

Introduction

It was around 7:30 P.M., March 30, 2014. Amid thundering cheers from the crowd, twenty-six-year-old student leader Lin Fei-fan took to the podium just a few hundred meters from the Presidential Office in Taipei, ready to deliver a speech to wrap up a mass rally that had reportedly attracted a half-million demonstrators, as well as spawned solidarity gatherings scattered over forty-nine cities in seventeen countries. Lin began the seventeen-minute speech by expressing his gratitude for the popular support that had been given to the protesters' occupation of the national legislature (Legislative Yuan) over the previous two weeks. Such an event, Lin contended, had already made history because "we have told the government that Taiwan's future belongs to all 23 million Taiwanese. Taiwan's future is our decision." He rejected the title "commander-in-chief" (*zongzhihui*) that the media had bestowed on him, saying, "The people are the real commander-in-chief and now we are here to command an out-of-order government," instantly drawing ecstatic applause from the crowd.¹ In concluding what has since been characterized as the best political speech in recent Taiwanese history, Lin reiterated the movement's core demands—withdrawing the free-trade agreement with China and enacting more supervision over cross-strait negotiation—and urged the audience to continue participating.

Between March 18 and April 10, Taiwan underwent an unprecedented mass protest that saw the nation's legislature occupied for twenty-four days. The dispute was over the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), a sweeping trade liberalization pact that was intended to remove barriers to

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bilateral investment and migration in order to deepen economic integration. Dubbed the Sunflower Movement by the media because of an incidental gift of sunflowers to the protesters from a florist, the unusual episode grabbed national and international attention. At the end of the standoff, the government remained committed to promoting economic liberalization with China; nevertheless, the movement secured the legislative speaker's promise to prioritize enacting a legal procedure to handle cross-strait negotiations, giving the protesters an avenue to withdraw from the legislature voluntarily. On the last day of the legislature occupation, a festive farewell rally commemorated the movement's achievements and the protesters vowed to continue their activism.

At 10:30 P.M. on September 26, the final evening of a five-day campaign launched by Hong Kong students to boycott classes in protest against a Beijing decision regarding the electoral rule for the territory's chief executive, Taiwan's student protest elicited an unexpected rejoinder from Hong Kong. As thousands of participants were about to leave the rally outside of the Central Government Complex in Admiralty, seventeen-year-old university freshman Joshua Wong unexpectedly mounted the podium and pleaded with the audience to stay for a while. Wong, who had become famous for his successful leadership in a campaign against patriotic education two years earlier, began to share his personal feelings. Suddenly he changed the tone of the event by urging everyone to storm into an empty space nestled between two government buildings. Hundreds of participants joined the surprise sit-in, the "taking back of Civic Square," and Wong managed to climb over a three-meter-high fence. Police officers reacted quickly by surrounding the intruders and preventing others from entering. Although Wong and other student leaders were arrested, their supporters stayed overnight. On the afternoon of September 28, demonstrators bolted out from the sidewalks to block traffic, triggering a fateful police decision to shoot tear gas at the crowd at 5:00 P.M. Indignant about the brutal force used against unarmed protesters, citizens immediately took to the streets and three occupation zones emerged to usher in the advent of the Umbrella Movement.

Like its predecessor in Taiwan, Hong Kong's great protest was named by the media, which documented the conspicuous presence of umbrellas used as makeshift shields against police pepper spray. The Umbrella Movement, which lasted for seventy-nine days, became the largest protest incident in the territory since its handover to Chinese sovereignty in 1997; a poll indicated around 1.2 million Hongkongers had visited the scene at least once—roughly one-fifth of the area's population. Since the trigger topic for the Umbrella Movement was the democratization of leadership elections, the movement received enthusiastic responses from around the world, with in-

ternational leaders such as U.S. President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel personally expressing their support. However, despite the international sympathy, the Umbrella Movement collapsed due to leader indecisiveness, mass fatigue, and bitter infighting, without securing any positive responses from the government. On December 15, Hong Kong police cleared the last occupation holdout with a mass arrest.

Although there was a stark contrast between the final outcomes of the two great protests, Taiwan and Hong Kong both experienced significant political changes in their wake. Protest activism proliferated and spread into newer issues, and many young people decided to enter the political arena by organizing new political parties and joining elections. Within the span of two years, both places witnessed the transition of erstwhile protest leaders into elected lawmakers. Taiwan underwent its third peaceful transition of political power in May 2016, as the independence-leaning party gained control of the presidency and legislature in defiance of Beijing. Post-Umbrella Hong Kong saw a surge in pro-independence forces as well as the imprisonment of dissident activists.

The Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement belonged to a rare subset of social movements characterized by unanticipated emergence, large-scale and intense participation, and deep and far-reaching consequences. In his seminal article “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures,” William Sewell (1996) called attention to these unusual protests, such as the storming of the Bastille prison during the French Revolution, which fundamentally altered the existing conditions and opened new horizons for subsequent actions. After the symbolic fall of monarchical despotism, there appeared no way to turn back the clock of history. Following this insight, Donatella della Porta coined the term “eventful protests” (2014: 17) to describe this kind of intensive, transformative, and history-making movement.

This book aims to make sense of the origins, the processes, and the outcomes of these eventful protests in Taiwan and Hong Kong. How did two massive and disruptive protests take place in culturally conservative societies where the Confucian norm of obedience to authority appeared to hold sway? Why were Taiwanese and Hongkonger citizens willing to take part in a protest that directly challenged the objectives of rulers in Beijing when their own political leaders had become increasingly accommodating to them? What were the sources of the bursts of creativity and artistry during the protests? How was it possible to orchestrate such large-scale collective action when the figurehead leaders of the movements did not possess extensive resources or real-time information? Finally, what were the regional and global consequences of these atypical protests? The following chapters tack-

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le these questions, but first let me identify the shared features of these two eventful protests and set them in a global context.

Two Eventful Protests at a Quick Glance

Taiwan is a self-governing country, although its international statehood is overshadowed by an increasingly powerful and prosperous China that insists on holding sovereignty over this island. Hong Kong, a historical creation of British overseas expansion, transitioned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, with a guarantee of a high degree of autonomy and the promise of full democratization. Both are successful economies in their own right. Taiwan maintains a vibrant democracy following a prolonged one-party authoritarian regime that lasted until 1987, whereas postcolonial Hong Kong is trapped in unfinished democratization.

Both societies remain fundamentally conservative in the sense that disruptive protests are not usually viewed as a legitimate means of expressing dissidence. Older Taiwanese grew up with an instinctive fear of politics because of protracted repression, whereas elder Hongkongers embraced a don't-rock-the-boat refugee mentality. Particularly in Hong Kong, colonialism has bequeathed a rule-of-law tradition that discouraged illegal protest actions (see Michael Ng 2017). In both places, political opposition arose in the mid-1980s and consistently adopted moderate strategies to further democracy. To illustrate the low tolerance for civil disobedience, consider the 2010–2014 World Values Survey. It showed the percentage of citizens in OECD countries with a principled disinclination to join a petition or peaceful demonstration to be 25.9 percent and 40.9 percent, respectively, whereas for Hong Kong the figures were 32.8 percent and 42.2 percent, and for Taiwan they were 56.7 percent and 71.4 percent.² The poll demonstrates the abiding power of political conformism in these two societies. Against this backdrop, Taiwan's Sunflower Movement brought the normal functioning of the legislature to a halt for more than three weeks, and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement shut down key traffic arteries for more than two months. Clearly, both Taiwanese and Hongkongers somehow managed to overcome the unfavorable political culture in making these eventful protests possible.

Both movements challenged the political objectives of leaders in Beijing who had expressly indicated their intent to incorporate Taiwan and Hong Kong firmly into China proper. In spite of their different political status, both appeared permanently locked into economic dependence on China. In 2014, Taiwan's exports to China and Hong Kong amounted to 39.7 percent of total exports,³ whereas Hong Kong's exports to mainland China were nearly half (47 percent).⁴ In terms of cross-border travel, visitors from China made up 40.2 percent of visitors to Taiwan⁵ and 77.7 percent to Hong Kong⁶

in the same year. Given these close economic and social linkages, it is even more intriguing why Taiwanese and Hongkongers were willing to engage in protests that defied the agenda of Chinese leadership.

University students made up the core leadership, and young people were the main constituents of these two movements. Two on-site surveys (Cheng and Chan 2017; Chen and Huang 2015) provide a profile of the participants: In Taiwan, 74.8 percent of the sampled participants were under the age of thirty, while 25.6 percent were students, and 84.3 percent held a university diploma or above, whereas the respective figures for Hong Kong were 53.5 percent, 56.5 percent, and 54.1 percent. Young and highly educated people were the mainstay of these unusual political incidents. While these two protests essentially evolved around the future status of the two territories—centering on the likely economic and political absorption of Taiwan into China, and China's reinforced grip over Hong Kong—the young demonstrators clearly perceived that their own personal future was also at stake.

While the two eventful protests challenged the pro-China domestic political leaders, movement leaders took care to present their action as nonpartisan. For different reasons, Beijing has been persistently skeptical of the political opposition in both Taiwan and Hong Kong, the former because of its pro-independence tendencies and the latter for its insistence on democratization and the political rehabilitation of the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre. Yet throughout the episodes, opposition politicians played only a limited role, and they were not able to steer the movement direction. In both places, government officials attempted to portray the incidents as a political plot engineered by the opposition or foreign forces, in order to discredit the demonstrators, indicating that the nonpartisan image constituted a vital component of the broad appeal in these two eventful protests.

Both protests involved an unprecedented and risky confrontation with the authorities, and proceeded under a shroud of uncertainty and fear, yet without engendering social or economic crisis. Demonstrators maintained orderly, clean, and civilized encampment over the weeks, and except for the inconvenience in terms of traffic, civilian life went on as usual outside the occupation zone. There was no accompanying economic disturbance; the stock markets in Taiwan and Hong Kong fell over the first few days, but then went back to normal. As a matter of fact, both the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement sites became famed tourist attractions precisely because of their peacefulness.

Last, the eventful protests in Taiwan and Hong Kong were not unrelated. In the preceding years, there had been mutual exchanges and cross-fertilization among civil-society organizations and student activists as they became increasingly aware of the common threat posed by Beijing and the need for transborder solidarity. The occupation of the legislature in Taiwan provided an accessible reference case for Hongkongers.

Global Eventful Protests

What happened in Taiwan and Hong Kong cannot be isolated from the global wave of eventful protests that became more intensive in the preceding years. From a social movement perspective, the twenty-first century was ushered in by the “Battle of Seattle” on November 30, 1999, in which a coalition of environmentalists, unionists, and anarchists disrupted a World Trade Organization (WTO) conference (Flesher Fominaya 2014b: 84–89). Thanks to advances in communications technology, movement activists in different countries became more capable of coordinating their action and forging transnational networks (della Porta and Mosca 2005; Juris 2005; Smith 2002). Subsequently, a global justice movement, or alter-globalization and globalization-from-below movement, came into being in many places (Maeckelbergh 2013; Mason 2012; Notes from Nowhere 2003). There emerged a distinctive repertoire for “summit protests,” in which protesters of different ideological tendencies and nationalities gathered to protest at meetings of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the G8, and so on, protesting each summit with a prolonged encampment (MacDonald 2002; Tominaga 2017).

A parallel wave surged in the former republics and satellite states of the Soviet Union under the Color Revolutions, massive demonstrations in support of democratization in locations including Serbia (in 2000), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005). The existence of a transnational network of human rights activists helped to spread the tactic of non-violent protests in these postcommunist countries (Bunce and Wolchik 2011). While the global justice movement mainly targeted neoliberalism, geopolitical factors played a visible role in the Color Revolutions, as these postcommunist countries were caught in the rivalry between the West and Russia (Way 2008). In his study on the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, Mark Beissinger (2011, 2013) discovered that participants were motivated by a number of diverse factors, and the aspiration for democracy was not the most predominant one. Ethnic and nationalistic politics were clearly involved in the Color Revolutions.

The global wave of eventful protests reached a climax in 2011, with the rise of the Arab Spring (heralded by the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions), the “European Summer” (stimulated by Spain’s Indignados Movement), and the Occupy Wall Street Movement and its global diffusion through the autumn (Castells 2012; Flesher Fominaya 2014b: 148–193; Gerbaudo 2012). The Arab Spring was composed of popular protests against corrupt dictators in a number of countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Young people who chafed under political intolerance and economic stagnation made up the main contingent force, and their digital connectedness helped to overcome the fear instilled in them by the police and their informants (Bellin 2012; Ghonim 2012; Gunning and Baron 2014; Noueihed and Warren 2012;

Rand 2013). The European wave of protests initiated by the Spanish had a more visible economic origin as countries such as France, Italy, Greece, and Portugal were affected by the debt crisis and the austerity measures that had blighted a generation's future (Flesher Fominaya 2014a; Tejerina et al. 2013). Finally, the Occupy Wall Street Movement and its ensuing waves of global imitations identified as the "occupy protests" arose and became a truly global lingua franca in protest making (Gitlin 2012; Graeber 2013).

How can we position the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement in these successive tides of international eventful protests? East Asia was a region that seemed relatively immune to the global contagion. With the noticeable exceptions of the 2005 anti-WTO protest in Hong Kong and the 2008 anti-G8 meeting in Hokkaido, Japan (Tominaga 2014), this region witnessed fewer activities associated with the global justice movement. Furthermore, the Color Revolutions and the upheavals of 2011 stimulated weak responses in the region. Was the emergence of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement a sign of convergence with the global eventful protest phenomenon?

As mentioned above, participation by predominantly youthful demonstrators and their political independence from political parties were similar to other international cases. Occupying a public space and using it as an ongoing bargaining chip with the authorities was also a familiar feature. In fact, the importance of spatial factors led many commentators to speak of "occupy movements" (Pickerill and Krinsky 2012), "square politics" (Krstev 2014), and "movements of squares" (Fernández-Savater and Flesher Fominaya 2017). Mobile and digital communication enabled youthful participants to launch a series of flash-mob-style protests that led to unusual confrontation with the authorities. Taiwanese and Hongkonger protesters also practiced a politics of inclusiveness by celebrating their cultural and ethnic diversities, and their occupation zones gave rise to a flurry of creative and artistic expressions.

Apart from these similarities, the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement diverged from the international eventful protests in many remarkable ways. First, they were emphatically not so-called leaderless movements, and the grassroots participants readily recognized some youthful faces as their figurehead leaders. In varying degrees, the decisions made by a small and closed circle of student activists shaped the movement outcomes. Second, although there had been a prevalent sense of economic deprivation among Taiwanese and Hongkonger youth, neoliberalism did not become a prominent issue in their protests. Even in the Sunflower Movement, which was triggered by trade liberalization with China, principled opposition to free trade remained a marginal voice. This reduced emphasis on economic demands was accompanied by a more salient role for geopolitical factors, as both the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement were inextricably

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opposed to an increasingly hegemonic China. Here, these two movements were more akin to the Color Revolutions, and more removed from the global justice movement. Last, unlike the European autonomous leftists and the American anarchists who shared an ideological aversion to institutional politics, Sunflower and Umbrella activists eagerly embraced party and electoral politics after the conclusion of their intensive mobilization. There was a rather smooth transition from street occupation to electioneering.

In short, the East Asian pair of eventful protests demonstrated a fascinating combination of convergence and divergence with what happened elsewhere around the globe. A closer look helps enrich our understanding of these unusual social movements as they have become increasingly important in reshaping our contemporary world.

The Six Puzzles to Be Examined

Social science is an intellectual craft that strives to provide a convincing account of those unlikely and unanticipated happenings that are incongruent with our received understanding. In this sense, the emergences of eventful protests, as well as their subsequent evolution await an explanation. Concerning Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, I raise six intellectual puzzles here:

Puzzle 1: Radicalism in Conservative Societies

In spite of substantial modernization on many fronts, both Taiwan and Hong Kong remain essentially conservative societies that frown on illegal protest behaviors. Yet, the two movements in question exceeded their global predecessors in terms of disruptiveness. The Sunflower Movement did not just occupy a public square; it occupied the national legislature, the citadel of contemporary democracy, and yet the movement enjoyed strong popular support. The Umbrella Movement managed to sustain a continuous road occupation in the city center for 79 days, surpassing the length of the Egyptian Revolution (18 days), the Spanish Indignados Movement (28 days with the protester decision to evacuate the Puerta del Sol square), and the Occupy Wall Street Movement (59 days with the police eviction of Zuccotti Park protesters). Why did Taiwanese and Hongkonger citizens decide to shelve their deep-seated suspicion over protest behaviors by supporting these ostensibly illegal acts of occupation?

Puzzle 2: "Hopeless" Protests?

Since protest making remains essentially a labor-intensive and risky activity, participants are more likely to join when they clearly perceive a chance of

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winning. However, such an optimistic outlook was conspicuously absent when the Sunflower and Umbrella Movements surged. Taiwan's ruling party was determined to ratify the trade bill with China with its parliamentary majority, and the major opposition party appeared to take a noncommittal stance in order to dodge confrontation over the sensitive issue. Opposition activists exhausted nearly every procedural possibility to delay the bill's passage and they also failed to draw public attention to the pernicious effects of free trade with China. In Hong Kong, despite an energetic campaign for a genuinely democratic chief executive election that lasted for more than one year, Beijing was determined to play hardball by announcing a package that was more restrictive than anticipated. To make matters worse, Hong Kong's opposition parties appeared utterly unprepared for such a hardline response and they were also too disjointed to present a common front. Many Hongkonger participants acknowledged that the chances of obtaining concessions from Beijing were slim in the early days of the Umbrella Movement (Cai 2017: 2). Apparently, Taiwanese and Hongkonger citizens took to the streets not because they saw that extracting concessions from incumbents was likely, but rather because something emphatically more vital was at stake.

Puzzle 3: Student Leadership

Both Taiwan and Hong Kong maintained a vibrant civil society, populated by a number of movement-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties. Experienced movement activists and established politicians appeared the more likely candidates to lead these two massive antiregime protests. But in reality, movement veterans and politicians were practically sidelined in the decision-making process as students emerged as the indisputable movement figureheads. As such, both the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement were directed primarily by a group of university students who were in their twenties. Legally speaking, Joshua Wong was a minor without the right to cast a vote when he led the Umbrella Movement. How can we make sense of this atypical leadership?

Puzzle 4: The Curse of Movement Resources

At the onset of the two movements, there was a great contrast in terms of preparedness. Hong Kong's campaigners had been preparing for an eventual showdown, and they enjoyed the advantages of respected and recognized leaders, independent financing, volunteers trained in the tactics of nonviolence resistance, and a collection of logistical resources; yet the Umbrella Movement turned out to be ineffectively led and suffered from widening internal discord. In Taiwan, before student protesters stormed the legislature, the opposition movement was understaffed, under-funded, and not widely

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known. Nevertheless, the Sunflower Movement engendered a strong and coherent leadership core capable of executing its strategic decisions relatively smoothly. How did the possession of more abundant movement resources become a liability in the eventful protest?

Puzzle 5: The Sources of Unsolicited Contribution

Both the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement were made possible due to on-the-spot and decentralized decisions made by anonymous participants. Provisioning and maintaining order in the protest encampment areas were delegated to participants themselves, as leaders were too preoccupied with strategic responses. How was it possible for Taiwanese and Hongkonger citizens to sustain such orderly and prolonged protests? In a sense, the distinction between leaders and followers was blurred, because participants self-organized their own movements without receiving orders or authorization from anyone. The widespread ability to generate such spontaneous responses among the participants needs to be explained.

Puzzle 6: Solidarity and Schism

In terms of political outcomes, there was a noticeable difference between these two movements. The Umbrella Movement ended up further dividing Hong Kong's opposition, whereas the Sunflower Movement helped Taiwan's opposition party to secure a turnover of power. Hong Kong's post-Umbrella political landscape was further fractured with the entry of new political forces that emerged as contenders against the preexisting opposition parties, whereas Taiwan's post-Sunflower force became a partner to the main opposition party in its quest for national power.

This book aims to explain these six puzzles by answering from a social movement study perspective how, why, and when the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement occurred. What makes for a social movement? And what are its essential components? What may we learn from the existing research literature?

A Synthetic Perspective of Social Movements

I follow Sidney Tarrow's suggestion to identify social movements as the collective and sustained challenges mounted by a group of people with a common purpose and mutual solidarity (1994: 3–4). This brief definition stops short of specifying the content of the purpose, because social movements can be progressive or conservative in their agendas. Regardless of their ideological

orientations, social movements are not reducible to protests, although these two terms are often employed interchangeably. A protest is an act of expressing one's objection, which can be highly individualized without involving a collaborative effort. Although a protest always takes place by violating an expected norm, it is not necessary that a protest evolve into sustained effort to challenge authorities. NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) is a particularly relevant category of protests that are not social movements.

One of the trademark characteristics of a social movement is its reliance on extra-institutional methods (Marx and McAdam 1994: 73). Apparently, there remain inherent difficulties in drawing a precise demarcation between what are the institutional ways to express one's dissidence and what are not. An extra-institutional act does not always go against the law, because there always remains an indeterminate gray zone. Whether peaceful or violent, an extra-institutional act is always something that departs from routine behavior and involves the collective presentation of the participants' worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (Tilly 2004: 2–3). Resorting to extra-institutional means has to do with the marginalized status of the people involved (Jenkins and Perrow 1977). In other words, if a group of people has routine and low-cost access to decision-making power, they tend not to launch social-movement activities in order to pursue their common purpose.

Ever since the theoretical revolution initiated by resource mobilization theory in the 1970s, researchers began to adopt an analytical perspective that was closer to the actions of movement activists, by focusing on the questions of how to organize collective action. The subsequent cultural turn, stimulated by new social movement theory and other theoretical orientations, helped to address the neglect of symbolic dimensions. Before the turn of the century, there emerged a well-established consensus on the image of social movements, as well as the conceptual tools to analyze them. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (2001: 14–18) identified a “classical research agenda” that contains the following components: (1) political opportunities and constraints, or how the political environment shapes the development of social movements, (2) forms of organization, or the interpersonal relationship that encourages protest participation, (3) framing, or a symbolic construction that identifies social injustice, and (4) repertoire, or the way the dissent is performed and dramatized in public. The consensual understanding of social movements entails a number of assumptions. Social movements are a rational pursuit of shared interests or identities, rather than the result of abnormal psychological status as portrayed in the earlier approaches of collective behavior. While social movements entail a political bargaining process with opponents or the authorities, one cannot ignore their cultural aspects because movements also construct a shared understanding among participants, present a new interpretation of the dispute in question, and contest the existing norms and values. Social movements involve coordination and leadership, so

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they are distinct from spontaneous and unorganized responses at the individual level. As a corollary, social movements are a normal phenomenon in modern societies, which are expected to incorporate them as a permanent and conventional feature with growing democratic tolerance.

This consensus has helped to institutionalize social movement study by providing a shared vocabulary to the extent that a “standard model” of social movements is said to dominate the field (Amenta et al. 2010). To move beyond what they identified as a “classical research agenda,” McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly led the intellectual movement to reposition the research focus on “mechanisms,” understood as universal causal sequences. Their collaborative attempt was to integrate the study of social movements with other related phenomena, such as nationalism, democratization, ethnic conflicts, and so on, into a single paradigm of “contentious politics” (2001; McAdam and Tarrow 2010; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

From the classical research agenda to the study of contentious politics, there has been a clear rejection of universal laws. Yet for their opponents, the mainstream approach has not sufficiently recognized the role of human agency and its ability to construct a social movement by making creative use of preexisting symbols and meanings. This constructionist camp maintained the need to deepen the theoretical meanings of strategy from an enlarged perspective that involves biographical, cultural, or even aesthetic meanings of agency (Jasper 2004; Polletta 2002). One of their main criticisms was that the mainstream approach erred in reifying the state, as the concept “political opportunity structure” (POS) essentially entailed an excessively deterministic understanding of social movements (Goodwin 2012; Goodwin and Jasper 1999, 2004). As an effort to correct the structuralist assumption, constructionists emphasized the role of emotions in the genesis of social movements precisely because the affective dimension did not directly derive from the preexisting conditions, but more as a result of participants’ shared understanding and interpretation (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Jasper 2011, 2014). In a sense, the debate evolved around a perennial question in social science—that is, the classical structure-and-agency debate. Simply put, the question was about whether one should see the emergence of a social movement as a result of the conduciveness of objective conditions or as an achievement of participants’ own efforts. In the literature on contemporary eventful protests, there appeared a clear divide of two theoretical orientations. Jeroen Gunning and Ilan Zvi Baron (2014) rigorously apply the mainstream approach by looking at the organizational mobilization in the Egyptian Revolution, whereas Jeffrey Alexander (2011) offers a cultural interpretation of how Egyptians manifested their political power via symbolic and moral performance.

While the existence of theoretical debates indicates the continuing vitality of a research field, there is a feeling that the divergences between these two

camps are overemphasized so that their overlapping consensus is in danger of being overlooked (see Kurzman 2004a). Take the POS, for example, which has arguably sustained the fiercest gunfire from the constructionist camp; its practitioners have moved away from the original determinist formulation and concurred on the need for more conceptual specification (Meyer and Minkoff 2004; Ramos 2008). And there emerges the recognition that the impact of political opportunities is far from uniform (Almeida 2003; Meyer 2004). On the other hand, neither is it true that the mainstream approach has completely ignored the cultural processes of social movements. The mainstream approach researchers continue to pay attention to emotion (Aminzade and McAdam 2002), language (Tarrow 2013), and how these cultural elements structure the dynamics of movement contention.

The point is that social movements are inevitably a multidimensional process that involves how people organize themselves in order to mount a challenge to the political authorities and their protests would not be effective if they fail to appropriate the preexisting symbols and meanings and elaborate them into a passionate pursuit of the shared goals. In spite of theoretical crossfire, it is clear that the existing literature has already bequeathed an abundant set of conceptual vocabularies, which can be readily applied in different contexts. The task ahead is not about the differences in philosophical assumptions, but rather how we can use these theoretical tools to make sense of the ongoing evolution of contemporary social movements.

This book adopts a synthetic approach by making a selective use of the analytical vocabularies developed by the two camps. From the mainstream approach, I borrow network and generation (see Chapter 3) and opportunities and threat (see Chapters 4 and 5) to understand the origin of eventful protests in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Inspired by the constructionist camp, I analyze how biography affects movement leadership (see Chapter 5), the creative playfulness in protest (see Chapter 6), and the emotional aspect of movement activism (see Chapter 7). In place of paradigm warfare, I am hoping a theoretical syncretism offers the best intellectual guide to make sense of the contemporary social protests.

Having said that, I find that the existing theories are mostly geared toward understanding “routine” social movements that take place and end in an expectable fashion. Yet, the surge of eventful protests calls for newer conceptual tools precisely because they deviate from the received script of the interaction between protesters and the authorities. In order to fully explain such sudden, intensive, and transformative social movements, I theorize “standoff” as the exceptional moments of movement-government confrontation and “improvisation” as on-the-spot and decentralized decisions from the grassroots participants in order to sustain these two eventful protests in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Research Data

The research data come from many sources. Based in Taiwan, I have more ready access to the Sunflower Movement, and in fact I entered the legislature two hours after the protesters stormed it on March 18, 2014. Given my prior familiarity with some of the student activists, I had the privilege of witnessing some of their inside meetings. I also conducted many rounds of field observation, both inside and outside the legislature. However, I do not consider myself an involved participant. During the twenty-four days, my engagement was largely limited to writing supportive newspaper op-ed pieces and delivering street-forum lectures. By comparison, my access to Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement was more limited. Nevertheless, I conducted a two-day field observation when the protest was still ongoing in the streets.

Furthermore, I carried out in-depth interviews with relevant persons in Taiwan and Hong Kong, in order to collect firsthand information from different subgroups and factions (see Appendix 1). In total, I interviewed 72 Hongkonger and Macanese, and 66 Taiwanese. My sample includes student participants and leaders, NGO activists, politicians and their aides, party workers, journalists, and university professors in both places. Since the Sunflower and Umbrella Movements were unusually large social movements in terms of scale, there has subsequently been a wealth of documentary films, published work, discussion forums, and speeches by both participants and observers, which also provide vital information.

Protests with and without Chinese Characteristics

Chinese political culture bequeathed a wealth of protest-making scripts for the would-be challengers. In particular, Confucianism bestowed an elevated status to literati because they exemplified the nation's conscience. It was scholar-officials' moral duty to remonstrate against the emperors' wrongdoings and the incidents of patriotic martyrdom were often lauded in the history textbook. Such preexisting cultural understandings created a shared expectation that protest movements led by intellectual elites should be treated with greater leniency, thereby constraining the regime's maneuvering space. Outright repression, such as the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, remained a possibility, but it often came about when the besieged rulers ran out of other means for their own self-preservation.

In the twentieth century, the role of literati was inherited by university students whose sacred task was no longer the safeguarding of intellectual and moral orthodoxy but mounting a national salvation campaign with modern leanings. The famed May Fourth Movement of 1919 was a latter-day rendition of this Chinese intellectualism, and so were the subsequent students' nationalistic agitations in the 1920s and 1930s (Israel 1966). Craig Calhoun noted

that in the 1989 Beijing pro-democracy movement the particular combination of elitism, heroism, and unselfishness was an enduring legacy of traditional culture (1997: 262–264). The students' attempt to couch their protest in the studied deference to the authorities and dramatized moralism clearly originated from the classical political theater (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1994).

The Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement emerged partly because they made successful use of this cultural heritage by foregrounding the student role, even though students were not the sole participants. If those who stormed Taiwan's legislature were not students, but a group of plighted workers, it would be unlikely to elicit immediate and massive response to their cause. The same reasoning applies to Hong Kong's student protesters who were surrounded and badly treated by police after occupying Civic Square. It took students' victimization to arouse widespread citizens' sympathy and participation.

While both movements drew their strength from the moral force of student activism, there were clear deviations from the traditional script. In both the 1989 Tiananmen Movement (D. Zhao 2001: 284–285) and the 1990 Wild Lily Movement in Taipei (Wright 2001: 126), student participants maintained a cordon line to keep other citizens from entering their sit-in area, partly because of their fear of agent provocateurs sent by the government, which, however, symbolized the status distinction between student and nonstudent participants. Such spatial segregation was patently absent in the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement, as nonstudent participants played an important role in strategy making. In fact, Taiwanese activists made a formal decision in rejecting the characterization of a "student movement (*xuesheng yundong*)" in order to highlight the contribution of nonstudent participants (Yen et al. 2015: 142).

In place of the ultraserious tone of Chinese intellectualism, both movements were expressed in language that incorporated many elements from the youth popular culture. In many incidents, the government's response and the hostile media's detraction were treated with creative playfulness, such as in the Japanese *kuso* style. Personal life details of two Sunflower male student leaders, Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting, became insanely attractive to the public. Lin's Harry Potter-style glasses and green overcoat became an instant fashion, while a picture of Chen asleep with a teddy bear on the floor of the national legislature attracted the donation of more than eighty teddy bears overnight (hence the expression "Weiting-the-Pooh"). Hong Kong's participants also invented some playful and humorous forms of protest, including singing "Happy Birthday" to pro-government opponents to neutralize explosive situations (Gan 2017). As with Taiwan's Lin-Chen duo, Hong Kong student leaders Alex Chow and Lester Shum, often shortened as "Alexter," were portrayed in *fujoshi* (rotten women)-style

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cartoons that depicted the two males in a same-sex erotic fantasy (the “boys’ love romance”).

The waning of the relevance of classical political theater for Taiwanese and Hongkonger did not come from a deliberate choice, since both movement leaders were too engrossed in the strategic interaction with the government incumbents to pay attention to issues of style. More likely, the aesthetic shift reflected the change of university students’ role in both places. The expansion of higher education in the 1990s had eroded their privileged status. Since a college degree no longer promised a decent professional job, it would become anachronistically incomprehensible if student activists decided to play the elitist role of classical intellectuals. Moreover, the prevalence of mobile digital communication and social media had leveled the distinction between student and non-student populations. What came in place was a shared youth culture in cyberspace that appeared more equalitarian, more creative, and funnier (M. Ho 2014c).

On the other hand, the cultural meanings of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement can be discussed in light of the literature on protests in post-Mao China. The economic reforms and the gradual withdrawal of party-state control have generated many new social grievances that led up to growing numbers of petitions and protests. Yet, with the absence of a civil society and political liberties, Chinese protesters had to devise novel ways of making their collective claims, identified as “rightful resistance” (O’Brien 1996), “protest with rule consciousness” (Perry 2010), or “disorganized popular contention” (Chen and Kang 2016). Rather than mounting a bottom-up challenge, protesters were careful to make exhaustive use of the existing institutions (X. Chen 2008). Oftentimes, protesters professed their allegiance to the central leadership and used the preexisting socialist slogans to pressure the local cadres (F. Chen 2008). Despite its exponential growth, there was evidence that the Chinese government had found ways to manage and contain its political fallout.

Obviously what happened in Taiwan and Hong Kong did not share this Chinese characteristic because both episodes involved large-scale civil disobedience that confronted the government incumbents. Were a similar incident to take place in contemporary mainland China, it could have been a second Tiananmen Movement, ending either in the regime’s collapse or crackdown. Nevertheless, “Chinese characteristics” are not a timeless and immutable essence, but subject to constant revision with the change of circumstances. During the Umbrella Movement, many Chinese visitors came to the occupation zones and personally witnessed how a protest could proceed in an orderly and civilized manner—a great contrast with the negative associations of protest behaviors with rowdiness in the mainland. It remains to be seen how these newer understandings take root and ferment over the years in redefining “Chinese characteristics.”

The Mandate of Heaven and Its Peripheral Challengers

The two major incidents of resistance took place at the periphery of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and in different ways challenged its legitimacy claim. Hong Kong is currently a territory of China that enjoys administrative autonomy, whereas Taiwan remains independent, yet its *de jure* statehood is challenged and it now experiences more visible intrusion from China's visible hand. Despite their distance from China's power center, both Hong Kong and Taiwan bear strategic implications for the global rise of China.

For thousands of years, Chinese history has been animated by stirrings from distant places. Although the traditional perspective tends to consider Chinese civilization as evolving from its governing center, revolts in its periphery have actually punctuated many historical transitions. Nomadic invasions from the north by Turks, Mongolians, and Manchurians have decided the fate of ruling dynasties. The republican revolution of the twentieth century would not have been possible if a coterie of Cantonese-speaking revolutionaries led by Sun Yat-sen had not established an insurgent network in Hong Kong and among overseas Chinese societies. Similarly, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would not have come to power if it had not built guerilla bases in faraway locations and received aid from Russia. Over the course of Chinese history, things fell apart and the center did not hold, because of constant and robust challenges from the periphery.

Classical Chinese philosophy has long understood the vicissitude of ruling powers and developed a theory of "mandate of heaven" (*tianming*), which bestowed legitimacy on successful rebel leaders (Perry 1992: ix-x). A general, a feudal lord, a "barbarian" chief, or a peasant leader could rise to the throne of the Celestial Empire as long as he possessed such a blessing. More than a century after the fall of the last imperial dynasty in 1911, the Chinese ruler was again experiencing challenges from the periphery to the mandate to govern. The Beijing incumbents have implicitly renounced their allegiance to revolutionary socialism and have now embraced a militant nationalism to buttress their undemocratic rule. No longer denounced as a feudal vice, classical Chinese statecraft and its guiding philosophy of managing the periphery have now come back into fashion. For its enthusiasts, the traditional China-centered civilizational order (*tianxia*) was bound to dislodge the Westphalian system that saw individual national states as formally equal participants in international politics with the phenomenal rise of the PRC's economic and military might (for an engaged criticism, see Babones 2017). For Chinese President Xi Jinping, cultural assimilation (of Hong Kong and Macao), irredentism (of Taiwan as well as other "lost territories"), and other expansionist attempts overseas (such as in the South China Sea) have become a priority in the "Great Revival of the Chinese Race" (*zhonghua minzu*

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weida fuxing) political project. The more China seeks to reenact its historical imperial image, the more it encounters opposition from its periphery and neighboring countries.

I do not imply that the Sunflower and Umbrella Movements will result in a drastic change in China's political center. However, the multifaceted and contradictory center-periphery interactions should be taken into consideration when analyzing China's rapid ascendancy to world power. Taiwan's future, indeed, is going to be largely shaped by the ongoing contention between "China's ambitions and America's interests" (Friedman 2013), whereas Hong Kong's prospects appear more complicated with the addition of the Taiwan factor. Nonetheless, these contemporary peripheral resistances to the inheritor of the Chinese empire do not strive for a mandate to the throne, as both Taiwanese and Hongkongers prefer to preserve their own distinctive political cultures, identities, and ways of life. The Sunflower and Umbrella Movements are the dramatic explosions of such powerful aspirations and they are sure to leave enduring legacies to future Taiwan-China and Hong Kong-China relations in the years to come.

Understanding the rise and fall of world powers and the implications for the global order has long been an area reserved for specialists in international relations and security studies. By contrast, social movement researchers have established a consensus to focus on short-term episodes of contentious mobilization, which appears to be detached from the sweeping changes brought about by the rise of a new world power. As expected, the advances of a more assertive China are often examined from the perspectives of military power and economic might, and less attention has been paid to the agitations from civil society. Here the insights of social movement study can help to fill the void, precisely because its analysis of mesolevel (interorganizational) and microlevel (interpersonal) processes enables us to understand how ordinary citizens are directly affected by macrolevel (supranational or national) changes, and why they are willing to engage in unusual protest behaviors. True, the evolution of geopolitics is largely shaped by top-down forces, such as military rivalry and economic strength; however, there also exists an oft-overlooked bottom-up dynamic of civil society, which is sometimes able to exert cross-border influence.

Plan of the Book

This book offers an account of the origins, the processes, and the consequences of Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. I tackle the genesis of the movements in Chapters 1 and 2, movement mobilization in the four middle chapters (Chapters 3 through 6), and domestic and international outcomes in Chapter 7 and the Conclusion. Here is a brief summary of the chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the historical background of Taiwan and Hong Kong from their common origins as edges of contending empires. Both experienced prolonged colonialism and the resumption of Chinese rule. Social protests and pro-democracy movements in the two places first appeared in the 1970s, yet their subsequent trajectories diverged. Taiwan's political opposition was driven by a strong indigenous identity and the democratic transition finished before Beijing became capable of interfering with Taiwan's domestic politics, whereas Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement proceeded with an anticolonial Chinese nationalism and its progress stalled after the resumption of Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

Chapter 2 examines development in the twenty-first century, as Taiwan and Hong Kong began to experience more coercion from China. Although Beijing's strategic concession of economic benefits has cultivated a group of privileged local collaborators, grievances have emerged with its political intervention. Hongkongers rose to resist political and cultural assimilation, the "mainlandization," while Taiwanese reacted to the looming specter of Hongkongization. Both places witnessed a surge in self-defensive protests related to China impacts, accompanied by visible growth in indigenous identity over Chinese identity.

Both the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement were preceded by an increase in youthful protests. Chapter 3 looks at the similar economic circumstances that generated such waves of youth revolts. As young Taiwanese and Hongkongers engaged in protests more frequently, their movement networks expanded and thickened, which laid the interpersonal foundation for the two eventful protests. I also analyze the rise of the trans-border network between Taiwanese and Hongkonger movement activists.

Chapters 4 and 5 form a pair in the examination of the eruption and the dynamics of the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement, respectively, through the theoretical lens of political opportunities, threat, and standoff. At the moment of their flare-up, political opportunities were not open to the protesters, whose demands appeared to have failed to elicit a positive response from the authorities. Yet both Taiwanese and Hongkonger government incumbents made fatal mistakes in dealing with the protest movements by creating an instant sense of urgency that heightened the cost of inaction. The attempt by Taiwan's ruling party to railroad the controversial trade bill through the legislature and the use of tear gas by Hong Kong's police unexpectedly stimulated protest participation beyond the anticipation of the activists. Therefore, both movements took place not because of favorable political opportunities, but rather because of the sudden rise of a threat.

Both the Sunflower Movement and the Umbrella Movement sustained a protracted confrontation with the government. In a standoff, movement leadership was post hoc constructed, making preexisting organizations and prior planning useless, or worse, a liability. Standoffs offered only a short window

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of opportunity for social movements; the longer they persisted, the more perilous they became. Standoffs were *sui generis* situations, in which contingency played a particularly important role in shaping the outcome, which explained why Taiwan's previously weakly organized movement turned out to command more effective leadership and to engineer a more graceful exit.

Chapter 6 surveys the widespread voluntary contributions and on-the-spot decision making among grassroots participants in light of the notion of "improvisation," defined as "strategic response without prior planning." These unsolicited efforts came in a rich variety and satisfied a number of needs to sustain protest encampment. In contrast to some literature that excessively glorified the so-called leaderless movements, improvisation could be just as hierarchical (as more experienced activists were able to play a more important role), conflict-prone, and even contradictory because it was essentially difficult to reconcile different ideological tendencies.

The consequences of the two eventful protests are investigated in Chapter 7. In Taiwan and Hong Kong newer protest activism emerged as a younger cohort of activists formed political parties and joined electoral politics. Post-Sunflower Taiwan experienced a turnover of power, while the post-Umbrella Movement witnessed the surge of political forces that advocated for independence or self-determination. I also look at both how Beijing responded to these unprecedented challenges and the regional reverberations. The Conclusion wraps up the preceding observation and analysis. I conclude the book by elaborating on the theoretical implications for the field of social movement study. Moreover, these two peripheral revolts provide a unique perspective by which we may broaden our understanding of the contemporary meaning of China's global ascendancy.