

Challenging Hongkongisation: the role of Taiwan's social movements and perceptions of post-handover Hong Kong¹

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Introduction

On 18 March 2014, approximately 300 students stormed the Legislative Yuan in Taipei, and began occupying the building. This was done in response to legislators from the ruling Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) expediting the review process of the controversial Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA) with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Many Taiwanese feared that the CSSTA, a follow up to the Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement (ECFA) signed in 2010, might be detrimental to Taiwan's economy and sovereignty. In the days after the occupation of the Legislative Yuan, more than 10,000 Taiwanese surrounded the Yuan building in support of the students. These demonstrations were followed by student-led protests in other Taiwanese cities against the CSSTA. A remarkable characteristic of these protests was the frequent reference that protestors made to Hong Kong. The Special Administrative Region was depicted as a victim of economic integration with Beijing. Delegations from the student movements in Hong Kong paid visits to the occupying students and organised a rally in Hong Kong in support. It was the first time that people in Hong Kong and Taiwan had expressed their solidarity and strong mutual support so vocally.

The economic integration of Taiwan and China has accelerated since the KMT regained power in 2008 under President Ma Ying-jeou. During this period, Taiwan's semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) has signed several agreements with their Beijing counterpart, the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS). These included an agreement concerning the 'Three Direct Links' (flights, shipping and post), the ECFA, and ten follow-up agreements. This pattern of economic integration follows that of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) signed between Mainland China and Hong Kong in 2003. Both the Taiwan ECFA and the Hong Kong CEPA frameworks provide preferred access to the Chinese market for Hong Kongese and Taiwanese

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companies respectively, and allow individual Chinese tourists to visit both territories.

However, there has been increasing concern among the Taiwanese that integration with China is transforming Taiwan, and questions have been raised as to whether it is becoming the next Hong Kong. In recent years, the issue of the 'Hongkongisation' (香港化) of Taiwan, framed as following the path of Hong Kong's post-1997 development, has gained significant public attention and has been widely discussed in the media; media outlets in sympathy with pro-independence organisations and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), such as the *Liberty Times* Group, have raised the spectre of the Hongkongisation of Taiwan since as early as 2001 (Liu 2001). The KMT administration has continued to deepen its relations with Mainland China, with the result that debate over increasingly negative similarities between Taiwan and Hong Kong has intensified during Ma Ying-jeou's second term. Issues that have been debated have included economic dependence on Mainland China, as well as a pro-China media bias, and these have been perceived by some to be indicators and features of Hongkongisation. The debate has been further fuelled by concerns over the increasingly dominant position of the pro-China *Want Want China Times* Group in the media sector. This concern increased after the Group emerged as one of the investors taking over the Next Media Group (Taiwan), including *Apple Daily*, the largest newspaper on the island.

Although there are scholarly attempts to define what 'Hongkongisation' means, the discussion remains largely descriptive and unsystematic and the Taiwanese media continues to employ the concept without a fundamental assessment of its appropriateness and limitations. This paper goes beyond current research and journalistic practices to develop a deeper understanding of the concept, through a critical investigation of the relationship between Hong Kong and Taiwan and by comparing Taiwan's and Hong Kong's relationship *vis-à-vis* Mainland China. The paper begins with an outline of previously-dominant discourses in Taiwan on Hong Kong, following which the concept of Hongkongisation is de-constructed and re-conceptualised by considering the argument for comparing Taiwan's and Hong Kong's relationship with the PRC (in the case of Hong Kong, focusing particularly on the post-1997 period). Next, convergence theory is introduced as a theoretical framework, and the current discussion of Hongkongisation is critiqued through evidence from interviews with Taiwanese party officials and social activists. The concluding remarks put forward suggestions for a balanced perspective on Hongkongisation.

'One Country, Two Systems' Challenged by Hongkongisation

The PRC does not officially recognise the Republic of China on Taiwan; instead, it considers it as a renegade Chinese province. From a historical perspective, the post-Mao era saw a significant shift in Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policy towards Taiwan, emphasising 'peaceful reunification' over 'liberation' by force. This was accompanied by the formula 'One Country, Two Systems', devised by Deng Xiaoping in 1983 (Cooney 1997, 500–502). This model was used during the Sino-British negotiations over the Hong Kong's sovereignty change and implemented after 1997. Hence discussions of Hong Kong in Taiwan were initially and mainly

focused on the feasibility of the so-called 'One Country, Two Systems' model in Hong Kong. The current official PRC position on 'One Country, Two Systems' as it applies to Taiwan appears in the State Council's 1993 White Paper on 'The Taiwan Question and the Reunification of China' (Taiwan Affairs Office 1993). The four key principles set out in the White Paper can be distinguished into a 'One Country' part, which includes the strict adherence to the 'One China' principle, and the promise of a continuation of Taiwan's current socio-economic system, way of life, and economic and cultural ties with foreign countries after 'reunification' under the 'Two Systems' element. Taiwan would become special administrative region (SAR) with a 'high degree of autonomy', and it is emphasised that economic and other links with Mainland China should be rapidly expanded, with negotiations towards peaceful reunification commenced as soon as possible. 'One Country, Two Systems' continues to be the PRC's formula *vis-à-vis* Taiwan despite Taiwan's democratisation and the Chen Shui-bian era (Hughes 2001). Yet the argument that such a system would 'radically reduce the degree of autonomy and accountability which currently exists in the Taiwanese political system' (Cooney 1997: 500) has made it largely unacceptable for Taiwan's political actors and population. Indeed, public opinion surveys routinely indicate an overall rejection of the formula: in 2007, only 12.8 percent found it acceptable, with 72.2 percent responding negatively (Shaw 2009). The negative experience of Hong Kong with the 'One Country, Two Systems' model did deepen the adverse view of the model in Taiwan.

Hong Kong's post-1997 development has been used by the DPP in political campaigns to emphasise the value of Taiwan's sovereignty and the dangers of close economic integration with China. In DPP discourse, the 'One Country, Two Systems' model is a proven failure in Hong Kong and will be a disaster for Taiwan. In summer 2010, prior to the municipal elections and after the signing of ECFA, the DPP produced a short video to illustrate this. It was narrated entirely in Cantonese, and thus conveyed a sense of authenticity of a local Hong Kong perspective: the usage of Cantonese is a rare practice in Taiwan's electioneering, and it creates a strong connection between Hong Kong and Taiwan, as it implies that Hong Kong today could be Taiwan tomorrow. Post-CEPA Hong Kong was portrayed as dark place, in which the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. The message was that when the ECFA comes into effect, Taiwan will similarly experience increasing inequality. The reference to Hong Kong in the video indicates that the political elites in Taiwan are observing closely changes in Hong Kong, and consciously comparing these two special political entities. This is further exemplified by frequent reference to Hong Kong by Taiwan media outlets critical of the PRC government, or which support the opposition and pro-independence perspectives. Hong Kong is employed as an example of the negative outcome of the current administration's pro-integration policies.

This paper provides an alternative discourse of Hongkongisation, salient and relevant to Taiwan's politics and society. It therefore goes beyond existing arguments and a discussion of the 'One Country, Two Systems' model. That model has been subject to a very comprehensive debate, and its formula has been predominantly rejected in Taiwan; another analysis focusing solely on the same model would only reinforce the hegemonic structure of the debate, in which the PRC 'grants' Taiwan the status of an SAR. It would also provide a further

opportunity for the CCP to manipulate Taiwan and Hong Kong, and ignore political opportunities for Taiwan and Hong Kong to resist. Conversely, a balanced and fair argument would assume that all actors – the CCP, Hong Kong and Taiwan – possess a certain degree of agency, and this is the key to a thorough understanding of the term ‘Hongkongisation’.

Hong Kong and Taiwan in Comparative Perspective

Hong Kong figures in the political thought and policy of political elites as well as of the media in Taiwan, making a comparison between the two locations’ respective relationships with Mainland China critical. Currently, ‘Hongkongisation’ as used in the media lacks sufficient depth and understanding, due to a lack of clear definition and appropriate analytical framework: meaningful comparison between Hong Kong and Taiwan is largely absent in scholarly literature and media analyses, and Hongkongisation is treated as if it were a surprisingly new phenomenon. Therefore, before defining Hongkongisation, this paper will first establish the rationale and justification for comparative research on Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Hong Kong and Taiwan share a number of comparable social, economic, cultural and political elements. While there is a fundamental difference in the level of sovereignty, there is a general consensus within the research community that both societies are in ethno-cultural terms predominantly Chinese societies. The majority of the populations are ethnic Han Chinese, and rituals of ancestral worship, religious festivals and traditions prevail in the living culture of both societies. These features are considered to be defining characteristics of Chinese values and identity (Weller 2007: 342). In Taiwan and Hong Kong, religious rituals and traditions were not affected by the campaigns of the Communist regime of China. The same holds true for cultural values and philosophies such as Confucianism. In Taiwan, the KMT actively promoted traditional Chinese culture in the 1960s while, in Hong Kong, the British colonial rulers did not interfere in the cultural and religious affairs of their subjects. Chinese history and language were taught in schools in both societies. Therefore both societies favour very similar ‘Chinese core cultural values’ (Yang 1986). Among the foremost is the Confucian idea of filial piety, which continues to shape social organisations and interpersonal interaction in Hong Kong and Taiwan (Yeh 2003).

Another crucial factor is shared experience: the decades of colonial rule in Hong Kong and Taiwan (by the British and the Japanese respectively), economic success in the 1970s, and democratisation in the 1980s (So and May 1993; Yu 2004). This shared experience has led to a set of similar social structures, political institutions to accommodate democratic development, and a rising civic awareness. Hong Kong and Taiwan both tasted modernity and progress as introduced by their colonisers. Also, the colonial history experienced by the two societies has created a strong identification with values associated with modernity, as well as recognition of the need to preserve tradition. Most importantly, the two cases refute the claim that Confucian countries are not compatible with democracy.

A further basis for comparison is the presence of a ‘common opponent’. Both entities face the challenge of Chinese nationalism and its related policies, known as the ‘China factor’. Bhattacharya (2005), for instance, envisions a clash between

the state nationalism of the PRC and the civic Hong Kong identity. By contesting Chinese state nationalism, Hong Kong contests the CCP's legitimacy. The proclaimed unity of nation-state-party advocated by Beijing is also undermined by alternative ideas of Chineseness not only in Hong Kong, but also in Taiwan. Analytically, therefore, two factors determine the position of the Beijing regime in relation to Taiwan and Hong Kong. Firstly, there is the *emerging nationalism discourses* of the 1990s, particularly the narrative of colonial humiliation, that explain the great symbolic importance of the 'handovers' of Hong Kong in 1997 and Macau in 1999. Taiwan's *de facto* status is in this way framed by Beijing as a consequence of foreign intervention in the region, especially by the US, and thus as evidence of imperialism against the Chinese people (Brown 2004: 21). Secondly, there is the *ethno-cultural understanding* of Chinese identity which forms the basis of PRC discourse and is evident in the PRC White Papers on Taiwan and in the rhetoric of the Beijing leadership in relation with Hong Kong. Beijing's purpose is to roll back democratic progress and penetrate both societies with its influence. The PRC regime employs the discourse of national identity to engender a dichotomy between Western and Chinese values. This '*either democracy or Chinese political values*' mentality enables the regime to brand democrats in Hong Kong and Taiwan as traitors in collusion with foreigners against the 'authentic' Chinese (Wu 2007). Thus, through the lens of the Communist Party, shared civic awareness in Taiwan and Hong Kong is portrayed as threatening and unpatriotic.

The experience of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has implications for Taiwan simply because the Communist regime in Beijing is using Hong Kong as a laboratory to experiment with policies and government formula prior to applying these to Taiwan. The Chinese government is learning from its experience in Hong Kong and, as a consequence, the post-1997 experience of Hong Kong is of crucial importance for the analysis of Taiwan and its future. Hong Kong's path to further democratisation over the past decade has been described as retroactive (Sing 2004; Ma 2007; Chan 2008). While Taiwan's democracy has been further consolidated during the Chen Shui-bian era and with the second change of power in 2008, China has been allowed to exert its influence more and more directly and forcefully in Hong Kong, which, for example, effectively halted moves towards meaningful universal suffrage. (This process is crystallised in the term used by Sonny Lo: 'Mainlandisation'. Lo observes that this term had been used by Hong Kong analysts and politicians to refer to 'the political and legal processes in which the HKSAR has demonstrated the practises of mainland China' (S.S.-H. Lo 2008: 42). Cases in which politics was perceived to interfere with the rule of law were already being cited shortly after the handover. However, Hong Kong politicians and scholars have not provided a comprehensive conceptualisation of the process. The discussion is usually confined to individual cases, and examples of 'Mainlandisation' are provided with reference to the civil service, the media and the protection of civil liberties. Lo removes the negative connotation from the definition, stating merely that the purpose of Mainlandisation is to activate 'Hong Kong's swift convergence with the motherland in multi-faceted aspects' (43). He thus neutralises the term, which, in actuality, refers to an active policy of the HKSA government to be 'politically' more dependent on and similar to Beijing, economically more reliant on the Mainland's support, socially more

patriotic toward the motherland, and legally more reliant on the interpretation of the Basic Law by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress' (42–43).

Lo reconceptualises the term 'Mainlandisation' through the lens of convergence theory. This systemises the often anecdotal evidence about the Taiwan–China relationship and the phenomenon of so-called Hongkongisation into a more analytical framework, and is used by Lo to interpret Hong Kong's development under its first Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa.

Convergence theory is based on the ideas of a Dutch economist, Jan Tinbergen, as explained in his seminal 1961 article 'Do Communists and Free Economies Show Converging Patterns?' Tinbergen observed that Western capitalist economies appeared to be moving towards a social democratic-oriented welfare state model at the same time that Eastern European economies were leaving behind their Stalinist legacies and beginning to liberalise economically and politically. As a consequence, the two types of economies were becoming not only increasingly akin, but were also beginning to influence each other (Tinbergen 1961: 332) and to show signs of convergence in the areas of bureaucratisation, social welfare guarantees and pricing (338). Both systems were being altered beyond recognition.

Brockmann (1997) provides the context for the growing popularity of convergence theory. He notes that it was well received during the 1960s when the post-war economic boom in the West was at its height, and Communist economies were attempting to address the failures of the command economy through cautious liberalisation. Subsequently, 'convergence theory... spread beyond the relatively narrow realm of economic theory to become part of broader cultural debate about post-war industrial society' (59). The essential premise was that industrial societies in the West and countries in the Soviet realm would both make socio-economic progress and become alike. This thesis appeared to be validated with the collapse of the Soviet empire and the spread of capitalism and democracy through Eastern Europe.

Applying Western theory to the case of Hong Kong, it seems that the process of convergence is largely one-way, from China to Hong Kong and not vice versa. It is true there had initially been hopes that democrats would be able to influence a reforming China, thus effecting a convergence towards the Western model of democracy; Peter Cheung (2011) does indeed observe the selective adaptation of Hong Kong practices, experiences and values, especially in Southern China. These have been mostly limited to business practises and some bureaucratic structures. Interesting instances are the adaptation of limited protests practices that have diffused among the younger generation from Hong Kong to China. Yet it seems premature to speak of political convergence, with China adopting more liberal values and practices, and the process remains very much dependent on a further liberalisation and democratisation of the PRC. Therefore, for the time being the Hong Kong case presents a one-way flow of the convergence process, and the predominant influence is that of Beijing on Hong Kong. Thus Lo's earlier verdict – identifying no signs of political convergence between the PRC's authoritarian system and Hong Kong's semi-democratic, semi-competitive system, and instead observing a dilution of the territory's political and economic uniqueness – remains valid for the time being (S.S.-H. Lo 2008: 41–42). This one-sidedness of convergence, and the dilution of Hong Kong's pre-1997 civil liberties and

freedoms, are not only results of the HKSAR government policy but also a direct consequence of the strategies employed by the Beijing regime *vis-à-vis* the democratic societies in the so-called Greater China region.

The lopsided nature of the convergence process in Hong Kong can be explained by the strategic dimension of the Communist regime, which is exaggerated by the media but overlooked by academia. Mainlandisation is not merely a descriptive concept, but also a strategic one, encompassing a number of facets. It includes putting political pressure on the media, civil society groups and the judicial community to adhere to positions promoted by Beijing. At the same time, the direct involvement of the Liaison Office in local politics enables the CCP to monitor social development on a micro-scale. In addition, the rise in importance of Mainland businesses has become a part of the government–business collusion in Hong Kong, leading to increasingly blatant political interference in local business and competition in favour of pro-Mainland Chinese companies and the weakening of the anti-corruption bodies. This makes the situation akin to that in Mainland China, and it also has the potential to re-write the rule of law, a key part of the Hong Kong identity. At a mundane level, the everyday life of Hong Kong people is altered through the influx of Mainland tourists and immigrants, and the growing usage of simplified Chinese characters and Mandarin Chinese in the public realm. It would be unfair to argue that the entire phenomenon is strategically planned in detail by the Communist Party with the goal of fully assimilating Hong Kong. However, it would be equally naïve to overlook the strategic aspects of Beijing's actions, steering the political development of Hong Kong away from further democratisation and, indeed, the Western model of democracy in its entirety. The following section defines Hongkongisation, and facilitates a better understanding of the strategic aspect of convergence.

Framing Hongkongisation

Following the opening of the border with China in the late 1970s, and with the beginning of Sino-British consultations over the future of the territory in the 1980s, the Beijing leadership managed to identify and convert new allies and co-opt them into their united front scheme.² The main target were Hong Kong elites such as the business community, industrialists, and real estate conglomerates, as well as former British appointees to consultative bodies set up by the colonial administration (Wong 1997). As a consequence, pro-Beijing social and economic elites became dominant in the city from the 1990s, while the lack of accountability in consultative committees has hampered the performance legitimacy of the administration. This has been further exacerbated by the continuous patronage in post-1997 administrations of 'patriotic' and pro-business forces (Fong 2014). Beijing's united front work furthermore relies on traditional leftist groups, such as pro-Beijing unions and a wide array of associations ranging from hometown to women's groups. If politically necessary – e.g. during elections or government consultation exercises – these groups could be easily mobilised in support of pro-government forces or government policies (Kaeding 2010).

² Research has shown that the Beijing government has for decades made extensive use of united front organisations in Hong Kong (Wong 1997; S.H. Lo 2001).

This strategic co-option under a united front scheme is taking place in Taiwan, in a similar fashion as seen in Hong Kong. Capitalists who rely on the Mainland market or production, and who favour intimate relations with the Chinese regime, have been targeted directly since Taiwan's democratisation and the early improvements in Cross-Strait relations. This strategy was intensified with the onset of the Chen Shui-bian era (Hughes 2001). Since at least the beginning of intensive face-to-face exchanges under Ma Ying-jeou, a broader spectrum of societal groups and leaders has been identified by the Communist Party as possible agents in a united front strategy. Yet there remains one fundamental difference between Hong Kong and Taiwan – the degree of sovereignty. In Hong Kong, political intervention by Beijing after 1997 has been overt, and increasingly so after 2003, accelerating particularly during the Tsang era. This political intervention has come via either the direct involvement of staff and associates of the Joint Liaison Office in Sheung Wan, through Basic Law interpretations of the NPC's Standing Committee, or through comments by Mainland law professors and constitutional experts or statements by the Beijing leadership. Where Taiwan is concerned, however, it is hard to imagine that comments by the Beijing leadership will have the desired outcome on the island. Nevertheless the possible establishment of a Joint Liaison Office in Taipei might allow the PRC to concentrate and organise its undercover activities on the island, and establish links with united front actors and agents coming to Taiwan through individual visitor schemes and student exchanges.

As with Mainlandisation, the concept of Hongkongisation remains a largely fuzzy concept. However, four dimensions can be identified. Wu Jieh-min recognises three areas of direct influence on Taiwan, or 'Mainlandisation': economic, media, and political discourse, and I argue that united front strategies can be added to Wu's framework to give a more complete conceptualisation. The economic realm is a frontier that encompasses trade and business relations: in this, united front agents can be business tycoons and tourists from Mainland China. And, as mentioned earlier, the ECFA between Taiwan and the PRC has been likened to the CEPA between China and Hong Kong. The Taiwan economy's growing dependency on the Chinese market might lead to limitations in the government's manoeuvring space, as the Beijing regime could use the economy as leverage *vis-à-vis* Taipei. The 2012 Presidential election is evidence of the growing clout of pro-Chinese business interests, in which key business figures, such as HTC chair Cher Wang, went beyond general endorsements of an administration or candidate, to urge the public to back the KMT's China policy and accept the '1992 consensus'. Meanwhile, Chinese tourists form the largest group of overseas tourists in Taiwan. Since July 2008, more than 4.83 million Mainland tourists have visited the island. This illustrates clear parallels with the situation in Hong Kong, where the government has transformed the territory into a prime destination for Mainland visitors, and the SAR has come to rely heavily on tourism from Mainland China after the individual travellers' scheme was implemented in 2003. Within a single decade, the cumulative number of Mainland visitors under the scheme had surpassed 100 million (Chong *et al.* 2013).

Beijing's second strategy is to interfere with media freedom in Taiwan, as in Hong Kong. With the assistance of pro-business groups, the media are increasingly manipulated by a *de facto* alliance of the KMT and the CCP with regard to

reporting on China. Changes in the ownership structure of the Taiwan media have given rise to self-censorship (Wu 2012), which has gained greater public attention after the moderate conservative *China Times* was purchased by Want Want Holdings. This company is led by a pro-Beijing businessman, and it consequently adopted a staunchly pro-China editorial stance. The issue of media freedom has been extensively debated in Hong Kong, as China has exerted influence on journalists' reports and analysis. Freedom of expression and of the press have deteriorated since the transition period, largely as the consequence of journalists' self-censorship (Zhang 2006) and the change of media ownership (Fung 2007). The recent firing and life-threatening attack on a famous *Ming Pao* editor, well-known for his critical stance *vis-à-vis* the HKSAR and Beijing governments, has raised fears of China's more direct involvement (Mullany 2014).

However, the model of Mainlandisation provided by Wu underestimates the breadth and strength of the united front work on the societal level. It overlooks, for example, the efforts of Beijing to co-opt Taiwan university students. Interviews with Taiwanese student activists and political party strategists confirm that the CCP approach to winning the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese has moved already beyond the business sector and direct material benefits: politically active students and student union members are targeted by united front agents, and invited onto organised trips to Mainland China promising prestige but also taking advantage of curiosity about China. In co-opting either naïve or politically convinced student leaders, united front institutions are able to gain access to other Taiwanese students; they also benefit from the legitimacy of the student organisations. This model has been tested and effectively put in place in Hong Kong for a long time, hence illustrating another area in which Taiwan is being Hongkongised.

Wu's analysis of the political dimension as the third element of Hongkongisation is also instructive. In this, he identifies both discursive hegemony and the hands-on micromanagement of local politics. The discursive area of Cross-Strait relations and elections is dominated by the so-called '1992 consensus' of 'One China, different interpretations' and, through this, Beijing has increasingly been involved with, and even participated in, the manipulation of Taiwan's (national) elections. Such involvement was evident in Taiwan's 2012 Presidential elections (van der Wess 2012). In relation to Hong Kong, scholars have pointed out that the financial balance is clearly tilted in favour of pro-Beijing candidates (S.H. Lo 2001; Ma 2008), so that the '1992 consensus' has become a mainstream and unchallenged discourse during campaigning. Pro-Beijing parties have been able to use their extensive grassroots network of leftist and patriotic organisations in election campaigns; more importantly, there also is a mismatch between the vast financial and logistic resources deployed and the official election expenses of individual candidates, even when grassroots organisations providing volunteers and direct assistance are taken into account. Scholars have pointed out that the financial balance is clearly tilted in favour of pro-Beijing candidates (S.H. Lo 2001; Ma 2008). The isolation or shunning of pan-democrats in Hong Kong and pan-green parties in Taiwan by mainstream media outlets and the China-friendly business sector is thus part of the CCP's election strategy. However, it is a key feature of these strategies that they are carried out underground. Moreover, the influence of Taiwanese and Hong Kong businessmen working on the Mainland and with Mainland counterparts is likely to grow further, given the accelerated pace of

economic integration. Figure 1 below shows the four dimensions that provide a comprehension framework of Hongkongisation, as viewed through the lens of the united front scheme of the Chinese Communist Party. It demonstrates Beijing's strategy of assimilating Taiwan, in a similar manner to Hong Kong.

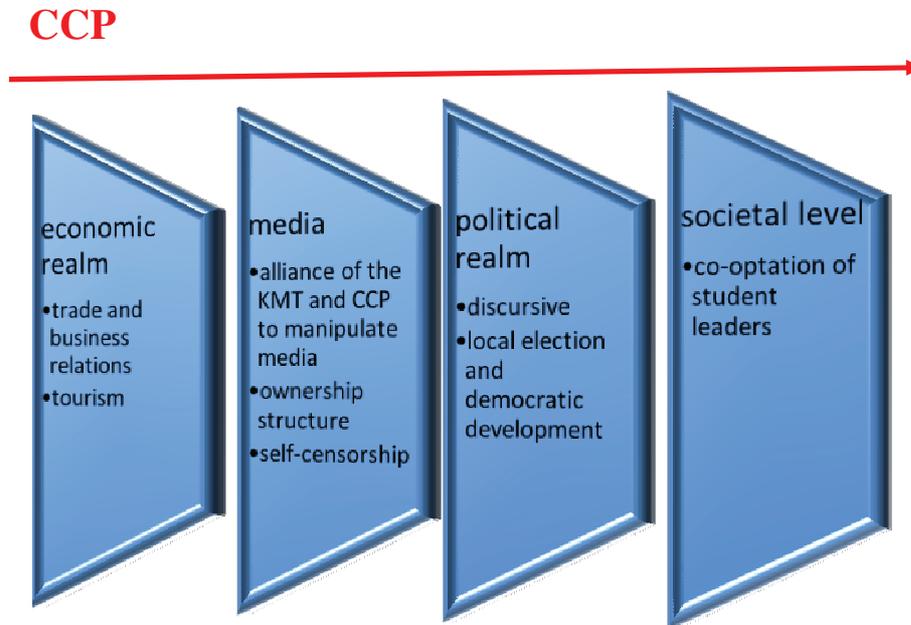


Figure 1: Four dimensions of Hongkongisation as part of united front strategy

The Role of Agency

Beijing's attempts at Hongkongisation overlook the agency of Taiwan and Hong Kong, including the flipside of Taiwan's Hongkongisation. In this, the island has experienced a different kind of Hongkongisation which includes the rise of civil resistance against too-rapid integration with China. Taiwanese civil society organisations and social movement actors follow closely the analysis and arguments made in Hong Kong, as well as the patterns of protests employed by the Special Administrative Region. In any case, the convergence between Hong Kong and Taiwan is different from the process involving Hong Kong and Mainland China. The former is two-directional, whereas the latter is largely one-directional. Wu observes that Taiwan increasingly resembles Hong Kong, but there is evidence that Hong Kong is also increasingly converging with Taiwan, as Hong Kong learns from Taiwan. The increasing sophistication of civil society actors, social movements and, most importantly, political parties with regard to mobilisation and election campaign strategies and styles that has been seen in Hong Kong in recent years is inspired by Taiwan. A number of political parties have adopted more confrontational and elaborate styles of political campaigning, modelled after Taiwan politics (Kaeding 2010). Furthermore, the rise of identity politics in Hong Kong parallels that in Taiwan.

The question as to whether Taiwan will increasingly bend to Beijing's pressure and become increasingly like Mainland China is more difficult to answer. On the one hand, the island remains a democratic, vibrant country and, unlike Hong Kong, it has the means to defend its sovereignty. On the other hand, the rising influence of business interests in politics, and the non-transparent nature of negotiations over trade pacts with China, point towards Mainlandisation. There is also the question as to whether, like Hong Kong, the process of convergence or Hongkongisation applies equally in all areas actively fostered by the government and the political elites. In some key areas such as tourism, economic relations and cultural exchanges, this is clearly the case. However, it is difficult to argue that KMT government elites are consciously aiming at turning Taiwan into a version of post-1997 Hong Kong or of the Chinese Mainland. Such an outcome is more likely to be due to miscalculation on the part of the Taiwanese government, caused by naivety: the government might simply underestimate or misinterpret aspects of co-operation with China. This seems to be a possibility in the cultural sector, as a telling incident illustrates: at an overseas public forum, the KMT's new Minister of Culture, Lung Ying-tai, a well-known writer and academic, appeared to be oblivious to the fact that Chinese cultural productions from mainland China were based on a Chinese culture selectively created by the CCP, and containing ideological elements.³ In this regard, the DPP appears at least superficially better prepared, as it seems to be more critical of advances by the CCP with respect to co-operation between Taiwan and the PRC.

Finally, it must be admitted that the terms Hongkongisation or Mainlandisation are value-laden and to some degree misleading. These terms suggest a lack of agency on the Hong Kong and Taiwan side: Hong Kong is Mainlandised, Taiwan is Hongkongised. This discourse ignores the power and agency of Taiwan and Hong Kong. It also leads to a hidden empowerment of the CCP, as the terms assume the existence of a highly sophisticated Beijing government capable of manipulating both Hong Kong and Taiwan. The unstated assumption is that the power of the central leadership is so strong that it leaves little room for resistance by either Hong Kong or Taiwan. Indeed, the terminology distances Hong Kong from Taiwan, resulting in a missed opportunity for co-operation between the two locations. However, this co-operation does, in fact, exist, as student leaders and party representatives in both societies confirmed during the Legislative Yuan occupation through visible and frequent exchanges and expressions of solidarity on social media sites such as Facebook and actual visits of Hong Kong delegations to the protesting students. Here, convergence theory suggests a two-way communication and the fluidity of power. Taiwan can influence Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Taiwan. This gives agency to both Taiwan and Hong Kong, and creates the possibility for both of them to counter CCP manipulation.

³ Minister Lung publicly stated on 22 March 2013 in a forum held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, that Mainland Chinese television programmes would be safely acceptable to Taiwanese audiences and should be readily available.

The Future of Hongkongisation

This paper re-visits the notions of Mainlandisation and Honkongisation, and attempts to conceptualise them. It has identified areas in which there are symptoms of Hongkongisation in Taiwan were identified, but also spaces in which Taiwan and Hong Kong can resist the surrounding influence of China. Wu Jieh-min, as well as Wang Dan (a former Chinese student leader and scholar), have emphasised the role of civil society in resistance against the reversal of democratic progress. Social movements such as student movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan co-operate and exchange ideas; illustrative examples include Scholarism in Hong Kong, the anti-media hegemony movement in Taiwan and, most recently, the occupation of the Legislative Yuan. Furthermore, there is the possibility that – at the grassroots level – democratic ideas and values can travel into China via student exchanges from Taiwan and Hong Kong.

A systematic analysis of Hongkongisation narrows the gap between the journalistic usage of this term and the empirical evidence. However, although there is a distance between suggested developments in the media and the reality on the ground, there is also a wide array of possibilities for resisting PRC pressure. The Taiwanese (and Hongkongers) have basically four options in dealing with Mainlandisation/Hongkongisation. There is the *utilitarian* option, which would mean making the most economically of the situation, and seizing the possibilities of closer integration that exist in the short and medium terms. There is the *defeatist* option, which would mean giving up all resistance and perhaps emigrating elsewhere, as many Hong Kong people did in the run-up to 1997. There is the *radical* position, in which Taiwanese would strive for a fundamental break with China, as propagated by pro-independence groups in Taiwan and the autonomy movement in Hong Kong. The fourth option might be more realistic, and would entail both *co-operation and resistance*. In this, Taiwanese need to be well informed and aware of developments in Hong Kong civil society groups in both societies, and to co-operate to resist PRC policies of integration. However, resistance must be based on information and education. The importance of democracy and human rights needs to be communicated, together with the idea that these are not guaranteed and need continually to be defended. The value of the status quo in Hong Kong and Taiwan *vis-à-vis* China has to be emphasised, together with areas where caution needs to be applied in co-operating with China. In short, Hong Kong and Taiwan need to know each other, and learn from each other to resist Mainlandisation and Hongkongisation.

It would appear that, at the moment, a significant part of the population, led by student activists in both territories, is opting for the fourth option. This is attested to by the close co-operation and mutual support demonstrated among civil society groups in Hong Kong and Taiwan at the Occupy Legislative Yuan and in the planned Occupy Central movements. This co-operation shows that, while the fear of Mainlandisation and Hongkongisation is real, there is recognition that both groups – learning from and supporting each other – have the power to effect political action. Hongkongisation should therefore not be simply understood as a passive phenomenon, but also as a situation that creates an active motion of resistance. It would be ironic if the united front strategy of Beijing should create a

vibrant cross-straits civil society fighting for more political participation and government oversight.

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