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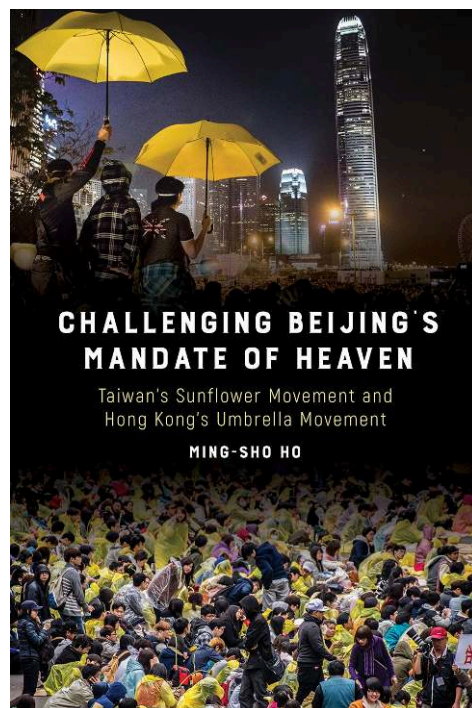
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- 1 With *Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven*, Ming-sho Ho provides one of the most comprehensive accounts of two major social movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Both the Sunflower Movement (*Taiyanghua xueyun* 太陽花學運) and the Umbrella movement (*Jyusaan wandong* 雨傘運動) have garnered interest due to the efforts that civil society and youth groups have played in strengthening democracy in their respective societies. From 18 March to 10 April 2014, Taiwanese activists occupied the national legislature to protest against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), aimed at facilitating economic integration with China. Less than five months later, a similar large-scale protest occurred in Hong Kong from 26 September to 15 December, advocating for greater democratic rights and universal suffrage for the Chief Executive election. Ho's book offers an account of the "origins,



the processes, and the consequences” (p. 18) of these two movements by examining their evolution, movement mobilisation, and domestic and international outcomes.

- 2 This book is comprised of an introduction, seven chapters, and a conclusion. In his introduction, Ho highlights a divide in the traditional social movement literature and adopts a synthetic approach to bridge these two perspectives. The first half of his book adopts vocabularies from the mainstream approach on networks, opportunities, and threats to forward his argument, while the second half of his book uses a constructionist approach that focuses on movement leadership, the creativity of protesters, and the role of emotions as modes of analysis.
- 3 After introducing six analytical puzzles that are explored throughout the book, Chapter One begins by diving into the historical parallels between the two case studies. Starting in the 1970s, Ho interweaves the social movement histories of Taiwan and Hong Kong into a single fluid narrative. This chapter will be valuable to readers unfamiliar with both places, as it provides an overview into both the institutional and political factors that have resulted in Taiwan’s democratic success and Hong Kong’s hybrid regime. Chapter Two examines “China’s impact,” providing a better understanding as to how the China factor has manifested itself in both places. Rejection of economic integration with China and the country’s growing sharp power, he argues, has reinforced local identities. Ho provides a novel perspective as to why Chinese identity has been largely rejected in both places, aptly noting that “China perfected the skill in exerting authoritarian influence first in Hong Kong and Taiwan before applying it to other countries” (p. 70).
- 4 The third chapter examines the “forging of movement networks” by examining the linkages between different social movement actors (e.g. students, NGOs, and opposition parties) and the pre-existing activism in both societies. Chapters Four and Five provide detailed accounts of the sequence of events in both the Sunflower and Umbrella movements through the framework of “opportunities, threat and standoff” (p. 148). Chapter Six then applies the theoretical concept of “improvisation” (p. 152-3) to better understand how the proliferation of these strategic responses occurred without prior planning.
- 5 Finally, Chapter Seven examines the post-Sunflower and post-Umbrella activities that led to the shift from activism into electoral politics. This chapter makes an important contribution in explaining how new political parties emerged and claimed victory in competitive elections. The conclusion then revisits the theoretical contributions of this book and the spillover effects these movements will have on the future of these two societies.
- 6 Ho’s contextualisation of Hong Kong and Taiwan within the larger social movement literature is impressive. However, one important point that could have been further elaborated upon is the relationship between these social movements and the larger institutional frameworks under which Taiwan and Hong Kong operate. As a sociologist, Ho is focused on the social structure of the movements, rather than the political outcomes created by the political institutions. While Ho synthesises his arguments in a novel manner, improved methodological dialogue with other disciplines could provide further explanation as to how the respective political institutions in Taiwan and Hong Kong also shaped the outcome of protest politics. Taiwan’s democratic system was ultimately better prepared to address the demands of protesters compared to Hong Kong’s semi-democratic hybrid regime. This ultimately shaped the diverging

trajectories of these two societies. For instance, as these youth-based political parties in Taiwan became integrated into the island's democratic electoral system, the Hong Kong government's inability to handle grievances resulted in reverberating political conflicts that disqualified many of these young activists-turned-politicians from office. While Ho provides a detailed analysis of where the Sunflower and Umbrella movements diverge in terms of leadership, types of mobilisation, and protest strategies, some readers will wonder how these differences have impacted the subsequent political participation of youth activists in Taiwan and Hong Kong after 2014. Similarly, the book does not delve into the differences in institutional design and government policy responses that resulted in a divergence in both the attitudes and goals of protesters in Taiwan and Hong Kong. While no one author can be expected to account for all of these different aspects and theoretical approaches, this additional level of comparative analysis could have further complemented the structural analysis of these two movements. Despite these minor limitations, Ho's book provides a comprehensive yet succinct overview for anyone who wishes to better understand these two social movements.

- 7 At the time of writing, both Hong Kong and Taiwan are at critical junctures in their developmental trajectories. The recent imposition of the National Security Law in Hong Kong has come as a stark response from Beijing to the 2019 anti-extradition bill protests. Likewise, Taiwan's January 2020 election and the victory of President Tsai Ing-wen has also raised questions about the island's own autonomy and the impact the "China factor" has on the health of Taiwan's democracy. While international coverage of both events has been extensive, *Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven* is a highly effective and much-needed contribution to the studies of Taiwan and Hong Kong, providing the historical context and grounding to understanding current events in both societies. Ho's book adds to the growing body of literature that understands both Taiwan and Hong Kong not through their colonial pasts or their relationships with China, but by re-positioning both societies at the centre of their own subjectivities.
- 8 **The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the associated organization.**

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