

Jean Oi [01:28:18] Alright, thank you for keeping it in time. We're going to have some more time for discussion. And now we turn to Mike Lampton.

David M. Lampton [01:28:27] Good afternoon everybody. Welcome. I want to say these have been wonderful presentations that have preceded me and I'm honored to be part of this program.

[01:28:40] We've had a couple of evocative recountings of the handover ceremony in 1997. I had an evocative experience there. I got there early, it was a rainy day, I was soaked, I thought I needed to dry out. And I got there early and I was assigned to a section and Prime Minister Thatcher was sitting all alone in almost all these empty seats. And I, it's not my style to go and sit right next to a Prime Minister uninvited, but I put one seat separation and I did. And I kind of asked her as she was getting along in years, what her impression was. And basically, the answer is, these are my words not hers, "We'll see." You can understand given where she comes from why she might have had that and I guess that's always been mine. But now we are seeing. And so, I think of Prime Minister Thatcher and her role in precipitating this to some extent and so forth.

[01:29:55] Another point that was brought up and I did want to comment on is Hong Kong is sometimes underappreciated for its historically precarious and fragile role. I mean you go back to 1840 and it wasn't obvious how this city would negotiate its future. You think about Sun Yat-sen and the revolution unfolding beyond the borders and the role Hong Kong played. We think about the Cultural Revolution and all the turmoil. The point is this is a remarkably adaptable city. And I don't mean that just to be the conclusion, that we've seen hard times before we'll get through this. Actually, as you'll see that I'm not so sure that's true this time. But in any case, we really have to start this discussion by an appreciation of what the city has been through, how it's adapted, how it got to where it is.

[01:31:02] I guess I would just say that I'm not as optimistic as Anson and I have the highest regard for her. But I asked myself five questions and I'll just sort of telegraphically spit out the question and the outline of an answer. And I think you'll see at least why I am more hopeful but worried.

[01:31:30] I think the first thing to question is does the outside world and does the SAR any longer have a road map to the future with the PRC. That's what the Joint Declaration were and the Basic Law you can say still is, but I think really the answer is no, there is no roadmap that is shared between the people of Hong Kong and the PRC or the surrounding powers, I'll say the U.S., the U.N. and Britain. There is no shared roadmap any longer. I can get into the details where that shared vision may have ended but I'd go back to 2014. And the Chinese have said the Joint Declaration is a historical document. It was only relevant from 1984 to 1997. Well if you basically say that, the Joint Declaration is not the roadmap anymore.

[01:32:52] If you look at the Basic Law in 1990, Article 45, it called for selection of the Chief Executive by elections, a gradual orderly process and the ultimate aim of which is

universal suffrage. Well that broke down at the latest in 2017 and started breaking down severely in 2014. So, the long and the short of it is the two constitutional documents have in the one case it seems been in effect rejected and the other, let's just say when Hong Kong people didn't want to accept the limited offer in 2017, for the 2017 election earlier on, you don't have a roadmap to the future. So, it's hard for me to be optimistic about a process when there are no agreed upon principles. So that's the first thing.

[01:33:53] Question two, do the protesters have a cohesive demand command structure? Is there somebody, if you hypothesize Beijing were interested in an agreement or were the SAR government with the protesters, do they have a command structure that could authoritatively agree, and we'll say enforce on its followers that agreement. And it's not clear to me that, it's pretty clear to me that structure doesn't exist, maybe we could hypothesize it could cohere in the future, but the long and the short of it is the protesters have had over the course of since the Umbrella Movement, a sort of increase in the number of demands. So, I wonder how much of a cohesive force there is on the protester's side that could authoritatively agree with the PRC.

[01:34:55] Also you seem to see the protesters fragmenting into the basically peaceful majority and a highly motivated increasingly violent subset. Notwithstanding the point that Anson made that agent provocateur are probably almost undoubtedly a part of the picture. So fragmented opposition in the sense of dealing as a unity with the PRC or the SAR government and a fragmented movement in terms of its own tools that it's willing to contemplate.

[01:35:32] Question three, what are Xi Jinping's incentives to agree or be accommodating because as we've seen and Anson emphasized, Carrie Lam didn't move until she was in effect told to by Xi Jinping. So, what are Xi Jinping's incentives to compromise. Well it seems to me, you just look at the parade on October 1st and you got a big part of the answer, which is this is muscular nationalism and conceding to people in the streets particularly when you're worried about domestic stability in the PRC doesn't seem the formula that I would expect the PRC leadership to gravitate towards. Now we can be optimistic, he pushed Carrie Lam to accept one of the withdrawal. But the other four have much greater implications it seems to me for governance of the PRC itself.

[01:36:32] Question four, what can the West and outsiders do? Well I mean let's just put it this way, President Trump has shown little interest in the Hong Kong issue or expending American capital, and the one expression I recall him talking about was the relationship between our trade problems with the PRC and our attitude about Hong Kong. So once again the American leadership is not exhibiting, at least the executive leadership, any positive leadership on this. You know also it seems to me that the United States and Britain, not to mention much of the rest of the world, are in constitutional crises themselves. So, you know it just doesn't seem like this is the moment, even if you could figure out how the big powers might be more effective, what they would do.

[01:37:33] And question five, and Harry touched on this, with executive action in the U.S. or in Britain, or other powers not very robust, we'll put it that way. This gives the U.S. Congress room to run. And you know in general I agree very much with Harry, the 1992 Hong Kong Policy Act was a positive inducement, give the autonomy and we'll treat you in a special way. Well Congress is now in a punitive mode for all sorts of reasons and the contemplated act now is heavy on sanctions and low on inducements. Well my reading of the PRC leadership or Xi Jinping is sanctions and threats are not the way to get him behaving as we might hope.

[01:38:27] So the long and the short of it is that I'm not seeing those agreed upon rules and roadmaps that we I think we thought we had. I don't see effective leadership in either Hong Kong SAR or among the protesters. It's hard for me to envision Xi suddenly capitulating to three or four conditions. And I don't think the big powers are going to play the responsible role we would hope.