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## America's Foreign Policy Response to the Hong Kong China Conflict

Ciera C. Lehmann

*Liberty University, Helms School of Government*

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For the past five years, the international community has watched the former British colony, Hong Kong, in its fight for democracy and retention of autonomy without the infringement of Beijing. While Hong Kong has remained an important trade partner to the United States and Washington D.C. has supported its autonomy, it is still under China's rule, and American relations with China, though progress has been made, are currently very strained. Can anything truly be done for China's rebel city? It is imperative to understand the United States' foreign policy record and understand its relationship with Hong Kong and China in order to determine if there is a possible course of action involving the U.S. For years, scholars and international relations professionals have greatly debated whether the U.S. should involve itself in foreign affairs. While the debate continues, one thing is certain: the U.S. is a leader in world affairs – from Afghanistan withdrawal to talks with Russia, the international community watches its every move.

Considering this, the U.S. must act carefully, but also resolutely because it is a beacon of freedom throughout the world, and as such, its foreign policy must reflect this in unwavering support of liberty. Liberty not only for the people of Hong Kong but for people everywhere. Interaction with China is indeed interacting with authoritarianism itself. Washington must not act in ignorance. The reality is that China has no regard for the Sino-British Joint Declaration Treaty in the same way it does not care to address its glaring issues regarding human rights violations. According to Doug Bandow of the Cato Institute, Hong Kong cannot be saved, much less restored to its former status.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, the United States does have influence, and this course of influence must be set to pressuring China itself, demonstrating a push against authoritarianism so that people can live free.

### **Hong Kong and China**

In 1997, Great Britain handed her colony, Hong Kong, back over to the control of China. For the next fifty years, the former British colony was to co-exist with mainland China as “One Country, Two Systems.” Under this system, Hong Kong maintained a certain level of autonomy and quickly became an economic powerhouse; in fact, from 1995 to 2020, the former British colony's economy was considered the freest in the world.<sup>2</sup> The structure of Hong Kong's relationship with China is Basic Law, which since the handover, has been considered the mini-constitution of Hong Kong.<sup>3</sup> Basic Law has been regarded as a promise from China that Hong Kong could maintain the way of life it possessed under Britain for the next five decades.<sup>4</sup> It created the understanding that Hong Kong would deal with its own internal affairs, while Beijing handled external issues and defense.<sup>5</sup> However, Beijing has begun to reach deeper into Hong Kong before the end of the fifty-year agreement.

Despite the level of freedom and significant autonomy that Hong Kong possessed, there was always an underlying current of debate about whether Beijing would keep its word and the Basic Law. These concerns proved correct in 2014, when the Umbrella Movement emerged demanding that Beijing respect the democratic freedoms of Hong Kong.<sup>6</sup> In 2019 protests began

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<sup>1</sup> Doug Bandow, “America Can't Save Hong Kong,” *Cato Institute*, June 4, 2020, <https://www.cato.org/commentary/america-cant-save-hong-kong>.

<sup>2</sup> “2021 Index of Economic Freedom,” 2021, <https://www.heritage.org/index/>.

<sup>3</sup> Tsoi, “What is Hong Kong's Political Controversy About?”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Lau Yiu-Man, “Hong Kong and the Independence Movement that Doesn't Know Itself.”

again against the proposed extradition bill, which Hong Kong citizens claimed to be the mainland's infringement on their political system. The bill would allow any suspect from Hong Kong to be extradited to the mainland and be subject to Beijing's unjust legal system.<sup>7</sup> While Hong Kongers have some hope of a fair trial in Hong Kong, on the mainland, the justice system is a tool used to silence those who show signs of opposition. Most recently, Beijing has passed a national security law in June 2020, further intensifying fears of subduing Hong Kong into complete submission.<sup>8</sup> The national security law condemns "terrorism, subversion, secession, and collusion with foreign power" but defines them very broadly, which critics note, strongly suggests was done so with the express intent of cracking down on protestors.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the law which bypassed the Hong Kong legislature makes provision for a security force in Hong Kong established by Beijing, as well as Beijing-appointed judges for national security cases.<sup>10</sup> In the face of these events, lawmakers and activists who support democracy and autonomy in Hong Kong have proclaimed their fears of "the end of Hong Kong."<sup>11</sup>

### **U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Hong Kong: Why It Matters**

The first 200 years of American history was characterized by isolationism and non-interventionism, as seen in the Monroe Doctrine, wherein President Monroe stated, "in the wars of the European powers, in matters relating to themselves, we have never taken part nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded, or seriously menaced, that we resent injuries, or make preparation for our defense."<sup>12</sup> This isolationist philosophy established in the Monroe Doctrine remained a cornerstone for US foreign policy throughout nineteenth century and all the way up to the twentieth century. Towards the end of the second World War, however, American foreign policy began to shift. A quasi-isolationism demonstrated that the United States had international interest, but did not want to lose the liberty of acting on foreign policy as it wanted.<sup>13</sup> This was particularly evident between the World Wars when the U.S. did not give its full support to the League of Nations.<sup>14</sup> The Lend-Lease Act established by FDR during WWII further solidified this approach by directing such aid as food and ammunition without actually compromising U.S. neutrality. In the wake of the events of WWII, the U.S. adopted interventionism and gained an active role in leading world affairs,<sup>15</sup> as evidenced in the establishment of NATO and involvement in the Cold War. This method of foreign policy was primarily driven by a motivation to prevent further spread of communist ideology.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jeff Li, "Hong Kong-China Extradition Plans Explained," *BBC News*, December 13, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-47810723>.

<sup>8</sup> Albert and Maizland, "Democracy in Hong Kong."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Historic Documents: The Monroe Doctrine," USHistory.org, n.d., <https://www.ushistory.org/documents/monroe.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> "The History of American Foreign Policy," Lumen, n.d., <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-politicalscience/chapter/the-history-of-american-foreign-policy/>.

<sup>14</sup> "The History of American Foreign Policy."

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the United States' influential role in international affairs, it has possessed little, if any say at all, in the trajectory of Hong Kong's relationship with Beijing.<sup>17</sup> Washington's initial statement toward Hong Kong is stated in the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 and grounded in the determination to promote Hong Kong's prosperity, autonomy, and way of life. In May of 2020, however, (following the Beijing's initial crackdown on Hong Kong) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that Hong Kong no longer retains enough autonomy to be treated differently from mainland China.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. maintains substantial economic and political interests in Hong Kong by supporting its autonomy under the "One Country, Two Systems" framework.<sup>19</sup> It concludes and implements bilateral agreements, promotes trade and investment, broadens law enforcement cooperation, bolsters educational, academic, and cultural links, supports high-level visits of U.S. officials, and serves the large community of U.S. citizens and visitors within Hong Kong.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps most notably, and internationally recognized, is Hong Kong's status and influence economically. Because it is a separate customs territory from the mainland, Hong Kong is a member of the World Trade Organization and "...maintains a comprehensive strategic trade controls system that follows multilateral export control regimes."<sup>21</sup> It is also a member of such economic organizations as Financial Action Task Force and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Moreover, it has supported reducing trade barriers and free markets.<sup>22</sup> In addition, it maintains low taxation and there are over 1,300 firms within Hong Kong.<sup>23</sup> While the United States sustains these important economic interests in Hong Kong, it does not provide foreign aid; rather, it supports their independent economy through direct investment and continues to be one of Hong Kong's largest sources of direct foreign investment. Out of any American trading partner, Hong Kong is the single largest with U.S. surplus, mostly due to Hong Kong imports of American aircraft, natural resources, and food, among other things. Not only has the United States treated Hong Kong as a special trading partner, but it holds Hong Kong as an important ally in "preventing illegal diversion of controlled items" and in counterterrorism "...efforts to eliminate funding for terrorist networks and combat money laundering."<sup>24</sup> These are clearly substantial economic (among others) ties to China's SAR.

Now, the U.S. is left to determine whether or how elements of its relationship with Hong Kong (such as export and financial regulations) must be altered.<sup>25</sup> Hopefully, "...new policies will distinguish between areas of no risk to American interests or values, e.g., the treatment of most trade between the U.S. and Hong Kong, and areas like extradition, which must change."<sup>26</sup> Washington must be careful to alter its relationship with Hong Kong in a way that China does not somehow benefit. Regardless, none of this will change Hong Kong's current course. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has already determined its trajectory and it has no intention of backing down now. Xi Jinping has built much of his career and position on clamping down on

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Lohman, "The Limits of American Power in Hong Kong," *The Heritage Foundation*, July 16, 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/the-limits-american-power-hong-kong>.

<sup>18</sup> Lohman, "The Limits of American Power in Hong Kong."

<sup>19</sup> "U.S. Relations with Hong Kong." *U.S. Department of State*. August 28, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-hong-kong/>.

<sup>20</sup> "U.S. Relations with Hong Kong."

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Lohman, "The Limits of American Power in Hong Kong."

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

liberty on the mainland, making the stakes are far too high for any subversion on the part of Hong Kong.<sup>27</sup>

If then, Hong Kong's course is already determined, why does U.S. foreign policy matter? Certainly, there is economic value in the U.S.-Hong Kong relationship, but if Washington really has no say, what is the significance in any foreign policy at all? While it is unlikely that U.S. policy changes will alter Hong Kong's current course, U.S. action still matters as it sends a message, one way or another, to the rest of the world of what the U.S. truly believes about liberty, and exactly how much an authoritarian regime can be pushed back against. As a sovereign nation, it is the United States' sovereign right to declare its reasons for enmity or amity.<sup>28</sup> The reasons behind these, any collaboration or balance of interests on the part of the U.S., are grounded entirely in its fundamental values of unalienable rights and the government's role to protect those rights. China based on Confucianism, and the U.S. grounded in unalienable rights and liberty do not need to have a hostile relationship. Indeed, a good deal of international relations is nations standing by their beliefs, uncompromisingly, while waiting for other to change of compromise. This being said, the United States has the right to set limits as it stands by its ideology. Washington is open to better and closer relations with China, if it demonstrates a greater respect for human rights and liberty.<sup>29</sup>

Although Congress signed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, there have been other acts that addressed technology and trade passed at the same time.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the U.S. has wavered among economics, geopolitics, and human rights with China, and it is reasonable that the PRC would believe that the U.S. cares about human rights as much as it cares about business.<sup>31</sup> Tech companies from the U.S. have pulled out of Hong Kong, not to mention the NBA showing support of, or at least submission to China.<sup>32</sup> In truth, Washington D.C. needs to make a decision to contest the challenges China presents to its interests, whether globally through the Belt and Road Initiative, or domestically through its soft power of "Confucian Institutes."<sup>33</sup> Challenging China is asserting United States' rights as a sovereign state to make known its stance behind enmity and amity decisions.

### What Can the U.S. Do?

Beijing and Washington have cooperated on issues in the past, but there are unresolved concerns such as China's trade surpluses and possession and sale of nuclear technology, not to mention its recent deception over the global pandemic<sup>34</sup> that muddied the relationship and made foreign policy towards China exceedingly difficult.<sup>35</sup> Washington placed sanctions on China to push it to honor fair trade and respect intellectual property rights in addition to banning products

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<sup>27</sup> Lohman, "The Limits of American Power in Hong Kong."

<sup>28</sup> George Paik, "Why Hong Kong Really Matters to Americans," Foreign Policy Association, November 4, 2019, <https://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2019/11/04/why-hong-kong-really-matters-to-americans/>.

<sup>29</sup> Paik, "Why Hong Kong Really Matters to Americans."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Kurt Zindulka, "China Lied, People Died: Five Eyes Report Details CCP Coronavirus Cover-Up," *Breitbart*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2020/05/02/intelligence-report-details-how-china-covered-up-coronavirus-outbreak/>.

<sup>35</sup> Cornelia Meyers, "The U.S. and China: In a Relationship, but it's Complicated," *Arab News*, July 3, 2021, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1675631>.

from Chinese companies, such as Huawei.<sup>36</sup> However, one of the greatest banes to the U.S.-China relationship is human rights. China has an extensive rap sheet of human rights abuses, from political and religious persecution to detaining minority groups in re-education and labor camps.<sup>37</sup> In Hong Kong, the Chinese state has steadily increased its repressive authoritarian tactics, especially through its police force which regularly assaults both protestors and bystanders.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, the international community has no say in the course that Beijing has planned for Hong Kong well before the protests began, and neither does the U.S.<sup>39</sup> Because Beijing is vague in its policy-making process (demonstrated in articles in Basic Law that make provision for Beijing to interpret it as it sees fit), it is difficult to pinpoint the exact intentions of the Chinese government, such as passing the national security law and the Handover agreement itself, and implement its true intentions. The Brookings institute observes that Beijing's "...imposition of its will on Hong Kong as a morality play with good versus evil undertones" is a common interpretation.<sup>40</sup> In fact, this position supports the theory that Beijing has always desired to suppress Hong Kong and erase its special distinction from other Chinese cities.<sup>41</sup> If this could be achieved, it is speculated that Beijing could guarantee that its Special Administrative region "...did not serve as an inspiration for Chinese citizens desiring greater freedom to express their views, practice their religion, access information from around the world, and protest injustice."<sup>42</sup> In short, according to this argument, Beijing merely accepted the terms at the Handover in 1997 because it was not ideologically or militarily strong enough at the time to push back and assert its will.<sup>43</sup> It can be reasonably concluded that China never intended to keep its word in the first place. Consequently, war is not a wise option as Beijing will certainly resist even the slightest show of outside force.<sup>44</sup> It could confidently be expected that China might increase actions such as human rights violations in retaliation to any show of military force. During the CCP's recent 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, President Xi Jinping stated, "We will never allow anyone to bully, oppress, or subjugate China. Anyone who dares try to do that will have their heads bashed bloody against the Great Wall of Steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people."<sup>45</sup>

Tibet further provides a clear example of actions by the Chinese state that demonstrate predictable patterns in Hong Kong, giving reason to assume China's future actions. While Beijing has not maintained the same military presence in Hong Kong as it has in Tibet, it has been greatly resistant in giving up its claim over the region. Human rights abuses and the mother-child philosophy have not just occurred within Hong Kong, nor is the spread of authoritarianism merely theoretical. China has viewed Tibet in much of the same way. Beijing

<sup>36</sup> Meyers, "The U.S. and China: In a Relationship, but it's Complicated,"

<sup>37</sup> Joshua Wong, "China is Committing Human Rights Abuses in Hong Kong," *Aljazeera*, April 18, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/china-committing-human-rights-abuses-hong-kong-200408083726463.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Wong, "China is Committing Human Rights Abuses in Hong Kong."

<sup>39</sup> Lohman, "The Limits of American Power in Hong Kong."

<sup>40</sup> Ryan Hass, "Why Now? Understanding Beijing's New Assertiveness in Hong Kong," Brookings Institute, July 17, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/07/17/why-now-understanding-beijings-new-assertiveness-in-hongkong/>.

<sup>41</sup> Hass, "Why Now? Understanding Beijing's New Assertiveness in Hong Kong,"

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Bandow, "America Can't Save Hong Kong."

<sup>45</sup> Robin Brant, "CCP 100: Xi Warns China Will Not be 'oppressed' in Anniversary Speech," July 1, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-57648236>.

maintains that Tibet has always been a part of the “motherland” and forced it into annexation in 1951.<sup>46</sup> Tibetans attempted to regain their independence in 1959 but were quickly repressed.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, the CCP has always considered Hong Kong as part of the motherland, and has taken overt action to suppress any opposition with the national security bill and recent arrests of individuals in the opposition movement. Beijing is also not expected to accept democracy because that ruins the regime’s “...long-term determination to reconstitute historic China. The loss of prestige would be enormous.”<sup>48</sup> Outright demands or pressure of Beijing will only solidify losing any glimmer of change.<sup>49</sup> This was clearly observed in the aggressive response to the protests and the change in Hong Kong’s electoral rules to squash any opposition. While the U.S. does have success with helping such countries as South Korea maintain freedom, and promoting the successful independence of such autonomous regions like Taiwan, in the case of Hong Kong, the SAR has no recourse, and the international community, is mostly resigned to watch.

Isolationists would argue that it is not prudent to become involved in another state’s internal affairs, and this is entirely reasonable. In the grand scheme of international relations and to that end, geopolitics, why should a country stick its neck out for citizens that are not its own? However, giving up benefits and accepting the cost of unfriendliness (or even hostility) the more China suppresses freedom and squelches human rights, is not at all intervening in its internal affairs.<sup>50</sup> In fact, it is quite the opposite, and if anything, is standing by the founding creed of the United States. Writing for the Foreign Policy Association, George Paik noted, “Our founding creed may tend to undermine non-democratic regimes, but asserting our nature as we shape external relations.”<sup>51</sup> This is merely shaping U.S. foreign policy in such a way that makes Washington’s terms clear, while maintaining consistency with the founding ideology that makes up the core of the United States. What can the U.S. do? The United States can, and ought to, take a firm stance in favor of protecting human rights and civil liberties. No compromise. That way, it would not only continue with U.S. ideals and core ideology, but it would also reduce the whiplash caused by foreign policy with China. Instead of bouncing back and forth between economics, and human rights (not to mention geopolitics, such as in the South China Sea), foreign policy with China would be direct and on no uncertain terms. Evolve by protecting human rights and liberty, and Washington will support free trade and investment. Otherwise, the U.S. will count the loss and stand by its foundation.

### **How the United States Should Respond to the Hong Kong-China Conflict**

Should the U.S., in fact, do anything at all? The main objective of American foreign policy on this issue would be to preserve as much life as possible, while working to prohibit the spread of authoritarianism. Hong Kong is mostly a lost cause, in the sense of keeping it entirely autonomous. In dealing with Beijing, Washington must be careful that any form of push back does not result in greater loss of human life, nor such a closed off Beijing that diplomacy is ruled null. While the U.S. does not have the end-all answer, Bandow noted, “The U.S. can help. But

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<sup>46</sup> Peter Hessler, “Tibet Through Chinese Eyes,” *The Atlantic*, February 1999, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/02/tibet-through-chinese-eyes/306395/>.

<sup>47</sup> “Tibet Profile,” BBC News, April 26, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific16689779>.

<sup>48</sup> “Tibet Profile,” BBC News.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Paik, “Why Hong Kong Really Matters to Americans.”

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

not by overt, dramatic intervention, which is unrealistic and would force China's hand, ensuring an even tougher and more permanent clampdown."<sup>52</sup> In other words, the U.S. cannot, and it would be prudent if it did not, directly insert itself into the situation.

While Beijing retains the authority to do what it wants with Hong Kong given its loss of trust and credibility in the international sphere offers a chance for the U.S. to unify other states to combat Chinese policy. Already, twenty five countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Japan, France, and Australia (all U.S. allies) openly oppose China's actions.<sup>53</sup> Doing so is certainly a multilateral job.<sup>54</sup> This is because China is strategically leveraging its economic expertise by taking advantage of international economic weaknesses among U.S. allies.<sup>55</sup> The United States must acknowledge China's presence in the international community, but focus on influencing it towards freedom and international cooperation.<sup>56</sup> In order to work towards accomplishing this, the United States and its allies ought to focus on influencing stronger relationships between European and Indo-Pacific allies, facilitating innovation that will provide significant advantages over China's technological influence, and centering and strengthening the defense and domestic resilience of U.S. allies.<sup>57</sup> The U.S. and its allies are positioned well to confront the China challenge, however, they must be of one mind, explicitly clear on their positions of their relationships with China.<sup>58</sup>

Because of its actions in Hong Kong, and most recently with COVID-19, Beijing's image has noticeably declined.<sup>59</sup> "Ironically, Hong Kong's best hope is the *threat* of economic retaliation by a broad coalition led by America focused on vital redlines protecting essential liberties, not democracy or independence."<sup>60</sup> What matters most to China in its relationship with Hong Kong is its "...existing financial exposure to Hong Kong – companies on the Hong Kong stock exchange and the stock-connect schemes that enable international traders to invest in Chinese stocks..." is of the utmost importance."<sup>61</sup> The U.S. and the rest of the world have treated Hong Kong's economy entirely different from that of the mainland. Relegating Hong Kong's economy like the rest of the mainland would threaten great economic loss to China. Furthermore, should Hong Kong not be able to clear American or other currency, investors will go elsewhere, therefore removing international investment exposure away from Chinese businesses.<sup>62</sup> The Cato Institute quoted a study by the Hong Kong Watch that found, "The issue is less current production than access to Western capital through Hong Kong," and this would be especially tough to swallow in the wake of the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 issue.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Bandow, "America Can't Save Hong Kong."

<sup>53</sup> Eleanor Albert, "Which Countries Support the New Hong Kong National Security Law?" *The Diplomat*, July 6, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/which-countries-support-the-new-hong-kong-national-security-law/>.

<sup>54</sup> Lindsay W. Ford and James Goldgeier, "Retooling America's Alliances to Manage the China Challenge," Brookings Institute, January 25, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/retooling-americas-alliances-to-manage-the-china-challenge/>.

<sup>55</sup> Ford and Goldgeier, "Retooling America's Alliances to Manage the China Challenge."

<sup>56</sup> "The State of U.S.-China Relations," Wilson Center, April 3, 2003, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-state-us-china-relations>.

<sup>57</sup> Ford and Goldgeier, "Retooling America's Alliances to Manage the China Challenge."

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Bandow, "America Can't Save Hong Kong."

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Eamon Barrett, "'Nuclear Option': How the U.S. Could Leverage Hong Kong to Hurt Beijing," *Fortune*, May 29, 2020, <https://fortune.com/2020/05/29/trump-china-announcement-hong-kong/>.

<sup>62</sup> Barrett, "'Nuclear Option': How the U.S. Could Leverage Hong Kong to Hurt Beijing,"

<sup>63</sup> Bandow, "America Can't Save Hong Kong."



Removing international investment and currency from the reach of China's economy would further bolster alliance among the U.S. and its allies economically. It would further counter China's leveraging of financial fissures among allies, and deal a blow to the Chinese economy. In short, Hong Kong may just be the United States' best bargaining chip to influence human rights in China, as well as guiding economic relationships. This is indeed tricky, as China has increasingly been shutting down businesses in Hong Kong, and even on the mainland, that have become too big to control. It is still to be determined even, just how much Beijing cares about business in Hong Kong, as what is exposed to the rest of the world's investment may start to grow out of China's reach.

Key, however, is for the United States to allow its allies rely less on the U.S. itself, and take greater lead in their own regions and defense.<sup>64</sup> It must encourage its allies out of a supporting role and into one that shares the defense burden equally.<sup>65</sup> In addition, U.S. allies must be enabled to obtain the capabilities and resources they need to deter Beijing.<sup>66</sup> According to the Brookings Institute, avenues for this should include, "breaking down outdated bureaucratic hurdles, export control rules, and technology transfer restrictions that can make it difficult for U.S. allies to compete more effectively with Beijing."<sup>67</sup> United States leadership is important, and indeed influential. However, it cannot be everywhere at once, nor is it aware of everything that occurs. In order to be the most effective in influencing China towards greater freedom and respect for human rights, the United States must work with and rely on its allies.

The United States must be resolute in its intolerance for issues such as human rights violations and in its stand against authoritarianism. However, it must maintain the delicate balance between assertion and repeal because China may view U.S. action in Hong Kong in a more threatening light than it already does.<sup>68</sup> The same goes with the U.S.-China relationship. If anything, it would be beneficial for the U.S. to maintain as open of a relationship with China as possible and preserve as much of a productive and influential presence in Hong Kong as it can.<sup>69</sup> Doing so is a much more efficient strategy to prevent worse outcomes,<sup>70</sup> by keeping an open avenue for dialogue between the U.S. and China. That way, influence towards freedom and respect for human rights can make its way into China. Moreover, the U.S. and the West must keep in mind the future of the next generation of Hong Kongers, as they will undoubtedly impact the future of Hong Kong.<sup>71</sup> While China is treating Hong Kong as a purely internal issue that must be free of international influence, its overreach could be used to "...galvanize greater international coordination of positions and actions in China."<sup>72</sup> For example, Washington might consider building off of the efforts of the G-7 Summit, encouraging Beijing to consider moderation with the national security law.<sup>73</sup> While the United States cannot remove Hong Kong from China, it can lead a unified West in the pursuit of protecting innocent human life and standing in defense of civil liberties.

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<sup>64</sup> Ford and Goldgeier, "Retooling America's Alliances to Manage the China Challenge."

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Hass, "Why Now? Understanding Beijing's New Assertiveness In Hong Kong."

<sup>69</sup> Hass, "Why Now? Understanding Beijing's New Assertiveness In Hong Kong."

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

Hong Kong activist, Joshua Wong boldly stated, “The international community must intervene because this is about the expansion of authoritarianism everywhere.”<sup>74</sup> Indeed, this is what the China-Hong Kong conflict is truly about. As Wong stated, the fight does not stop with Hong Kong, it must continue to push back authoritarianism so that people can live free. The United States, while it does not have a direct say in the future of Hong Kong, ought to clearly communicate that it will not stand for human rights violations or the bloodshed of innocent people. Moreover, the U.S. is a leader in the international community, and is positioned to rally and lead its allies in the fight against oppressive governance that stamp out freedom. The U.S. has great influence, and this has the potential to be used in such a way to lead the fight to protect civil liberties. China’s human rights violations and suppressive actions against Hong Kong (as well as Tibet and Taiwan) should not be treated as a random foreign policy issue, as also threatens citizens of the U.S. where companies and universities are susceptible to influence from Beijing.<sup>75</sup> China’s undermining of human rights and push of authoritarianism are global, and the repercussions of them spreading will be global as well.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Joshua Wong, “China is Committing Human Rights Abuses in Hong Kong,” Al-Jazeera News, April 18, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/china-committing-human-rights-abuses-hong-kong-200408083726463.htm>

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