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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BUSH: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming today. I think we are in for a really good program.

My name is Richard Bush, I'm the Chen-Fu and Cecilia Yen Koo Chair in Taiwan Studies here, but I also do Hong Kong. And Hong Kong has been in the news a lot. We, today, have probably the best person from Hong Kong to talk to us about that.

Christine Loh has done many things in her career. Her career sort of parallels the arc of Hong Kong's political development. She is a Lawyer, a Scholar; she's been a Legislator and a Government Official. She's written a really good book. For anyone who's interested in the history of Hong Kong, and the history of the Chinese Communist Party, it's called *Underground Front*, and it's really terrific.

What we're going to do is that I am going to pose some questions for Christine, and we will have a conversation, but with plenty of time for you, we will open it up for your questions and concerns. So, shall we start?

MS. LOH: Yes, thank you.

MR. BUSH: First of all, in order to remind our audience of how Hong Kong got to where it is today, November 21<sup>st</sup>, could you please tick off what you think are the key events that happened since the extradition bill was proposed?

MS. LOH: Maybe I can put it in phases. You know, I think like a good crisis there are phases, and you can detect time where you can pull back, and you can see that there are phases where things kind of got out of hand. So, the early phase was when they proposed the extradition bill. That was in February, between February and you could say May, this was the period of time where there were already early warnings and rumbling of discontent.

This was a time when the government proposed the amendment to the legislation, and lots of people were kind of sending signals to the government that there were going to be problems. And if we were to revisit this area the extradition -- Hong Kong has relatively few extradition arrangements. It doesn't have one with the Mainland, doesn't have one with Taiwan.

This lack of extradition arrangements had been something that the government had been

targeting going back to 1997. This was something that they wanted to do. And a few years ago -- I was just saying to Richard -- I can't quite remember the name of this organization, an international organization I think based out of Europe, I think based out of Paris, had criticized Hong Kong for not having extradition arrangements.

So with the alleged murder of a young lady in Taiwan by her boyfriend from Hong Kong, this was seen as a possible moment to cure -- you know, to fill the gap. But at the time people were raising all kinds of concerns, so there were lots of rumblings of all kinds of questions. The other thing that the government didn't do during that time was to spend enough time to bring the legal community along.

So actually between March and May there were small demonstrations including one by several hundred lawyers in Hong Kong. So, I think for the rest of Hong Kong, if you can't carry the legal community with you, if your most distinguished lawyers are out there protesting, I think for the rest of the community the conclusion is, well, there must be many problems.

So, I think that's kind of phase one, right. Phase one was rumbling of discontent.

Then phase two was in June and July. In June you will remember there were very large demonstrations, but even there, there was a moment where the government could have pulled back. You will remember there were hundreds and thousands of people coming out, and some said as many as a million, people coming out to say they objected to the legislation.

What happened then was instead of saying, well, you know, this is perhaps a signal for me to just pause, but in fact the decision of the government was, we're going to plow ahead in any case. And this, you can imagine, upset a lot of people. Even if so many people came out the government was not willing to temporize.

So this led to an even larger demonstration, and in fact this is very important because it was from there, you know, so many people coming out, that Hong Kong people thought, it doesn't matter what we do, the government is just deaf to our concerns. So again this was a very important marker of how people felt.

Then of course in July, particularly the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, this was the annual anniversary of the Transfer of Sovereignty, and there was a demonstration. And also some protesters went and vandalized the Legislative Council. So this was a marker of the start of much more aggressive kinds of

demonstration. So that was June and July.

And by the time you got to August and September some new things happened. There was a sense, again arising from Hong Kong people feeling it didn't matter what they said things were not going to happen, the protesters decided that it was important to do things that, we are going to make both Hong Kong and China listen.

So you might remember, for two days the airport was shut down, and you probably know that Hong Kong is one of the biggest airports in the world in terms of activity, so for it to shut down for two days was an international issue.

The other thing that happened then was the protesters wanted to internationalize the issue, so they know that the G20 Meeting was about to happen, and before that the G7 Meeting was about to happen. So they raised a lot of money online, cloud funding and so on, and they used the money to take out ads in all the major newspapers of the world, in multiple languages to plead the Hong Kong cause.

So, this had a reaction from the Mainland China because Mainland China did not want the Hong Kong issue to be discussed at these international meetings, so there had to be a flurry of diplomatic activities. So that was August and September.

So, again the 1<sup>st</sup> of October was another marker, because that was the 70th Anniversary of the People's Republic of China. We all knew that China would have a big party, and in a way Hong Kong, the protesters felt that this was also a bit of their moment. And so they kind of got what they wanted, which was there was the national celebration, but the news coming from Hong Kong was like a poke in the eye.

So that was the 1<sup>st</sup> of October. But between the 1<sup>st</sup> of October and today, what happened was the protests got increasingly violent, and just last weekend when I was in Hong Kong, you've probably seen all the scenes on television, one of the universities -- in fact two of the Universities -- the Chinese University of Hong Kong, followed then by the Polytechnic University, but mostly at Polytechnic University it really became a war zone, and you could see on scenes that actually it became a bomb factory, and they were throwing things at the police, the police were, you know, it was really a war zone. Something that Hong Kong had never seen.

So I'd say those are the phases. And today the question is, are we now in a new phase? Is this where exhaustion might be happening? Is this a turnaround phase? Because of course the Mainland China, Beijing, during the Fourth Plenum, a very important political marker in China, again Hong Kong was a trigger for some of the decisions that they took.

MR. BUSH: Thank you very much. You've mentioned a few mistakes that the Hong Kong SAR Government made. Were there mistakes that the Central Government in Beijing made? That the Hong Kong elite made? And that the protesters made?

MS. LOH: I would say from the protesters point of view, because it's supposed to be leaderless it lacked accountability. So, you would have thought that maybe much earlier they could have -- they could have declared victory, and they could have been more strategic to look for opportunity to negotiate.

Now, of course their demands have shifted, they wanted their withdrawal of the bill, which has happened, they said they didn't want what they were doing to be classified as a riot, well it's too late, there are clearly riotous activities. They wanted the protesters not to be prosecuted. Well, it's too late again.

And then, you know, the other demand had to do with electoral reform. Now, obviously you can't just say you want electoral reform, there has to be a process. So I think they should have declared victory, and they should have found some way of opening a discussion. So, maybe we leave that a little later, because that obviously is a very important issue.

So I think this notion that they're leaderless, that they're unaccountable, is a problem. And I think even for a lot of people who are sympathetic to the key cause of extradition and electoral reform, it is hard to say you support the vandalism and the violence. So there is this tension there between ordinary Hong Kong people and the protesters.

The other thing about the protesters is many of them are extraordinarily young, kids, 12, 13, 14, 15, have been arrested. So, this is, I think, something quite difficult for Hong Kong people, and you can imagine every young person that is caught there is -- there are their parents, their families, so, you know, it represents actually a large watch of people in Hong Kong who have never been in that situation before.

You never quite imagine that you have to deal with all of that. So, I think the -- what you're also seeing in Hong Kong is the protesters, by doing what they've done, they've caused enormous polarization in Hong Kong. And you've probably heard that Hong Kong has never felt so divided, and it's not just society at large, it's actually in your family.

So, families have -- families apparently are not talking to each other, because mom, and dad, and kids might feel differently about things, grandparents might feel differently about things. And I've been told by many people that, you know, they'll have social media, WhatsApp, or whatever, usually they'll have a family WhatsApp, and it's usually about where to go for lunch on Sunday.

But they've kind of taken people off, or people have taken themselves off, because when they get together they're going to talk about what's happening. So not only families but also colleagues, because the protesters have also called for strikes, so in a company there are different people who want to go on strike, people who don't go and strike. So that's another cause of division, and you can imagine also at the universities.

MR. BUSH: Yes.

MS. LOH: The universities have had to absorb this young energy but, you know, there are other students there who feel they're also dragged into this. And one of their concerns, is they feel the university actually cannot protect them. And then of course at work, at universities, there are also students from the Mainland, so this tension between the Hong Kong protesting students, and those from the Mainland that's another source of tension.

So, in terms of others, we could say the political elites, the political establishment, I think their mistake is, they haven't united to come and exert the kind of leadership much earlier. Well, they still haven't as of today, and I'd like to think that going forward whether they're blue or yellow, blue pro-establishment, and yellow being pro-democracy, when you have such a crisis happening in your community, I'd like to think they could get together and work across the aisles.

And this is in any case, what they have to do going forward, but we're not seeing that as yet.

As for Beijing, whether Beijing has made any mistakes. I think what Beijing has tried to articulate, it's quite understandable. They're saying; can you stop this? And they also want to say,

actually, why can't you in Hong Kong, ever think about one country? This has been a message they've been trying to say for several years, and going back to the Umbrella Movement at the time.

MR. BUSH: Yes.

MS. LOH: And during that time they published a whitepaper where they said, again, don't forget, it's one country, two systems, in Hong Kong you're always talking about two systems, but how about one country? So, I think this conversation between Hong Kong and the Mainland on one country still needs to take place.

MR. BUSH: Okay. Thank you very much for that inventory. You'll notice I've worn my yellow and blue tie. (Laughter) I would -- I'd like to follow on from a point that you just made to ask, given the current climate of mutual mistrust, or universal mistrust and given, it seems, the conflicting goals of the various parties involved, what can and should be done to restore some version of the *status quo ante*? Or is that impossible at this point?

MS. LOH: Well, let's talk about the conflicting goals you're talking about, right.

MR. BUSH: Yes.

MS. LOH: So, for the Hong Kong Government and for Beijing, I mean of course their goal is, can you stop and what they're saying is, please stop, and when you stop we can sit down and talk about some of the things you're not happy about. But please stop first.

MR. BUSH: Yes.

MS. LOH: Then you have the protesters, the protesters are saying, we cannot stop because if we stop, but actually there's nothing else we know how to do. So they have not stopped. So that whilst the conflict is over, well what we want is democracy, and you're not hearing us, and therefore we must continue. I think the protesters do know that it isn't necessarily going to be them that will deal with whatever it is that society is unhappy about, including democracy, but how we get there to start those conversations that's a huge vacuum right here.

And as I said earlier on, I don't know to be honest, if we are talking about the political establishment, both yellow and blue, what role that they see themselves playing. Now, of course on the 24<sup>th</sup>, which is just around the corner, we are going to have District Council elections. So these are, they're electing over 400 people, it's all direct election, you could say this is the most democratic election

in Hong Kong, that's about to happen, and what will be the result.

How will that help to perhaps provide an occasion for us to go forward or not? Now, the people who are going to be elected -- or actually, the people who are going to vote, how will they exercise their vote? And this has never happened before. I mean in the past you might say, well, I clearly like them better than them. But this time will Hong Kong people think about the exercise of their vote? What impact might it have on our trajectory after so much violence? So this we don't know.

The presumption is that there'll be a big win for a lot of younger people, a big win for the more yellow candidates. The second thing is, okay, so we'll have some new political personnel in Hong Kong. What about the ones in the Legislative Council? So far of course since they came back from the summer recess, they haven't managed to do too much, because there's just again in a lot of antics and shouting and screaming. So, what role are they going to adopt going forward?

MR. BUSH: On LegCo itself, do you think it, at this point after the developments of the last several years that LegCo is institutionally capable of addressing this issue, and if a compromise is proposed, of ratifying it?

MS. LOH: Well, I think we're a long way from a compromise --

MR. BUSH: Understood, understood.

MS. LOH: -- because we haven't started that yet, but I think this is where it's important how Hong Kong people, the rest of us, how do we see this moment? That's why I think how they're going to vote might be indicative of something. Secondly is, how do we give a message to the political establishment that we want -- we want effective dialogues on what kind of subjects. It isn't all just about democracy because I think democracy is a way for us to elect some leaders, but what do we want the leaders to focus on?

Now, that's been one subject that, you know, in the heat of protest people say well, you know, how about housing, and social equity, and so on. Yes, I think those are real issues for Hong Kong, but of course in this particular discussion that's not what we're discussing yet. But if we were going to sit down and talk about policy and politics in Hong Kong, no doubt these issues will come up.

So, under what kind of arrangements are we going to have these discussions? We, actually, we don't need democracy yet to sit down and have those discussions. We should be having



them now, what we do need our political class to be willing to work across the aisles.

I mean in a way there is a moment here, so that the political class can show themselves to be able to exercise the kind of leadership for the people to achieve a bunch of policies that people have not been happy about for a long time.

MR. BUSH: Yeah. One thing that puzzles me about this series of protests, is recalling the Umbrella Movement, I recall that after a certain point the public got pretty fed up with having the Admiralty area, and Causeway Bay, and Nathan Road occupied. And that turned the tide. It seems this time a lot of the public remains supportive of what the protesters are doing. What's different this time?

MS. LOH: I think a number of things have happened. I mean first of all is, there is greater politicization of Hong Kong people, the other thing that has happened is in 2014 the Umbrella Movement was a call for democracy, for electoral reform, actually there was an opportunity for electoral reform.

MR. BUSH: There was.

MS. LOH: China put something on the table that was actually an advancement to what we have, and I wish we did it. So I think that temporized the feelings in Hong Kong with the political establishment, and I think even the younger folks who were protesting at the time, because they realize that they perhaps should not have rejected the plan out of hand.

But anyway, it was off the table, so I think that probably was a calming factor at the time. But today the -- it's the bigger politicization and the deeper frustration that nevertheless we seem not to be able to get back into discussion about Hong Kong, and I also feel that Hong Kong hasn't really -- I think there's a realization that Hong Kong hasn't reconciled itself fully that it is a part of China and what it means, and also in terms of the changes in China.

China's rise and its sense that it's being constrained, there's the trade conflict, and other conflicts arising particularly with the United States. I think all these factors are playing into how Hong Kong feels. And it with all this pressure, what is the future for them?

MR. BUSH: Okay. Hong Kong has an important economic niche and that is as an international financial centre, and that role I think is still very important to China. Do you think that niche is in jeopardy because of the social instability and political instability that we've seen over the last six

months?

MS. LOH: I'd like to make a few points here.

MR. BUSH: Please.

MS. LOH: The first thing is there's a lot of talk about whether Beijing is so fed up with Hong Kong that -- you know, that it's going to make Shanghai and Shenzhen give them, you know, more benefits so that it could develop more quickly so that, you know, Hong Kong would be some backwater.

Actually I don't buy that. I think if I was sitting in Beijing and, you know, this is nevertheless a part of your own country, and yes it's difficult, but you want to show that Hong Kong can be successful too. And whatever facility, whatever benefits that Hong Kong can provide, well why would you want it for as long as possible?

So the fact that you want Shenzhen, and Shanghai, and other parts of China to do well, the fact that China has said it does want to open up more economically, I don't see that it necessarily means there is an intention, and active intention to destroy Hong Kong. So, as I said I don't I don't buy that narrative.

Secondly is, Hong Kong is still the -- it's still the one place in China -- I mean, in fact, it's one country with two economic systems. This is very useful to China, and it is still the case because money flows freely, it is where -- it is where money business is done. Hong Kong is the major offshore renminbi center, that's all incredibly important to China. So Hong Kong still plays that role.

So, I think in the foreseeable future, I don't see that changing, and of course our concern is the money business, nevertheless, requires good governance, and the rule of law. And the discussion therefore is, how will China continue to give confidence to the international community that they can rely on the rule of law, in Hong Kong?

MR. BUSH: Turning back to the protests, and the role of one particular institution, that's the police. And there's been a demand on the part of the protesters to hold old Hong Kong Police accountable for how they cope with the protests. Secretary of State Pompeo has actually echoed the call for an independent commission of inquiry. What do you think about that? Is that a good suggestion as a way of sort of building trust within the community?

MS. LOH: I think Hong Kong people and the police, we need to also rebuild our relations.

I mean of course law and order is an issue for the protesters, and I think for a large number of people in Hong Kong. Our concern has been whether in -- you know, in this great heat of the moment, the police, in carrying out their law and order activities, that they have made mistakes, that they have perhaps abused their powers here and there.

There so many clips that you can find on social media about, you know, both sides of the story, that this is very important for there to be dialogue and healing. You cannot -- well, it was just a few months ago when relations with the police was good, so the rapid descent from what was regarded as good relations to where we are today, again, this is like a new experience for us.

The police, unfortunately, have had to absorb the anger and the frustration of Hong Kong and the protesters because the government has not been able to provide the political solution that is necessary. The police themselves I think are upset that they're out there every day, they're exhausted, but nevertheless the solution isn't really for them to provide, but the government has not been able to do that.

So, that is again actually such a key tension in Hong Kong. If Hong Kong people are mad, one of the things they're really mad with is that they don't see the government itself as playing a deciding role when, you know, things are breaking down. So, I think the -- and Hong Kong not quite sure how this will go, whether the government will suddenly turn a leaf and behave very differently, this is the big question mark.

MR. BUSH: Yes. The Central Government has very recently challenged the judgment of Hong Kong courts on the issue of face masks. Do you think this represents a serious challenge to Hong Kong's independent judiciary and rule of law? Should we be worried about this?

MS. LOH: This is a very live and current discussion right now. The government used emergency regulations to pass the law to prohibit the wearing of face masks. Now, I think the court judgment didn't say that is unconstitutional to pass a law but it was -- to prohibit the wearing of face masks, it had to do with, if you're using the emergency regulations but you have not declared an emergency, this is an unusual situation, right?

MR. BUSH: Yes.

MS. LOH: So, I think -- so that so the point centers on that point.

MR. BUSH: I see. Mm-hmm.

MS. LOH: Now, the issue in the future is Hong Kong might very well in the future pass laws on the wearing of face masks.

MR. BUSH: Yes.

MS. LOH: But on this particular occasion the High Court has ruled that that it's unconstitutional. The question now -- the government has also asked for the law to be kept in place until it could be appealed, so one of the concerns is, can you do that? And secondly is, what will Beijing do? If Beijing is unhappy about that will they use its basic law interpretation powers to effectively, you know, put such a law in place?

And therefore what would it mean for the rule of law in Hong Kong? And the statement made that only the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress can make a final decision on the constitutionality of the basic law, again this is the big question mark, is that really so? So, if that was so how would it diminish the powers of the courts in Hong Kong? So, it is a very live discussion, it's just happened in the last two days.

MR. BUSH: Thank you very much. I think I've asked enough questions. You've been very patient to wait for your opportunity to ask questions. So we're going to start now.

The rules are, once I recognized you, identify yourself and your affiliation, and do pose your -- whatever you're going to say in the form of a question, and keep it short, because I'm sure there will be a lot of people.

So, I saw this gentleman with a nice white beard right here, first. Wait for the mic, that's the other thing, we do have floor mics, so right in here, Adrian.

MR. RUSHFORD: Hi. I'm Greg Rushford. Thanks for the nice words about the white beard. I'm just an old man.

Christine, your points on the need for the political establishment to get together and forge a deal they could take to Beijing are well-intended, well taken. What about the U.S. Congress' passing legislation, the Hong Kong Democracy and Human Rights Act? Is that helpful from your point of view, or irrelevant, or good, or bad, or whatever?

MS. LOH: This is also greatly discussed in Hong Kong. I believe just in the last 24 hours

the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong has issued a statement to say something like, well, this is not very helpful, because it could affect the interest of American business. So, I think in Hong Kong itself, it's kind of symbolic for some of the protest movement that they have some kind of help, if we could call it that, from the U.S.

Now, of course I think this is seen very poorly in Beijing. I mean my own sense is, if we go back to the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act which was passed much earlier on, that was seen as a confidence booster for Hong Kong because this was the U.S. Congress saying that they regard Hong Kong as a separate entity from China, and that it would deal with Hong Kong in the way that it would deal with Hong Kong like before.

So, I think from that point of view it was regarded as helpful. Now today, 20-something years after 1997, the current iteration is seen to be not very helpful.

MR. BUSH: It happens that when the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act was considered in the House of Representatives in 1992, I did the staff work on it because I was working as a staff person, and without getting into a legal analysis, I think that the current bill does less than Hong Kong protesters think it does, and more than Beijing thinks it does. So, there's a danger for some misunderstanding and overreaction.

The gentleman back there, okay, and then I'll go to you next.

MR. WINTERS: Thank you. Steve Winters, Independent Consultant. I'd like to ask you to comment on some things I've heard from other experts on Hong Kong, but basically the financial -- the Chief Financial Officer of Hong Kong had a delegation, we're here in D.C. a few years ago, and had a big banquet. But basically he was soliciting, you know, corporations to come over there.

But he said, during his talk he said, our young people in Hong Kong they aren't as enthusiastic as we were of just going and becoming bankers for the rest of their lives at these financial centers. So he said, they have other aspirations, and we need to meet those.

Now, then more recently I asked some other experts on Hong Kong about this, and they said it's even worse than that because of the fact that even if the young people in Hong Kong, with the proper education, go into the bank they won't move up in the bank because so many of the banks now are branches of Mainland Chinese banks.

And the fact of the matter is, whether we want to admit it or not, you have to have connections, family connections on the Mainland in order to move up in the bank. And then there were some anecdotal examples of people from Hong Kong who did this. So, I don't know what the solution to a problem like that would be, maybe affirmative action for Hong Kong people and the banking industry -- (laughter) -- but it -- and so this is a type of thing that's leading to some of the frustration perhaps.

MS. LOH: Well, I'm not sure -- I mean young people today they don't all want to work in finance. I think that's maybe even the case here.

MR. BUSH: It speaks well of them. (Laughter)

MS. LOH: Secondly is, I've always thought that if you want to distinguish yourself it might be useful to have some connections, but if you're good you're good. And let me take this argument a bit wider. In Hong Kong, what I talk about in Hong Kong is we have to continue to be excellent in whatever it is that we do

You know, whether it's running hospitals, or running museums, or banking, whatever it is that we do, because Hong Kong is a small place, it has traditionally punched way about its weight, but it is a small place, and as a part of China, and with China improving her capability by leaps and bounds, there's only one thing that people will respect you for in China, is that you're good. Good meaning that you're excellent in what you do.

So that is the path to respect. So, I think for Hong Kong people we have to be trilingual, and we can be, right. Actually for a Hong Kong person dealing with Mandarin, dealing with Cantonese, speaking English, it's all possible, so, we should be very good communicators in China, that means we have to speak much better Putonghua, we have to create our place in the sun, and we need to not be afraid of that.

You know, so if you're working for a Mainland Chinese companies, and many more people around the world will be dealing with Mainland Chinese companies, private, or state-owned, you know, whatever, and that's not necessarily a negative thing.

And I think Hong Kong young people see it as negative because they haven't quite kind of reconciled with Hong Kong being a part of China and what, you know, they have certain fears about China, but how are we going to reconcile that? We have a particular need to in Hong Kong, because

we're Chinese nationals.

MR. BUSH: Okay. The gentlemen here, and then I'm going to do Dave Brown, then come over here, right here. Wait for the mic, it's coming, there you go.

MR. MACRAE: Chris Macrae, Macrae Foundation. So, taking this idea of hubs of excellence of Hong Kong, because I mean if you look at the map of the world Hong Kong and Singapore have really kept the world going an awful lot of the time, in technology, and all sorts of things. What are the positive channels that can be used to start a debate on positive futures for Hong Kong? I mean, are the new television channels, or any of the universities actually, a center for positive discussion? How do you see that?

MS. LOH: I think we've got to get out of the fix that we're in right now, because it's -- I think we need to go after the possibilities, I think if we were -- if it was eight months ago, and we're not in the problem that we're in, it would be much easier to talk about those areas where Hong Kong can sort of get into, and there are many areas obviously.

But I think today we need to clean out this particular period to enable our young people and our older people to see that there is a positive future as a part of China. So, I think that's really what it is. So, just now I talk about Hong Kong people mustn't think that Beijing wants to take things away from Hong Kong.

The discussion that we're having right now is very difficult because people have the impression that Beijing doesn't really want one country, two systems, it's all going towards one country one system, and since we have another date with destiny in 2047, people are asking, you know, I guess if you're 18 years old you're saying, well, I'm saying in Hong Kong and, you know, I look down the road what will it be like at the height of my career.

So, I think the 2047 issue, what Hong Kong will become, it's also very important to start some conversation about, and I do appreciate that if you're sitting on the Mainland, and if you're Shenzhen, right, you're saying, well, what could I do in 204-7?

So I think it's a very interesting discussion for China as a whole. And you've probably already heard about that in southern China we now have an area called the Greater Bay Area which includes Guangdong, and of course Shenzhen, and Macao. How can we reenvision this area and have

some interesting discussions.

Because I think if your mindset, it's all about Beijing snuffing us out and not -- you know, not participating in reimagining what it could be, then the future is very dark if we believe that Hong Kong can exert itself, assert itself, be itself within one country and talk about what we would like to see, then what that could be a much brighter future.

MR. BUSH: Okay. David Brown, right here. Where's the mic, the mic is coming?

MR. BROWN: Thank you. David Brown, I'm affiliated with SAIS. You have said that the administration isn't playing its role to resolve these differences, and that the political elite is not playing its role very effectively. What's the role of the civil society leaders? And particularly there was a meeting this past weekend in Hong Kong envisaged by something called the Hong Kong Forward Alliance. Can you explain what that was? What they hope to accomplish, and whether that's an example of constructive activity?

MS. LOH: Oh. Well, thank you for asking. I'm one of the organizers of the Forward Alliance. What we wanted to do was to not talk about the issues of contention, because it seems like people are not yet ready to talk about that. We wanted to talk about what are some of the skills and processes we could -- we could learn and use those skills to bring people together?

So you could say, or somebody said to me at the conference, said, oh, this is Hong Kong first Peace conference. Well, I guess so. What we tried to do is to invite people from outside Hong Kong, because the kind of conflict that we're having no matter how much we're enmeshed in it ourselves, other people have had conflict too, and so other societies have actually had much worse conflict.

So how did they get out of the fix? What skills do they need? So, I think it's important -- an important time in Hong Kong to talk about how we can equip ourselves to work across the aisles, to work through division so that we can, together, talk about what it is that we want to build.

So, at the Forward Alliance we listened to stories from South Africa, from Northern Ireland, from Myanmar, from the Philippines, from Malaysia, about how they went along to deal with conflict. And the guests that we had they were really practitioners; they were part of those processes. So, it was very, very interesting listening to them, we had about 500 -- we had 500 people who came to the conference and at the height we had maybe 200 people watching live streaming.



People felt better afterwards which was good, because I think when people realized that there are tools and skills that they could use, and in fact people thought that they could go home and use those skills within their families, with their colleagues, how do you be more empathetic towards others? How can you truly learn to listen? I mean these are things that we could all be practicing.

Now, it's much more difficult to say, okay, how will this take place at a political level? But I think what we were able to see is, it is possible to say to the protesters there are alternatives to violence, and this is where I think government and others, including civil society is important.

How can we generate the discussion to show that there are alternatives? And the alternatives have to be dialogue about the other things that we want. So the government has an important role, other groups in Hong Kong. I mean, you know, if the government cannot do it now, it doesn't mean other people cannot start these dialogues.

What do we do about our universities? Of course we need to talk to the people who run the universities. What do they think would be useful to have in the coming months to bring the student body back together again?

And I just want to say, because I think many of you are connected to universities, and the students in Hong Kong's universities, actually they love their universities they get on very well with their professors, so this particular period of rupture is very painful for both sides.

And when you see their universities destroyed, being like a war zone, I think it's very hurtful to the students as well. So, there's a tremendous amount of healing to be done, and I personally believe that however difficult the circumstances, talking to each other, listening and talking to each other are the fundamental elements of restarting relations and rebuilding trust.

MR. BUSH: Thank you. Bob Keatley? Right here.

MR. KEATLEY: Thank you. I'd like to ask about the role of Carrie Lam. To what degree is she responsible for where we are now? Or to what degree is she lacking authority or power to do anything and even if she wanted to? Either because of Beijing, or the more conservative business establishment in Hong Kong which really doesn't want the kind of political change you've been talking about?

MS. LOH: Perhaps I can talk about our Chief Executive, Mrs. Carrie Lam, kind of from

two perspectives. One is what she has told us about the difficulty of her role, and actually she was at a private meeting but somebody recorded what she said, and put it out there. So, we kind of -- we kind of know what she said. The *mea culpa* was very deep and very genuine.

She talked about not being in total control of decisions, and I guess one is -- people are assuming that total control that she doesn't have, must be referring to Beijing. And I think up until now people have felt that Mrs. Lam has not played the kind of leadership role that they would like their leader to be able to play.

Now, the second thing I want to talk about is how difficult it is to be the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, precisely because you've got to talk to your own people in a kind of way that Hong Kong people is receptive to. People in Hong Kong have felt that our leaders, Mrs. Lam, and other Chief Executives perhaps talk to them in a more imperious way than they need to sometimes.

And I think Hong Kong people would like their leaders to speak to them in a way that they could associate with. So I think that's one kind of demeanor and language, right, talk to your own people. Secondly is, we clearly need a Chief Executive who can communicate well to Beijing, because they need to have deep discussions, convincing discussions about Hong Kong.

Now, if people in Hong Kong feel that their Chief Executive cannot do that then, you know, they're going to say, well, you're not -- you're not able to express our concerns adequately to Beijing. Because I think people in Hong Kong -- I mean, they do understand Beijing has a role on many things.

Now thirdly is, we need also leaders who can communicate internationally, so you need kind of three demeanors, right, three sets of disposition, three ways of communicating that makes an effective leader.

And this is kind of like what we don't have right now. So, maybe if you're up in Beijing you might conclude, well, Hong Kong people can't rule Hong Kong. Now, this would be the worst conclusion that Beijing could have about Hong Kong, because we want them to accept that Hong Kong people, that we can operate the Hong Kong system.

Secondly is, if we don't have good reception internationally, if Hong Kong does not communicate in good times and bad times about ourselves, then people are going to see that Hong Kong

is less important. I mean many people have already kind of concluded with Shenzhen, and Shanghai, and China rising, surely Hong Kong is not so important.

So, I think to play our part, we need to be very good communicators, internationally. And then we need -- as I said when we talk to our own people, to be able to carry them, both in substance and in style; a very difficult job.

MR. BUSH: On the Beijing side I would offer the view that the structure of decision-making within china doesn't make it any easier for a leader like Mrs. Lam, because information doesn't necessarily get all the way to the top. There may be the attitude that the Central Government knows best. So, I sympathize with her having to deal in that sort of political environment.

MS. LOH: Right. I mean, I sympathize with whomever is the Chief Executive. Right?

MR. BUSH: Yes.

MS. LOH: Because if we go back to 1997 we hardly know who to call. I mean Hong Kong never had much knowledge of the Chinese political system, and you don't have the personal relationships that other politicians in Mainland China have like, you know, who to call, or can you call?

But nevertheless we did -- and even today we have an exalted position, somehow, that it's really up to Hong Kong to learn how to use those chips that you have, you have to learn to play them very well, and of course we need to spend time to be really good at speaking Chinese.

MR. BUSH: Yes. Right here, Andrew, up here in the front?

MR. MERTHA: Thanks very much. Andrew Mertha, China Program, SAIS. Thank you for your insightful comments. I wanted to ask about the protesters. At one point you had said that it was leaderless, and that made it unaccountable. It's leaderless but at all -- it might have been unaccountable in the way in which you mean, but it was also, it was not unresponsive. And, you know, getting back to the example -- you know, about the airport, after it became clear that that was a black eye, or once they were able to demonstrate that they could close the airport if they wanted to, so they didn't have to do it, you know, for more than two days.

That just struck me as really just a unique type of protest organization and leadership that has now essentially devolved into what is more of -- for lack of a better word -- a mob.

And I guess my question is, from your perspective; at what point did that change from this

really 21st Century, social-media-led organization to kind of what it is now? And do you think that it's possible to go back and kind of put the genie back in the bottle? Or is that -- has that ship already sailed and what that means in terms of ways forward?

MS. LOH: I'm not sure I can answer your question to any degree of great satisfaction, but what I find very interesting is, yes, protesters are responsive, but it's not necessarily continually responsive. And then, if you don't like the word accountable, then what about the word responsible -- question mark, right, question mark?

But what I find interesting, and there is something I think for the world to ponder. And that's, Hong Kong may be the first place to kind of really get organized using social media, and Hong Kong is a reasonably wealthy society, and people are very set savvy, so you see the iteration of how the protests are going.

Now, because of social media the copycat, in terms of who is doing what and I can do it too, actually probably started with Occupy Wall Street. So, the Occupy Movement then created occupy movement in other places, including a very small one at the time in Hong Kong. And today what's happening in Hong Kong it's clearly inspiring people in the Catalan, and other places.

Now, if we can imagine, is this a new kind of risk that the police around the world will have to think about, it's very interesting, in a way, that social media and people's kind of creativity, people's energy and creativity can produce the (inaudible) in Hong Kong.

And also the other thing that is endearing about the protest is the tremendous amount of artistic creativity. I know, you know, for us in Hong Kong, and this is our town, right, so the protesters, my, God, these are our children. You're at one time surprised by them, you know, that they're willing to go so far.

And, yes, we do have sympathies with them because they're sharing with us some deep concern that they have, but somehow, well, you can't be creating weapons and, you know, throwing Molotov cocktails in -- I mean you can go that far, and yet we're now in this moment where, now we're about punishment also for our children.

And yet, you know, you have someone far away who is rioting in some other city in the world, and they're saying we support Hong Kong. You know, oh yes, you know, stopping the airport for

two days that was so great, we're doing it in Barcelona.

I mean, you know, all these things are kind of happening at the same time. So, I just want to kind of say that this might be a new phenomenon for the world.

MR. BUSH: There's a gentleman way in the back, yes, waving your hand. Stand up so we can see you in hear you.

QUESTIONER: Sure. Thank you. This is a Chenying Chi. (Inaudible) with a Christine after 30 years, the last time was in Princeton 30 years ago. But I have a question to challenge Christine today. There are over 10,000 ranks of chemical weapons in (inaudible) in Hong Kong that caused the (inaudible) contamination that may affect the sperm cells of the next few generations. Please give your comment on this disastrous phenomenon.

MS. LOH: Well, I won't talk about the sperms, but maybe something more immediate. And I have to admit it's not something I've looked into yet, but it is an issue that is being discussed because there has been so much tear gas, and the tear gas is obviously fired in a particular area, and if you were in that area for any period of time what might it do to the health of the people affected? Now, I can't answer that question, but I suspect those issues will also be coming up in Hong Kong.

MR. BUSH: Okay. The gentlemen over there, yes, in the blue sweater or blue shirt, yes? It's coming there -- right there.

MR. SMITH: My name is Lee Smith, I'm a Freelance Writer. What is it the protesters, what would they change? You mentioned in passing, housing was an issue. What are the other big issues that they want democracy as a vehicle to effect change?

MS. LOH: I think the protesters today have just said they want several things, right. They wanted the bill to be withdrawn, which has, as I said some of the things that they say they want, they've kind of gone by the cell by date. So, for example, they wanted -- they want their activities not to be called riot but, you know, it clearly has been, they wanted people not to be prosecuted, so okay, they are being prosecuted, so you can't do anything about that.

But the one that is out there for discussion, the one that they're pushing hard right now is democracy. They want electoral reform so -- now there hasn't been I think an opportunity to really sit down in Hong Kong society to really say, right, we want electoral reform, is it that is an end in itself? So if

you have that everybody is happy? Or, do we also want to talk about but what kind of policies do we want to fix in Hong Kong?

Now, I think any kind of electoral reform will take some years. Even if Beijing says okay, you know, let's -- and they have sort of said it, they said we're going to go back to talk about electoral reforms, we need to go back to what we put on the table into 2015.

So, what I'm saying is, it'll take some years to discuss that, and pass laws, and so on. But I don't think we have to wait too long, if we wanted to talk about other social problems that we have. So, obviously housing, social equity, these are key issues that Hong Kong people have been already talking about for quite some years. I'd like to think that actually we can start talking about those now.

MR. BUSH: The gentleman right here, yes, right there.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I'm Shadung Fahm. I'm an independent scholar on American presidency. So, my question is that, compared the compare to the Congress, the American President was quite reluctant to engage in the Hong Kong issues, especially he's -- have a trade war with China. So, my question to our Christine Loh is that, apart from their legislation to have a domestic -- U.S. law to sanction on China, what is the -- do you think, what should be an optimal way for the U.S. to engage in the Hong Kong issue and to prevent the escalation of the protest? Thank you.

MS. LOH: Well, I'd like to think that after so much has happened -- well, I think if we look at, again, the different phases, in the early phase reports about what's happening in Hong Kong was very much about the protesters, and I think it's really in the later phase that people could see that there has been a lot of destruction, that the U.S. and other governments sounded a bit more measured.

I'd like to think that if foreign governments and foreign bodies are going to talk about Hong Kong, that maybe they'd like to restrain themselves, and address the issues as they are. And I'd like them to consider that essentially it's going to be for the people of Hong Kong to solve our problems on the ground, and it will be for the people of Hong Kong to work with the Mainland, to work with Beijing to achieve whatever it is that we would like to achieve for the future of Hong Kong.

MR. BUSH: The woman in the very back, standing in the door, right there, yes.

QUESTIONER: Sorry. So, I'm currently a senior student, Mainland student studying at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. And we have two campuses, so I study in Mainland Campus,

which was in Shenzhen. And our Hong Kong campus is right now actually a war zone. So it's kind of young people who are kind of in -- I mean it's the Mainland young people kind of involved in the situation.

I feel very -- like I got a very complex, (inaudible) feeling, because I saw a lot of concerns which are now raising in the debates, like here now. Because for me I felt like this is not that political problem, but it's a cultural problem, or the social problem.

And I mean, the reason why I feel so sad right now, because I felt like I -- I mean I appreciate those people who want to change, but the problem is, I think they don't raise the right question, or raise the right problems that's we can solve. And even if they raise the questions, they don't - like kind of provide the right solution for that.

MR. BUSH: Could you please ask a question, sorry.

QUESTIONER: Okay, sorry. I mean, I just want to kind of, it's like expressing with my opinion, is that okay?

MR. BUSH: Sure.

QUESTIONER: Okay. So, I felt like if they provide a solution which is called democracy, they didn't even find the right person to solve the problem. So this is one concern I'm having right now as a Mainland student. And the second one is --

MR. BUSH: Other people have questions.

QUESTIONER: Okay, sorry.

MR. BUSH: I think we get the point. Okay. Do you want to respond to that?

MS. LOH: Okay. I get the point.

MR. BUSH: Okay. The person over there, and then we'll come here; so, the gentleman in the blue shirt.

QUESTIONER: Hi. My name is Jonathan Mulkey. I'm really grateful for Brookings, for hosting this. I'm a Private Tutor. My question is, how is Taiwan looking at the situation in Hong Kong? The cost for democracy and what does that mean with the upcoming Taiwan elections? What's that relationship like between Beijing, Taiwan and Hong Kong?

MS. LOH: I'm going to ask Richard to answer this. He's the Taiwan expert.

MR. BUSH: If you'd ask me around January this year if Tsai Ing-wen had any chance of

being reelected, I would have honestly have had to say, no. And now she does. And she has a good chance, and I think a lot of it is due to what has happened in Hong Kong, and how Taiwan people view the one country, two systems formula as a result of that.

And this only confirms, even more strongly, their opposition to that formula, and confirms their support for politicians, who will speak out against that. China has put Hong Kong, and Macao, and Taiwan, into the same "one country, two systems" box. Taiwan people feel that that's unjust, that their situation is actually quite different from the Colonial situation that Hong Kong and Macao are in. But the basic answer is this, what's happened only strengthens Taiwan opposition to one country, two systems.

Mike? Oh, I'm sorry. Can I take her first? I promised her. Please, she's in the same business as you are.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I'm Siyong (phonetic), a Reporter from *The Voice of America*. I have two questions. First is, what do you think is Beijing's strategy? The reason why I'm asking, there are people talking about the Beijing, just want to have the protester fight it out, and when they lose the public support, they're going to tighten it up, and try to even maybe crack down.

And the second question is, I know you wrote a book about the underground forces of CCP in Hong Kong. So, what kind of role they are playing during this turbulent period? Thank you.

MS. LOH: I think your first question is, you know, China's overall strategy. It kind of worked last time with 2014, after a while it petered -- it petered out. This time, you know, we talked earlier on about the conditions being different from last time, and it hasn't petered out yet. But as I said, one of the things that I do want to emphasize is, the frustration of the vast majority of Hong Kong people, including people in the blue camp, is that somehow they don't see the Hong Kong administration itself able to assert itself to help solve the problem. So there's therefore a deep-seated frustration with that.

Now, from Beijing's point of view, I think they knew that the world was kind of watching, if there was going to be a kind of Tiananmen Square 2, right. This is what -- this is what people were writing about. And I think they're probably right to say, well, we don't really need to do that.

So what they did was to show that, well, the PLA is there, and they're ready for, you know, all kinds of things. Now, that's a -- so there then, and I think that was the only message they wanted to give, because if you think that Hong Kong itself can still last and, you know, maybe get to the



next stage, which is exhaustion, then that would be much better for Beijing.

So I would imagine that if you're sitting up in Beijing, they probably have option A, B and C, but the most optimal one is not to really have to do very much. And recently I think they did something that people didn't quite expect, which is they had the PLA soldiers who were stationed in Hong Kong, march out to go and help with cleanup, because Hong Kong people, I mean this is the other side, right, in the last few days there has been community cleanup of the mess in the streets more extensive, more people than ever.

So that is also a sign of -- or is it a sign, right? So I think if you're sitting up in Beijing, or you're a Hong Kong Government, is that now a signal that there are enough people who don't want the violence anymore? Even though they might still have sympathy for the protest, I think now if we can disassociate the two, because the deeper frustrations still have to be dealt with.

MR. BUSH: Mike, and then I'll come here.

MR. MOSETTIG: Michael Mosettig, *PBS Online NewsHour*. Thank you for coming. Good to see you again. You said two things, one is that we need to communicate with Beijing, but you said earlier we don't know whom to talk to. That strikes as a situation a real danger of miscommunication.

And does anybody in Hong Kong really know what's on the President's mind? We know he's used the word terrorist, when they've used the word terrorist to apply to people in Western China they've now set up reeducation camps for a couple of hundred thousand people. Do you need to appoint an ambassador to Beijing, or what, to learn what's on -- because they ultimately have control?

MS. LOH: When I said that Hong Kong people don't know who to talk to, I wasn't referring to Mrs. Lam doesn't know who to talk to, because after 22 years she does have channels to the right people, or the important people to talk to. And she recently saw President Xi, so they had a conversation, and you can, I think, see from the senior leaders in China that -- I mean, that shouldn't come as a surprise.

They're saying the priority is to stop this. I mean, you know, it's the obvious thing to say. In terms of whether, then you can go on to dialogue, the bit that I'm most interested in, yes the current phase will come to some kind of resolution. But what are you offering so that they will stop?

I think this is the point. We want to say violence is not the only option, but you need to

give Hong Kong that option and make people believe and want to participate in that next phase. So one of the things that President Xi said, that I think it's interesting, is apart from saying he supports the government, he also said he supports the government in terms of its dialogue with the people.

One of the things that Mrs. Lam did, although at the time it was not very well received, was she had a rather stilted public session with several hundred people who registered to go. Now, for President Xi to say that, have more dialogue I'd like to read that positively.

Now, that dialogue, apart from Hong Kong itself having to have dialogue, eventually that dialogue does need to include the Mainland component. Now, in Hong Kong whenever we talked about Mainland issues, in the past it's always been very formal, you know, because there is some law, or there's some particular issue.

But we know that in Hong Kong today, a part of the nervousness, or the unease, is what in Hong Kong people call Mainlandization, and this is a sense that the Mainland is so big that we would just be overwhelmed.

How can we turn this sense of unease for Hong Kong people to have conversations, to have dialogue with people from the Mainland, where we can have the kind of discussions that we need to have for us to see a path forward?

I'll give you some examples. There are many Mainland students studying in Hong Kong, and I know a bunch of them, actually many of them tell me they really enjoyed their time in Hong Kong, and they see that those aspects of Hong Kong that they like. They do feel that sometimes it's difficult to develop relationships with some of the local students.

So I think this is an area which can be very human. This is not the political stuff, but if Hong Kong people, if we can create, and I'm saying this is where also the non-government sector can create just more dialog for us to listen to each other and talk, I think that would be a very good start. And eventually that that that circle of dialogue could lead to the more political dialogue.

Is it possible? I mean maybe I'm naïve. I don't think there's any point for us to go to Beijing and -- officially and talk about, you're wrong about Hong Kong, you know, you shouldn't have these policies, you should have other policies. Their policies about national security, let's accept them for what they are, right.

They're concerned that Hong Kong there'll be splitters tendencies, and so on, and they would want to pass laws, and so on, that would prevent that. Let's leave that aside.

Let's not say to them, those are not relevant or important. But as Chinese to Chinese, is it possible for us to talk about our collective future, about our common -- our common past?

I think those can be much more touching. I'm not quite sure how we get there, but here's where I foresee a role for the private sector. Here is a role that the universities can think about how to do that.

MR. BUSH: I recall that at the time of reversion Beijing took a rather hands-off approach to Hong Kong, and I can understand why they did that, so they wouldn't be seen as interfering. But in retrospect that may have been a mistake, that communication should have been fostered in various sectors at all levels from the beginning.

MS. LOH: Well, we didn't do it then. But I still think going forward, I mean how can Hong Kong reconcile itself as being a part of China, if not through the goodwill of people, if not through the effort of understanding and talking to each other?

And we can talk about difficult subjects. I mean it is about -- talking about how different our perceived differences, and how we go forward. I'd love to think that's a contribution that the private sector can start to make now.

MR. BUSH: Okay. So, Jack, good, right here. And if we have time we'll go there.

MR. GOLDSTONE: Thank you, Richard. I'll try to brief. Jack Goldstone, formerly of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Christine the intelligence and clarity you bring is what we admire most about Hong Kong. So it's a pleasure you hear. I wonder if I could encourage you to talk about the business community for a bit in Hong Kong.

You would think they were most hurt by the disorder, and so that they would be most vocal in saying, do whatever it takes, replace the Chief Executive, have a Police Reform Commission, have a Democratic Reform Commission. Let's just restore trust and bring order.

Instead, they seem to either be quiet, or urging Ms. Lam, don't do anything to offend Beijing. Can you talk about whether there are divisions in the community? What you see is their attitude, and what constructive role the business community could play?

MS. LOH: I think the business community, are the great and the good. The great and the good has been rather fearful, and they've been fearful because from about September onwards, the protesters have targeted certain businesses, that are supposed to have some kind of Mainland link, and then they started to vandalize Mainland business organizations.

So you might be surprised to hear that a lot of Starbucks had been vandalized, and Starbucks had been vandalized because the company that held the license, Founder's daughter, is supposedly close to the Mainland side, right.

So, it's a bit tangential, and then, you know, then the vandalization of Bank of China, you know, Chinese companies, that's again rather new experience, some people had made the observation that they hadn't vandalized McDonald's, but then pointed out that McDonald's in Hong Kong, the license is owned by a Chinese company.

So what I'm saying is, you know, if we have to go down that path, that's not what Hong Kong wants to see. But I have had the great and the good, several of them say to me, you know, I really want to support what you guys are doing. You know, to bring sort of peace and dialogue to Hong Kong. But can I now put my name out there?

So, for example, if I'm willing to make a donation, you know, to have a peace conference, can I not put my name out there, because I'm afraid they're going to come and bash up my business. You know, so I think that's a real fear on the part of somebody.

So, I'd like to think that once we have some relative calm, we're at the stage where it's possible to talk, hopefully the great and the good will be willing to participate much more actively.

MR. BUSH: On that note, I think we should bring this to a close. A few days ago you were 12 time zones away, so I'm conscious of your fatigue level, probably.

But this has been a really special time. Thank you for enriching our understanding of what's going on in Hong Kong right now, we benefited greatly from it. And we're very grateful. Thank you.

MS. LOH: Thank you. (Applause)

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