

SECURITY OF FREEDOM FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG

Jacky Luu: Senior – History

Mentor: Dr. Michaelene Cox – Department of Political Science

Introduction

- Human security means safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression. It also means protection from a sudden and hurtful disruption in daily life. (Paris 2001)
- The Chinese government avoids the term “human security”. The phrase is never used in public speeches, talks, documents, or the Chinese news media. (Breslin 2015)

Literature Review

- The PRC redefined human security in keeping with the state’s priorities and objectives. It is important for the PRC to maintain control definitions on ideas and norms to make it “safe” and “suitable” for China. (Breslin 2015)
- Shambaugh said that China has a different history, and a different world view built on “harmony, ethics, and benevolence”. That said, China develops concepts and theories based on its unique experience. (Breslin 2015)
- “Western ideas are modified to reflect China’s experiences and Chinese contexts. So ideas like human security go through a process of *Sinification* to ensure that they are imbued with “Chinese characteristics” first developed to explain a distinct “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. (Breslin 2015)

References

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Background

- Hong Kong was a British colony for 156 years. Hong Kong peacefully transitioned back under the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on July 1, 1997 under a system called “One state Two systems”. This system gives Hong Kong a bit more sovereignty and its citizens more rights. How can Hong Kongers resist the PRC’s attempt to suppress Hong Kong under the PRC’s system?
- In 2003, 500,000 Hong Kongers took to the streets to protest a national security bill known as Article 23 (a law where Hong Kong is subject to the PRC’s strict national security laws). The protests worked and made the bill shelved. With a new administration in the PRC, it is more challenging to try to fight the extradition bill. (Cheung BBC News 2019)
- Hong Kong is a subject of “mainlandization”, an attempt by PRC to make Hong Kong politically, economically, and socially dependent on the PRC. (Lo 2008)
- A June 2012 study showed that a large percentage of Hong Kongers identified themselves as Hong Kongers rather than Chinese. It is a historic high since 1997. (Ping and Kin-ming 2014)
- In February 2019, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR) proposed an extradition bill. The bill will allow the PRC to extradite fugitives to mainland China. The controversy with this bill is that Hong Kong does not have existing bilateral extradition agreements with the PRC. There were strong criticisms and suspicion on the PRC’s motivations from Hong Kong democrats. (Lee, Yuen, Tang, and Cheng 2019)



“Protester’s Defense Mechanisms”

Umbrellas, gas masks, and helmets are commonly used by protesters to defend themselves against the police’s use of tear gas and water cannons. This is an example of the people under freedom from fear of their government. (GettyImages: <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/pro-democracy-protesters-react-as-police-fire-water-cannons-news-photo/1168358238?adppopup=true>)



“Lacks Restraint”

Four Hong Kong policemen in riot gear beat up an unarmed protester, showing Hong Kong’s police force lacks restraint when dealing with protesters. Despite numerous beatings and arrests from the police, Hong Kongers continues to protest and fight back the police by numerous methods. (Hong Kong Freedom Press: <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/11/20/hkfp-lens-fierce-police-protester-battles-around-polyu-students-evacuate-campus/>)



“Medics in the Crossfire”

From what it looks like, the helmet on the floor signifies that they are medics, who are supposed to be protected from the violence. This shows that the Hong Kong Police Force is indiscriminate when suppressing the protests, no matter who they are. Attacks like these create further mistrust between the people and the government. (Tom Grundy’s (Co-Founder of Hong Kong Free Press) Twitter Account: <https://twitter.com/tomgrundy/status/1235163337966534656/photo/3>)



“Bastion of Freedom”

American flags are a popular symbol of freedom and democracy in the Hong Kong protests. Other flags such as the Hong Kong colonial flag and British flag are flown by protesters. Hong Kong protesters would make pleas to the West for support for their cause. The US passed the *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act* that sanctions China and Hong Kong over human rights abuse. (Washington Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/hong-kong-protesters-defy-threats-from-beijing-police-and-heavy-rain-for-yet-another-huge-march/2019/08/18/68dc5812-c063-11e9-a8b0-7ed8a0d5dc5d_story.html)



“#MeToo”

Female Hong Kong protesters had a #MeToo style rally in response to the rampant sexual assault and sexual abuse to female protesters by the Hong Kong Police Force. (BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-49505901>)

Methodology

- This project will utilize pictures to give visuals, invoke emotions, and promote discussions on Hong Kong’s struggles for freedom.
- I utilized history in this project to show how Hong Kong is different from mainland China. This project will also focus more on the protests from March 2019 to before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The pictures came from various sources such as *GettyImages*, social media such as *Twitter*, and various news media such as the *Hong Kong Free Press*, the *Washington Post*, and *BBC News*. I attempted to find news articles and pictures from English Chinese news media such as *China Daily*, but there were no results that popped up regarding the Hong Kong protests. It is not surprising, because the PRC heavily censors the press and they would not allow something like the Hong Kong protests to be allowed for people in mainland China to have knowledge of another democratic civil uprising that mirrors the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989.
- I chose images that I felt are powerful to show what Hong Kongers go through during the protests.

Findings

- The protests were able to make the HKSAR withdraw the extradition bill from the legislation in September 2019. However, the protesters said it was “too little, too late”. They have more demands such as an inquiry on police brutality, the removal of Carrie Lam (Chief Executive of HKSAR), amnesty for all who have been arrested, and greater democratic freedoms. (John CNN 2019)
- What I found through the photos and my readings is that through persistence, momentum, and mass defiance, pro-democracy Hong Kongers were able to withdraw the bill. The protesters will not back down and will fight back until they get what they wanted no matter how many people were beaten, arrested, and abused by the pro-Beijing forces in Hong Kong.
- The protests were ongoing until the COVID-19 pandemic struck in China and spread to Hong Kong, making the protest lose its momentum. However, the PRC and HKSAR faced further criticisms and backlash for their incapability to contain the virus from spreading, especially from healthcare workers in Hong Kong. There are no signs that the protests will stop until the people of Hong Kong get what they want before COVID-19, and possibly after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.