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A special territory: visions of Hong Kong and its people

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Chapter Three Nationalism, Ideology, Intellectuals, and Hong Kong

Nationalism creates and maintains the nation-state. But what is nationalism exactly, and if Hong Kong is not a nation-state, does this mean there is no nationalism in Hong Kong? What frameworks can foster nationalism, and who create them? As in the previous chapter, I draw on various typologies and take them as orientation points for understanding Hong Kong nationalism and localism.

3.1 Nationalism: Creating the Nation

Nationalism is essential to the nation and nation-state. By what process is the nation made relevant for each generation and real enough for people to believe in, live in, and sometimes even die for their nation? Scholars have arrived at conflicting answers. For an overview of the debates, see Umut's excellent *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (2000), Smith's *Nationalism* (2010), and Hearn's *Rethinking Nationalism: a Critical Introduction* (2006). The ideology of nationalism operates at different levels. There is nationalism that operates globally, meaning that nation-states divide the world. Global nationalism operates on the premise that nation-states delineate the world, emphasizing divisions between different national entities. Conversely, everyday nationalism functions to (re)create the nation on a more personal level. This form of nationalism is evident in the visible display of national flags, as well as in casual conversations where individuals refer to their nation using inclusive pronouns like "us" and "we." For example, during discussions about the Olympic Games, people may express national pride by saying "our country got more medals than your country." In such instances, the nation becomes internalized in everyday speech and actions, contributing to the ongoing construction and reinforcement of national identity.

Smith (1991, p. 72) identifies five ways in which the term "nationalism" is used;

1. The whole process of forming and maintaining nations or nation-states,
2. A consciousness of belonging to the nation, together with sentiments and aspirations for its security and prosperity,
3. A language and symbolism of the 'nation' and its role,
4. An ideology, including a cultural doctrine of nations and the national will and prescriptions for the realization of national aspirations,
5. A social and political movement to achieve the goals of the nation and realize its national will.

These five ways show the political element of nationalism. It is a process, an ideology that evokes a "consciousness of belonging to the nation" and "aspirations for its security and prosperity" as the people, through nationalism, aim to achieve nationhood and the national will. In the same work, Smith

writes that nationalism is “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity, and identity of a nation” (p. 74). It is clear from Smith’s notion of nationalism that it is an exclusionary force. It is hard to imagine that two co-existing national wills or national aspirations could wish to realize their national will over the same territory and the people inhabiting it.

The distinction between nation, state, and nation-state also extends to the characterization of people. A national people is distinguished from an ethnic group. According to Smith, an ethnic group constitutes a cultural collective that accentuates shared memories, ancestral myths, language, customs, and institutions. These elements are historical in nature, drawing upon a cultural repertoire that predates the formation of the nation. Smith (1991, p. 21) outlines six primary attributes of the ethnic community, which he terms an "ethnie."

1. A collective proper name,
2. A myth of common ancestry,
3. Shared historical memories (shared historical memories may also take the form of myth),
4. One or more differentiating elements of common culture,
5. An association with a specific 'homeland',
6. A sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.

The re-evaluation of an ethnic community’s history and the attributes of an ethnic community are like a recipe for nationalism.

Guibernau (2004), discussing Smith’s work, notes how he does not clearly distinguish between nation, state, and nation-state. Guibernau criticizes the five points outlined above, raising two issues. First, she asserts that mass public culture clashes with earlier elite notions of national identity that pre-date the modern nation-state. Second, she takes issue with Smith for making citizenship a feature of national identity. There are nations without citizenship or nations where citizenship is folded under a different nation altogether. Guibernau argues that Smith once again conflates nation and state, writing: "Are we then to assume that Catalan, Quebecker, Scottish, Basque, Flemish, and Corsican national identities do not exist? Should we ignore that citizens of a single state may have different national identities?" (2004, p. 134). I would add Hong Kong to the list as well.

In Guibernau’s analysis national identity is formed from a community that shares certain characteristics and has come to believe they share ancestry (2004). An important distinction is that for Guibernau, national identity can exist without a state, as members who feel they belong to a nation can do so regardless of it being a nation-state. In this regard, where Smith uses *ethnie* to differentiate it from national identity to keep the second term centred around the nation-state, Guibernau has no apprehension in separating national identity from the nation-state. While this seems a semantic affair, the word "nation" has vast political implications. To say a nation-state has different ethnicities or *ethnies* has different connotations than to say a nation has different national identities. The former claim does not necessarily have to lead to political claims. In contrast, the latter claim, following the

dogmatic ideal of nationalism, does lead the people, to quote Smith once again, to “a social and political movement to achieve the goals of the nation and realize its national will” (1991, p. 72).

The work of Smith remains valuable for its delineation of typologies, particularly his distinction between territorial and ethnic nationalism (1991). This typology differentiates between pre-independence and post-independence forms of nationalism. In the pre-independence phase, territorial nationalism primarily manifests as anti-colonial sentiment, as the populace strives to expel foreign rule. The designation of the ruler as foreign serves as a marker of nationalism, with the aim being the establishment of a nation-state indigenous to the territory in question. After independence, territorial nationalism aims to unite the ethnic diaspora and ethnic populations in what Smith terms integration nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is considered secession and diaspora nationalism, where the idea of the nation is ethnic, and a part of the population wishes to separate from the larger nation to create and control their homeland. After independence, these states want to form a larger ethnonational state. Catalanian and Scottish nationalism are two examples of ethnic nationalism wishing to secede from an existing nation.

Smith further identifies three commonalities between these autonomist movements. First, they are movements against an existing state and a distribution of power perceived as unfair, and they are popular movements led by mass mobilization. Second, these movements involve reconsidering the past and the identity of the people. The community must rediscover itself on its own terms to separate from the dominant nation, a process Smith calls vernacularisation. Third, Smith notes the leading role of intellectuals who provide the framework for reconstructing the people and their history, culture, and customs. These new national movements (for Smith, this refers to post-Soviet Nationalism, Catalonia, and Scotland) are mostly autonomist, recognize the possibility of multiple identities, and take place in nations with more robust economies. In the case of Scotland, for example, people can see themselves as both Scottish and belonging to the United Kingdom, still wishing to keep a large degree of autonomy for themselves but not going as far as becoming a separate nation-state. Hong Kong could be a case where territorial and ethnic nationalism co-exist. As I will show, Hong Kong society has undergone processes of vernacularisation as a distinct idea of Hong Kongness (including language, customs, values) has formed in the past decades, sometimes even envisioning a separate Hong Kong ethnicity (ethnie) from Mainland China. Simultaneously, much nationalist sentiment by people in Hong Kong is concerned with the idea of the PRC as a (colonial) oppressor invading Hong Kong, which nationalists argue seeks to integrate Hong Kong and reduce or even remove the territory's autonomy.

Nationalism often capitalizes on pre-existing community bonds, a phenomenon Alfred (1995) refers to as latent nationalism. Alfred's study, focusing on Canadian tribal inhabitants, highlights the activation of latent nationalism as tribes reshape their identities in response to the encroaching Canadian nation-state, which aims to formalize tribal identities and assimilate them into the national framework. The Kanahe Mohawk, in response, reframe their identity within the context of nationalism to assert their political recognition. As our world is a world of nations, tribes must

reconstitute their identity alongside national terms to be able to speak the language of sovereignty and autonomy. As European colonization brought European ideas of sovereignty and nations, the existing tribes in Canada had to reconcile their ideas of culture and people and reformulate them to appear legitimate to the colonizers.

Similar sentiments are echoed by more radical voices in Hong Kong, who perceive the framework of OCTS as a form of colonialism, particularly as the PRC government takes steps to diminish the autonomy of the special administrative region. For these individuals, establishing a separate nation is viewed as the only viable path to safeguarding the sovereignty of the people. This perspective aligns with Billig's argument that the concept of the nation can limit our political imagination by constraining our ability to envision alternative forms of human communities and territorial arrangements (Billig, 2017). This is evident in Hong Kong, where localists and the government are increasingly thinking along national lines, albeit in opposite directions: the government in terms of national integration, and the localists in terms of safeguarding and preserving their identity through possible secession. Some strands of the localist movement in Hong Kong as will be shown in chapters four and five, akin to Kanahe Mohawk nationalism, can be viewed as manifestations of territorial and ethnic nationalism.

In contrast to these visions of the nation that often result from pre-existing ties re-articulated to become national ties, there is another interpretation where nation and nationalism suddenly come into being: the shock theory of nation building that situates nationhood as an event (Brubaker, 1996). This approach is well suited to Hong Kong as social unrest since the 1990s and increasing integration into the Mainland have prompted many in Hong Kong to consider Hong Kong's uniqueness, leading to growing attempts to define Hong Kong's culture, history, and identity to resist the PRC's narrative. From this perspective, nationalism and nation-building emerge in response to significant historical events that jolt the population into reconsidering their own identities and future. For Hong Kong society, pivotal moments include the PRC government crackdown on the Tiananmen protests of 1989, the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, the 2003 article 23 anti-national security protests, 2012 moral and national education protests, the mass protests of the 2014 Umbrella Movement, and the 2019 Anti-Extradition Bill Movement. After such catalyst moments out of which nations arise, those in power of the new nation-state will often create histories to make the nation's arrival appear self-evident. Following pivotal moments that precipitate the emergence of nations, those in authority within the newly formed nation-state frequently construct narratives to depict the nation's inception as inevitable (see also Gellner, 1997, chapter 15).

Regardless of how nations come into existence, nationalism is necessary for a nation. In this regard, Kedourie's (1961) classic vision of nationalism, portraying it as a means of establishing criteria to justify self-governance, the legitimate exercise of state authority, and the right of collective organization, remains pertinent today. Nationalism, as a total ideology, divides the world into unique nations. The modern principle of nationalism states that the world is, or should be, divided into nations. Billig (1995) observes how nationalism has spread worldwide, and many now accept the

nation-state as the 'natural' form of societal organization. However, the organization of human societies into nations has often been enforced through coercive means. The history of nations is marked by violence, a reality often overlooked as nation-states propagate the narrative of their natural and self-evident historical progression.

3.2 Nationalism: Maintaining the Nation

Malešević (2006) and Greenfeld (2005) call nationalism the dominant ideology of modernity as nationalism instils, in its citizens, a shared set of symbols, practices, and stories that find their expression in everyday practices. Nationalism, therefore, is much more than flag-waving or military parades but stands at the heart of the nation and the global political system in use today, which considers the nation as one of the few, if not the only, legitimate route towards societal organization.

The nation is (re)produced through what Billig (1995) terms banal nationalism. Billig introduced this term to argue for the importance of nationalism in long-established nations. At the time of the publication of *Banal Nationalism*, the main concern was with the nationalism of new nations such as former colonies. Much attention was given to the 'other' nationalism in the extreme form, the mass rallies with their jingoistic flavour. He proposes that nationalism is always there, even after the nation's establishment. Billig shows how the government must constantly remind the people that they live in a nation. Instead of focusing on newly independent nations or former colonies, he shows that nationalism is prevalent in all nation-states. Banal nationalism challenges the assumption that long-established nations such as the United States and France (as opposed to for example colonial nations, which have existed only a few decades at most) do not need nationalism, as they have already formed an established national unit. Billig shows how nationalism is still necessary for the nation's reproduction in daily life. This is the flagging of nationalism for Billig. The small, banal things encountered and done in everyday life reproduce our nations.

Billig posits that much social science has 1. projected theories of nationalism, meaning that nationalism is always happening elsewhere, and 2. naturalized theories of nationalism, meaning that nationalism has become so normal that it is no longer an object of inquiry. Continuing the scholarship trend of focusing on everyday nationalism, Brubaker (2004) questions how the "category of nation" works. By positioning the nation as the object of analysis—the nation as a particular category with nationalism as a particular language that evokes the category of nation, Brubaker reframes the debate. The nation becomes active. It is a political claim, a category of practice. By studying nationalism and nations, researchers should look at the practice of nationalism or how nationalism is done. How do nations work as a practical category, a way of thinking, and why do nationalism and nationhood work well for some countries but not others?

Nationalism is needed for the nation to come into being, after which nationalism is required in order to remain a nation and govern itself through its own nation-state ideally. Nationalism encompasses elements from the national (or public) culture that can be considered relatively benign to

aggressive jingoistic nationalism. Nationalism in the nation-state is a continuing exercise in self-legitimization, which is why it includes shared history, myths, and culture. It is also difficult to imagine a genuinely autonomous people without them being a nation. The tension between autonomy and nationhood is evident in regions such as Scotland, Catalonia, Okinawa, Hong Kong, Tibet, and other locales, where our political imagination appears constrained. The ideology of nationalism directs our focus toward the pursuit of national self-determination as a means of ensuring the well-being of the populace. Nationalism is the prevailing ideology of the modern era, imbuing the concept of the nation with an aura of self-evidence.

3.3 Studying the Ideology of Nationalism as a Discourse

So far, I have introduced nationalism as an ideology in instances both macro (the world is divided into nations, which is natural) and micro (the nation is normal and reproduced every day). But what is ideology? Eagleton (1991, p. 1), in his *Ideology: an Introduction*, observes that: “Nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology, and this book will be no exception”. Van Dijk (2006), like Eagleton, notes how the matter of ideology has not been settled as he puts forward his outline of a theory of ideology. Van Dijk classifies ideologies as belief systems that are never private. Ideologies always function within groups. However, they are more than shared beliefs as ideology controls and organizes beliefs and informs practices and attitudes. Ideologies are acquired gradually and are ‘foundational social beliefs of a rather abstract nature’. Van Dijk notes that ideology is not always apparent in everyday life as ideological discourse varies by context and person.

The Encyclopædia Britannica offers a useful general definition as its entry on Ideology states that ideology is a “form of social or political philosophy in which practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones. It is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it.” (Cranston, 2014). There are several crucial characteristics in this definition. Ideology is a social and political philosophy, meaning that it is shared between people. It has practical and theoretical elements, with the theoretical elements often informing the practical. Things done under the banner of an ideology are to pursue a goal that is explained and justified by the ideology in question. As an example, war can be fought for the nation's glory with the ideology of nationalism telling the soldier that they need to defeat the enemy, lest the enemy destroy the nation. Ideology, therefore, is a shared system of ideas that explains its subject (the nation, a cult, the world, society) and moves people to action to change the subject towards the ideal provided by the ideology in question. This action can also work toward conserving the status quo if other ideologies move towards changing in the ‘wrong’ direction.

One approach to understanding ideology is through discourse analysis. Machin and Mayr (2012) position discourse as a representation of the world that highlights a specific ideology while simultaneously marginalizing or obscuring alternative ideologies. Through discourse analysis, Foucault (2010, p. 22) argues that we can test our “ready-made synthesis, those groupings that we

normally accept before any examination.” Discourse analysis provides a method to stop and examine conventionally accepted categories. It is a method to highlight the ideological undercurrents in texts.

Central to the current research is the recognition that discourse analysis can unveil the underlying assumptions and relationships embedded within the media encountered in everyday life. Media, broadly defined to encompass press, commercials, posters, print materials, as well as items like t-shirt prints and graffiti, serves as a platform for communication practices that shape particular truths and constructs. However, challenges arise as individual texts or interviews are often part of a larger discourse and therefore contain gaps. I take inspiration from De Certeau and his seminal work on everyday life, in which he proposes the concept of the recited society (2000). The recited society refers to how states (nations) create and spread stories of the nation, its myths, legends, received history, and cultural characteristics. Citizens internalize these narratives, incorporating them into their own discourse and identities before projecting and circulating them back into the nation. In essence, stories of the nation represent a rearticulation of what Benedict Anderson (1983) termed the "imagined community." Nationalism emerges as a reified discourse that solidifies a fixed, relatively static notion of the nation as an external "object" that can be shared and discussed among people—a discussion sampled in the present study through the examination of four texts and interviews.

My approach towards the study of nationalist ideology is based on van Dijk's (1993; 1998; 2006) work on discourse and ideology. Van Dijk (1998) conceptualizes ideology as a mental and social system of belief that shapes individuals' beliefs and identities, viewing it through the lens of social practices. Similarly, Malešević (2006), drawing on Weber, relays how individuals (actors) are drawn to and perpetuate certain sets of ideas and customs reproduced through everyday life. In this conceptualization, emotional and group appeals work on individuals and values “for their own sake” and often work as a prop-up for a belief system. A belief in liberal values in the United States, Malešević (2006, p. 73) proposes, is linked to “symbolic (and, of course, material) rewards generated within the framework of the American nation”. Ideology is a bedrock that colours our reactions and shapes how individuals and groups consider new information.

Furthermore, Geuss (1981) in *The Idea of Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*, broadly identifies three research contexts for the study of ideology: descriptive (anthropological), pejorative (critical), and positive (Leninist). The present study focuses on ideology in the descriptive and pejorative sense. The aim is to describe and analyse the ideology of selected intellectuals critically.

Familiarity with a particular ideology is unevenly distributed amongst group members. Differences in expertise can lead to contradictions in individual members of the group. At the same time, ideologies themselves are “coherent and complex only at the group level at which they are defined” (1998, p. 314), as ideology is a mental and social system of belief distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups. Van Dijk provides a set of questions to analyse the structure of ideology in groups. These are:

- "Membership: Who are we? Where are we from? What do we look like? Who belongs with us? Who can become a member of our group?"
 - Activities: What do we do? What is expected of us? Why are we here?"
 - Goals: Why do we do this? What do we want to realize?"
 - Values/norms: What are our main values? How do we evaluate ourselves and others? What should (not) be done?"
 - Position and group-relations: What is our social position? Who are our enemies, our opponents? Who are like us, and who are different?"
 - Resources: What are the essential social resources that our group has or needs to have?"
- (1998, p. 69)

As the questions above show, an ideology differs from a worldview through its social component. There is no personal ideology.

Academia has used the terms discourse and ideology to mean similar things. As Malešević (2006) notes, social scientists follow academic trends, and ideology in the 1970s made way for discourse and identity as key concepts. Both terms have been used to define similar things and often overlap, making them hard to differentiate. This echoes DeLuca (1999) who, discussing Laclau and Mouffe's treatment of articulation, shows how the two academics move from ideology to discourse due to the conceptual baggage of the former term. Malešević also discusses this point in a lengthy discussion on ideology and its Marxist origins versus the (post)modern streams of thought as championed by Foucault, who purposively shifted away from using ideology. Similarly, van Dijk criticizes this use of discourse, observing that the post-modern, Foucauldian usage of discourse is in vogue in social science and the humanities as he writes how "cultural fads and fashions, ambiguity, myth and vagueness are often more attractive than conceptual precision" (1998, p. 197).

I take ideology as creating the normal. It is shared in groups and is not individual, but individuals can create ideology through works that forward a particular view of the world. Ideology is characterized by fragmentation and often exhibits contradictions. Researchers must employ multiple viewpoints to triangulate their study of it effectively. Ideology succeeds when it is seen as the given and speaks with "the voice of nature" (Billig, 1995, citing Barthes 1977, p. 47). I follow Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) differentiation between discourse and ideology. They observe that ideology composes a shared worldview based on different mental representations, convictions, attitudes, and evaluations shared between members of a social group. Ideology creates and maintains power relations through discourse. Discourse analysis, then, as Reisigl and Wodak⁵ term it, unpacks and demystifies ideology.

Embracing an agency-oriented approach to ideology, Malešević (2006, p. 74) proposes a set of questions that serve as a useful framework for understanding the various ideologies examined in the case study:

⁵ In their case, Reisigl and Wodak are referring to power imbalances and ideology as hegemony or an ideological construct that dominates and divides (functions as gatekeeper) between members of community. I am not as interested in the question of hegemony but rather the construction of an ideology. However, hegemony does enter the story, especially in the relation between China and Hong Kong.

- What do ideologies offer to individuals?
- How can individual and collective agents be motivated or persuaded to believe in particular value systems?
- Why do individuals subscribe to one and not to another ideology?
- When, why and under which conditions is one articulation of an ideology preferred over another? Why and when are some interpreters ('articulators') more trusted than others?

This list of questions, like van Dijk's set above, offers a concrete approach to studying ideology. Malešević (2006) reminds us that the conceptual distinctions between ideology and discourse not only pertain to the application of these concepts but also shape our perspective on the world. He suggests that if every society or nation adheres to a regime of truth, then denying individuals their agency and choice becomes inevitable. Furthermore, Malešević discusses ideology within the context of the study of nationalism and offers several anchor points towards the ideology of nationalism. The analysis would, according to Malešević, centre on four categories; the economy, politics (system, dominant beliefs, leadership, power distribution, party structure), culture (cultural products and values, beliefs, popular perception of culture), and the nation (who belongs to the nation, degree of nationalist feelings, the relation between the nation and the state). Working with these categories, Malešević argues that the researcher should analyse language and symbols to analyse the type of appeals made by, for example, the government, their intensity, and the relation between the group and the individual. Last, how are counter-ideologies depicted? How are opposing ideologies framed or delegitimized by those in power, and what do they say about the dominant ideology in question? These questions serve as valuable guideposts for the analysis of ideologies of this research.

Positioning nationalism as ideology allows the use of different frameworks (Van Dijk's, Malešević's) that offer concrete sets of questions to study an abstract and ethereal phenomenon. Ideology, however, does not come out of nowhere and is often the result of hard thinking done, by and large, by intellectuals. The vision of intellectuals systematically brings together the people's history and identity to illuminate a nationalist history. The discourse of the intellectuals then formulates the ideological goals, membership, values, and activities drawn up in a nationalist story that serves to justify the becoming nation-state.

3.4 The Role of Intellectuals in the Ideology of Nationalism

What role do intellectuals play in shaping and interacting with ideology, nations, and nationalism? The intellectual has surfaced repeatedly in the discussion so far, prompting a need to elucidate the dynamics between intellectuals and the broader populace. I borrow James's (1996, p.9) "working definition" of the intellectual, which he conceives of as "those persons who work critically with ideas, extending or assessing the given frame of knowledge". James's definition is useful as it encompasses a range of people, be they academics or the authors of popular works. The focus is on intellectuals who create works related to Hong Kong localism and nation building. In the case of Hong Kong

nationalism, authors would be intellectuals as they take the time to create works (extend or assess the given frame of knowledge) to advance a particular course for Hong Kong's destiny.

The role of intellectuals in nations and nationalism has been the source of considerable debate. Anderson (1983), in his *Imagined Communities*, comments on the role of the intelligentsia⁶ in the colonies, educated in colonial schools, and how they could form and translate a concept of nation to the colonial people. James (1996) notes how the works of intellectuals needs to be "carried" through (mass) media which, to come back to Anderson (1983, p. 140), would help "to give shape to a thousand inchoate dreams". Malešević (2006), in a primarily Marxist interpretation of intellectuals, writes that they translate (abstract) forces already present in society into something digestible for the masses: intellectuals act as interpreters for the people. Malešević draws, as do many, on Gramsci's (1992) work on the role of intellectuals in society, particularly his division between traditional and organic intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals represent the ruling class's ideas while organic intellectuals are organically linked to the class they hail from. Organic intellectuals differ from traditional intellectuals as they would be "free floating"; able to free their specific class by raising awareness of their situation and fostering critical consciousness in the working, non-dominant classes.

Do I over-emphasize the attitude and writing of elites in the creation of nations? As Connor (1990, p. 97) proposes:

[...] we have noted numerous instances in which reputable and presumably dispassionate scholars have imputed national consciousness to a people generations and even centuries before the fact. In these cases the error appears to be due to giving undue weight to the recorded statements of a few historical figures. Some years back, Walter Sulzbach chided historians of nationalism for presuming that the utterances of a few members of the political and intellectual élite were necessarily indicative of the ethos of the times.

As Connor highlights, the development of national consciousness is a process that unfolds within the masses. What the masses think, however, has been historically difficult to trace. The lack of representation in historical data leads to an emphasis in academia on elite writing and consciousness, which Connor argues is highly suspect. He further emphasizes that nationhood cuts across other loyalties and binds people together. The existence of serfdom in Poland, Connor submits, shows that nationality was non-existent as there was far from a sense of shared destiny and identity between Polish elites and serfs. Nationality (that is the formation of a national identity through nationalism), Connor argues, is a process, not an event, and processes are difficult to date. This interpretation of nationality (the process of nation formation through nationalism) is at odds with those of Gellner and Kedourie, amongst others, who would classify it as a phenomenon that originates mainly with the elite, which is then spread to the masses. Nevertheless, in the case of Hong Kong, a sentiment that there is a Hong Kong people and identity as separate from Mainland China has been growing steadily over the past decades (Fung, 2004; Kwong, 2016; Kaeding, 2017; Veg, 2017; Centre for

⁶ Anderson uses the term "intelligentsia" as he refers to a social group of mostly elites with specific characteristics within the colonies at the time. I will use the term "intellectuals" as discussed on this page.

Communication and Public Opinion Survey, 2017; Chan & Fung, 2018). This means that for Hong Kong nationalism is a phenomenon present in both the masses as well as a class of activist intellectuals.

Discussing nations without states and the role of intellectuals, Guibernau (2000) offers an excellent case study and overview of the role of intellectuals in burgeoning nations. Guibernau contends that various factors, including a genuine affinity for the nation and material interests, can motivate intellectuals to align with nationalism. This stands in contrast to Kedourie's earlier assertion that intellectuals predominantly embrace nationalism out of self-interest. No matter the motivation, mass support is crucial for a nationalist movement.

Guibernau further posits that examining the nationalism of nations without states necessitates consideration of two key points. Firstly, nationalism typically arises within an already established state. Secondly, the emergence of new elites who construct this emerging nation challenge the preexisting state from which they originated. The emergence of a new state often relies on intellectuals to craft the narrative of the nascent nation, typically in direct opposition to the existing state within whose territory they originate and operate. This "potential elite" (p. 997), as Guibernau calls it, will become the future leaders of the new possible nation. These might be elites dissatisfied with the current situation, excluded from the mainstream national discourse due to their social class or ethnicity, or loyal to the new nation-to-be instead of the ruling nation-state. The desire for intellectuals to create a new nation-state, Guibernau further notes, is not invariably tied to financial or political gain but might stem from a genuine love for the nation and the desire to see it prosper. It could similarly come from a desire to protect one's people when the existing nation-state maltreats them. Both viewpoints are represented in the intellectuals of my case study.

Guibernau (2000) further argues that any community that sees itself as a nation is an automatic threat to the legitimacy of the nation-state. While it is common for multiple communities to live in a nation-state, the label "nation" is rarely used due to the political bearing of the term. According to Guibernau, national minorities will seek their own political rights and autonomy, undermining the existing state. Nations states unify the people and give them a sense of identity by, for example, writing new histories from the perspective of the becoming nation. These "rational arguments", as Guibernau (2000, p. 1001) calls them, will be used in future political discourse to argue for the nation's existence on the domestic and international stage. Next to rational arguments, Guibernau identifies emotional arguments. These draw on the shared suffering and cultural repertoire of the people. Select individuals and works of art are elevated to represent the becoming nation. Memorials and collective memories of suffering are used to foster a sense of collective unity. This symbolic repertoire connects people from different backgrounds as they transcend the individual and bind them to the new nation. Intellectuals in stateless nations play a pivotal role in shaping the national movement and undermining the nationalist projects of other nationalities within the same territory. They act as formulators and agitators of nationalism and draw upon rational and emotional arguments to engage and mobilize the people.

Smith's (1991) concept of the ethnic (discussed in 3.1) is further helpful in looking at the role of intellectuals and nation building. This ethnic can become a nation and conceive itself as an ethnic in the first place through the work done by ethnic intellectuals, which turns a community into a nation by re-evaluating the historical culture. In this vein, Smith (*ibid*, p. 64) identifies the process as a revolution that seeks to "mobilize a formerly passive community into forming a nation around the new vernacular historical culture that it has rediscovered". This process has five interrelated steps:

1. A movement from passive subordination of the community to its active political assertion,
2. A movement to place the community in its homeland, a secure and recognized compact territory,
3. A movement to endow the territorial community with economic unity,
4. A movement to place the people at the centre of concern and to celebrate the masses by re-educating them in national values, memories, and myths,
5. A movement to turn ethnic members into legal 'citizens' by conferring civil, social, and political rights on them. (*ibid*, p. 64-65)

Putting this framework to the test in Hong Kong shows how Hong Kong is a state of exception. Points two, three, and five have already happened to an extent as Hong Kong under OCTS has its own "secure and recognized compact territory" with territorial and economic unity in which its members have a special legal status. The preservation of the territorial homeland community and the advancement of points one and four represent the primary concerns for Hong Kong nationalists. Conversely, from the perspective of the PRC government, as I will demonstrate, the contentious issues lie in points three, four, and five, where Hong Kong, as a Special Administrative Region, remains separate from Mainland China. According to this viewpoint, the populace has not yet been adequately educated in accordance with the nationalist narrative. Moreover, residents of Hong Kong do not possess the same legal rights as citizens of the PRC. These five points, or movements, are partly fuelled by intellectuals who, as Smith observes, engage in the re-education of the populace, emphasizing "national values, memories, and myths" and cultivating an assertive political community.

Intellectuals play a crucial role in fostering nationalist consciousness and furnishing the conceptual framework for burgeoning nationalist mass movements. They effectively displace the past and present, positioning the nation within a new narrative that emphasizes its unique national character through a combination of emotional and rational arguments; arguments which will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters through analysis of the four texts. The past becomes teleological to show that today's nation is a natural development of what has happened before, and the future is changed to include this new past. The new nation comprises and reformulates history, language, art, culture, and famous people so that the newly created people can recognize themselves

in a new national (hi)story. Moreover, the future is reimagined to encompass this newly constructed past. Within this framework, the new nation reshapes and reinterprets history, language, art, culture, and the narratives of prominent figures, allowing the emergent populace to identify themselves within this new national story.

3.5 The Four Key Primary Sources

The following four works form part of the case study (coupled with the interviews):

1. Jiang Shigong [强世功], *China's Hong Kong* [中國香港], 2008,
2. Chin Wan [陳雲], *Hong Kong as a City State* [香港城邦論], 2011,
3. Hong Kong University Student Union, *On Hong Kong as a Nation* [香港民族論], 2014,
4. Yu Jie [余杰], *Hong Kong Independence* [香港獨立], 2020.

These four works hold different visions of Hong Kong. *China's Hong Kong* is from a pro-PRC point of view, while the other three position Hong Kong outside the PRC. *Hong Kong Independence* and possibly *On Hong Kong as a Nation* move towards independence for Hong Kong, separating Hong Kong and China into two distinct and incommensurable nation-states. At the same time, Chin argues that Hong Kong can change the Chinese nation from within, giving Hong Kong a leading role as a reformer. *Hong Kong as a City State* and *On Hong Kong as a Nation* started the discussion around Hong Kong identity and nationalism. Contributors and authors of these works formed nativist political parties in Hong Kong and have been part of a growing civil society since the 2014 Umbrella Movement calling for autonomy or even independence (Wu, 2016). After the 2020 NSL, only *China's Hong Kong* is easy to find in most bookstores. While not forbidden outright, the other three books would be politically sensitive and liable to persecution as they discuss topics illegal under the NSL.

Although all four books exhibit academic writing styles to some extent, they each possess distinct characteristics. *China's Hong Kong* adopts a predominantly academic analysis approach. Likewise, the essays featured in *On Hong Kong as a Nation* maintain an academic tone, albeit with a noticeable activist inclination, drawing extensively on theories of nationalism. *Hong Kong as a City State* occupies a middle ground between analysis and praxis, leveraging previous scholarly work while employing a more relaxed writing style. This book often poses rhetorical questions to the reader and urges them to act. *Hong Kong Independence* stands out as the most explicit among the four books, employing dramatic comparisons, bold statements, and impassioned calls to action. *Hong Kong Independence* offers little in the way of references, as it is a radical work by an author known for writing fiery critiques and polemic arguments.

Some of these authors fulfil intellectuals' role in the early development of nationalism by providing the budding, possible nation with systematic discussion on, for example, the people, their history, and their culture (James, 1996; Malešević, 2006). These works do not exist in isolation and are part of a larger publishing trend in Hong Kong, hosting pro-China and Hong Kong nationalist and localist viewpoints. Books such as by Tsui Sing-yan [徐承恩], one of the authors of HKUSU who

would go on to publish localist history works such as *Searching for the Homeland* [思索家邦] (2019) and *Melancholy Homeland* [鬱躁的家邦] (2020), Leung's (2020) *Hong Kong for beginners* [香港第一類], Lee's (2020) *Hong Kong's Awakening* [香港覺醒], and even fiction books such as by the House of Hong Kong Literature's (2020) *My Hong Kong My Streets* [我香港我街道] or Dong Kai Cheung's [董啟章] (1996) *Atlas: Archaeology of an Imaginary City* [地圖集], all form part of an overall trend of awareness of identity. I have selected the four works as the pillars of this research due to their widespread discussion and recognition and as each of the four offers a distinct vision of Hong Kong's past, present, and future.

The first, published in 2008, is *China's Hong Kong*, written by Jiang Shigong, a well-known legal scholar in Mainland China who has worked for the PRC's Liaison Office in Hong Kong. It is an academic monograph published by Oxford China, with Springer publishing the English version. His experience as a legal and political scholar in China, combined with his work in the Liaison Office in Hong Kong, makes him familiar with Hong Kong statecraft's theoretical and practical matters. Chan (2012), in a discussion of his work, describes him as belonging to something like China's official think tank whose work can serve as a white paper on the government of the PRC's logic towards Hong Kong and China. Jiang adheres to the official narrative of Hong Kong, and while he might sometimes criticize earlier policy decisions regarding Hong Kong, he will not question core principles. Criticism is especially apparent in what Jiang sees as Hong Kong's post-handover government's failure to capture the Hong Kong people's support in returning their hearts to China as 'the motherland'. His discussion of the eras of Mao Zedong (1949-1976) and Deng Xiaoping (1978-1989) and their respective Hong Kong policies is full of praise for their "genius" and appears beyond reproach. Jiang's work is valuable as he takes the reader through his thinking process beyond Hong Kong's OCTS as a political construction – a construction that, in Jiang's view, is a historical continuation of Chinese politics mimicking the Qing dynasty's ruling structure of the outer territories as well as the PRC's government approach towards Tibet today. His work is also valuable as he discusses the idea of China as a nation-state, drawing on Mao's writing, where he shows how the idea of the nation-state as a Western construct might not necessarily apply to China. Although published by academic publishers, *China's Hong Kong* book is mostly an exercise in PRC political orthodoxy, legitimizing the current state of affairs by drawing on historical examples of CCP reign in China. It draws little on academic theories, and referencing is scant. As Jiang states in an interview appendix of the book, he aimed to write a narrative from the perspective of China. Jiang is frequently cited and discussed in local academia.

The second of the four books, *Hong Kong as a City State* (2011), is by Hong Kong-based author Chin Wan, and made him known as the godfather of localism in Hong Kong. Its publication kickstarted the debate about localism in Hong Kong. Chin published a sequel to his book in 2014, called *Hong Kong as a City State II* [城邦論 II]. Both were published by Enrich Culture [天窗文化集團], an independent publisher in Hong Kong specializing in (semi) academic works. *Hong Kong as a City State* uses references but is also an activist work full of polemic language. Chin is a prolific

writer and enjoys considerable readership. Several of my interviewees referred to *Hong Kong Has a Culture* [香港有文化], a book on Hong Kong culture published by Chin in 2008, as instrumental in shaping their awareness of Hong Kong culture as a distinct entity. Chin's writing, informal on Facebook, is esoteric, and I have heard him described as crazy or strange in many informal conversations with Hong Kong people familiar with him. Regardless of his personality, his writing has stimulated the discussion about localism and political alternatives in Hong Kong and has enjoyed widespread readership and debates. Chin founded a political party called Hong Kong Resurgence⁷ [香港復興會] for the 2016 election, with little success.

The third of the four books is the work by the Hong Kong University Student Union (referred to further as HKUSU) *On Hong Kong as a Nation*, a compilation of essays published in February 2014 as a special student union issue titled "Hong Kong Nation Determines Its Destiny!" [香港民族命運自決]. The February special issue was later expanded and re-released during the Umbrella Movement as *On Hong Kong as a Nation*, which aimed to kickstart the discussion about nationhood in Hong Kong. As HKUSU (2014, p. 12) writes in the opening:

We hope every Hong Konger who reads this book will be able to share a strong vision where Hong Kongers will, finally, one day be able to enjoy real freedom and, with their heads held high, choose their own destiny.⁸

The essays compiled by HKUSU are written in an academic style, underscoring their nature as primarily student essays. They serve as a reflection of the burgeoning sentiment advocating a distinct Hong Kong identity separate from the Mainland, which crystallizes into budding nationalism. *On Hong Kong as a Nation* includes contributions from non-Hong Kongers and non-students, such as Wu Rwei-Ren [吳叡人], an established Taiwanese political scientist. The publication fostered widespread debate in Hong Kong as it was one of the first systematic public discussions and analyses of the possibility of a Hong Kong nation. Hong Kong nationalism does not automatically lead towards independence but can be part of an overall awareness of Hong Kong as distinct from Mainland China. Maintaining Hong Kong under OCTS might fulfil this ideal of Hong Kong as a separate, but distinct part of the PRC. According to *On Hong Kong as a Nation*, Hong Kong society could continue as an autonomous unit after 2047 when OCTS officially ends, or through other political solutions that would keep Hong Kong as a distinct but integrated part of China, along the lines of Quebec or Scotland. Evocative language is evident throughout *On Hong Kong as a Nation*, which mixes academic-style essays with sentences that show the underlying sentiment and resentment towards a CCP-ruled China. In this regard, it resembles *China's Hong Kong*, with its mixture of academic analysis and blanket statements reiterating the authors' particular dogmas.

The three works examined thus far were authored before the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 anti-extradition bill movement. In the aftermath of these events, attitudes have significantly hardened among many individuals. The implementation of the 2020 NSL has led numerous pro-

⁷ This is their original English name.

⁸ 但願每位港人讀畢此書後，都能分享到一份強烈的願景終有一天香港人能享受真正的自由，昂首選擇自己的命運。

democracy activists and localists to proclaim the demise of OCTS. This sentiment of "OCTS is dead", and sometimes even "Hong Kong is dead" is pervasive among my interviewees, a topic that will be extensively explored in chapters four and five. It encapsulates the widespread belief that conventional political solutions are no longer viable, necessitating the exploration of more radical alternatives. These more radical solutions can come in the form of political change in Hong Kong, for example, democratic reforms or Hong Kong independence, or political change in Mainland China. The *China Daily* (Lau, 2021) even published an opinion refuting the narrative of the death of OCTS idea, citing "Western misunderstandings".

The fourth work, *Hong Kong Independence* by Yu Jie, was released during the 2019 Anti-Extradition Bill Movement. Comprising a collection of essays spanning from 2018 to 2019, this work is characterized by its argumentative and polemical style, akin to the discourse often found in activist magazines and newspapers. *Hong Kong Independence* enjoyed and underwent multiple print runs following its initial publication. Yu's book was published by the Lordway Publishing Company [主流出版社], a publishing house known for publishing critical works about China, including other books by Yu such as the provocatively titled *I Don't Want to Be Chinese in This Life* [今生不做中國人]. Yu describes himself as one of the first Chinese intellectuals to bring up Hong Kong's independence. He is a fierce critic of reformers in Hong Kong who advocate the idea of a greater China and of Hong Kong as a catalyst for political reform in the Mainland. One example is the annual Tiananmen memorial service⁹ in Hong Kong, one of the main slogans of which was to establish democracy in China and consider Hong Kong as tied to the Mainland. According to Yu, this changed in 2019 when it was recognized that there were irreconcilable differences between China and Hong Kong, and only independence was a solution. Yu describes himself as a "rightist like Liu Xiaobo and V. S. Naipaul who supports an English-speaking civilization and universal values" (p. 21).¹⁰ Supporting Hong Kong to Yu means supporting its independence.

Yu was born in the PRC and gained notoriety after publishing works critical of the Chinese government as well as his friendship and support with Liu Xiaobo¹¹ [刘晓波], another prominent critic and dissident. He soon became famous for his fierce rhetoric and has lived in the United States since 2012 after detention and alleged torture in Mainland China for his critical works. Yu supports right-wing politics in the United States as he perceives they will be harder against the CCP. He follows the tradition of right-wing politics along the lines of Reagan, Thatcher, and Trump, all of whom he cites and supports. While his brand of politics is extreme, he enjoys a wide readership. Yu, like Chin, identifies as a Christian and frequently uses biblical imagery in his work, comparing the CCP to the Devil. As he (2016) writes in an essay on Christianity in China;

⁹ At least until it was effectively banned by the NSL.

¹⁰ 我是右派和獨派，跟劉曉波和奈保爾一樣擁抱以英語文明為主體的「普世價值」

¹¹ This kinship further extends to their ideas as many of the viewpoints of Yu regarding Chinese nationalism and Hong Kong's position within China are seen in chapters five and six of *A Single Blade and Toxic Sword: Critique on Contemporary Chinese Nationalism* [單刃毒劍：中國當代民族主義批判] published in 2006.

Christianity has transformed how I see myself as a dissident. (...) When I became a Christian, I learned to recognize myself as a sinner. In doing so, I developed a sensitivity to sin that helps me recognize evil and injustice when I see them. As I point out the tyranny of the Communist regime, I reflect on and judge myself.

Yu stands far removed from Hong Kong, writing in the United States, taking a position far removed from Jiang's but also from that of the other advocates for an autonomous Hong Kong. Despite Yu's constant disavowal of Chinese (patriarchal) culture, he adopts patriarchal gender rhetoric in his work. This rhetoric seems to come from his Conservative Christian-US Republican leanings. Both Yu and Jiang can be considered outsiders to Hong Kong but stand on opposite sides, enjoying wide readership in their respective camps.

We would do well to remember that ‘these are not isolated theories of intellectuals in their study rooms’, to paraphrase Ren (p. 78) in HKUSU, but are ‘products of the emerging national.’¹² In other words, these are not abstract ideas and theories created by aloof academics but are alive and active and form part of an ongoing struggle that has already changed Hong Kong. *On Hong Kong as a Nation* was written in 2013 and discussed Chin's *Hong Kong as a City State*. It has been almost a decade since then, and support and discussion about Hong Kong nationalism have only increased, culminating in the 2019 movement and the subsequent crackdown following the NSL. This is part of a broader movement in Hong Kong termed localism.

3.6 Localism and Local Identity in Hong Kong

Works by intellectuals in Hong Kong that would promote a distinct Hong Kong identity or even nationalism generally fall under localism. Localism in Hong Kong is a widely recognized term and an actively practiced concept. It is an active form of identity, and there are localist books, shops, or products that proclaim themselves as local. Localism and Hong Kong nationalism can overlap but do not have to. Even pro-PRC politicians have used localism to support local pride, as one could, in this interpretation of localism, be a proud Hong Konger at the same time as a patriotic citizen of the PRC (Kaeding, 2017). Localism is more than just China (the other) versus Hong Kong (the local). There are degrees of localism, such as district localism, buying and supporting local goods and farms or purchasing ‘Made in Hong Kong’ products over foreign ones. The above-mentioned localist history book *Melancholy Homeland* by Tsui describes itself as a “Localist¹³ Perspective on Hong Kong's origin” [本土觀點的香港源流史]. Localism has grown as a concept and category of analysis after the handover. It can range from a simple pride in Hong Kong culture or food to considering Hong Kong (people, culture, the rule of law) superior and even including elements of racism and jingoism.

¹² 他們並非少數知識精英在書齋空想出來的孤立論述，而是嘗試對上述香港住民日益增強之香港政治認同進行理論化的產物。換言之，他們是根植於廣泛民眾意識之中的新興民族主義論述。

¹³ 本土 has sometimes been translated as nativist but both local and the majority of academic work use the term “local” or “localism” which is what I adhere to in the present study for consistency.

In a general overview of the concept of localism, Davoudi and Ali (2015) note five common aspects of localist movements worldwide which are:

1. Economic: buying local goods, supporting local shops and industry,
2. Political: decentralization of power, local decision making with local stakeholders,
3. Social: this often involves protecting a community and its ways of life,
4. Spatial: What is the space of the local? In England, local might refer to the space of the village or neighbourhood, while in Hong Kong, being a localist might include the entirety of Hong Kong, which is on a different scale,
5. Environmental: localism is often tied to self-sufficient and sustainable ways of living.

Localism in Hong Kong is a broad spectrum encompassing all five points of localism. While the different strands of localism are often interconnected, it should not be taken for granted that an environmental localist would naturally align themselves with a political one. Applying these five points to Hong Kong shows the diversity of Hong Kong's localism being more than just a political force but encompassing appreciation of local foods and culture to pride in the local language.

1. It is economic in that buying local goods and supporting pro-Hong Kong shops (usually defined as pro-democracy or yellow) is stimulated,
2. It is political as there were political and civil organizations (most disbanded following the 2020 NSL) calling for more autonomy in Hong Kong and for the government to put Hong Kong first, another form is Hong Kong nationalism,
3. It is social as many organizations operate on a grassroots level and organize events in local communities, for example community markets, as well as promote Hong Kong heritage,
4. It is spatial as Hong Kong localism operates throughout Hong Kong as the overall framework but is articulated in different districts, each with its own spaces and communities,
5. Whether or not localism in Hong Kong is environmental is a tenuous point. Localism has some environmental aspects, but buying local vegetables and supporting recycling are not the focus. Rather, buying local is more of a political claim than an environmental one.

Environmental concerns have tied into localism, for example, with protests around new building projects in nature reserves. Still, environmentalism is more incidental than part of the core of localism in Hong Kong.

Localism is often juxtaposed with the (perceived) culture and social mores of Mainland China, and radical localism could be patriotic if Hong Kong were a recognized nation-state. In more radical instances of localism, individuals in Hong Kong are perceived as constituting a distinct ethnicity. However, localism in Hong Kong seldom extends to sub-levels within the territory, such as endorsing products exclusively from specific local neighbourhoods over those made elsewhere in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, references to sub-divisions within Hong Kong occasionally arise, and sub-regions of the territory are often conflated with the broader act of supporting local shops and products throughout Hong Kong.

Lo Wing Sang (2014) identifies three historical waves of Hong Kong localism. These waves roughly overlap with the development of the Hong Kong identity discussed in the previous chapter. The three waves are:

1. The baby boomer generation growing up in the 1960 to 1980.

The first wave of localist awareness follows a surge in migration and refugees, mainly from Mainland China after the Second World War to Hong Kong. These refugees were concerned with livelihood, proper housing, and jobs. The more prominent localist wave came from the children of these migrants, who, in the 1960s and 1970s, grew up in a Hong Kong they called home and formed a pop culture scene that dominated the region. Hong Kong transformed from a place of refuge into a home. Later demands, such as the movement to recognize Chinese as one of the official languages of the colony, show the progression from livelihood demands to higher-level expectations of the government.

2. The generation coming of age in the mid-1980s and 1990s, following the handover agreement and the Tiananmen Massacre.

With the looming handover, discussions in Hong Kong about what it means to be a Hong Konger instead of a citizen of China grew. The Tiananmen protests and aftermath shocked Hong Kong, as the majority supported the movement. Political figures across the spectrum and the media criticized the PRC government's handling of the protests.¹⁴ Reflections on what it means to be a Hong Konger became more pressing. During the handover negotiations, the Hong Kong Observers, a local activist group, highlighted in a comprehensive report based on interviews with approximately a thousand Hong Kongers that "Hong Kongers have been stereotyped as rude, noise, lacking in civic awareness, obsessed with money, anxious to emigrate to the west and shortsighted in their general outlook", nevertheless they continue to state that the findings of the report "show that the aspirations of this community is similar to those of people in developing countries—Hong Kongers want a future. And money is not the most important thing in life. Nor do all the people want to leave, even if they had the chance. (...) the younger, better educated generation are far more critical, more demanding" (as cited in Rafferty, 1989, p. 394). This shift of a younger generation being more critical and demanding seems to continue into the third wave of localism.

3. The Post-handover generation, as the 1980s and 1990s generation became adults.

Today's discussion of localism in Hong Kong is usually concerned with the third wave. Following the handover, a new generation of Hong Kongers fought for their version of Hong Kong, growing up in the aftermath of the 'golden age of Hong Kong' with previous generations often criticized for not being interested in politics. Conflict defines the post-handover generation who grew up under a new type of government. The Star Ferry pier preservation movement (Cheung, 2003; Ku, 2012) and the 2003 Article 23 national security protests (Kaeding, 2017; Veg, 2017) are often regarded as the foundational movements of an emerging form of localism.

¹⁴ Some of which have following the 2020 security law cast doubt on the death toll of the Tiananmen protest movement and retracted their statements, supporting the official government narrative (Cheng, 2021)

While protests around heritage have been peaceful, economic, and political localism has turned violent several times. The protests against the proposed amendments to the Article 23 National Security Law in 2003 and the anti-national education law in 2008, later incorporated indirectly into the 2020 NSL, were preludes to the larger-scale movements witnessed in 2014 and 2019 (Ip, 2020; W. Lam & Cooper, 2017). Economic localism, on the other hand, focuses on issues such as the growing economic reliance on the Mainland and the marginalization of local traders by Mainland tourists and cross-border traders. Tensions reached a peak during the 2016 Mong Kok unrest, marking one of the earliest outspoken instances of civil unrest and violence since the handover (Kaeding, 2017; Veg, 2017; Ip, 2020). The riots, sparked by issues surrounding parallel traders following the 2014 Umbrella Movement, underscore the escalating tensions in Hong Kong, culminating in the 2019 Anti-extradition Bill movement and subsequent violence and crackdown. These protests have led to different forms of explicit nationalist sentiment as I have shown elsewhere (Ismangil, 2020, 2024; Ismangil & Schneider, 2023).

I would position the 2014 Umbrella Movement as the start of the fourth wave of localism.

4. Post-2014 Umbrella Movement, localism becomes political.

This fourth wave is centred around two major social movements. The 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 Anti-Extradition bill movement. The 2014 Umbrella Movement was a pro-democracy civil disobedience campaign in Hong Kong, characterized by mass sit-ins and protests demanding universal suffrage. The 2019 Anti-Extradition Bill Movement was a series of protests against a proposed bill allowing extradition to Mainland China, seen as a threat to the region's autonomy and civil liberties. The 2019 movement quickly evolved into a broader pro-democracy and anti-government campaign, marked by massive demonstrations, clashes with police, and demands for greater democratic freedoms and autonomy from Beijing. Despite the bill's eventual withdrawal, the protests continued, fuelled by grievances over police brutality, erosion of civil liberties, and a broader push for genuine democratic reforms in Hong Kong.

This wave must be seen in the context of the 1997 handover, where the PRC took formal control of the territory of Hong Kong. Ten years after the handover, Lo & Pang (2007) write how China “turned out to be not exactly as vicious a colonizer as the stereotypes set in the western media had made it out to be”. Hong Kong, as an SAR and state under OCTS, has maintained its exceptional status, and the people show optimism towards China as they head out into the new millennium, or so they claim. Lo & Pang (ibid, p. 352) write that

By no means is Hong Kong’s cry for universal suffrage meant to be a ‘revolution’ (i.e., the change of the existing coordinates) for the self-interest driven Hong Kong majority, though the world governed by globalized capitalist economy is more than ever open to the indeterminacy of any revolutionary moment. Decolonization or democratization is by definition a foreign body to Hong Kongers, who find it simultaneously attractive and repelling. They would never claim it to be their own.

More than a decade after Lo & Pang's article, it has become clear that theirs was an optimistic assessment, underestimating the speed at which China, according to many, would indeed move to be the "vicious colonizer" that Lo & Pang describe. At the same time, their evaluation of the Hong Kong people further shows that the notion of Hong Kong as a pragmatic, "self-interest driven" majority discussed in the previous chapter is alive and well. Protests define localism after the 1997 handover—protests such as those relating to changes in the Hong Kong cityscape. One prominent example is the demolition of a Star Ferry Pier in 2003, which triggered protests and discussions about Hong Kong's heritage. These protests further fostered a debate against the government's developmentalist attitude (i.e. a neoliberal adherence to development over other concerns) and the supposed 'renewal' of older areas of Hong Kong.

However, to reach the magnitude of the social movements seen in 2014 and 2019, the people of Hong Kong, characterized by their loose connection to Hong Kong as their home under the refugee mentality as discussed in the previous chapter, first had to overcome the stereotype that Hong Kongers cared little for politics. The notion of an apolitical Hong Kong was already evident in the 1960s. As early as 1967, the year of the unrest, Hughes writes how the people of Hong Kong are not harbouring "suicidal pretences of 'democracy' or independence" (p. 9). Similarly, Rafferty, two decades later, writes in *City on the Rocks* (1989, p. 36) that "To the distress of local 'white liberals' (...) there is no articulate political sentiment and only negligible popular interest in a wider franchise or expanded powers for the Urban Council, far less in suicidal demands for 'self-government'". Rafferty's observation that potential democratic or independent aspirations were depicted as suicidal underscores the prevailing rhetoric in colonial Hong Kong, which heavily favoured maintaining the status quo. The fear of potential invasion by the PRC loomed large, and neutrality was a key tenet of the colonial government's policy at the time. Moving towards democracy or independence would threaten the commercial interests and anger the PRC, which might endanger British rule (Faure, 1997; Tsang, 1995).

Hong Kong as apolitical was put into academic terms in the 1980s with Lau's framework of Utilitarianistic Familism. Kam (2020) notes, following Lau's framework, that the typical Hong Konger places self and family interests over social and collective ideals, which would counteract (collective) political demands.¹⁵ However, the notion of what political means is limited, considering politics only in terms of self-determination or democratization of the colony. These are the politics of local white liberals, to paraphrase Rafferty (1989). Does it make sense to judge the politics of a mostly migrant refugee population that recently fled and migrated from Mainland China for thinking of politics in these terms? Considering politics on a smaller scale during this period, for example, in terms of housing and necessities of life, or gaining recognition of the local language in politics, a major item for student activism at the end of the 1960s, then the people of Hong Kong have been political all along. Even in the colony's early days, Hong Kong was host to regular strikes and activism. For example, the 1920s dockworker strikes were instigated by patriotic sentiment amidst the

¹⁵ It could be argued that this might be the case for the majority of people as caring for the family is often a collective affair.

founding of Republican China (Tsang, 1997). In fact, being a refugee, as many who came to Hong Kong were, can certainly be seen as a political act.

Schneider's differentiation between patriotism and nationalism is useful here in distinguishing the types of politics of Hong Kong's localists. Comparing the Umbrella Movement to Chinese nationalism, he makes a distinction between patriotism (applicable to both) and nationalism, which is a form of patriotism that "additionally makes claims as to where political autonomy should be chiefly located" (2018, p. 49). This is an important distinction as the argument that Hong Kong people were patriotic, even during the early localist movements in the 1970s, is accepted—taking patriotism to mean attachment to the homeland. However, the emergence of nationalism, defined as patriotism coupled with political demands for sovereignty over their designated territory, represents a more recent development.

The myth of an apolitical Hong Kong society was dispelled soon after the handover. The post-handover period saw the foundation of many new civil society and political organizations dominated by the younger generations, especially in the wake of the Umbrella Movement. Organizations and groups with provocative names (all English names from the original) such as Hong Kong First [香港人 優先]; the Hong Kong National Party [香港民族黨]; the Hong Kong Autonomy Movement [香港自治運動]; Hong Kong Indigenous Front [本土民主前線]; Demosisto [香港眾志] amongst many other, smaller organizations some of which amount to little more than online discussion rooms. All these and more were disbanded or banned, some already before the 2020 NSL, but most soon after its enactment. I will not discuss these organizations as much as others have done (e.g., Kam, 2020; Kwong, 2016). However, these organizations and their ideology are discussed indirectly under the general banner of localism, which forms the background of much of my case study. From 2014 onwards, localism in Hong Kong has grown broader as a movement but simultaneously has fostered political groups that seek to maintain Hong Kong's autonomy and, in some cases, even fight for independence from China.

The 2020 NSL and the following years reverted most of the successes of civil movements since the handover. National Education has come in the guise of national security, and the developmentalist attitude of the Hong Kong government continues to draw the ire of many Hong Kongers with its stance towards heritage. The political aspirations of more radical forms of localism, centred on asserting or safeguarding autonomy, have faltered in the aftermath of the 2019 protests, as any semblance of political opposition has been systematically removed. This frustrated sentiment of failure is captured by two protest slogans from 2019: "It was you who taught us peaceful protesting does not work", which appeared, in variations, in English, and "Hong Kong independence, the only way out" [香港獨立唯一出路]. These slogans frame the development of many localists in Hong Kong who consider the post-handover social movements as a series of defeats and failures. Discussion with China is no longer viable for many, and the idea of autonomy in OCTS is seen as a farce by the more hardliner localists. Kong (2020, p. 116) captures this sentiment at the time through a

conversation with a radical protester who compared the Hong Kong predicament to annihilation and even genocide:

I've studied the [American] Indians," he said. "they're like us: outnumbered, outgunned, maybe even at risk of annihilation. "Annihilation?! That's a little exaggerated, isn't it" [said Kong - ed]. "Not in the sense that that regime wants to do away with any sort of substantial separate HK identity. The US government never really intended to exterminate all the Indians either, just the ones that got in the way."

The 2019 protests were perceived by many young Hong Kongers as a matter of life and death, framing Hong Kong's struggle as existential. It is against this backdrop that the four texts must be considered for textual analysis.