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September 18, 2019 **Joshua Eisenman**

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; China; Taiwan

XI OFFICIALLY NAMED "THE PEOPLE'S LEADER"

On August 25th, the People's Daily ran the following front-page headline: "The people's leader loves the people." The story on Xi Jinping's inspection of Gansu, which described him as a leader who loves and is loved by the people, was also echoed by CCTV. "The People's Leader" is a title that was used by Mao Zedong, the PRC's founding father, during the Chinese civil war. Xi's right-hand man, Li Zhanshu, was the first to call him "the people's leader" during the closing speech of the National People's Congress in March 2018. Official outlets then began using the expression, and a video about "the people's leader who came from the Loess Plateau" was spread. This sparked pushback from those concerned that Xi's acolytes are building a personality cult around him – something which the party's constitution expressly forbids. Thus, the use of the term "the people's leader" in the People's Daily suggests Xi has further consolidated his power. "For Xi, Trump's endless trade war and the Hong Kong issue have become unexpected gifts from heaven," said one anonymous source. China, the pro-Xi argument goes, needs a leader whose stature is on a par with Mao to win the trade war with the U.S. and handle Hong Kong. (*Nikkei*, August 29, 2019)

SHENZHEN TO BE TURNED INTO "SOCIALIST DEMONSTRATION AREA"

Beijing has issued new guidelines "indicating support for Shenzhen to build a 'pilot demonstration zone for socialism with Chinese characteristics'" and become the "core engine" of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area regional integration initiative. Policies to promote Shenzhen as a "global benchmark city" include "developing strategic emerging industries," "promoting the first trial for the internationalization of the RMB," "building a 'global ocean center city,'" and building a "Greater Bay Area Data Center." The new guidelines also support Shenzhen easing restrictions to attract overseas talent and granting citizenship to Hong Kong and Macau residents that work in Shenzhen. "Shenzhen will set an example for residents in Hong Kong...on how to better integrate local policy and mechanism support into national development." (*Global Times*, August 19, 2019)

BEIJING TO HONG KONG: YOU ARE NOT "IRREPLACEABLE"

An editorial published by the Beijing-controlled *Ta Kung Pao* has issued a public rebuke to Hong Kong – and suggested that the territory could soon be eclipsed by another, more compliant one, "Shenzhen's 2018 GDP already surpassed that of Hong Kong's, and more importantly, Shenzhen has a high-tech industry, a strong manufacturing industry, and a comprehensive service industry that Hong Kong does not have," the editorial notes. "Hong Kong's greatest advantage lies in the 'rule of law,' 'openness,' and the support of the country, but now with rampant violence and social unrest, these advantages are disappearing. If certain people in Hong Kong continue to sprint on the road of self-destruction, the result for Hong Kong is disastrous; Hong Kong will not only lose economic development and its international reputation but also the future of the next generation. If rioters wake up immediately, there is still hope, but if they continue to be unrepentant, Hong Kong is by no means irreplaceable." (*Ta Kung Pao*, August 19, 2019)

TAIWAN PLEDGES HELP FOR HONG KONG ACTIVISTS SEEKING SANCTUARY

Taiwan will provide sanctuary for Hong Kongers fleeing China's persecution, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Taiwan's top policy-making body on China, has announced. The MAC's statement said it would handle such cases "under the principle of respecting human rights protections and humanitarian concerns." Dozens of activists have already fled to Taiwan and are spread across various locations receiving assistance from NGOs. "We can provide necessary assistance to Hong Kong residents whose safety and freedom are in urgent danger due to political reasons. These friends from Hong Kong will be treated in an appropriate way on humanitarian grounds," said Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen during a visit to Saint Lucia, one of Taipei's diplomatic allies. Tsai describes the 2020 presidential election as a "fight for freedom and democracy," and herself as the person who can defend Taiwan. Her opponent, Han Kuo-yu of the Kuomintang party, advocates improved ties with Beijing. (*Jakarta Post*, July 19, 2019)

TAIWAN IS FIGHTING CHINA'S TRAVEL BAN

Taiwan is expecting 400,000-700,000 fewer Chinese travelers and about \$125 million in lost revenue in the second half of 2019 due to Beijing's decision in July to suspend permits for individual PRC citizens to visit Taiwan. Taipei's plan to make up for the loss includes streamlining the visa application process for international visitors, extending visa-free privileges to Indonesian passport holders, and new subsidies to encourage international airlines to operate charter flights and offer special fares to Taiwan. The PRC began allowing Chinese to travel solo to Taiwan in 2011. (UPI, August 28, 2019)

