of opinion pieces. Statements and open letters are texts that follow certain formats and structures;

---

\(^8\) A detail description of the limitation and the potential bias is documented in Ho (2020a).
### Table 8.2: Description of International Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Experience</td>
<td>Incidents related to other stateless nations and foreign countries.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Affairs</td>
<td>Mentions of foreign countries when discussing a local issue.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversea Visit</td>
<td>Reports and announcements about the nationalists’ overseas visits</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Political incidents in China, including the detention of Liu Xiaobo, the anniversary of June 4 Massacre, and China’s national day</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Hong Kong athletes’ participation in international competition and the history of Hong Kong football.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonialism</td>
<td>The effect of British colonialism on Hong Kong’s early development of social institution and autonomy.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle of Hong Kong</td>
<td>The history of the Battle of Hong Kong and announcements of memorial events.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan Experience</td>
<td>Taiwan’s experience in democratisation and maintaining autonomy.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causeway Bay Books</td>
<td>Statements and discussions in the response of the kidnapping of the staff members of Causeway Bay Books.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism of Foreign Government</td>
<td>Criticism of Thailand authorities for the detention of Joshua Wong.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Values</td>
<td>Statements about the erosion of freedom of speech, the rule of law, democracy, and human rights as a result of Chinese influence.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International News</td>
<td>News about international affairs.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-HK Policy Act</td>
<td>Calls for the abolishing of the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau Experience</td>
<td>Macau’s experience in integrating with China.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brexit</td>
<td>Discussion around Brexit.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison with other Countries</td>
<td>Discussion on international indicators.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Statement and open letter about Hong Kong independence.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-British Joint Declaration</td>
<td>Discussion about China’s violations of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disqualification of Lawmakers</td>
<td>Discussion on the Hong Kong Legislative Council oath-taking controversy.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK Human Rights and Democracy Act</td>
<td>Summary of US’s Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong History</td>
<td>Summary of the book, <em>Hong Kong People’s Hong Kong History</em>.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
both of them contain a title that explicitly states the purpose of the text, which is often a response or opinion on certain social issues by the post author. The major difference between a statement and an open letter is that the latter contains an explicit recipient. Texts of announcement follow a similar format with those of statement, but they often concern organisational matters rather than social issues. The implication of the genre will be discussed in the next section, when it becomes relevant.

Figure 8.3 shows the result of the coding visualised in a joint plot. The identified issues are plotted along the y-axis, a hierarchical cluster algorithm was used to reorder the issues, issues with similar genre pattern are locate closer with one another. The identified genres are plotted along the x-axis. The main panel shows the joint frequency of issue and genre, the darker the colour, the larger the quantity of post identified as the respective issue and genre. The number in the cells represent the count. The right margin of the plot shows the univariate distribution of the issues in the form of a bar plot while the top margin shows that of the genre. The longer the bar, the larger the number of posts of the respective issue or genre.

It can be observed that the majority of the posts congregated into a large cluster at
the bottom-right corner of the figure. Within the main cluster, Local Affairs is the largest category. The category contains texts that happen to mention a foreign country when discussing a local issue, and the country in question is neither relevant to the main topic of the text nor used as an example to enrich the discussion. A typical example is a post captured in Figure 8.4. In response to TVB’s, the largest television broadcasting company in Hong Kong, initiative to add simplified Chinese subtitles to their news programmes, Youngspiration (YP) asks, sarcastically, if TVB should add Japanese, Korean, French, Filipino, or even Indonesian subtitles too.
Excluding Local Affairs, International Experience is the largest remaining category. Posts in this category are mainly written in two forms. The first form focuses on international events related to other stateless nations. For example, on 17 October 2017, Hong Kong Indigenous (HKI) shared a news article about the arrest of Jordi Sánchez and Jordi Cuixart, two prominent political leaders in support of Catalan independence.\(^9\) The second form involves citing foreign countries’ experiences as an example to enrich the discussion of local issues. For example, in a post titled *Defend Workers, Protect Life. Joint Statement by universities and Localist Organisations on Labour Day*, Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) drew on international examples to argue for the legalisation of paternal leave:

> Compared with other Asian countries, paternity leave in Hong Kong are still clearly lagging behind. For example, male employees in Taiwan can enjoy five days of paternity leave with full pay, and male employees in Singapore can enjoy seven days of paternity leave with full pay. Hong Kong should follow the practice of other countries, extend the statutory paternity leave, and improve

CHAPTER 8. HONG KONG OF THE WORLD

the relevant statutory criteria for calculating pay.\textsuperscript{10,11}

A common goal of the posts in this category is to draw inspiration and learn from the experience of other countries, such as other stateless-nations’ strategy in dealing with their central state, other nations’ history of gaining independence, and the experience of small and medium states in dealing with great powers.

Related to International Experience is Taiwan Experience. Due to the similarity in the social context, as both Hong Kong and Taiwan face the same centralising state, Taiwan is often considered a case for Hong Kong to learn from. A typical example can be seen in an interview excerpt of Ray Toi-yeung Wong, Convener of HKI. He suggests that Taiwan’s situation convinced him that ‘sovereignty’ is the key criterion of Hong Kong’s road to democracy:

Taiwan’s democratisation can be successful and sustained only because they have sovereignty. The current situation has proved, it is impossible for Hong Kong to achieve democracy under one country two systems.\textsuperscript{12}

He goes on to argue that:

In the past, the wave of Taiwanization was a key driving force for democratisation, and it was also a necessary way for Hong Kong’s democratic movement.\textsuperscript{13}

Taiwanization refers to the ongoing development of a distinct Taiwanese culture and identity, as opposed to those of the Chinese, since the 1980s (Jacobs, 2005).

The above examples demonstrate the ideological aspect of the internationalism exhibited by Hong Kong nationalists. Not only do they not reject foreign ideas, but they also proactively bring in foreign strategies and experiences from a wide range of countries, such as Taiwan, Japan, Northern Ireland, Catalonia, Kosovo, and Singapore. The following paragraphs will explore the nationalists’ attitude towards another form of foreign influence that has changed the course of Hong Kong’s history, colonialism.

\textsuperscript{10} Unless specified otherwise, all quotations in this chapter are translated by the author
\textsuperscript{13} ibid.
The category of Colonialism discusses the effects of British colonialism. The discussion contains two aspects. First, the nationalists attribute the early development of Hong Kong’s social institution to British colonialism. For example, HKNP claims that:

From 1841 to 1997 were all the history of the formation of the Hong Kong nation. As a result of the organic interactions between the indigenous Chinese who had lived in Hong Kong before the arrival of the British and the social institutions, systems, laws, and practices placed by the British colonists, the Chinese in Hong Kong have emerged with new characteristics, including observing the spirit of the contract, acting in accordance with conventions, and awareness of mutual assistance among ethnic groups.14

HKNP’s views on the British’s contribution is similar to the observations by the literature discussed in Chapter 2 (cf. Lau, 1997a; Carroll, 2007; Tsang, 2004). British colonialism is in general regarded highly by both the local population and academic researchers. The influence of the 156 years of British colonial rule is often described as the ‘colonial legacies’ of Hong Kong, including the political framework and social stability that enabled Hong Kong’s economic prosperity and paved the way for them to become a global financial hub, to inherit a political culture that emphasises integrity, a professional and efficient civil service and administration, the establishment of liberal values such as freedom and the rule of law, and even the preservation of Chinese culture in Hong Kong.

The nationalists trace the autonomy Hong Kong currently enjoys to the colonial times. For example, HKI quoted an article written by Brian Fong, claiming that:

If we read the history of our city on a macro level, we should understand that Hong Kong’s autonomy is not simply granted by Beijing from top to bottom, it was a three-stage process consisted of London’s indirect rule during the colonial era, acknowledgement by the Sino-British Joint Declaration, and codification by the Basic Law.15

YP also devoted a series of posts to the Young Plan, an abandoned constitutional reform proposal by Mark Young, former Hong Kong Governor, that attempted to introduce

---


representative democracy in colonial Hong Kong in the 1950s. YP attributed Hong Kong’s lack of democracy to two causes. On the one hand, they argue that Hong Kong people at that time generally believed that ‘economic development should be prioritised over democracy’ and therefore were apathetic towards the reform proposal. On the other hand, they argue that due to China’s threat, the British government feared China would take over Hong Kong with military means if they attempted to introduce democracy. Therefore, Hong Kong has become the only colony of the British empire that did not undergo political reform until the 1980s. As the above example has shown, the nationalists were generally uncritical of British colonialism. In one text, the British were even framed as a protector of Hong Kong:

During the Cairo Conference in the late World War II, US President Roosevelt suggested that Hong Kong should be returned to China after the war, and Chiang Kai-shek also agreed. But Churchill claimed that ‘Hong Kong will be eliminated from the British Empire only over my dead body’.

In the text, Winston Churchill, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is portrayed as a protector who stopped Hong Kong from falling into China’s hands and therefore changed the course of Hong Kong’s history.

As a colony established by the British, there is no doubt that the 156 years of British rule has exerted immense influence on all aspects of Hong Kong society. However, such ‘colonial legacies’, a phrase widely used in Hong Kong to refer to the influence of British colonialism (Lai, 2019), is not only not rejected but also acknowledged and celebrated by the nationalists and Hong Kong people (as discussed in Chapter 2). Beyond the activists’ online discourse, such positive image towards British colonialism can also be found in key publications of the nationalist intellectuals (Chin, 2015; Tsui, 2015; Tsui, 2017; Fong, 2015; Undergrad Editorial Board, 2014; as discussed in Chapter 6). Certain aspects of ‘Britishness’, for example, the command of English, are even seen as a marker of identity to distinguish Hong Kong people from the Chinese (Bhattacharya, 2005; Undergrad Editorial Board, 2014). That said, it is crucial to read the nationalists’ view on British colonialism in context. As an immigrant society that shares immense cultural links with China, the valorisation of the Britishness can be seen as a strategy to highlight the ‘non-Chineseness’

---


17 Some nationalist would claim otherwise, see discussion in Chapter 6.
This section discussed the inward-internationalism of Hong Kong nationalism. The above examples show that in contrast with the literature would suggest, Hong Kong nationalism does not entail xenophobic rejection of foreign influence. Instead, foreign ideas, experience, and intervention are not only valued, but also actively sought for in some cases. Next section will discuss the outward aspect of internationalism, namely how the nationalists reach out to other international actors in order to advance their agenda.

8.4 Outward-Internationalism

According to Keating (1997), a key aspect of building a stateless nation is the projection of the nation into international arenas. Instead of a comprehensive foreign policy resembling traditional diplomacy, the strategy of stateless nations often focuses on specific actors in the world and serves specific goals. Keating identifies three common goals: promoting trade and investment; gaining support for language and cultural development; and legitimising and consolidating the nation-building project at home by putting the stateless nation on the same level as other nation-states.

However, when speaking of the measures to project stateless nations overseas, current literature puts great emphasis on external policies by territorial governments (Keating, 1997, 1996; McCrone, 2006, 2001a). As Keating (1996) explains, institutions of self-government are important for the sub-state nations since they ‘provide an arena for debate and decision, to frame policies, to legitimise decision, and to define the collective interest in the state and international arenas.’ (p. 54). Following this line of thought, Fong (2019) traces the projection of Hong Kong’s territorial representation into the international arena to the post-war British-Hong Kong period (1945–1997), led by the British colonial government. According to Fong, the colonial regime projected Hong Kong into the international arena through bilateral agreements with other nation-states, membership in international organisations, and the establishment of Economic and Trade Offices around the world. The agenda advanced by the British colonial government is, however, limited to the economic sphere.

When a territory faces institutional deficiency, nationalist projects often rely on civil society to advance the nation’s interest (Keating, 1996). This can be exemplified by the case of pre-devolution Scotland. Even though the Scottish Office has a European Affairs division tasked to identify benefits to Scotland and to promote Scotland’s interest within
the European Union, it is limited to minor modifications of the overall United Kingdom policy line. In response, sectoral interest organisations and trade unions became active agents in lobbying within the European Union (Keating, 1996).18

Similar to the pre-devolution Scotland case, there is no elected government to define the nation’s interest and advance the nation’s agenda of Hong Kong, both internally and externally. More importantly, after the transfer of sovereignty to China, the Hong Kong government was often regarded as a proxy for the Chinese to suppress, instead of promoting, Hongkongers’ interest (Wu, 2016; Fong, 2017b). Even before the transfer of sovereignty, as Fong (2019) has himself acknowledged, the nation-building measures during colonial times were not intentionally devised by the British rulers, but an accidental outcome of many factors.

As a result of the institutional deficiency, Hong Kong people often resort to collective action within civil society. It has long been a tradition for the pan-democrat activists and politicians to reach out to the international community, not for economic, but democratic and humanitarian causes.19 For instances, two senior pan-democrat members, Anson On-sang Chan Fang and Martin Chu-ming Lee launched a two-week visit in 2014 to the United States and Canada to lobby support for Hong Kong’s democracy (Chong and Lau, 2014); in 2015, Martin Lee testified at Canada’s House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee and urged Canada to back democracy in Hong Kong (Cheung, 2015a); after the Umbrella Movement, Joshua Wong, one of the student leaders of the movement, made a university speaking tour in the United Kingdom to urge the UK government to pressure Beijing over the crackdowns in Hong Kong (Merrill, 2015), he also made annual visits to the United States between 2015 and 2017 to testify concerning the democratic situation in Hong Kong (BBC, 2019); Denise Ho, a singer and high-profile activist during the Umbrella Movement, spoke at the Oslo Freedom Forum in 2015 and the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2019 (Victor, Qin and May, 2019). In some cases, civil society organisations even perform state functions in the international arena. A prime example would be the Hong Kong UPR Coalition’s participation in the Universal Periodic Review for China. Universal Periodic Review is a process of the United Nations Human Rights

---

18 That said, it is also important to point out that Keating was writing in a pre-devolution time and the devolution in 1999 has brought significant changes to the Scottish political landscape, as the new political institutions provided new points of access for organised interests and the Scottish Government has engaged extensively in paradiplomacy, namely the practice of foreign relations by regional or territorial actors (Keating, 2020; MacLeod and Halpin, 2020; Lynch, 2020).

19 See Chapter 3 for a discussion of political camps in Hong Kong.
Council which entails a review of the human rights records of the member states. The Coalition submitted an additional report on top of the report submitted by the Hong Kong government (Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2020).

In this chapter, I theorise that these initiatives are attempts to project Hong Kong into the international arenas. Rather than insertion into the global economy as argued by the literature (Keating, 1997), the goal of these projection efforts is to insert Hong Kong people into the international community of free peoples and project Hong Kong as an aspiring member of the free world. As shown previously, civil society actors of the pan-democrat camp are traditionally active in projecting Hong Kong internationally, and one key question is therefore if the Hong Kong nationalists also attempt to do the same. The following section addresses the above question and argues that the nationalists are equally, if not more, inclined to reach out internationally, despite the differences in their political stance and goal of their political project. Theoretically, such attempts could be seen as the outward aspect of internationalism exhibited in the Hong Kong nationalism discourse.

8.4.1 Comparison Across Political Camps

To evaluate the nationalists’ attempt to project Hong Kong internationally, the following subsection will look at the English posts. English posts are defined as posts with a substantial proportion written in English. It can be bilingual, typically written in Cantonese followed by an English translation, or written solely in English. To identify English posts, all web addresses, a widespread source of English characters in non-English posts, were removed. Next, I counted the number of English characters within the posts. Since non-English posts can occasionally contain English characters (for example, English names, user ids, or occasional use of English terms), a threshold of 300 English character is determined based on the manual reading. Finally, all posts with more English characters than the threshold are categorised as an English post. Even though English is one of the official languages of Hong Kong, Cantonese is the main language of daily conversations, and English is rarely used in communication among local Hong Kong people. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the intended audience of the English posts is not Hong Kong people, but the international community. The number of English posts on a page can serve as an indicator of the page owner’s intention to communicate with an international audience.
Table 8.3: Distribution of English Post across Political Camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faction</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Non-English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist</td>
<td>80 (3.13%)</td>
<td>2474 (96.87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localist</td>
<td>47 (1.24%)</td>
<td>3749 (98.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-Democrat</td>
<td>20 (0.27%)</td>
<td>7275 (99.73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Beijing</td>
<td>18 (0.57%)</td>
<td>3160 (99.43%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3 shows the distribution of English and non-English post across the camps. As the main channel to communicate with local supporters, it is not surprising to see the low percentage of English posts across camps. However, it can be observed that there are noticeable differences between the nationalists and pan-democrats; 3.13 per cent of posts by the former are English while merely 0.27 per cent of the latter are English. Given the assumption of the intended audience, the nationalists seem to exhibit a higher tendency to reach out to an international audience than other political camps. Using the pan-democrats as a baseline of comparison, since the pan-democrats are known for high levels of internationalism, the nationalists show an even higher tendency in reaching out internationally, it can be concluded that the nationalists are internationalist in their online discourse, even more so than the pan-democrats. The next section will investigate what issues the nationalists intend to communicate with the international community.

8.4.2 Content Analysis of the Nationalist Dataset

Taking a similar approach to the international posts, this section returns to the Nationalist Dataset. The same procedure was used to identify English posts. A total of 113 posts were identified. Following the same coding strategy, content analysis was employed to identify the issues and genres of the English posts. Figure 8.5(a) shows the total count of the issues, and Table 8.4 shows the brief description of each issue. Selected issues relevant to outward-internationalism will be discussed further below. Figure 8.5(b) shows the distribution of genres, in sharp contrast to the international posts, none of the English posts belong to the category of unformatted text. In other words, all the English posts follow a certain kind of format. This suggests that the international posts and English posts serve a different function in the online communication for the nationalist groups. Among the genres, statement and announcement are the most popular. Notably, several issues span across both of them, the major difference between statement and announce-
### Table 8.4: Description of English Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disqualification of Lawmakers</td>
<td>Discussion of the Hong Kong Legislative Council oath-taking controversy.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>Announcement of upcoming protests.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Statement and open letter about Hong Kong independence.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Organisational matters such as the organisation’s goals and agendas, call for support, and the organisation’s activities.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK Election</td>
<td>News coverage and public statements of the 2016 Hong Kong Legislative Council Election.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Censorship</td>
<td>Statements on the government’s harassment, for example, the ban on the nationalists from setting up fundraising stalls in Hong Kong’s annual New Year’s Fair.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Values</td>
<td>Statements about the erosion of freedom of speech, the rule of law, democracy, and human rights as a result of Chinese influence.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversea Visit</td>
<td>Reports and announcements about the nationalists’ oversea visits</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police &amp; Arrests</td>
<td>Posts about the arrests of party members and police brutality.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-HK Policy Act</td>
<td>Calls for the abolishing of the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causeway Bay Books</td>
<td>Statements and discussions in the response of the kidnapping of the staff members of Causeway Bay Books.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Country Two Systems</td>
<td>Discussion about the interpretation of the Basic Law by the National People’s Congress Standing Committee in 2016 and the denied entry of two UK activists to Hong Kong</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Discussion on political incidents in China, including the detention of Liu Xiaobo, the anniversary of the June 4 Massacre, and China’s national day.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei Attack</td>
<td>Statements on the assault of two Hong Kong National Party members by pro-China figures in Taipei.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonialism</td>
<td>The effect of British colonialism on Hong Kong’s early development of social institution and autonomy.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localism</td>
<td>Discussion about the nationalists’ views on localism.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ment is that the latter are announcements made by the nationalists when an incident happened, for example when a member was arrested, while the former consists of the organisation’s comment on the incident, often followed by a call for action. Similar to the international posts, there is a significant amount of news shared by the nationalists across various issues. The major difference between the two is that all of the news items are from international outlets, rather than local ones. The implication of genre choice will be discussed further below.

Figure 8.5: Issue and Genre of English Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disqualification of Lawmakers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK Election</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Censorship</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Visit</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Values</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-HK Policy Act</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police &amp; Arrests</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Country Two Systems</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causeway Bay Books</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei Attack</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonialism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International News</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Letter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, Figure 8.6 shows the result of the content analysis visualised in a joint plot. The identified issues were plotted along the y-axis, and a hierarchical cluster algorithm was used to determine the order while the same method was used to plot the genres along the x-axis. The main panel shows the joint frequency of issue and genre. The number in the cells represent the count. The univariate distributions of the issue and genre are shown in the margins.
A few clusters can be observed; the texts of different issues seem to adopt different genres. Statement is the only exception as it can be found in texts across all but one issue, including the erosion of liberal values in Hong Kong, the controversy around the disqualification of lawmakers, political incidents in China, and the threat towards One Country, Two Systems.

The genre of the open letter denotes an appeal or response to a named international actor and therefore is particularly relevant to the idea of outward internationalism. The genre consists of three issues. The US-HK Policy Act concerns the open letter sent to the Consulate General of the United States to request the abolishment of the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act, an act that allows the United States to treat Hong Kong differently from Mainland China for the purposes of trade and export controls. The campaign is led by HKNP, who argues that the Act provides Hong Kong with a special
status, but the status has been exploited by China for its own economic and political benefit. Following the disqualification of lawmakers by Hong Kong’s Court of Appeal, in a judgement believed to have been made in response to the interpretation of the Basic Law by the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, HKNP argues that both the rule of law and judicial independence have perished. Therefore, in order to put pressure on China, HKNP suggests that the United States should abolish the Act.\(^{20}\)

Following the disappearance of five staff members of Causeway Bay Books, a former bookstore frequented by Chinese tourists looking for banned books on Chinese politics and politicians, the nationalists contacted the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the United States, and Sweden to urge them to help investigate and put pressure on the Chinese government. In an open letter sent to Philip Hammond, the then Foreign Secretary, HKI urged the UK government to uphold their commitment to the Sino-British Joint Declaration and provide assistance:

We request the assistance from The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to investigate the missing of Mr. Li and Mr. Gui and the other three, who should be protected by the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

We urge you to recall the commitments set out by both Britain and China at the handover in 1997, that the Sino-British JD protects Hong Kong’s legal autonomy, Lee, Gui and others are in Hong Kong and under Hong Kong’s law and neither of them is ‘first and foremost a Chinese citizen’ as claimed by China.\(^{21}\)

Later the same year, YP and HKI sent another joint open letter to the Consulate General of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the United States, and Sweden in Hong Kong to request intervention on the basis of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

We are writing to request [the] intervention of your State in the event that four Hong Kong and one Swedish citizens [sic] have been held in arbitrary detention in China and be deprived of their liberty without due process established by law, which is in blatant violation of Article 9 of the International Covenant on


\(^{21}\)Hong Kong Indigenous (2016) 12 February. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/154692548228025_1686816354905603 (Accessed: 2 June 2020); Originally English.
Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Hong Kong implemented through its Bill of Rights Ordinance in 1991, and Article 28 of the Hong Kong Basic Law. We hope your State can respond to the incident, urge the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to release any related persons who are still in its custody, and urge the government of Hong Kong to uphold the liberty and security of its citizens.\textsuperscript{22}

An open letter was also sent to Chris Patten, the former governor of colonial Hong Kong, in response to his comment on Hong Kong independence, where he stated in an interview that ‘Hong Kong is not a would-be nation-state, with no disrespect to the people who advocate this, it is never going to happen’ (Ibrahim and Lau, 2017). He also contended that the calls for Hong Kong independence would dilute the fight for democracy in Hong Kong, but instead urged the activists to make use of their international support to put pressure on the government. The nationalists rejected Patten’s advice by citing the fruitless outcome of the Umbrella Movement in 2014 and also the disqualification of lawmakers, many of whom had never voiced support for Hong Kong independence. HKNP also urged Patten to help bring international attention to China’s ‘continuing colonisation of Hong Kong’.\textsuperscript{23}

Furthermore, the nationalists used Facebook to document their oversea visits. Table 8.5 summaries all the oversea visits documented in both the English posts and international posts. Throughout the study period, the nationalists participated in a wide range of events to reach out to various international actors, including the activists of other independence movements in Asia, such as those of the Taiwanese, the Tibetans, the Uyghurs, and the Southern Mongolians, as well as international actors concerned with human rights and democracy, such as Human Rights Watch and Henry Jackson Society.

Gaining international support has been a major focus of the nationalist. In a post titled \textit{One will from East to West shall free the chained in number}, HKNP lays out the organisation’s blueprint of international outreach:

\begin{quote}
We shall establish diplomatic links with the various pro-independence democratic leaders of the Uyghurs, the Tibetans, the Taiwanese, and the Southern
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22} Youngspiration (2016) 18 June. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/754643994627238_1024043421020626 (Accessed: 2 June 2020); Originally English.

## Table 8.5: Oversea Visits of Hong Kong Nationalists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Organisers</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2047: The Future of Hong Kong Talk</td>
<td>Hong Kong Cultural &amp; Political Forum</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Conference of Tibet Support Groups</td>
<td>Tibet Interest Group in the European Parliament, International Campaign for Tibet, Lights on Tibet, Les Amis du Tibet, the Tibetan Community in Belgium</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong After 20 Years: the Rollback of Civil, Human, and Legal Rights Round Table and Report Launch</td>
<td>Henry Jackson Society</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong’s Handover Parliamentary Hearing</td>
<td>UK Parliament</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Seminar on Asia-Pacific Cooperative Security</td>
<td>International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts, Cross-Strait Interflow Prospect Foundation</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Meeting</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
<td>Washington DC, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InterEthnic InterFaith Leadership Conference</td>
<td>Initiatives of China/Citizen Power for China</td>
<td>Dharamshala, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Meeting</td>
<td>Taiwan Statebuilding Party</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Symposium on the Evolution of the Political Situations in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan and China’s Policy in Japan</td>
<td>China Democracy Forum, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, Federation for a Democratic China, Japan China Democracy Movement Coordination Association</td>
<td>Kanagawa, Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom, Democracy, and the Right to Self Determination: Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan Round Table Conference</td>
<td>Students for a Free Tibet, Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228 and Hong Kong Exhibition Talk</td>
<td>Memorial Foundation of 228</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International press conference on Human Rights and Self-determination in Asia</td>
<td>Taiwan Human Rights And Cultural Association, Taiwan Association for China Human Rights, Japan Uyghur Association, Japan Taiwan Research Forum, IR Independent Referendum Human Rights Movement Promotion Group</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaugural Meeting of the World Conference for Southern Mongolia</td>
<td>The Preparatory Committee of South Mongolian Congress</td>
<td>Tokyo, Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Forum on East Asian Democratisation</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mongolians, spread the word of Hong Kong’s dire situation at the hands of the PRC, and work out any possible cooperation with these diverse organisations and leaders.\(^{24}\) and its hopes:

The HKNP shall meet up with various national leaders to spread the word that Hong Kong on this very day is bound in colonial captivity under the People’s Republic of China in hopes that awareness and subsequently pressure would arise from the international community.\(^{25}\)

Similarly, HKI also argued that it is important to let the world know that ‘Hong Kong is under the oppression of China’s colonial policy, just like Tibet, Xiangjian, and Inner Mongolia.’\(^{26}\) They believe that ‘if Hong Kong were to save itself, it is vital to seek the opportunity to exchange with other victims of Chinese oppression.’\(^{27}\) Among the independence movements in Asia, HKI believes that Taiwan and Hong Kong can become formidable allies and the international alliance of nationalists will become a strong power against Chinese communists.

The above examples show that Hong Kong nationalists do not shy away from forging international connections, fostering international cooperation, and seeking international aid so as to advance the nation’s agenda. Hong Kong is projected into international arenas as an aspiring member of the free world and a potential ally for other stateless-nations.

### 8.5 Chapter Conclusion

Many observers have constructed nationalism as the opposition of cosmopolitanism and nationalism is often associated with isolationism, protectionism, and xenophobia. Throughout the last few decades, nationalism’s association with protectionism has been challenged by various scholars. McCrone (2006) points out that state-less nationalists, when compared with more traditional forms of nationalism, have already learnt to live


\(^{25}\) ibid.


\(^{27}\) ibid.
CHAPTER 8. HONG KONG OF THE WORLD

with the globalising market. Similarly, Keating (1996, 1997) documents the ways through which state-less nations inserted themselves into the global economy.

My work enriches the discussion by drawing on the case of Hong Kong. Ideologically, the case of Hong Kong shows that nationalism does not necessarily reject foreign influence; in some cases, foreign influence is even celebrated. Politically, the above examples demonstrate that Hong Kong nationalists do not shy away from international cooperation; in some cases, they even invite international actors to intervene in local affairs. The internationalism of Hong Kong nationalism demonstrates that nationalism does not necessarily go hand in hand with isolationism and xenophobia. Instead, the manifestation of nationalism depends on the history, social context, and opportunities in the political market of the nation in question.

The findings in this chapter also enrich the discussion of stateless nations by expanding the goals stateless nations can seek to achieve. For stateless nations in an authoritarian context, seeking international support for democratisation can be a legitimate, and often necessary, goal of the stateless nation’s agenda. This is especially true for cases like Hong Kong, as a small city-state pitted against an authoritarian world superpower like China. Due to the enormous discrepancy in strength, seeking international allies is a reasonable, and probably the only, choice for the nationalist. As mentioned in Chapter 2, much of the discussion on stateless nations focuses on those within Western democracies, and it is not surprising that democratisation is not often discussed.

It is important to note that there have been discussions of democratic deficit and call for devolution in, for example, Scotland in the past, but these should not be confused with the call for democratisation. The situation of and options available to a stateless nation within a democratic and non-democratic state are vastly different. Stateless nations in democratic countries are represented in the legislature of the central state and in certain cases members of the stateless nation have the opportunity to become the leader of the central state; for example, there have been Quebeccois Prime Ministers in Canada and Scottish and Welsh Prime Ministers in the United Kingdom. Political rights such as freedom of association and freedom of speech are generally guaranteed by the constitution and an independent judiciary. In the case of Hong Kong, it is unthinkable for the government the hold an official referendum on secessions like Quebec and Scotland, especially when the simple act of advocating independence can result in prosecution and losing the right to run in elections. Hong Kong people are not represented in any meaningful way in the national legislature of China, nor would it be imaginable to become a political leader,
and even the regional legislature is skewed heavily in favour of the pro-China camp. That said, it does not mean political oppression is non-existent in democratic countries. In Catalonia, for example, pro-independence leaders were jailed for organising the 2017 Catalan independence referendum. The differences between stateless nations in democratic and non-democratic countries are nuanced. If democracy is understood as a spectrum, the case of Hong Kong could offer insight to stateless nations at the authoritarian end.
Chapter 9

Conclusion

The overall goal of this thesis was to understand the discursive constitution of Hong Kong nationalism. In Chapter 1, I set out to address two overarching research questions: first, how the nationalists constructed competing discourses about Hong Kong’s past, present, and future; and second, how Hong Kong nationalism relates to Chinese nationalism, British colonialism, and other actors in world.

To address these questions, my research drew on data from social media, publications, and archival documents and introduced a novel approach that combined qualitative analysis with computational method to study nationalism. The study employed a mixed methods design; for each of my findings chapters, the most appropriate research strategy was devised with the consideration of its research aims and the nature of the data. Throughout the thesis, critical discourse analysis was the key qualitative analysis technique, it was employed to study the elements constituting the discourse and strategies employed by the nationalists. For chapters that relied on social media data, computational text analysis was used to reveal patterns within the text corpora and select texts for qualitative analysis at a subsequent stage. The computational and qualitative methods used in my analysis represented a combination of distance reading and close reading techniques.

My research rested on the assumption that nations and nationalism are constructed. Following Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Anderson, in this study I assumed that nations are cultural artefacts, traditions were invented, and historical materials were interpreted by nationalist to serve their purposes and meet the needs in building the nation. Informed by discourse theory, I conceived nationalism as ideologies that were constructed around the prime concern of the nation. The ultimate goal of nationalism is to render itself
identified with and internalised by the people to the point that it constitutes common sense. Furthermore, I considered nationalism as a dynamic battleground in which different representations of the nation compete to become the official account. Nationalists strive to claim the ownership of the *ethnonym*, reinterpret history and historical events, and insert new essence to what it means to be a *homo nationalis*. Based on these assumptions I examined the discourse of Hong Kong nationalism.

### 9.1 Summary of Findings

This section summarises the findings of my research in relation to the two overarching research questions.

#### 9.1.1 How does Hong Kong nationalism construct its past, present, and future?

Defining the ‘Other’ is a common strategy employed by nations to define themselves. Constructing a nation is not only to address the question of ‘who we are’, but at the same time ‘who we are *not*’. Hong Kong nationalism was constructed against the ‘significant Other’ of China and claiming ‘we are Hongkongese’ was in effect ‘claiming we are not Chinese’. Hence, arguing why Hong Kong people are not Chinese has been a key focus of Hong Kong nationalism.

In Chapter 6, I discussed three different discursive approaches, each employing a different strategy, to combat China’s ‘myth of consanguinity’ and construct alternative origins of the Hong Kong people. Despite their shared goal, their strategies were wildly different: Eric Tsui argued that the people of Hong Kong were the descendants of the Baiyue kingdom that existed at the edge of the Chinese empire; Brian Fong differentiated Hong Kong people from the Chinese by stressing the former’s longing for freedom since the beginning of the city; Chin Wan argued that Hong Kong people were indeed the true adherents of Chinese culture and thus claimed ownership of the *ethnonym* of Chinese.

Corresponding to the three histories of Hong Kong people, I also discussed three approaches by intellectuals to respond to the challenges of the times and build an autonomous Hong Kong. Their plans for Hong Kong’s future spanned across the whole spectrum of autonomous political arrangements. The student nationalists of *Undergrad* Editorial Board called for outright independence. Their version of Hong Kong’s future was
analogous to that of peripheral nationalism and classic nationalism: the seeking of secession from its host state. Brian Fong, on the other hand, sat on the conservative end. He supported internal self-determination and desired to build a democratic Hong Kong within China. Fong’s proposal was the closest to the political goals described by the intellectuals of stateless nationalism; it was best understood as an autonomous political arrangement within the central state rather than a clear-cut independence. Chin Wan’s imagination went beyond Hong Kong as he proposed a grand plan for a Chinese confederation that would include not only Hong Kong and China, but also other Asian countries that were historically under China’s cultural influence. Chin’s grand plan resembles elements of the assimilationist state-building nationalism.

A common theme that connected narratives of the past and the narratives of the future in Hong Kong nationalism was the idea of China Threat. As mentioned above, China was the ‘Other’ in the construction of the Hong Kong nation. However, it was not depicted as a friendly neighbour that sat quietly across the Shenzhen River,\(^1\) it was depicted as an invader who seeks to take over Hong Kong, assimilate the Hong Kong people, and destroy Hong Kong culture and values in the process. It was against this threat the intellectuals developed their theories and proposed plans to save Hong Kong.

In Chapter 7, I illustrated how the nationalist activists used contemporary issues to substantiate the notion of China Threat. The narrative contained three dimensions. First, the economic dimension focused on the neoliberalist policies and economic inequality in Hong Kong. The nationalists argued that the grave income inequality was the result of the Chinese government allowing the business class to gain huge profits in Hong Kong in exchange for their support. Second, political incidents throughout the study period were used by the nationalists as evidence to show how the liberal values and way of life embraced by Hong Kong people were destroyed by China. Third, in the cultural dimension, the nationalists focused on the new Chinese immigrants and their alleged refusal to integrate into the local culture of Hong Kong as well as the Hong Kong government’s ‘cultural invasion’ initiatives, such as Mandarin education and the promotion of simplified Chinese characters.

\(^1\) Shenzhen River is the natural border between Hong Kong and Mainland China.
CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

9.1.2 What are the influences of British colonialism and Chinese nationalism and how does Hong Kong nationalism negotiate its relations with other actors in the world?

My research also illustrated the complex relationship between Hong Kong nationalism, Chinese nationalism, and British colonialism.

In Chapter 5, I showed that there was a pan-Chinese identification during the Chinese Language Campaign in the late 1960s and 1970s. I argued that there existed a branch of Chinese cultural identification that has localised and transformed into the anticolonial nationalism we observed in the Campaign. At the time, Britain and British colonialism were the ‘Other’ that put the culture embraced by Hong Kong people at risk. However, as I have shown in Chapters 6 and 7, China and Chinese nationalism became the new ‘Other’ in contemporary Hong Kong identification and the British colonial rule was regarded highly by the nationalists despite the fact that the root of many problems facing Hong Kong today can be traced back to colonial times. The colonial legacies were not only treasured, but also believed to be the key to Hong Kong’s success. Hong Kong nationalism’s changing relationship with Chinese nationalism and British colonialism has shown that the manifestation of nationalism is a product of political contingency. It is a response to the needs of the times, instead of an inevitable consequence of ethno-cultural differences.

In Chapter 8, I situated Hong Kong nationalism within the context of the world of nations and explored the relationship between nationalism and internationalism. I showed that nationalism does not necessarily reject foreign influence. Hong Kong nationalists did not shy away from fostering international cooperation, and they even invited international actors to intervene in local affairs. I also pointed out that due to the authoritarian context of Hong Kong, seeking international support for democratisation was not only a reasonable, but probably the only choice for the Hong Kong nationalists. The case of Hong Kong demonstrated that the manifestation of nationalism depends on the geopolitical context and opportunities available in the political market.

9.2 Contributions

My thesis makes three major substantive contributions and a key methodological contribution.
CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

The Hong Kong nationalist movement is a movement that changed the course of Hong Kong history. Although Hong Kong has a long history of democratic protests, it was the first movement in which Hong Kong people demanded independence. As I will further discuss in the Epilogue, on top of bringing the idea of secession into the imaginations of Hong Kong’s future, the movement also exerted a lasting impact on Hong Kong’s political landscape and subsequent social movements. Therefore, the findings of my research are crucial for understanding the political situation in Hong Kong; my thesis highlighted the critical events that shaped Hong Kong’s political environment and the long-lasting grievances that provoked not only the nationalist movement but also the protests we observe today. I also studied Hong Kong nationalism at a time when the political situation in Hong Kong was undergoing rapid changes. Despite the lack of democracy, Hong Kong was largely seen as a free and liberal society. The year of 2016 was the first time Hong Kong had a candidate barred from running in an election due to political stance and also the first time Hong Kong had an elected lawmaker disqualified. Due to the increasing similarity in political context between Hong Kong and China, studying nationalism in Hong Kong can shed light on other minority nationalisms in China, which is not always as easy to study given the strict anti-subversion laws within the PRC. The findings of my research are important for understanding nationalism in Hong Kong, minority nationalism in China, and even other sub-state nationalism within authoritarian regime in general.

Studying Hong Kong nationalism also helps advance our understanding of nationalism. Hong Kong nationalism is widely considered to be a novel phenomenon which emerged recently. It began as a series of minor conflicts between Hongkongers and Chinese in early 2012, and it was not until 2015 did the term ‘Hong Kong nation’ become widely used. Examining the nationalism at its early stage served as a great opportunity to reflect upon existing theories about the development of nationalism. As I have shown, Hong Kong nationalism contained a range of competing narratives that have undergone rapid transformations in response to the societal context throughout its relatively short history. My study has demonstrated the dynamics of the competition between different narratives proposed by the intellectuals at its formulation stage and examined how the narratives were used as resources by the activists to articulate response to current affairs. I also showed the changing manifestations of nationalism in Hong Kong as the political situation evolved.

The third substantive contribution comes from Hong Kong’s ‘fuzziness’. Hong Kong situates between multiple theoretical constructs. Geographically, Hong Kong exists at
the edge between the Chinese and British empires; historically, Hong Kong is subject to
the influence of both Chinese nationalism and British colonialism; culturally, Hong Kong
people embrace not only Chinese culture but also western values; politically, Hong Kong is
a hybrid regime consisting of both democratic and authoritarian elements, despite the fact
that the former is eroding away at a unprecedented pace. As a result of the ‘fuzziness’,
Hong Kong often does not fit comfortably into a single category of typologies. In the
thesis, I examined how well the existing theories on stateless nations, many of which were
developed against the backdrop of western liberal democracies, fit Hong Kong. I showed
that, rather than insertion into the global economy as argued by the literature, the goal
of Hong Kong stateless nation was to insert Hong Kong into the international community
of free peoples as an aspiring member of the free world.

Methodologically, my work introduced a novel approach to study nationalism. In this
research, I consulted data from a wide range of sources and adopted an interdisciplinary
approach that complemented my sociological research with computational methods. I
proposed a new research framework that augmented qualitative content analysis with
computational text analysis, in which computational text analysis was used for describ-
ing patterns within text corpora and selecting relevant texts for qualitative reading. From
‘#indyref2’ on Twitter to ‘r/The_Donald’ on reddit,\(^2\) nationalism is everywhere on the
internet. More often than not, internet data is characterised by its vast volume. How-
ever, qualitative methods such as qualitative content analysis are limited in terms of how
much data they can analyse. My approach helps the qualitative methods by providing a
meaningful way to select a manageable subset for further analysis. On the other hand,
qualitative analysis also compensates for the difficulties of computational methods in dis-
tinguishing subtle differences in language use, which is essential for understanding the
nuances of discourses. Apart from nationalism studies, my work demonstrated the value
of computational methods to social science research in general and developed an approach
applicable to a wide range of research that utilise text data.

9.3 Limitations and Prospects

In this section, I will discuss the limitations of this study and the prospects for future
research. One limitation of this research is that it focused only on the ‘supply side’ of na-

\(^2\) ‘#indyref2’ is a hashtag in support of Scottish independence on Twitter and ‘r/The_Donald’ is a
subreddit in support of Donald Trump on reddit.
tionalism; it studied the nationalism discourse constructed by the nationalists. However, this research was not able to tell the other side of the story: how the nationalism discourse was received by the general population, namely the ‘demand side’ of nationalism. Social media data have been central to my analysis. Although the data contained information such as user comments, which could be used to gauge the users’ reception of the discourse, the accuracy and completeness of the data were affected by what user activities were technologically allowed on the platform (platform affordances) and what data we were allowed to obtain (more discussion on this below). Motivated by considerations on data quality, I chose not to focus on user comments. One corresponding possibility for future research is to research how nationalism is received and transmitted across social networks. While Facebook data might not be the ideal source to address such questions, data from messaging applications such as Telegram and Whatsapp could serve as potential data source for understanding how nationalism is communicated between users.

Other limitations of the thesis come from the fact that my research was conducted at a time of rapid changes, both politically and technologically. My research was conducted during the period when public access to social media data was becoming increasingly restricted. Half way through my PhD programme (on 7 November 2017), Facebook imposed a new limitation on the maximum amount of posts retrievable through their Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) (Ho, 2020a). The closing down of public access to platform data was accelerated by the Cambridge Analytica scandal. In the aftermath, Facebook proposed a new plan to severely limited public access to their data. On 4 April 2018, the ‘APIcalypse’ reached a milestone as Facebook completely shut down their API, rendering it impossible to obtain Facebook data without violating its terms of service (Bruns, 2019; Freelon, 2018). Although I eventually managed to obtain a complete set of Facebook page data of the study period (see Appendix C for further discussion), the changes in API limited the scope of additional data I could have collected. The new initiatives made available recently could provide additional data for further studies. For example, Social Science One aims to provide selected researchers with access to anonymised user data and CrowdTangle seeks to reopen access to content from public profiles (Ho, 2020a).

3 API is the primary legal way to extract data from Facebook.

4 In 2018, a whistleblower disclosed that millions of Facebook users’ personal information was obtained by Cambridge Analytica for targeted political advertising, allegedly without the users’ consent.

5 The term ‘APIcalypse’ was coined by Alex Bruns to describe the apocalypse of API.
The final limitation comes from the changing political environment. While it was already discussed in Chapter 4, it is worth reiterating some of the key points in light of recent developments. Following the Hong Kong government’s announcement to criminalise one of the key nationalist organisations, I decided to drop the planned interviews and therefore removed one source of data to triangulate my findings. Looking forward, as I will go on to discuss below, with the hard-line approach adopted by the Chinese and Hong Kong governments and the new national security law, it is reasonable to expect less explicit manifestations of Hong Kong nationalism in the public and the nationalist movement will likely go underground. However, this also opens up research opportunities to ask completely different questions, such as what covert operations are employed by nationalist movements within authoritarian regime, and they would require totally different approaches to address. Another potential line of research would be the continuity of Hong Kong nationalism and its influence to other social movements in Hong Kong. At this stage, this is unclear if the hard-line approach will send a chilling effect and successfully suppress Hong Kong nationalism or if it will provoke new rounds of social movements in the future. In the final section, I will illustrate in detail how the political environment has changed after the study period and what influences of the nationalist movement on current social movements in Hong Kong can be observed.

9.4 Epilogue

The year of 2016 was a definitive year for Hong Kong and Hong Kong nationalism. As Edward Tin-kei Leung won 15 per cent of vote in the year’s by-election, it was widely expected that the nationalists would be able to develop into a full fledged political force alongside the pan-democrats and pro-China parties (Chen, 2018). Under the current proportional representation election system in Hong Kong, 15 per cent of vote should easily secure a seat in the legislature (Ng, 2016; Cheung, 2016b). However, nothing went as planned. During the nomination period of the election, Edward Leung and Chan Ho-tin, along with four other localist candidates, were barred from running for the election. Although Youngspiration, which was backed by Hong Kong Indigenous, won two seats, they were disqualified shortly after the election.

To the nationalists, this was without doubt a major setback. In the wake of the disqualification saga, Leung Chung-hang claimed that the nationalist camp should go ‘underground’ (Now News, 2017). In 2017, Edward Leung also acknowledged the fact
that it will be unlikely for the nationalists to be elected again (Tong, 2017). Later the year, he decided to leave Hong Kong for the United States to study at Harvard University (Chen, 2018) while Ray Toi-yeung Wong, the founder of Hong Kong Indigenous, also fled to Germany, where he later obtained refugee protection and continued the global advocacy abroad (Sataline, 2019; Kaeding et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Chan Ho-tin from the Hong Kong National Party suggested the party would turn to mobilisation within secondary schools. While different parties took different approaches after the disqualification saga, all of them retreated, or partially retreated, from Hong Kong’s political scene. It is not exaggerated to say that, the nationalist camp, as a political force, was completely wiped out. This corresponded with the plummet in the nationalists’ Facebook activities since late 2016, as shown in Figure 7.1.

The situation deteriorated even further in 2018 as the Chinese and Hong Kong governments adopted a hard-line approach to further deter Hong Kong nationalism. A total of 33 people were charged for rioting, assaulting police, or other related crimes for their involvement in the Mong Kok civil unrest, with 23 found guilty (Lee et al., 2019). Among those convicted was Edward Leung, who returned to Hong Kong to stand trial for his involvement in the Mong Kok unrest despite the objection of his relatives and friends (Lin, 2019). He was eventually sentenced to six years in prison. The sentence was widely criticised as overly harsh and thought to be a means to intimidate activists and quell protests (McLaughlin, 2019; Sataline, 2019; Sum and Lum, 2018). Later the same year, the Hong Kong government took unprecedented steps to ban the Hong Kong National Party. A letter was sent by the government to the Hong Kong National Party, urging it to shut down ‘in the interests of national security or public safety, public order or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others’ (Kuo, 2018). On 14 August 2018, the Foreign Correspondents’ Club in Hong Kong invited Chan Ho-tin for a luncheon talk, despite pressure from the Hong Kong government. In return, the government refused to renew the working visa of Victor Mallet, vice-president of the Foreign Correspondents’ Club who also chaired the talk, which was widely seen as retaliation (Bland, 2018). This sent out a strong message that the government will not tolerate anyone involved in the Hong Kong nationalist movement, even though hearing the views of a political figure is the job of journalists. The government’s reaction therefore denotes the suppression of a free press to investigate issues that the state deems inappropriate.

---

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

The hard-line approach taken by the government has apparently succeeded in demobilising social movements in Hong Kong, both the pro-democracy and the nationalist ones. It has been observed that even though protests addressing various social issues were still held, public participation plummeted (Lee et al., 2019). Even the protests against the disqualification of legislators and election candidates recorded only around 2,000 to 3,000 participants, a figure considered very low in Hong Kong’s context (cf. Lee et al., 2019; Dapiran, 2017). These events were compounded by a rise in a pervasive feeling of powerlessness and desperation among Hong Kong people (Lee, 2018). The years after 2016 were even described as a period of abeyance by observers of Hong Kong social movements (Lee et al., 2019).

With the tightening grip of the state and the deteriorating political climate, it was not unreasonable to believe that the Hong Kong nationalist movement would have come to an end. However, as observers of social movement have pointed out, the continuity of a movement depends on a range of factors (cf. Taylor, 1989; Lee et al., 2019). For instance, none of the grievances behind the rise of Hong Kong nationalism have been addressed; scepticism towards mainland Chinese immigrants and the Chinese government remains high; genuine election and democracy were not granted; and the degree of freedom and liberty guaranteed for Hong Kong people shrunk to a record low. More importantly, although the nationalist movement in 2016 came to a seemingly fruitless end, it has nurtured the next generation of student leaders in the process, including Tony Hon-lam Chung, the founder and convener of the localist group Studentlocalism. The founding members of Studentlocalism were secondary school students who met when they volunteered in Edward Leung’s by-election campaign. The group played significant role in the later Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill protests (the Anti-ELAB protests) in 2019 (Lin, 2019).

After a period of movement abeyance, millions took to the streets once again in 2019 to protest against a proposed bill that would allow the Hong Kong government to send alleged fugitives to China. The bill raised serious public concerns and suspicions about the government’s motivation, although they claimed that it was prompted by a murder case in Taiwan. After a series of mishandlings by the government and police brutality, the protest escalated into a recurring event every weekend until early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic brought a recess (Lee et al., 2019; Lee, 2020b). At first glance, the protests can be seen as a recent episode of Hong Kong’s prolonged fight for democracy. However, as I have argued in Chapter 1, the Anti-ELAB protests bear special significance to Hong Kong nationalism and nationalists.
As discussed in Chapter 3, there has been longstanding antagonism between the localists and pan-democrats. Ever since the localists and nationalists emerged in 2014, they remained the minority in Hong Kong’s political landscape. A survey conducted in March 2016 reported only 8.4 per cent of the respondents identify themselves as localist while it was 34.4 per cent for the pan-democrats (Lee, 2020b). As a result, the localists, including the nationalists, were often marginalised in Hong Kong’s political scene. There has been little, if any, cooperation between the localists and pandemocrats and the antagonism was especially severe during election times when seats in the legislature were at stake.

This is the reason why it was a historical moment when the slogan ‘Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times’, an election slogan first coined by Edward Leung, was chanted by hundreds of thousands protesters across political spectrum: it signified the reconciliation between the nationalists and pan-democrats. As Lee (2020b) observes, first, the hard-line approach adopted by the government and the oppression experienced by the two camps facilitated a process of reconciliation between them. Second, it also paved way for the nationalists’ ideas to propagate outwith their niche supporters, as the Anti-ELAB movement attracted a large amount of newcomers to the protests, many of them are secondary school students and they were too young to participate in the past movements, thus unaffected by the past antagonism (Lee, 2020b). That said, it is still too early to say if nationalist’s ideas (other than the slogan) could take root among this new generation of protesters.

The future of Hong Kong nationalism has become especially unpredictable after China imposed a strict national security law on Hong Kong on 30 June 2020, under which secession and subversion activities are now punishable with life imprisonment (HKSAR Government, 2020b). The law has created a chilling effect across Hong Kong since its adoption: political groups, including Studentlocalism, were disbanded; activists, including Leung Chung-hang, fled Hong Kong; people took down their Twitter and Facebook accounts; and journalists erased their names from digital archives (Agence France Presse, 2020; Barron, 2020; Leigh, Lung and Marlow, 2020; Liu and Yang, 2020; Lee, 2020a). As of 30 September 2020, the police have made 26 arrests on the basis of the new security law, including Tony Hon-lam Chung, the founder of Studentlocalism (Lau, 2020; Ho, 2020c).

Looking forward, it is perhaps too early to predict if Hong Kong will go into another period of movement abeyance and how the story of Hong Kong nationalism will evolve, but one thing is certain: the story of Hong Kong nationalism is not yet finished and only time will tell what the outcome will be.
Appendices
Appendix A

Key Texts Advocating Hong Kong Nationalism


8. Hong Kong University Students’ Union (HKUSU) (2014) *Xianggang Minzu Lun* (*Hong Kong Nationalism Theory*). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Students’ Union.

Appendix B

Consent Letter

B.1 Chinese Original

[Organisation Name]:

你好，本人是愛丁堡大學社會學博士生，現正進行一項有關香港民族主義的研究。由於貴組織乃香港民族主義運動與論述中最重要的行動者之一，而貴組織的面書專頁亦是香港追隨者最多以及互動率最高的專頁之一，故此本人希望能取得貴組織的許可（consent）以便借用貴組織面書專頁的公開內容（Public Information）進行分析。本人擬採用的內容包括：1. 貴專頁的公開發文（Public posts），包括公開發表的圖片及文字。; 2. 追隨者的留言，只取用留言的文字（及圖片，如有），不包括追隨者的個人資訴，同時他們的用戶名稱會以不可還原的方式加密處理，追隨者留言只會用作集合分析，不會單獨發佈以便確保保密性（anonymity）。

是次研究旨在分析香港民族主義的公共論述。由於香港民族主義只出現了一段相對地短的時間，故此有關的民族論述往往未被充分理解。故此，你們的參與對理解香港民族主義以及本土主義思潮將會有極大幫助。是項研究的數據，在獲得貴組織的許可後，將會由本人自行抓取，貴組織並不需要分享任何機密資訊。同時，已抓取的原始數據只會由本人分析，保管，並不會轉交予第三者；於分析完成後亦會進行加密並儲存於獨立的外置硬碟。若貴組織在給予許可後決定撤回許可，本人亦會按要求將所有已抓取的數據銷毀。然而，本人完成研究後，有可能會將分析結果於校內評核、學術會議或期刊發佈，故此其他人有可能能夠讀取有關內容，惟本人在發佈時務必僅守下列原則：1. 發佈的内容只限公開資訊（即閱覽權限被設定為公開的帖文）；2. 所有能識別作者的資訊都會被屏蔽，包括但不限於使用者名稱及頭像圖片。

是項研究暫名為《香港民族主義》，為本人博士課業的一部份，由本人獨立進行，過
APPENDIX B. CONSENT LETTER

程中並沒有接受任何組織的資助。如有任何問題，歡迎直接與本人聯絡，或聯絡本人的論文導師。如有興趣瞭解本人的其他研究，也可以參閱本人的個人面書專頁。期待你的回覆。

本人電郵：[Researcher’s email]
本人私人面書帳號：[Researcher’s personal Facebook account]
本人個人面書專頁：[Researcher’s public Facebook account]
論文導師電郵：R.J.Bond@ed.ac.uk
愛丁堡大學社會學博士生
[Researcher’s name]
APPENDIX B. CONSENT LETTER

B.2 English Translation

[Organisation Name]:

I am a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh, and I am now conducting a study on Hong Kong nationalism. Since your organisation is one of the most important actors in the Hong Kong nationalist movement while your organisation’s Facebook page (your page, thereafter) is one of the most liked and engaged pages in Hong Kong, I am writing to request for your consent to use the Public Information on your page to conduct the study. The data I am planning to use includes the followings: 1. Public posts, including status and pictures, with privacy setting of ‘Public’ on your page; 2. The comments of other users, including the words and pictures, if any. The study will not include the users’ personal information, their usernames and ids will be encrypted. All of the comments will be analysed aggregately, but not individually so as to ensure anonymity.

The present study aims to analyse the nationalism discourse in Hong Kong. Probably due to its novelty, the nationalism discourse in Hong Kong is understudied by the academia. Hence, because of your organisation’s importance in the movement, your participation in the studies would be highly beneficial to the understandings of nationalist and localist thoughts in Hong Kong. All of the data will be collected by the researcher (myself) once your consent is granted, your organisation is not required to share any confidential information with me. Also, the raw data will only be analysed, accessed, and kept by myself, and will not be given to any third party; after the completion of the study, the raw data will be encrypted and store in an external drive. You have a right to withdraw at any time. In the event of withdrawal, all of the collected data will be destroyed at your request. However, please be noticed that the research findings might be published for internal assessments of my University, academic conferences or academic journals, and therefore the findings could be read by the public. However, the following measures will be taken to assure ethical use of the data: 1. Only Public Information (the posts with privacy setting of Public) will be published; 2. All information that can be used to identify the author will be masked, including but not limited username and profile pictures.

The study is named The Rise of Hong Kong Nationalism on the Edge of Empires temporarily and constitutes a part of my PhD studies. The study is conducted solely by myself and has received no funding from any institutions. Should you have any questions,
please feel free to contact me through email or Facebook. If you need more information about my research, you can also contact me or my supervisor. If you would like to know more about my previous researches, you can also have a look at my personal Facebook page. I am looking forward to hearing your reply.

My email : [Researcher’s email]
My Facebook account : [Researcher’s personal Facebook account]
My Facebook page : [Researcher’s public Facebook account]
Email of my principle supervisor : R.J.Bond@ed.ac.uk
PhD Student in Sociology
[Researcher’s name]
Appendix C

Technical Notes on Facebook Analysis

Since v2.11 (released 7 November 2017), Facebook Graph API has limited the maximum amount of returned posts of any page to 600 in a given year. While the documentation states that ‘The API will return a maximum of 600 ranked, published posts per year’ (Facebook, 2017), how the posts are actually selected or ranked is currently unknown.

Due to the novelty of issue, there was no study about the effect it may have on the data. However, gaining insight from similar problems such as the limitation of the Twitter Streaming API (cf. Morstatter, Pfeffer and Liu, 2014), it is reasonable to suspect that there could be selection bias in the data returned through the Facebook API if the page produces more than 600 posts per year.

Among the selected pages, Youngspiration and Hong Kong Indigenous both posted more than 600 posts per year and therefore were affected by the limitation. While the full data of Hong Kong Indigenous from 21 January 2015 to 30 November 2016 were collected during the pilot study and therefore not affected by the new limitation, the data from 30 November 2016 onward and all data of Youngspiration are affected, resulting in a potentially incomplete dataset. To overcome the problem, upon researching, I realised that there is another article using the same data from Youngspiration (See: Chan and Fu, 2017). Therefore, I contacted Chan Chung-hong, the first author of the study who I have also previously established personal contact with, and he kindly agreed to share the data with me.

I also conducted additional analyses to reveal the potential bias introduced by the new limitation. The detail process and findings are now published as Ho (2020a).
Appendix D

Technical Notes on Cantonese Text Analysis

Tokenisation, or unit segmentation, is an often the first step in pre-processing textual data. For Latin languages, tokenisation is in general not a serious issue due to its syntax, as words are usually separated by white spaces. However, for Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese, there is no space between characters. Therefore, researchers have to rely on tokenisers to split texts into basic word units to allow for further analysis (Schuster and Nakajima, 2012). To further complicate matters, Asian languages have vastly larger basic character inventories; it is estimated that approximately 2,000 to 3,000 characters are used in modern Chinese. Most Chinese words contain one to three characters while the characters are combined with other characters to form words. Thus, how to segment the sentence into words can be confusing, sometimes even for native speakers. For example, ‘兒子生性病母倍感安慰’, a famous newspaper headline due to its ambiguity, can be segmented as ‘兒子/生性/病母/倍感/安慰’ (the sick mother feels comfort as the son is well-behaved), yet it can also be segmented as ‘兒子/生/性病/母/倍/感/安慰’ (the mother finds comfort as the son catches sexually transmitted diseases); both of them are grammatically correct.

This project entails the analysis of textual content on the Facebook pages. Yet, the content on those pages are often written in Cantonese, a variety of the Chinese languages. On top of the above-mentioned issues, the special nature of Cantonese has given rise to two challenges. First, there is no standardised form of written Cantonese, Hongkongers often resort to phonetic borrowing based on modern standard Chinese or English and phonetic compound formation to overcome the orthographic gap (Li, 2000). For example,
the slang phrase ‘講喱啲’ can be written as ‘講呢啲’ while it is also written as ‘講呢 D’, ‘講 Lee D’ or ‘講 E D’ in less formal context. Second, unique internet slangs and script mixing are very common in online texts. Both of the problems greatly increase the difficulty in Cantonese word segmentation.

Currently, there are three major packages for Chinese tokenisation, Stanford Chinese Word Segmenter, Jieba, and Fudan NLP Toolkit. They employ techniques such as Conditional Random Fields and Hidden Markov Model to conduct Chinese tokenisation and have achieve considerable success (Chang, Galley and Manning, 2008; Qiu, Zhang and Huang, 2013; Sun, 2020; Tseng et al., 2005). However, these packages were trained with Mandarin corpora and the texts were often taken from newspapers and magazines. For example, Stanford Chinese Word Segmenter was trained with Chinese Treebank 7.0 while Jieba was trained with annotated corpora consisted of People’s Daily in 1998, Microsoft Research annotated corpora, and novels collected by the developer. As a result, these packages perform poorly on Cantonese online text.

To deal with the issue and move forward with my analysis, I employed a method that is commonly adopted for finding multi-word expressions in other languages. I used the phrase (collocation) detector of Gensim, a python text modelling package, to detect the characters that appear frequently together but infrequently when separated (Rehurek and Sojka, 2010; Mikolov et al., 2013). I extracted the word list and read manually to determine if they are valid Cantonese words. Eventually, I produced a list of 820 most frequently used Cantonese words. Eventually, I produced a list of 820 most frequently used Cantonese words. The word list is documented in (Ho, 2020b). After that, I used the word list as a supplemental dictionary to Jieba and tokenised the texts. Finally, I reviewed a random sample of tokenised texts to see if there are mistokenised words and improve the dictionary when needed.
Appendix E

Technical Notes on Topic Modelling

Topic models draw on the notion of distributional semantics and learn meaning from the co-occurrence of terms within documents (Turney and Pantel, 2010). They typically invoke the bag of words assumption, which discards the ordering of words within each document. The method assumes that describing the distribution of words is sufficient to grasp the thematic structure of a document (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013).

Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA), one of the most popular algorithms of topic modelling, investigates the latent topical structure by extrapolating two matrices: the word-topic assignment matrix and the document-topic assignment matrix. The word-topic assignment matrix has dimensions of $K$ by $V$, where $K$ is the number of proposed topic supplied by the researcher and $V$ is the total number of terms in the corpus. The word-topic assignment matrix signifies the conditional probability of each word’s occurrence in each topic. The document-topic assignment matrix also has two dimensions, $K$ and $D$. Same as the word-topic assignment matrix, $K$ is the number of proposed topics while $D$ is the number of documents in the corpus. The word-topic assignment matrix signifies the conditional probability of each topic’s appearance in each document. These two matrices allow the researcher to gain insight about the content of the corpus in question. From the the word-topic assignment matrix, researchers can identity the most salient terms that define a topic, and therefore facilitating its labelling and interpretation. Likewise, from the document-topic assignment matrix, researchers can identify the most salient topic within a document (Maier et al., 2018; Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003).

While LDA has been proven useful and powerful in discerning major thematic clusters in large text corpora, it does not provide deterministic model results; the results are affected by the choice of the input parameters (Maier et al., 2018). The number of
proposed topic is one of the largest challenges. When specifying a topic model, the number of topics, $K$, must be determined by the researcher. In general, proposing a larger $K$ would result in more specific and narrow topics. However, proposing too many topics might lead to a large amount of similar topics that cannot be distinguished in a meaningful way. Meanwhile, proposing too few topics could produce very broad topics that combine different concepts or themes of interest and thus should be separated (Maier et al., 2018).

To find the optimal number of topics, researchers usually estimate several candidate models with different $K$. The resulting models are then compared for their performance and interpretability. There are a number of metrics that could inform the process of model selection. One of the most popular metrics is the measure of perplexity. Perplexity is a measure used to determine the statistical goodness-of-fit of a topic model by estimating how well a model produced using a large subset of data (training set) predicts a held-out subset of the documents (test set) (Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003). There is also a R package, LDAtuning (Nikita, 2016), which implements the methods proposed by Arun et al. (2010), Cao et al. (2009), Deveaud, SanJuan and Bellot (2014), and Griffiths and Steyvers (2004).

Following the suggestions of Maier et al. (2018), my research avoided using only one numerical optimisation procedure for topic selection, but instead combined multiple measures and qualitative human judgement. I adopted a topic selection process that includes the following steps:

1. A list of candidate $K$ were produced by using perplexity and methods proposed by Arun et al. (2010), Cao et al. (2009), Deveaud, SanJuan and Bellot (2014), and Griffiths and Steyvers (2004).

2. Topic models were estimated with each candidate $K$.

3. The top-words of all topics of all candidate models, ranked by a relevance metric, were read by the researcher. The model with the highest interpretability was chosen.

4. In-depth validation of topics was conducted by reading the ten most salient documents of all topics.
E.1 Estimating the Optimal Number of Topics (K)

In order to find the optimal $K$, perplexity of all candidate $K$ from 10 to 150 in step of 5 were estimated using 5-fold cross-validation. To conduct a 5-fold cross-validation for one candidate $K$, the whole corpus was first split randomly into 5 partitions, a model was trained with 4 of the partitions and used to predict the hold-out partition. The process was repeated 5 times, and an average perplexity score was calculated. Figure E.1 shows the result of the 5-fold cross-validation, the models estimated with $K$ equals 55 produced the lowest average perplexity. In order words, the topic models estimated with 55 topics has the best predictive power.

Figure E.1: Perplexity

![Perplexity Graph](image)

Similarly, Figure E.2 shows the result of the methods implemented by the LDA tuning package. Arun et al. (2010) indicated that 105 topics would be the optimal, Griffiths and Steyvers (2004) indicated 35, and Cao et al. (2009) indicated 70. Deveaud, SanJuan and Bellot (2014) was not informative for this corpus. Based on the above analysis, I narrowed down the candidate $K$ to 35, 55, 70, and 105.
E.2 Evaluating Candidate Models

Topic models were estimated with each of the candidate $K$ and the models were then reviewed and compared against each other. Since the purpose of LDA in this research is to gain insight about the content and its substantive meaning, the quality of the topic models therefore depend on how well a human researcher can interpret it with regard to the research questions (Maier et al., 2018). A topic model, however well performed in the metrics, would be of little use if it is uninterpretable. Therefore, I took interpretability as the prime criterion in the model-selection phase. However, it is also important to note that interpretability does not mean validity, a topic model, however interpretable, must be validated by the researcher (further discussion in the next section).

For the investigation of the models, the R package LDAvis was used to visualise the results (Sievert and Shirley, 2014). The question that was guiding the qualitative investigation was ‘which topic model most suitably represents the key themes in the Hong Kong nationalism discourse’. The interpretation was based on the word-topic association matrices of the models and the orders of the top words calculated by relevance metric developed by Sievert and Shirley (2014). Based on the investigation, I concluded that the
model with $K = 55$ offered the most reasonable topic solution to interpret the theoretical concept of ‘nationalism discourse’; $K = 70$ and $K = 105$ provide too fine-grind topics, many of which could easily be traced back to a single page; $K = 35$ produced too many broad topics that should be treated separately. After deciding the optimal $K$, the topic model was then checked for validity.

### E.3 Topic Validation and Labelling

As suggested by Maier et al. (2018), interpretability is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for validity. According to Neuendorf (2017), ‘validity is the extent to which a measuring procedure represents the intended – and only the intended – concept’ (p. 122). I followed a three-step procedure proposed by Maier et al. (2018): first, quantitative information from the model was summarised; second, filler topics were excluded since they cannot be validated by definition;\(^1\) and third, an in-depth investigation consisting of a close reading of documents and the labelling of the topics was conducted.

For the first step, relevance scores were calculated. The topic-word distributions of the model were based on the conditioned probabilities of the terms’ occurrence in topics. However, given some words occur frequently in many documents, they would have a high probability in many topics and therefore appear as top-words in them. Such words are not helpful in distinguishing the meanings of different topics. Sievert and Shirley (2014) developed a relevance metric to reorder the top words of a topic by taking into account their overall frequency in the whole corpus. A weighting parameter, $\lambda$, can be determined by the researcher. $\lambda$ ranges from 0 to 1, for $\lambda = 1$, the ordering of the top words is identical to original ordering from the topic-word distribution. For $\lambda$ close to zero, the most specific words of the topic will become the top in the word list. In their experiment, they found that a $\lambda$-value close to 0.6 will yield topics with the best interpretability. I adopted the same value and generated the top words of the topics according to the relevance score.

I then moved on to the second step. Topics with hard-to-interpret top words were excluded from the study. Two examples were topic 15, with the 5 top-words translated as ‘discovery, investigation, Apple Daily, event, and doubt’, and topic 38, with ‘live, show, television, ATV, and building’. These are words commonly used in news articles. While they could be useful in discerning the genre of the post, they are not informative with

\(^1\) It is natural for all topic models to contain a fraction of uninterpretable topics. They are referred to as filler topics.
regard to the theme of the content. After that, I extracted the top 10 documents of all the remaining topics, determined by the documents’ conditional probability of belonging to the topic in question, and read alongside the top-word lists. Upon the reading, two decisions were made for each topic: first, if the topic was semantically coherent and therefore a valid topic in a theoretical sense; and second, what label should be assigned to the topic.

Throughout the whole validation process, 20 out of 55 topics were discarded. The validation process eventually produced 35 qualitatively validated and labelled topic.
Bibliography
Bibliography


BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Cheung, G. (2016b). Hong Kong Localist Leader could have been Elected if Allowed to Run, Survey Shows. _South China Morning Post_. Available from: http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/1999297/hong-


Chin, W. (2011). *Xianggang Chengbang Lun (Discourse on the Hong Kong City-state)*. Hong Kong: Enrich Publishing Ltd.

Chin, W. (2013). *Xianggang Yimin Lun (Discourse on the Hong Kong Adherents)*. Hong Kong: Sub Culture Ltd.

Chin, W. (2014). *Xianggang Chengbang Lun II: Guangfu Bentu (Discourse on the Hong Kong City-stateII: Reclaiming the native)*. Hong Kong: Enrich Publishing Ltd.

Chin, W. (2015). *Chengbang Zhuquan Lun (Discourse on City-state Sovereignty)*. Hong Kong: Sub Culture Ltd.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Fong, B.C.H. (2017c). Xianggang Gexin Lun II: Cong Shijie Sikao Xianggang Qiantu (Discourse on Reforming Hong Kong II: Thinking about the future of Hong Kong from the world). Hong Kong: Chapter One.


265


Hong Kong Federation of Students (1983). Xianggang Xuesheng Yundong Huigu (Review on Hong Kong Student Movement). Hong Kong: Guang Jiao Jing.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


275


BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Undergrad Editorial Board (2014). Xianggang Minzu Lun (On the Hong Kong Nation). Hong Kong: HKUSU.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


