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# Hong Kong and the U.S. cold war on China

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June 23, 2019



Protests in Hong Kong in recent weeks have been covered extensively by the corporate press in the Western imperialist countries. The protests were called against legislation proposed in Hong Kong that would put in place an extradition treaty with mainland China.

Hong Kong, an autonomous territory in China, was a British colony until 1997 and today continues to have a separate government and economic system from the People's Republic. Hong Kong currently does not have a treaty to allow extradition to China. Most countries in the world have extradition treaties and passage of this amendment was considered to be routine.

Ian Goodrum, a U.S. journalist at the China Daily newspaper, told MintPress News:

“It’s unfortunate there’s been all this hullabaloo over what is a fairly routine and reasonable adjustment to the law. As the law reads right now, there’s no legal way to prevent criminals in other parts of China from escaping charges by fleeing to Hong Kong. It would be like Louisiana — which, you’ll remember, has a unique justice system — refusing to send fugitives to Texas or California for crimes committed in those states.”

The United States itself has such an extradition treaty with Hong Kong, the U.S.-Hong Kong Extradition Treaty signed in 1997. The U.S. invoked that treaty to demand the extradition of Edward Snowden. Hong Kong officials at the time suggested that the U.S. botched its extradition request, which delayed the arrest warrant, allowing Snowden to board a flight to Moscow.

The U.S. press is now bellowing as if the proposed treaty with China is an injustice such as they have never seen, and U.S. politicians are falling all over themselves to lead the charge against it.

The extradition proposal has for all intents and purposes been dropped by the Hong Kong legislators, but the protests continue. The general thrust of the protests is in reality against Hong Kong’s relationship with China.

In 1842, Hong Kong was taken by the British Empire at the conclusion of a series of wars it fought to impose the opium trade on China. It remained a British colony for 155 years.

When Hong Kong was reintegrated with China in 1997 as an autonomous territory, the phrase used to describe the agreement was “one country - two systems.” In other words, the capitalist economy of Hong Kong would be allowed to remain — until 2047.

But the U.S. and other imperialist countries never really accepted that. The U.S. in

particular has maintained a constant effort to separate Hong Kong from China once again. The U.S. has built major operations in Hong Kong aimed at mainland China.

Regardless of the slogans emblazoned on the banners of the Hong Kong protests, this uprising is not a result of widespread sentiment among the people of Hong Kong for sovereignty or separation from China. In fact, public opinion polls recently found that [only 11 percent of people in Hong Kong support or strongly support being independent from China.](#)

The corporate press speaks of the city of Hong Kong as a jewel of capitalism. It's true that the capitalists in Hong Kong have grown very rich – in large part due to their proximity to the rest of China. It is a world center for finance capital and the global shipping industry. With a population of just over 7 million, [Hong Kong is home to 93 billionaires – second only to New York City and more than the majority of countries in the world.](#) Another one million are actually millionaires, about the same number of people who are reported to have been participating in the protests.

They are hostile to socialism and the social measures that have lifted hundreds of millions of people in mainland China out of extreme poverty and provided high standards of health care, education and modern infrastructure.

Hong Kong has one of the greatest levels of inequality in the developed world, with about 1.35 million — about 20 percent of the population — at or below the poverty line. One in five children live in poverty. Elderly people, 478,000 of them, suffer the deepest poverty. The price of housing compared to income is far worse than San Francisco or New York. More than 100,000 people live in tiny cubicles, often only 35 square feet, after landlords have divided up apartments into multiple spaces.

China, by contrast, is the fastest-growing large economy in the world. It has developed from a time of extreme poverty for the mass of its people to prosperity for the majority. China has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty in just a

few decades. The president of the World Bank admitted: “This is one of the great stories in human history, frankly.”

Since China’s revolution in 1949, the basic elements of the economy have been state-owned and integrated into socialist planning. However, after a great internal struggle, the ruling Communist Party decided in the late 1970s to allow capitalist ownership and investment in order to stimulate economic growth.

The results have been mixed and contradictory, with great successes and great dangers. Today, China is a contradictory society, with a rising capitalist class challenging the socialist planned economy.

Hong Kong is an imperialist base of operations against China, encouraging the growth of the capitalist class in China, which threatens the foundations of socialism. It is in this context, including the U.S. trade war and military buildup against China, that the Hong Kong protests must be seen.

The imperialist powers — the U.S., Europe, Japan — have provided extensive political, financial and media support to the Hong Kong protests.

Anti-China agitation in Hong Kong has been funded and guided by branches of the U.S. government’s semi-clandestine National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

The NED was set up by the U.S. government as practically an arm of the CIA. At its beginning, one of the NED’s founders told the Washington Post, “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.” It was founded during the Reagan administration when the CIA itself was so rocked by its “dirty tricks” having been exposed, that they needed a new vehicle with a soft reputation to continue their work.

The NED has supplied several million dollars to some of the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations in Hong Kong, [says](#) Louisa Greve, vice

president of NED programs for Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Some of the most influential organizations in the current protests – the Hong Kong Journalist Association, the Civic Party, the Labour Party and the Hong Kong Democratic Party are tied to two branches of the NED in Hong Kong – the Solidarity Center and the National Democratic Institute.

While intelligence agencies like the NED keep their operations mostly secret, some others are more open. That includes House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who said in a statement that the U.S. Congress would have had to “reassess whether Hong Kong is ‘sufficiently autonomous’” if the extradition law were to pass. Ultra-imperialist U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo went to Hong Kong in May and met with Martin Lee, one of the leaders of the protests. And a whole gang in the U.S. Congress has introduced a bill to bolster the anti-China movement in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, if passed, could authorize sanctions and travel restrictions against officials in Hong Kong that do not go along with their anti-China campaign.

A recent open letter encouraging the Hong Kong protests was endorsed by some 70 NGOs in Hong Kong, and was signed by the directors of Amnesty International, the Human Rights Watch and the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor.

Maybe that’s why none of the protests Hong Kong have raised the issue of extreme poverty in Hong Kong or demanded the kind of socialist progress that has almost completely ended poverty in China. The working class in China is moving forward, infrastructure is improving, science and technology are making tremendous progress compared to the rest of the world, there is no measurable illiteracy, and life expectancy is comparable to and improving faster than the most developed capitalist countries.

Even as we defend Bolivarian Venezuela and oppose U.S. war moves against Iran,

progressive forces around the world have to stand firm against this reactionary campaign aimed against the majority in Hong Kong as well as People's China.

