

INSIGHT

The long game

Andrew Fung says with Beijing seemingly willing to play the waiting game and the students equally determined to stay put, the Occupy protests could last well into 2015

The Occupy movement has been with us for over a month, and there seems to be no way to end the deadlock. More and more people have come to the conclusion that the police will eventually have to clear the occupied sites by force. But this is unlikely to happen in the near future, so the current situation may become normalised for months to come.

The Beijing authorities, and hence the Hong Kong government, appear to have adopted the principle of “no compromise, no blood” for now, which means they are prepared to be patient and wait out the protests. Hong Kong’s gross domestic product last year was only about 3 per cent of mainland China’s, thus any short-to-medium-term damage to the Hong Kong economy as a consequence of its political turmoil will not hurt China as a whole.

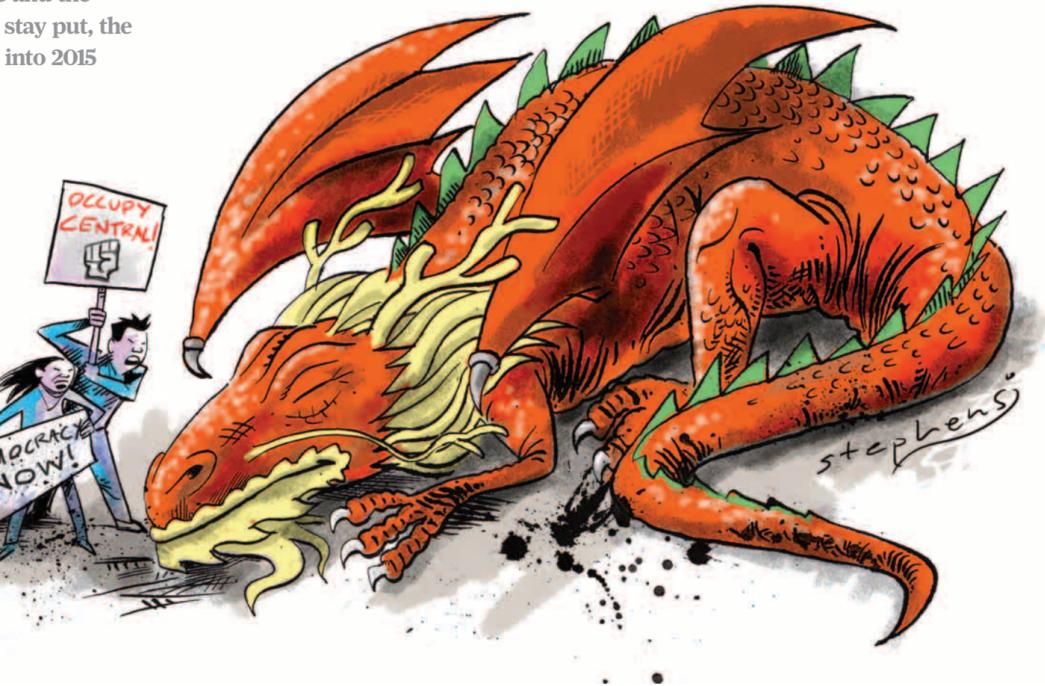
However, Chinese officials have also repeatedly referred to the Chinese saying, “If you refuse a toast, you will be forced to drink a forfeit”, which implies that the protesters and pan-democrats who want to do things the hard way are likely to find their wish granted.

The Chinese government claims comprehensive jurisdiction over the Hong Kong special administrative region. If needed, it will not hesitate to abandon its previous policy of granting special favours and concessions to Hong Kong, and quicken its implementation of a plan to develop Shanghai and Shenzhen into international finance centres, which will reduce Hong Kong’s role in the Chinese economy. The SAR’s economic significance to China has already declined over the years, and it will be further marginalised.

In the eyes of many – or even most – Chinese officials, Hong Kong is like a “spoiled child” best left to its own destiny and undeserving of more concessions and special care. Some businessmen visiting the mainland have brought back stories of Chinese officials harshly criticising Hong Kong in conversations, with some making derogatory remarks.

Meanwhile, some Hong Kong officials have told friends about the cold reception and stern faces that greeted them when they travelled up north to meet their counterparts.

The State Council has made it explicit, in its white paper published in June, that China’s sovereignty, security and development interests take precedence over Hong Kong’s stability and prosperity. This implies that the latter can be sacrificed in order to safeguard the former. As



things stand, there is no immediate need for the authorities to clamp down on the protests, as long as national priorities are not threatened.

On the streets, however, the protesters have firmly entrenched themselves. Repeated opinion surveys and media interviews have reaffirmed their great determination to stay put and defend the sites, in the vague hope of gaining some ground towards “genuine universal suffrage”. It is the people in the occupied zones who have been refusing to evacuate, forcing the leaders of the Federation of Students to go along with them.

When the student leaders brought back for consultation the government’s suggestions on submitting an opinion report to Beijing and setting up a multiparty platform, it was the masses in occupied Admiralty who flatly rejected the offers.



The government and people have grudgingly found ways to adapt to the Occupy movement

All along, the more radical protesters have been influential. By now, representatives of these small, radical organisations have successfully gained admission into the protesters’ top decision-making core group, comprising leaders of the Federation of Students, Scholarism and the original Occupy Central, in descending order of their influence.

The Occupy leaders have been racking their brains to come up with one idea after another on what to do next, including meeting with central government officials, going up to Beijing during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting, and triggering a de facto city-wide referendum with the resignation of one (or five) pan-democratic legislators. All these ideas appear whimsical or impractical in solving the deadlock. And, each time, the Occupy protesters stressed that these ideas would not pave the way to voluntary evacuation. Meanwhile, the Admiralty occupied zone has grown into a self-sufficient community, with voluntary division of labour among the masses who set up and manage the barricades, tents, resource centres, clinics, study corners and art exhibits. It has been reported that the resource centres have ample supplies to last the coming winter, and more are pouring in.

The sustainability of this community is ensured by the free movement of its

inhabitants, who take turns to go back to their own home for a good rest and better food. In the daytime, there are often only several dozen protesters at Admiralty to keep watch for government clearance actions, while many others go to college or work, returning in the evenings and on public holidays.

Most important of all, the inhabitants have developed among themselves a spirit of comradeship, an attachment to the territories they “possess”, and an identity of the community they have collectively built. Any clearance action by the government or the anti-Occupy forces will be perceived as an encroachment upon their “rights” to their “home village”.

Meanwhile, the Hong Kong government and people have reluctantly and grudgingly found ways to adapt to this normalisation of the Occupy movement. But the longer the occupation goes on, the bigger the chance people may get seriously hurt, for example through arson, violent fighting, or even a bomb explosion. Any such event could spark off riots, leading to harsh police repression.

Without a breakthrough, the “Hong Kong commune” at Admiralty is likely to stay with us well into 2015.

Andrew Fung is chief executive officer at the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute

Lurking threat

Michael Gazeley says the spate of cyberattacks in the wake of the Occupy protests should raise the alarm on organisations’ vulnerability

The threat of cyberattacks has escalated in Hong Kong. During the past month, the Anonymous collective – a global network of hacker-activists – has declared cyberwar on the Hong Kong government and police force, in support of the Occupy Central movement.

Further, it is clear that Anonymous was not the only group of hackers taking direct action, with websites on both sides of the political divide being targeted. Some were brought to a crawl using the “distributed denial of service” attacks. This is when so much artificial traffic is sent to the targeted system that it can no longer function properly. Other websites were attacked in different ways or simply defaced.

However, what everyone needs to understand, and urgently, is that these attacks are actually the least important cybersecurity dangers we face.

In today’s increasingly connected world, it is estimated that over a million devices are being added to the internet every three hours. More and more of these are not computers in the traditional sense. There are smartphones and tablets, but also televisions, fax machines, printers, telephones, CCTV systems, fridges, baby monitors, and even next-generation light bulbs. That’s not all. One also needs to add power plants, traffic lights, oil rigs, cars, aeroplanes, drones, ships, and even medical devices like pacemakers to the list.

We are collectively rushing headlong into what is commonly called the “internet of things”, without realising that this also means we are fast heading towards the “vulnerability of everything”.

If all this sounds like science fiction, note that former US vice-president Dick Cheney had his pacemaker’s wireless feature disabled in 2007, fearing assassination by a hacker.

Our company monitors cyberattacks in real time. Attacks are legion, and, despite being ranked as one of the world’s most connected cities, Hong Kong still has a very long way to go in terms of cybersecurity.

I have spent the past 20 years advising organisations in Hong Kong on how to improve their cybersecurity, so I felt more than a little sceptical when I recently read that 96 per cent of the city’s top executives fear the impact of a cyberattack on their business. In my experience, management complacency is the top reason cybersecurity is so poor in so many Hong Kong organisations. The vast majority of senior managers believe their organisation is not a target, so there’s no need to worry too much.

Upon looking into the 96 per cent figure, however, things made a lot more sense. The figure came from a survey conducted during a series of seminars on the business impact of cyberattacks. That’s like conducting a survey at a gym, asking the people working out if they think exercise is important.

Corporations move at the “speed of red tape”, while hackers move at the speed of the internet. This needs to change. Senior management in Hong Kong need to take cybersecurity seriously and take meaningful action to protect their organisations.

As Abraham Lincoln famously said, “You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”

Michael Gazeley is managing director of Network Box Corporation

To win the war, student protesters should consider a tactical withdrawal

Student leaders need to make a decisive call on where the Occupy movement should head next. If they don’t, they will play into the hands of the authorities, given that public tolerance for the disruptions caused by the prolonged protests is wearing thin.

As revealed by the University of Hong Kong’s recent opinion poll, the Federation of Students has become the most popular political group in town, eclipsing the political parties and trade unions across the political spectrum. This is to be expected, as the students have achieved in less than two months what pan-democratic lawmakers have failed to attain over the past three decades.

The demand for a complete overhaul of our lopsided electoral system has never been so loud and clear, and the pressure on the establishment for change has never been more intense since China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997.

Those who have been sleeping on the streets in Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok deserve respect. They are the ones who have made the biggest personal sacrifices to pursue the goal of genuine democracy. Yet it is a fact that their action has resulted in major inconveniences and even financial losses to some.

As indicated by a Polytechnic University survey, 73.2 per cent of people surveyed say the protesters should quit the occupied sites. This does not mean the students have lost popular support. The figure only shows that an overwhelming majority disagrees with their

Albert Cheng says as public tolerance for blocked roads wears thin, the Occupy movement must prepare for the next phase of action, post clearance



tactics of continuing to block some of our main streets.

The idea of asking pan-democrats to resign from the legislature to trigger territory-wide by-elections has been floated. This could be interpreted as a pseudo-referendum on whether protesters should withdraw.

The students can further publicise their demands for true democracy through the by-elections. The total portion of



No social movement that is at odds with popular opinion can keep going

votes the pan-democrats could get, rather than the number of seats they could retain, should be used as the yardstick for success.

Nonetheless, some councillors are dragging their heels. After all, those who would be barred from seeking re-election and will suffer substantial financial losses in terms of allowances and stipends.

Meanwhile, the authorities have learned their lesson. There

has been no further attempt to disperse the crowds by force. Instead, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying is playing a waiting game. He simply sits back and lets the public grievances against Occupy grow.

Occupy is meant to exert maximum pressure on the Leung administration. Nevertheless, events have taken such a turn that Occupy is exerting even greater pressure on its organisers.

No social movement that is at odds with popular opinion can keep going. Many community leaders have already urged the students to withdraw. I have no intention of adding to the symphony. My point is that the students should not become sitting ducks.

The Federation of Students is considering petitioning top officials in Beijing. They are doomed to be denied entry, let alone get to talk to anybody in the Chinese bureaucracy.

The head of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, Tam Yiu-chung, has pledged to arrange for the students to meet officials in Beijing. Tam, a shrewd opportunist, has obviously been authorised as a messenger. The student leaders should jump at the opportunity.

They might be able to see Wang Guangya (王光亞), director of the State Council’s Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. They might even end up

presenting their case to Zhang Dejiang (張德江), a Politburo member who chairs the National People’s Congress Standing Committee.

In the meantime, the students can earn themselves some breathing space to formulate a long-term strategy.

The Chinese authorities are unlikely to budge, but the students will at least be appreciated for their attempt to communicate. If the communist leaders are only interested in giving the students a dressing-down, public support in Hong Kong for them would surge again. The students could then devise, with renewed public blessing, the next phase of the movement.

There is a theory that the police will clear the sites after the world leaders attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit have left Beijing. If the students are to persist in Occupy, they should start preparing for the worst. The students should convene a meeting with the other organisations behind the movement to map out a plan for the post-clearance scenario.

They are duty-bound to lead the movement out of the current stalemate, one way or another. They should prepare their followers for a drawn-out war.

It is high time for students to consider a tactical withdrawal and think of other ways to deepen their campaign. That does not mean a retreat in defeat. Nobody can know when the time for a second wave of Occupy may come.

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Climate change battle can unite people of all faiths

Ciara Shannon highlights religious leaders’ role and shared responsibility

This week, over 100 people gathered to hear from Hong Kong’s religious leaders on ways to engage faith-based communities on how climate change applies to their faith doctrines and to urge world leaders to have the courage to agree on a meaningful UN climate agreement. This will be hammered out in Lima next month and hopefully agreed in Paris next year.

Father Sean McDonagh, a Columban Society missionary, published eco-theologian and climate change expert, spoke of the impact climate change and extreme weather are having on the world’s poorest communities, remembering the thousands who died, and millions left homeless from Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines last year.

Extreme weather events happen more and more often now, making it harder for the poorest countries to rebuild and protect their citizens.

Bishop Andrew Chan of the Anglican Church’s Western Kowloon diocese mentioned how we are all entrusted with the stewardship of this earth and also the obligation to speak up for the most vulnerable.

Markus Shaw, who chaired the event, said that we are united by a common love, a love for nature.

Many people say environmentalism is the new religion, but it is in fact a very old one called pantheism: the belief, shared by many scientists, that the physical universe is the only reality.

In 1990, Pope John Paul II

made clear that the ecological crisis is a moral issue, and we’ve also heard from Pope Francis recently: “Let us be protectors of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”

The Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change, drafted in 2009 and signed by the Dalai Lama and Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, among others, outlines the synergy of Buddhist teachings, to accept our individual and collective responsibility to assist the survival of life on earth and to have compassion for future



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generations, and the other species that have no voice. Interestingly, the Brahma Kumaris have been world pioneers in the installation and use of solar energy; they have installed a solar steam cooking system that is capable of producing 35,000 meals per day in India.

This multi-faith climate event also marked the Asian launch of Our Voices, set up earlier this year following the call by Christiana Figueres – the head of

the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – for religious groups to slash their carbon emissions and highlight the moral imperative of climate change to their communities.

The Hong Kong faith event followed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s latest report that gave the clearest and strongest message yet on how humans are changing the climate.

It also re-emphasised how much carbon we can emit and still have a likely chance of limiting warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius, the internationally accepted goal. This means cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 40 to 70 per cent by 2050, with fossil fuel burning almost entirely phased out by 2100.

Use of low- or zero-carbon energy sources, including wind, solar and nuclear, will need to increase to more than 80 per cent by 2050.

Over the years, we have seen the UN climate talks stumble over and over again over our “common but differentiated responsibility”.

Religious leaders need to urge world leaders to consider our shared responsibility for the well-being of our neighbours and for nature itself.

Ciara Shannon is Asia co-ordinator for Our Voices. www.ourvoices.net

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