

## The Issue of the mainland China-Hong Kong Conflict

Hong Kong has a complicated history as to its sovereignty that continues to this day. It was a British colony, then leased to the UK (by China) until 1997 when it became a part of the People's Republic of China once again. The deal agreed was a "one country, two systems" situation that, according to the BBC, meant 'that while becoming part of one country with China, Hong Kong would enjoy "a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defence affairs" for 50 years.'

In recent years, however, conflict has arisen pertaining to China's increasing control over the region. Despite the remaining liberties that are enjoyed by those in Hong Kong such as its capitalist system and the lack of jurisdiction of Communist Party officials, China has exerted increasing influence upon the area. For example, Beijing's control of changes in Hong Kong at a political level and limitations on press freedom. It is the conflict regarding freedom of press and speech that have sparked international concern.

Protests are commonplace in the history of Hong Kong but, in recent years, they have not only become more frequent but also more violent, with police brutality issues surfacing as a result. Those of June 2019 stemmed from issues regarding extradition to China and resulted in over 2,600 injuries and US\$755 million worth of property damage. The protests caused the government to concede and withdraw the bill, but international fallout ensued. This includes the deterioration of relations of the UK and US with China and stricter political controls of Hong Kong by the CCP such as the Hong Kong National Security Law instated on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2020.



The implementation of this law has led, primarily, to arrests of pro-democracy and human rights figures such as Chow Hang-Tung in October 2021. The UN expressed concern at this enforcement of the legislation concerning fair trials and the definition of "foreign agents" and terrorism within the bill. The UN reporters said, "There needs to be a reinvigoration of an independent judiciary in Hong Kong, a pause in applying this law, and a fundamental reconsideration of its use".

The international community too has reacted to the tensions by condemning the human rights violations, implementing trade sanctions and acts such as the USA's 'Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act' of November 2019 – increasing international tensions alongside those within the People's Republic of China.

There is growing anti-China sentiment in Hong Kong as surveys from the University of Hong Kong show that only 11% would call themselves "Chinese" and 71% of people say that they do not feel proud about being Chinese citizens. Though the leaders remain adamant that the relationship is strong, and Xi Jinping praised Carrie Lam – whom some call "China's puppet". With the rising voice of pro-democracy protestors and international calls for change joining, is there a way to reduce the conflict without more violence as China's global and domestic power grows?

### Points to consider

- Should China face sanctions for infractions upon the Sino-British Treaty?
- Should Western nations be encouraged or dissuaded from reacting with trade embargos?
- Is it within the UN's rights and powers to possibly infringe upon China's sovereignty in order to rectify the crimes against the citizens of Hing Kong?
- What is the role of the media in this conflict?

### Useful links

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertolsen/2021/03/14/uk-says-china-breached-hong-kong-handover-treaty-for-third-time/?sh=479dde6f2cb4>
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/01/1081552>
- <https://www.cfr.org/background/hong-kong-freedom-democracy-protests-china-crackdown>
- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/hong-kong-protests-explained/>