

A panoramic view of the Tokyo skyline at dusk. The Tokyo Tower is the central focus, illuminated with warm orange and yellow lights. The surrounding city is filled with numerous skyscrapers, some of which are also lit up, creating a vibrant urban scene against the twilight sky.

# **Traditions and Spaces of Protest: Student Activism in Hong Kong and Japan**

**Dr. Marta Soler Alemany  
Waseda University  
Tokyo, Japan**

**March 2, 2022**

# Student-led Movements in East Asia



Works cited: Library of Congress, USA.



Hong Kong Government Headquarters  
Works cited: The Guardian, 2014



Outside Japanese Parliament in Tokyo  
Works cited: Guillaume Bresson/The Guardian

# Outline

1. Main Concepts
2. Why Hong Kong and Japan?
3. The Umbrella Movement, 2014
4. SEALDs Movement, 2015
5. Summary Similarities and Differences
6. Conclusion

# 1. Student Activism

Student activism is a form of political activism in which students have a leadership role in the development of the social movement in question and they comprise a large part of participating activists (Weiss & Aspinall, 2012).



# Traditions of Protest

Traditions of protest in this presentation mean a way of citizens' political participation, which has been occurring in different moments among history as a way to claim for political and social change (Lee & Chan, 2011).



Tokyo, 1968

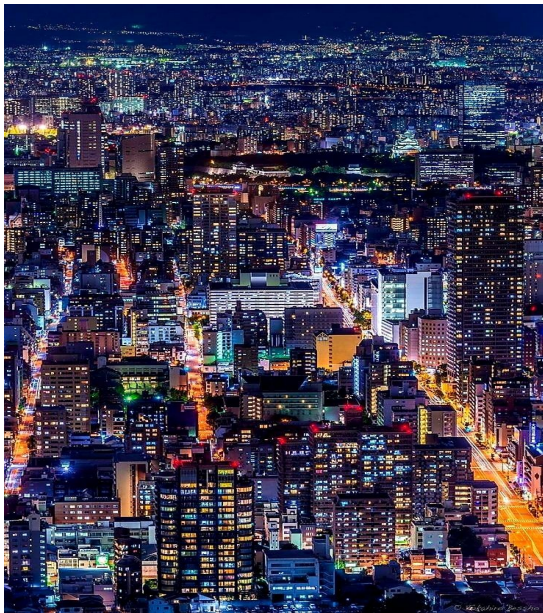
Works cited: Japan Focus

Hong Kong 1989

Works cited: South China Morning Post

# Spaces of Protest

The spaces of protest refer to the occupation of the streets, the squares or the university campuses that persists as a way of visualizing and consolidating the movements, combined with the usage of the connections and networks in the Internet (Castells, 2003).



Tokyo

Works cited: Pinteresc

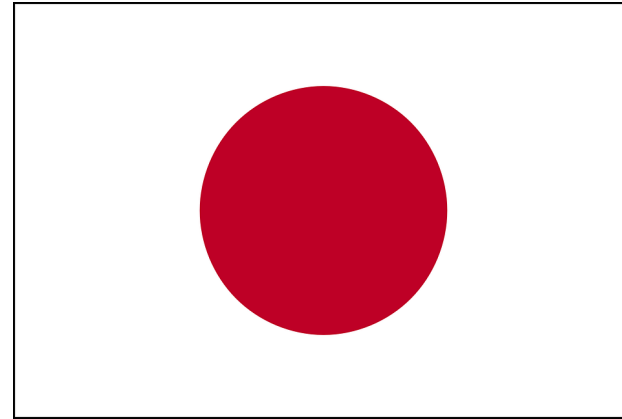
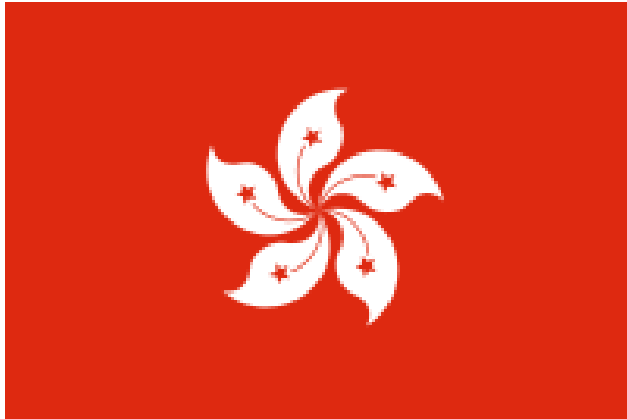


Hong Kong Umbrella Movement

Works cited: Times



## 2. Why Hong Kong and Japan?



- Phd Research and field work
- Uniqueness of each case
- Wave of protests in East Asia, 2014-2015
- Frustration and dissatisfaction with the government
- Usage of new technologies
- Media attention

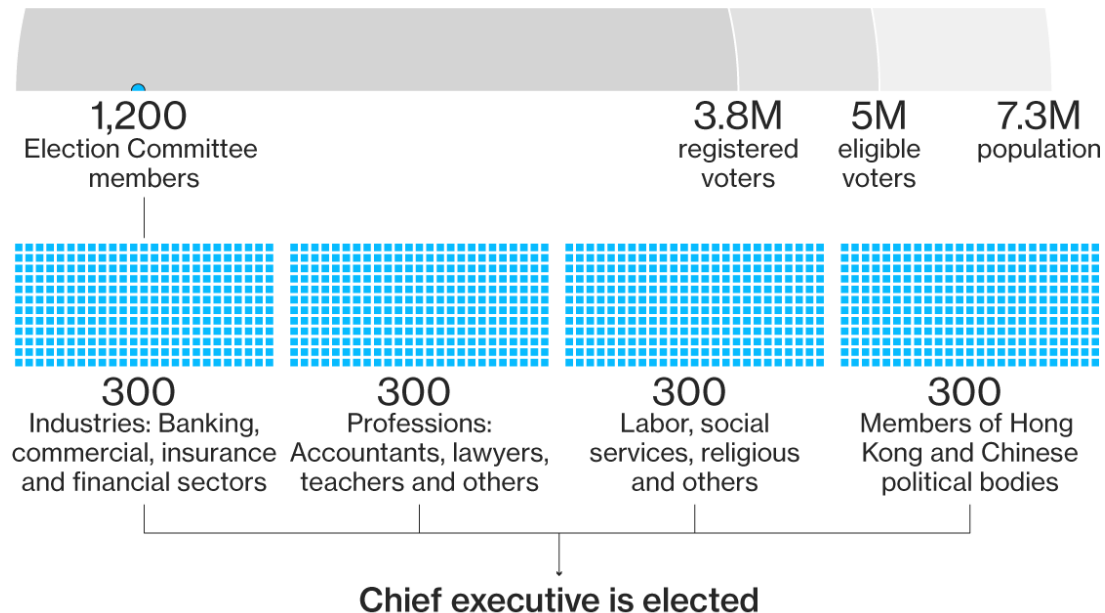
# 3. Hong Kong socio-political background

- Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the Republic of China since 1997
- “One country Two systems” until 2047



# Electoral system

- 90s Electoral System Introduction (1,200 member election committee)



Works cited: Bloomberg, 2017



# Hong Kong Identity



Usual spoken language:

- **Cantonese: 88.9%**
- Putonghua: 1.9%
- Other Chinese dialect: 3.1%
- English: 4.3%
- Other language: 1.9%

Works cited: 2016 Population By-census, Hong Kong Government.

# Cantopop or HK-pop in the 80s and 90s



Andy Lau



Anita Mui

# 2003: Protests Against National Security Reform



Works cited: South China Morning Post

# 2012: Protests Against 'Moral and National Education' (M&N)



Students at the Chinese University boycotting classes in protest of the moral and national education curriculum

Works cited: HKFS

# 2014: The Umbrella Movement for Universal suffrage



- The National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) announced that universal suffrage would be implemented in Hong Kong by 2017.



# Occupy Central with Love and Peace



# Symbolism



Works cited: Bloomberg

# Lennon Walls



Works cited: South China Morning Post

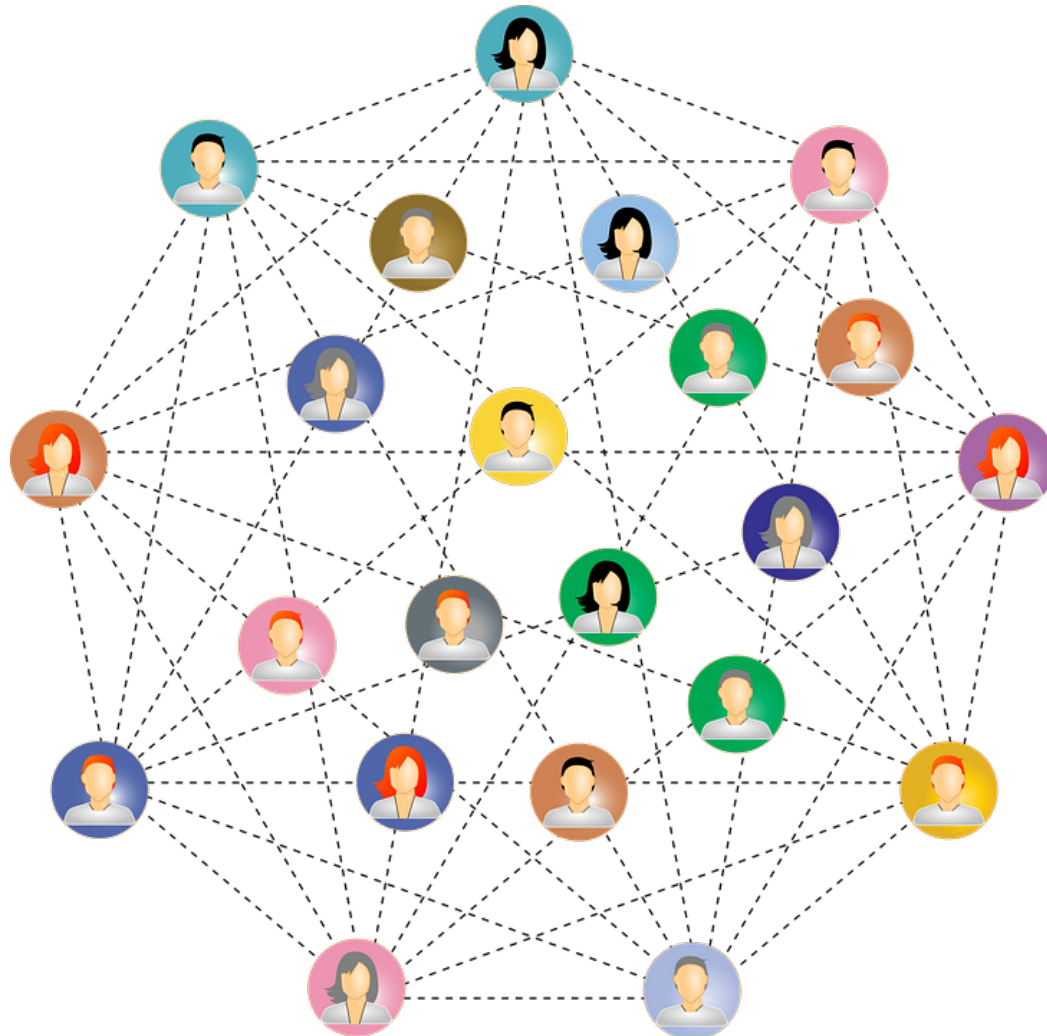
# Key Student Groups

- The Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS).  
Founded in 1958
- Scholarism . Founded in 2011.

學聯  
HKFS

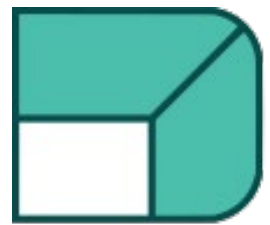


# Media Attention



# Output of the Umbrella Movement

- The attempt of the Umbrella Movement activists to influence the political agenda and change the electoral system by achieving universal suffrage **failed**.
- The Movement represented a significant **change in the city's socio-political development**.
- The spread of the **idea of civil disobedience** as well as the fact of remaining a mostly **non-violent mobilization** played a key educational role in the society.



香港  
眾志

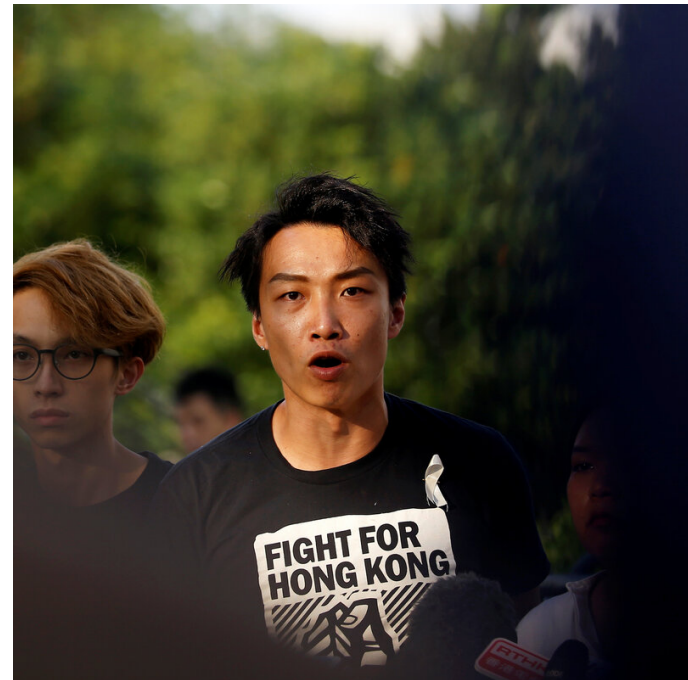
DEMOSISTŌ

# 2019: The Anti-Extradition Law Movement



Works cited: Hong Kong Free Press

# Civil Human Rights Front



Jimmy Sham, seen speaking at a news conference in June, 2019

Works cited: CHRF



# After 2020

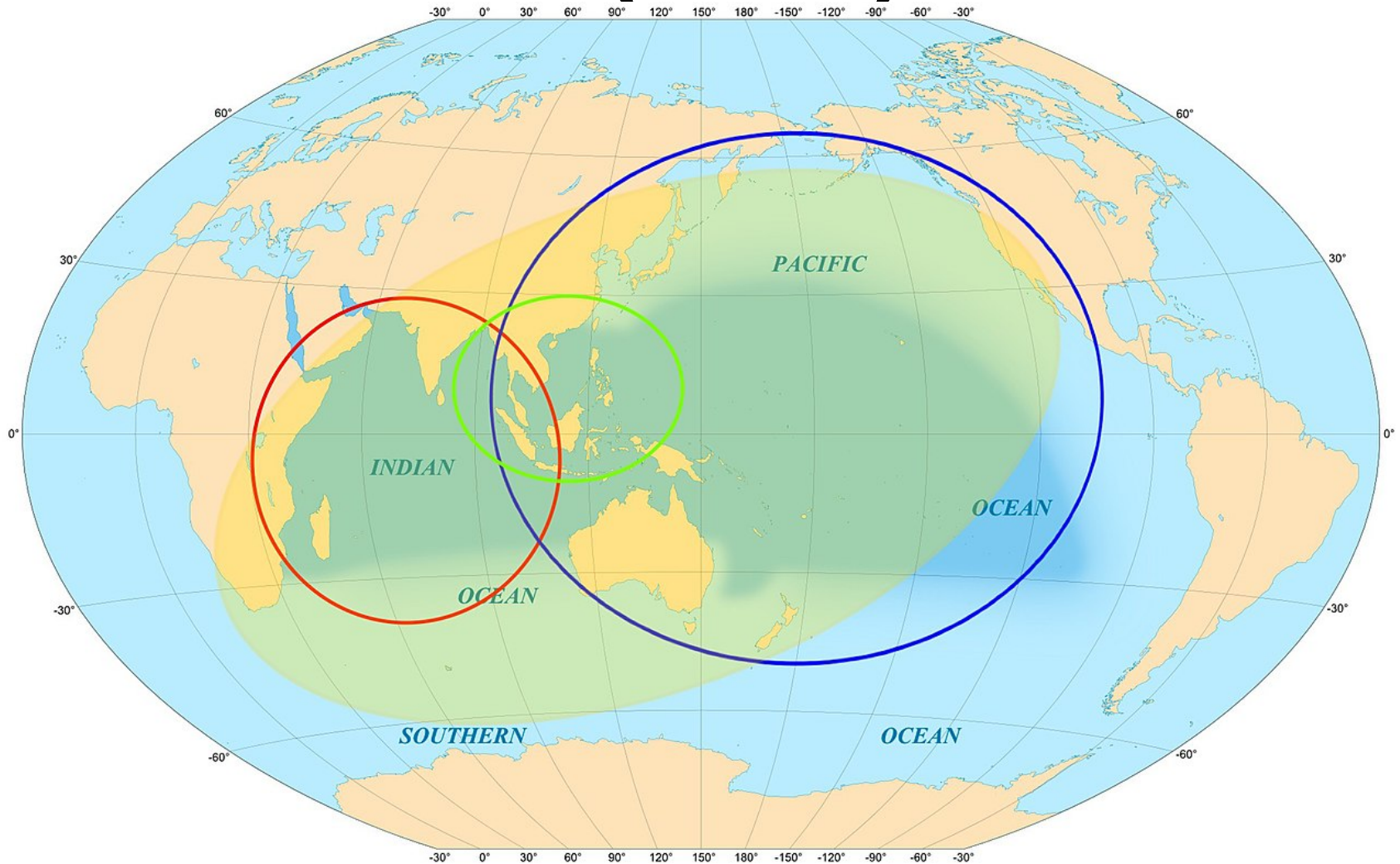


Works cited: Aljazeera



Works cited: The New York Times

# Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)



Works cited: Institute of Chinese Studies, ICS

# 4. Japan Socio-political Background

- Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy since 1955



# After II World War



Japanese foreign affairs minister Mamoru Shigemitsu signs the Japanese Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri as General Richard K. Sutherland watches, September 2, 1945.

# The Japanese Constitution



➤ Article 9  
of the Constitution

Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur, at their first meeting,  
at the U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, 27 September, 1945

Works cited: United States Army photograph/Lt. Gaetano Faillace

# Japan Self-Defence Forces



Works cited: The Diplomat, 2016

# Zengakuren



Works cited: Japan Times

# Japanese Student Movements 1968-69



Zengakuren, 1948





University of Tokyo



Nihon University



The University of Tokyo, 1969



Shinjuku station, 1969. Works cited: Asia-Pacific Journal



## Suppression of Student Occupation, University of Tokyo, 1969

Works cited: Asia-Pacific Journal

# Collective Memory



# Cultural Values

- **Harmony Wa** 和
- **Conformity**
- **The Common Good**



# Edo Period (1603-1867)



Works cited: Los Angeles County Museum of Art,  
Herbert R. Cole Collection (M.84.31.332)

# Meiji Era (1867-1912)



*Enpō happushiki no zu* illustrates the ceremony of joint promulgation of the Meiji Constitution.

Works cited: Especial Collection of the Metropolitan Library of Tokio.

# Following Periods

- **Taishō period (1912-1926)** – More international power.
- **Shōwa period (1926–1989)** – Nationalism, wars and Japanese student's protests.
- **Heisei period (1989-2019)** – Bubble economy and SEALDs Movement.
- **Reiwa period (2019-currently)** – COVID-19





# The Invisibility of Protests



Works Cited: The Japan Times

# The Anti-nuclear Movement After 2011



Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant  
Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami  
Works cited: National Geogrpahic

# The Reinterpretation of the Constitution 2014-2015

- Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)
- More power to the Japan Self-Defence Forces
- Disapproval from China and North Korea
- Supported by the US



# SEALD's Movement in Japan

- 'Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy' (SEALDs) Movement – 2015



# Protests Outside the Diet, the Japanese Government

- 120.000 participants
- 400 core members



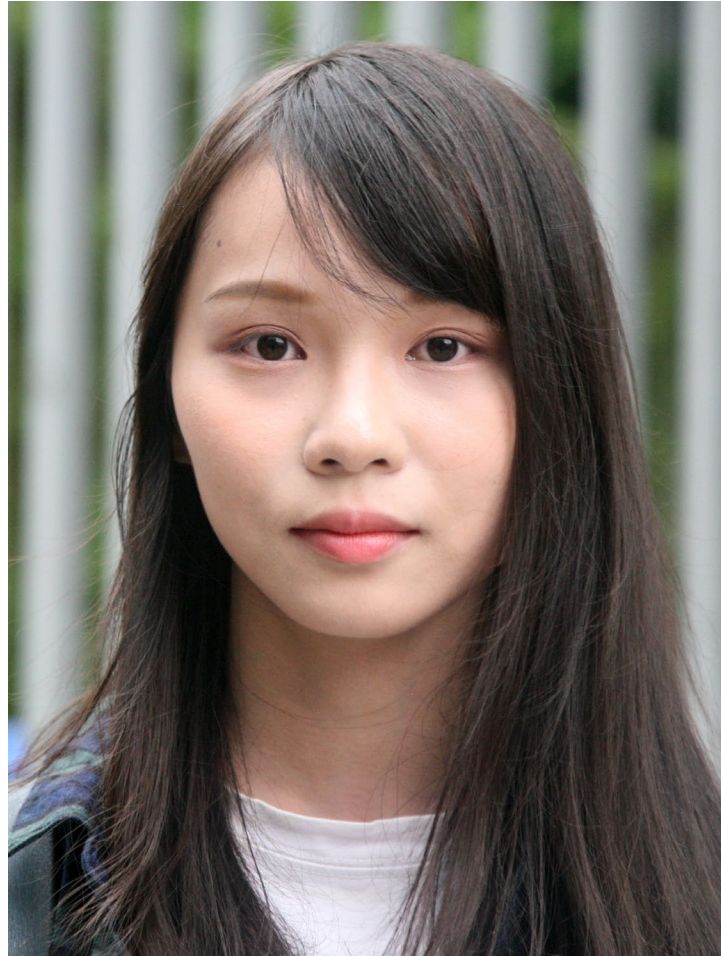
Source: The Japan Times

# Networked Mobilization

- Official Website
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Youtube
- Line



# **Umbrella Movement's Influence**



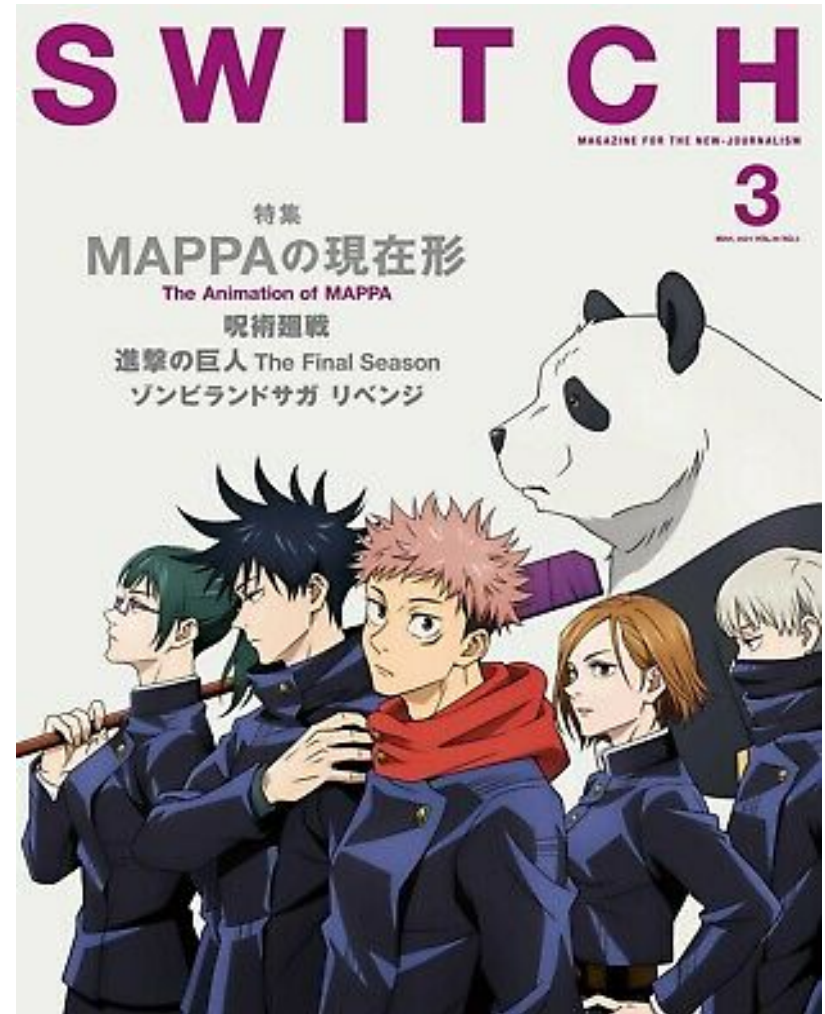
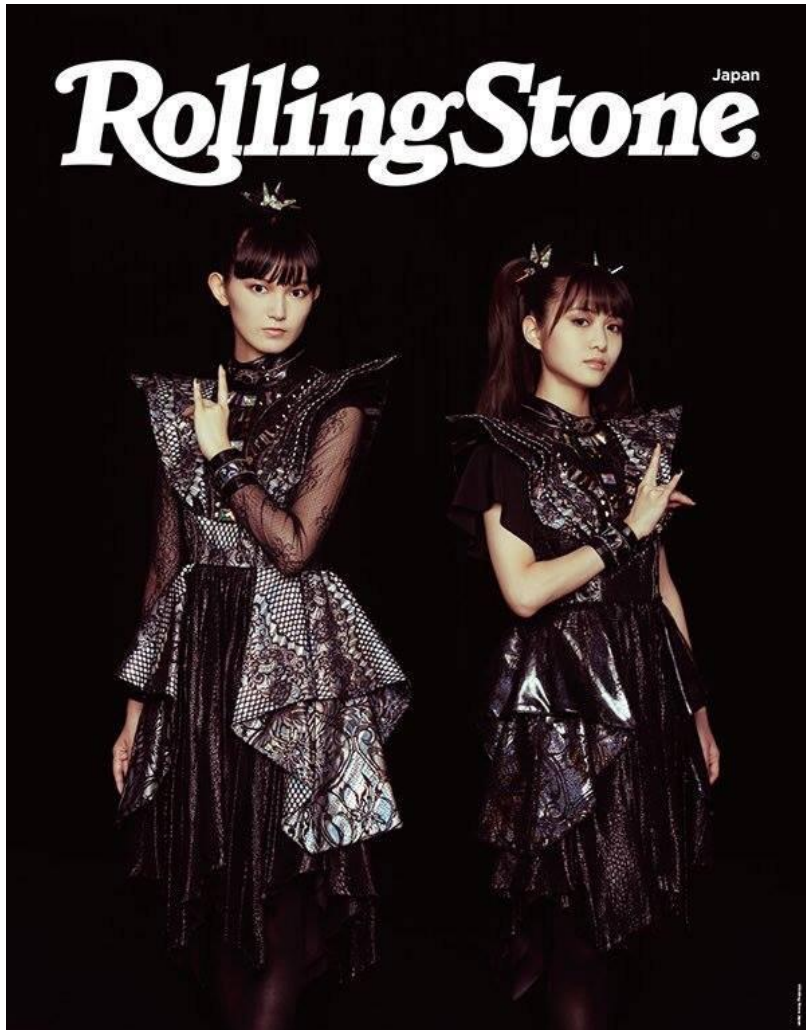
Agnes Chow  
Works cited: BBC

# “Marketing Campaign”



Works cited: SEALDs Official Website







Aki Okuda



Mana Shibata



Wakako Fukuda

# Output of the SEALDs Movement

- No impact in the decision-making
- Trivialization of the group
- Media attention
- Awareness
- SEALDs dissolved in 2016

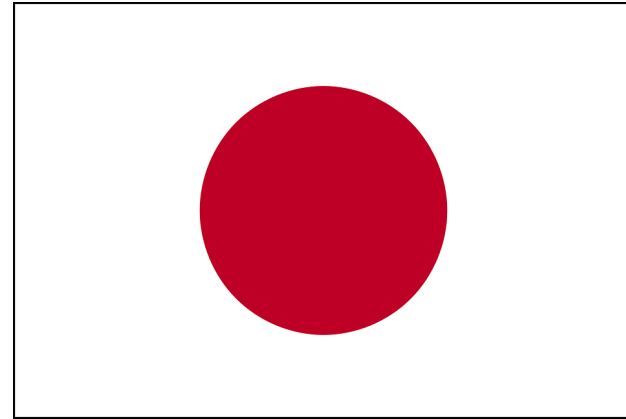
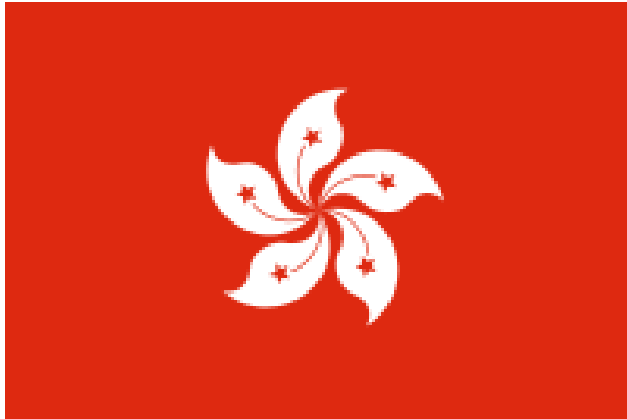
# Current situation

## Waseda University Example

- The Anti-War Action Circle – 早稲田反戦アクション



# 5. Quick recap



# Similarities

- Student-led and urban political movements targeting the political system.
- Similar time frame, between 2014 and 2015.
- Influenced by other movements in the region.
- Techniques of non-violent and creative resistance.
- Both Movements were able to capture the attention of media.
- They spread awareness.

# Differences

- The level of international coverage.
- The level of political interest from youth.
- The different political systems.
- The role of universities.
- Geopolitical issues.
- The absence of student unions and other political groups.

# 6. Conclusion



Works cited: Kelvin Yuen/National Geographic



A panoramic view of the Tokyo skyline at dusk. The Tokyo Tower is the central focus, illuminated with a warm orange glow. The surrounding city is filled with numerous skyscrapers, some of which are lit up with blue and white lights. The sky is a soft, pale blue, suggesting the time is either early morning or late evening.

**Thank you!**  
**¡Muchas gracias!**

**[Martasoler@akane.waseda.jp](mailto:Martasoler@akane.waseda.jp)**