BMUN LXXII

# CHINESE STATE COUNCIL (CSC)

LXXII
SEVENTY-SECOND SESSION

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome Letter

Greetings! Welcome to the Chinese State Council (CSC) for BMUN LXXII! My name is Eric Pan, and I will be your Head Chair for CSC this year. A little bit more about myself—I am a junior at Cal, double majoring in History and Political Science. I was born in Nanjing, China, and immigrated to the United States when I was eight, calling the Bay Area my home since. Due to the influences of my exposure to living in both China and the United States, I am very interested in Sino-American relations, which is one of the reasons why I chose to chair this committee. My other academic interests also include 20th-century European history and international law, which are both subjects I hope to study more in law school (hopefully) in the future. Outside of BMUN, I am an avid aquarium enthusiast, having kept both freshwater and saltwater aquariums for over nine years and as a result probably knows way too much about fish than I should. I am also involved in A Cappella and the ASUC Student Legal Clinic here on campus, and you will most likely find me watching or playing basketball in my spare time or spending time with my two cats. This year, I am joined by my wonderful Vice Chairs: Jackie, Amy, and Harry. You can read more about them below:

Hi everyone! My name is Jackie Thibault, and I'm a third year majoring in Engineering Math & Statistics. I'm half Chinese, so growing up mixed, I've become very interested in the global relations involving China. Outside of BMUN and school, I love exploring the bay, biking, thrifting, listening to music and going to concerts, and hanging with friends! I will be studying abroad in Singapore this spring semester so I won't be there for the conference, but nevertheless, I hope you all enjoy CSC this year and I'm looking forward to hearing about all the debates!

Hi everyone, my name is Amy Zhang, and I'm a junior majoring in Data Science and Public Health. I grew up in Dalian, China, and moved to the Bay Area after high school. I'm super excited to chair for CSC this year to oversee debate on topics that directly relate to my background. I hope to learn more about the topics and meet everyone during conference.

Hi everyone! I am Harry Xu and I'm a sophomore double majoring in Economics and Data Science. As someone who grew up in Guangzhou, China all the way up to middle school, I find myself interested in topics such as the long history that China has. As somebody that just joined BMUN, I am very excited to be in CSC and hope to learn more through different debates on different topics!

Before we begin, I would like to elaborate more on the layout of the committee and its procedure. First and foremost, because this is a bilingual committee, we will be debating one topic in Mandarin Chinese. **For this year, we have decided to assign the bilingual portion to Topic B, the Hong Kong Protests.**

Although, as delegates, you will not be graded on your command of the language but rather on the substance of your speeches and writing, we still highly encourage you to converse or attempt to converse in Mandarin during the bilingual portion of committee. Procedurally, this committee will be using standard BMUN procedure, but given its status as a specialized committee, the chronology of the committee will take place at the beginning of the respective topics. Regarding the committee roles, you will be assigned a province or special region of China. This role, however, will hold less weight than country assignments in other committees, as due to the specificity of this topic, you are not required to represent the interests of your province during the committee, although incorporation of regional statistics and provincial policies are encouraged. If any of this is confusing, please reach out to us at cscbmun72@bmun.org and we will not hesitate to address any of your potential questions or concerns. We would be more than happy to answer them.

On behalf of the whole dais, I would like to extend to you the warmest welcome at BMUN LXXII. We are so excited to see you all this coming March!

Best,

Eric Pan
**潘子瑞**
Head Chair of CSC
Email: epan@bmun.org

# TOPIC A: CHINA'S MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19

## TOPIC BACKGROUND

### First Signs of COVID-19

On December 12, 2019, a series of pneumonia-like illnesses resistant to standard treatment methods were reported in a hospital in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission (CDC). After further investigation and in the report submitted on December 31, 2019, to the World Health Organization Country Office in China, the outbreak was pinpointed to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, where the government would subsequently commence shutdown of the market in fears of a re-emergence of the SARS-CoV-1 virus that had previously broke out in Asia from 2000-2004 (CDC). Although not the same SARS that the world experienced in the early 2000s, SARS-CoV-2, also known as COVID-19, would become much more destructive, as many of you have most certainly become familiar with in the past few years. China, with the largest population of any nation in the world, in addition to being ground-zero for the virus, suffered immensely. Over an approximately three-year period, the Chinese government had to combat one of the most difficult tasks it has faced.


*Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, China (Cohen).*

## Zero-COVID Policy: Nationwide Quarantine

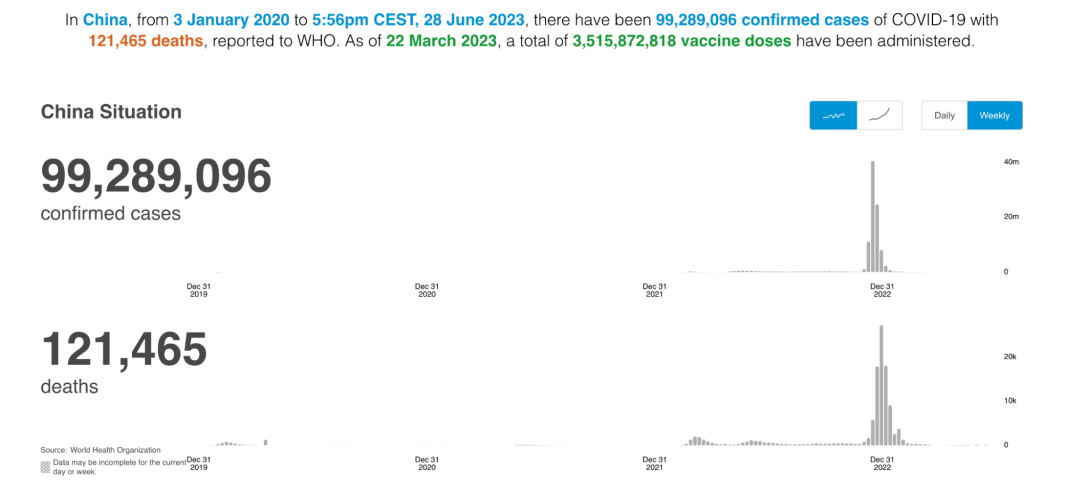
During the pandemic, the Chinese government placed heavy emphasis on quarantine as a primary method of combating the spread of COVID-19. Due to the fundamental difference in governmental structures and powers that exist between China and most Western nations, the approach to combat the pandemic varied drastically. China primarily relied on a series of nationwide lockdowns and enforced them rigorously, given that the government had much greater power and say in policy implementation in addition to its de facto one-party system led by Xi Jinping (Gan). Citizens were confined to their homes, and the government organized frequent testing and tracking to identify individuals who tested positive and anyone who may have come into contact with said individual (Zhou). In some severe cases, essential supplies like insulin were in short supply and could not be delivered in accordance with quarantine protocol. However, strict regulations still were not something that all Chinese citizens could embrace, especially among the low to middle-working class. China has always received criticism for its authoritarianism, but historically, this type of unrestrained power and disregard for individual liberties has led to rapid growth in China. For example, while it takes several years and even sometimes decades for infrastructure projects in the United States to be completed with issues over negotiations with municipalities and individuals over private property, eminent domain, and other considerations—one of the primary reasons why there is a lack of high-speed railways in the United States—the newly built bullet train network in China, or "gaotie," is one of the numerous public infrastructure projects that led to an increase in convenience as well as standard of living in Chinese metropolitan areas (Jones). However, in the case of a pandemic, an emphasis on nation-wide, government-sanctioned quarantine is not a panacea, especially when confronted with logistical issues of ensuring the needs of 1.4 billion people are met when almost every aspect of their lives are being restricted, something that China would soon find out about later.

## Vaccine Development and Procurement

While quarantine became the initial and primary option in combating the pandemic, vaccinations were still needed as a long-term solution, given that quarantine is not an airtight solution to the problem. China opted to develop its own CoronaVac and Sinopharm vaccines (WHO). These vaccines, which use an inactivated—or killed—form of the SARS-CoV-2 virus as opposed to their mRNA counterparts in the United States, do work. However, China still struggled to produce enough vaccines for its citizens, due to a refusal by certain members of the Chinese population to get vaccinated due to their distrust of the Chinese vaccines (Doucleff). To supplement this need in its domestic vaccination efforts, China joined the WHO-led COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX) vaccine program, in which it offered to utilize its vaccine production capabilities to secure vaccines for countries in need but also procure approximately 15 million doses of vaccines of its own for its citizens (Reuters). Although statistics may remain unreliable, according to information China submitted to the WHO, as of March 2023, China has administered over 3.5 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to its citizens (WHO).

## Role of Government

After relatively stable Sino-American relations since the administrations of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zeming, and Hu Jintao, the rise of Xi Jinping drastically altered the course of Chinese politics, which became a major factor to consider when analyzing China and the COVID-19 pandemic. Xi Jinping's philosophy has always been centered around a desire to shape China into a global superpower, whether through the "Belt and Road" initiative to expand influence globally or emphasizing the development of Chinese-made vaccines (Ross & Bekkevold). Thus, China opted to adopt a strategy that focused on self-sufficiency, and this "China first" mentality adopted by Xi in his policies meant that during COVID, the disastrous management by the government was largely covered up and replaced with statistics that portrayed China in a positive light (Ross & Bekkevold). China remains firm on this stance to this day, refusing cooperation with the United States and denying vaccine aid offered through private channels as recently as January of 2023, with its Foreign Ministry stating in response that China's own vaccines were in "overall in adequate supply."(Leonard). Besides a lack of willingness to accept aid, the Chinese government also had immense control over statistics in relation to the pandemic. Despite official statistics reported by China to the WHO as 121,465 deaths in total, the actual number of deaths greatly exceeded such reports. Instead, this report was a means through which China exerts positive light on its management of COVID-19 to the international community is a part of the central government's goal of attempting to shape the perception of the ways in which China's management of COVID was conducted, when in fact this is not the case. In addition, while not widely reported upon, COVID's initial transmission and lack of concern until it became widespread is a consequence of Chinese bureaucracy, since local leaders did not wish to be held responsible for any complications arising within their jurisdiction that might jeopardize a potential promotion. On December 30th, 2019, Dr. Li Wenliang, an ophthalmologist at Wuhan Central Hospital, asked his fellow medical practitioners to wear protective equipment in a story posted to the Chinese social media platform Weibo from his hospital bed (McDonnell). Authorities rebuffed this statement, and local police in Wuhan investigated Dr. Li Wenliang for "spreading rumors" about a mysterious virus, forcing him to sign a letter stating that he had "disturbed social order" (McDonnell). When Dr. Li succumbed to COVID-19 on February 7th, 2020, Chinese social media erupted with comments and hashtags of "Wuhan government owes Dr Li Wenliang an apology" and "We want freedom of speech," which were promptly censored (McDonnell). This is just one example of the many cases in which the Chinese government played a key role in shaping the direction of the pandemic—for better or (in most cases) for worse.




*The official COVID-19 statistics reported to the WHO by China as of June 28,*

## Government Response

On December 28, 2019, the Chinese government passed "The Basic Healthcare and Health Promotion Law," which gave the Chinese government the "legal duty to render 'safe and effective basic public health services,' control risk factors affecting health, and strengthen the prevention and control of diseases" (National People's Congress). During COVID-19, this law would be one of the primary ways in which the Chinese government controlled the populace, as it gave the "legal legitimacy" for the Chinese government to do as it pleased with regard to its handling of the pandemic. This would culminate in a "Zero-COVID policy," in which China quarantined major cities for the purpose of eliminating the virus in its entirety. During this period, entire neighborhoods were required to test, having to line up at a designated location at a designated time, and any suspicion of contact with the virus meant a suspension of travel and, in many cases, a form of house arrest. Despite this method working to a certain extent, as China, impressively given its population, became one of the first nations to reopen many of its major metropolitan cities by 2021, outbreaks still occurred in major cities like Shenzhen, Shanghai, etc., where international flights still continued to operate. Subsequent lockdowns designed to contain these new outbreaks, often caused by zero-symptom cases and false negative tests from individuals who had contracted COVID-19 abroad, became tedious and exhausting for much of the public. Similarly, strict regulations were applied to foreigners. China implemented a travel ban on all foreigners with a few exceptions, and during the peak of the pandemic, all travelers to China, mostly comprised of Chinese nationals abroad, had to undergo rigorous quarantine procedures, from a laboratory test within 48 hours of one's scheduled flight, to being forced to perform another test upon arrival, and having passports confiscated to ensure compliance before travelers were ushered to quarantine hotels at the travelers' own expense for a minimum of 14 days. There, the travelers are required to be tested anywhere from every other day to every three days by medical personnel, in addition to 7–14 additional days of house quarantine monitored with, in many cases, motion detectors installed in front of doors to ensure compliance (Kuo).

*Medical workers conduct COVID-19 tests for local residents on Mar. 14, 2022, in Shanghai, China (Guzman).*

## PAST UN ACTION

UN action in response to epidemics and pandemics has already been in place since the early 21st century. In 2003, the WHO contributed to the efforts to contain the SARS-CoV-1 outbreak through GOARN—the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network—an organization partnered with the WHO with 250 participating technical institutions and networks globally that work together to contain the spread of viruses (Mackenzie, Drury, Ellis, et al). Despite the existence of GOARN, the lack of transparency and uncertainty regarding the nature of the virus meant that it spread quickly, hindering efforts to contain the virus. During the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to the need for vaccinations across the globe, the aforementioned COVAX was formed, led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), vaccine alliance Gavi and the World Health Organization (WHO), alongside key delivery partner UNICEF. COVAX's key goals are to "accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines," with the goal of [producing] two billion doses available by the end of 2021 (WHO). In addition, the WHO implemented its own policies, in the form of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, committing over USD two billion to the "global humanitarian response plan to fight COVID-19 in some of the world's most vulnerable countries." In addition, the WHO added on with its Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, which "outlines the

public health measures that the international community stands ready to provide to support all countries to prepare for and respond to COVID-19," as well as setting up a COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, raising over 800 billion USD (WHO).

## INTERNATIONAL ACTION AND RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic, for the most part, has been an everyone-for-themselves issue. China also did little to accept international aid, meaning that aid was few and far between, given that the entire globe became impacted by the pandemic within a matter of months. In addition, as one of the wealthiest countries globally, not only was China not prioritized by the international community in terms of aid, it had a responsibility to contribute to the fight against the pandemic. One other factor to consider is the poor state of Sino-American relations in recent years, and thus China's need to independently develop its own vaccines and stabilize its own supply chains to support itself during the pandemic. Regardless of whether China is classified as a developed or developing nation, its status internationally meant that little to no direct support was provided by the international community, which was more concerned with containing their own outbreaks domestically. China also has a historically non-cooperative/reluctant stance on cooperating with international organizations, which are typically seen as "Western institutions," leading to minimal involvement of such organizations within China.

Non-governmental Organizations Integral in the Response

Similar to how China distances itself from international aid and intervention, NGOs have also historically been irrelevant when it comes to addressing issues in China (The Economist). However, by no means does this suggest that NGOs did not contribute to the effort to combat the pandemic, especially in the early stages in which the pandemic did not become global. For example, Save the Children China donated 36,000 face masks to Wuhan early in the pandemic, when mask shortages were low. Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) was also one of the many NGOs that sent what they could—in this instance, medical equipment to a Hubei hospital (Médecins Sans Frontières). As infections spread and governments scrambled to combat COVID in their own nations, in addition to an increased focus placed upon third-world and developing nations by international organizations like the UN due to their lack of infrastructure to combat COVID-19, NGOs also redirected their focus, meaning China became largely dependent upon itself to confront the outbreak.

# CAST STUDIES

## Case Study 1: Urumqi Fire and China's Zero-COVID Policy

China's solution, in addition to the need to procure vaccinations, was its "Zero-COVID" policy, enabled by the Basic Healthcare and Health Promotion Law. Implemented since the beginning of the pandemic in January 2020 when the Chinese government banned all travel to and from Wuhan, China expanded these total lockdowns across the nation in hopes of containing COVID, while taking strict measures to control its borders for the purpose of ensuring an "airtight seal" of its protective bubble. However, because of the variability of COVID, especially among those who test negative or test positive weeks while showing no symptoms after contracting COVID, the Zero-Covid policy would become worse as time went on. By 2022, most of the Chinese population had enough of the sporadic and unpredictable lockdowns because of singular, positive COVID tests, in which an entire apartment complex or block of the original positive test would be put under lockdown, in some cases forcibly. In Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, a fire broke out within one of the apartment complexes under quarantine, and it has been speculated authorities placed locks on the doors of many residents, preventing them from escaping to safety in an event that led to dozens of deaths (Yeung). This event led to protests across the nation, which, combined with the government's frequent involvement in suppressing freedom of speech through filtering social media and strictly enforcing national security laws during the pandemic, resulted in thousands of mostly young Chinese flooding the streets in protest against the human rights restrictions placed upon them. These protestors held vigils for the victims who perished in the Urumqi Fire but also held out pages of blank white paper for the authorities to see, mockingly challenging authorities to arrest or censor them, given that the papers said nothing at all (Murphy). This case compounds the issue of government censorship and control, which is an important issue to tackle when addressing the pandemic.

*Protestors holding a vigil for those who lost their lives in the Urumqi Fires (Wikimedia Commons)*

## Case Study 2: Lack of Emphasis on Vaccinations

After refusing to import foreign vaccines and insisting on developing its own CoronaVac and Sinopharm vaccines, the issue of whether these alternatives provide sufficient and effective protections for elders arises, since they are the most vulnerable (Reuters). In addition, misinformation by the United States, as well as the overall skepticism of the general Chinese population towards the Chinese government, has also

led to rumors that Chinese-manufactured vaccines were not effective. However, studies show that while those over the age of 60 are less protected in the first two initial doses of CoronaVac and Sinopharm vaccines, a third shot provides equivalent levels of protection as does any mRNA alternative. Despite the fact that China's state-developed vaccines do protect against COVID-19, the elderly in the nation are still reluctant to get vaccinated. Due to a variety of reasons that include the government's emphasis on quarantine rather than immunization in accordance with the Zero-COVID policy, as well as failures by the government to address rumors that China's CoronaVac and Sinopharm vaccines are not safe for elders, it is estimated that over 15 million people over the age of 80 in China are unvaccinated—a fundamental problem when they are the most susceptible group to COVID-19 (Guzman).


*Vaccine statistics comparing vaccination rates for over-80s from April 2022 to November 2022*

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Because of the Chinese diaspora and the significant immigration that resulted in many first-generation immigrants leaving their parents to study, work, and start their own families abroad, China's flat-out refusal to issue visas poses a huge problem. Thus, how can one address travel restrictions that mitigate the spread but limit the impacts on personal mobility?

2. Given that there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the origins of COVID-19 and China's status as ground zero for the start of the pandemic, how can China address global challenges and political uncertainty between other nations that arose due to conspiracies and theories about the way that COVID-19 was initially handled?

3. How does the presence/lack of data transparency pose political and economic challenges/incentives to promote data transparency on pandemics (in China)?

4. The Zero-Covid policy lockdowns were instated with the intention to save lives, yet it has occasionally backfired (e.g. the 2022 Urumqi fire). How should officials approach the fine line between safety and human rights violations? How should the government address the grievances of the people without causing unintended consequences? (i.e. abolition of Zero-Covid leading to mass breakouts throughout the country)

5. Given the economic recession experienced due to the effects of COVID-19 globally and the need for government regulations to contain it, how can China address supply chain management problems and the production of essential commodities for its citizens during the pandemic?

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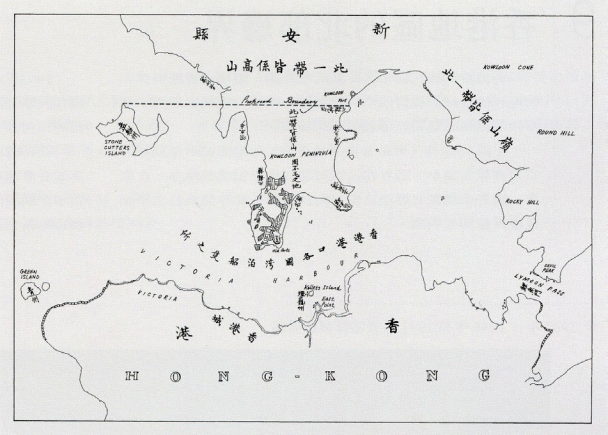
# TOPIC B: PROTESTS IN HONG KONG

## TOPIC BACKGROUND

### Another Imperialism Problem

During the 19th century, Western powers played an important role in shaping the current world by annexing and colonizing foreign territories, leaving lasting legacies that impact modern-day politics. The effects of imperialism are widely attributed as the driving factor behind ethnic conflicts or environmental injustice, from genocides to struggles between newly formed nation-states like India and Pakistan after the partition of British India in 1947 (Kohli). Since the 14th century, when the Hongwu Emperor of the Ming Dynasty began adopting a policy of isolationism, China had shut off all foreign trade and interactions with the rest of the world. By the 19th century, China would ultimately suffer the same fate as many other colonized nations. Despite a "golden age" during the Ming Dynasty in which China had the world's largest and most powerful navy in the world, over 500 years of isolationism meant a tremendous technological gap between the Chinese and the West, making China susceptible to "gunboat diplomacy," by imperial powers (Wong 93-120). In the 19th century, Chinese goods such as porcelain, tea, and silk were popular commodities in Britain. However, in exchange for these goods, the Chinese only accepted silver as payment instead of other British goods. Because silver was a limited resource—and so much silver was leaving Britain as a result of trade with China—the British East India Company, among other merchants, began to smuggle Indian opium into China illegally to reverse the flow of currency (National Army Museum). This operation was successful, leading to the mass spread of drug abuse and

resulting in detrimental impacts across Qing society. Chinese officials eventually began an anti-drug campaign by destroying opium shipments in Canton in the hopes of resolving the drug epidemic. However, the British used the destroyed opium as an excuse to wage war against China in what became the First Opium War (Wong 93-120). On August 29, 1842, the Qing Dynasty sued for peace with the British by signing the Treaty of Nanjing—the beginning of a series of unequal treaties with Western nations (Wong 93-120). Apart from the trade demands and indemnities that China was forced to accept, another condition outlined within this treaty was the cessation of Hong Kong, a port city in Canton (present-day Guangdong province), to the British Empire. While the terms of British control were unclear initially, in 1898, the British, in the Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory, secured a 99-year extension for their control over Hong Kong. Due to this historical turn of events, Hong Kong would, in total, be cut off from China for a total of 156 years. Ultimately, this would result in the development of a myriad of cultural, social, and political differences between it and the mainland by its agreed-upon return date in 1997.




*The map of the boundary between Hong Kong and China as outlined by the Convention of Peking, 1860*

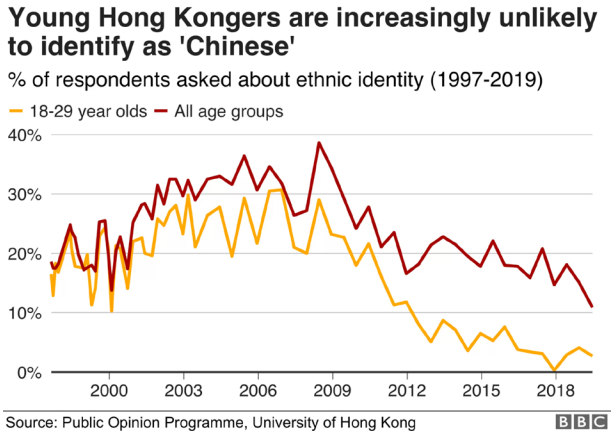
## The Sino-British Declaration and the Handover

Beginning in 1982, Great Britain and the now People's Republic of China began negotiations to discuss the terms regarding the return of Hong Kong to China by the end of the 99-year lease set in 1997. Under the Thatcher administration, Great Britain pursued a campaign to preserve their diminishing empire, having just protected the Falkland Islands from Argentina in 1982, leading to a renewed British imperial interest. Thus, the British pushed for a renewal of the lease, which China predictably refused. However, the British understood their predicament very well: Hong Kong's proximity with China in addition to a now comparatively more modern military, meant that a British defense of the colony was near impossible (Sheridan). China also capitalized on this leverage it held: Thatcher would recount later that Chinese premier Deng Xiaoping told her during negotiations that, "I could walk in and take [Hong Kong] this afternoon," to which she replied, "[t]here is nothing I could do to stop you, but the eyes of the world would now know what China is like"(Sheridan). Despite the passive-aggressive negotiations, the 1984 Sino-British Joint Convention, coming into force in 1985, established the terms for Hong Kong's eventual return. The provisions included an assurance from China that the legal, economic, and social aspects of Hong Kong society would be protected and unchanged from that of the colonial administration, in addition to the protection of personal liberties and property rights. Furthermore, China pledged to honor the "one country, two systems" promise in the form of giving Hong Kong status as a special administrative region and followed up on the provisions by drafting a separate legal code: The Hong Kong Basic Law. In return, Britain would agree to the eventual transfer of Sovereignty on July 1, 1997.

## The Hong Kong "Exception"

By 2019, many differences between Hong Kong and the mainland had started becoming apparent, much of which could be directly attributed to the cultural developments that Hong Kong underwent while under British rule. Because it was a colony of the British Empire, Hong Kong had developed a drastically different economic and social atmosphere compared to that of mainland China. Influences of British colonialism exposed Hong Kong to Western ideas like democracy and capitalism, in addition to an overall better quality of life compared to China's recent decades of turmoil, civil war, and poor economic development. In addition, the same political system that governed Hong Kong as it did for the rest of China prior to it becoming a British colony during Qing Dynasty, has evolved from hereditary monarchical regimes of the dynastic cycle to nationalism under the Kuomintang (KMT), and ultimately to Maoism under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This drastic political transition within mainland China was something vastly different to what the Hong Kong people were accustomed to by 1997 (Chan 567-582).

Although the vast majority of present-day Hong Kongers are ethnic Han, sharing the same ethnicity as those of mainland China, and being internationally recognized as Chinese citizens, there are many Hong Kongers who refuse to refer to themselves as "Chinese" (Cheung & Hughes). With the handover of Hong Kong to China, the borders were opened, and many mainland Chinese flocked to Hong Kong to take advantage of its excellent healthcare system and better economic opportunities, clogging up public transit systems and using resources. With China growing wealthier, many mainlanders began buying houses in the Hong Kong market, causing a massive spike in real estate prices and the general cost of living. Additionally, Hong Kongers also share many linguistic differences with mainlanders. Mandarin, developed in order to facilitate unity after the People's Republic of China was formed, used a simplified Chinese writing system to encourage literacy in a mostly agrarian country after most intellectuals fled to Taiwan with the KMT. Meanwhile, while Cantonese is not exclusive to Hong Kong as it is widely spoken in Guangdong province, it remains the primary form of communication in Hong Kong to this day. Because it was a British colony, Hong Kong also put more emphasis on its English education, which gave Hong Kongers a linguistic advantage in international settings.




## "Special" Regions

Hong Kong and Macau make up the only two Special Administrative Regions (SARs) currently in China as outlined by Article 31 of the Chinese Constitution. SARs enjoy the benefit of, on paper, separate economic and political systems and "a high degree of autonomy" as inscribed within the Basic Laws of both Hong Kong and Macau. Although only two SARs exist, China operates several Special

Economic Zones (SEZs) including Shanghai; many SEZs have been former "treaty cities" given to foreign powers to administrate and thus, enjoy a high level of internationalization. These SEZs differ from SARs, however, in that they do not have political autonomy. Nevertheless, SEZs still achieve a high overall rate of globalization and economic growth as they operate a free-market economic system, in which there is minimal state involvement. When discussing the Hong Kong question and its eventual integration by 2047, cities like Shanghai and Macau can be a focal point when researching potential solutions, given similarities in their history as being controlled by colonial powers and their consequent exposition to a wide variety of cultures.

## Brief History of Protests

While the 2020 protests were some of the most renowned protests in the city to occur, it was not by any means the first protest but rather the culmination of two decades of struggle against the encroaching grasp of the Chinese Communist party. In 2003, six years after the handover of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong government proposed national security legislation that would criminalize sedition, treason, and secession against the Chinese government. This proposition, under Article 23 of the Hong Kong Basic Law, angered hundreds of thousands of people who took to the streets to protest until the bill was suspended (Gunia).

In 2012, Hong Kong authorities attempted to alter the education system to introduce a "moral and national education." The aim was to instill a Chinese identity within future Hong Kong generations through the inclusion of materials relating to Chinese history and culture. This education reform was strongly supported by the CCP, who wished to establish grounds for effective reintegration of Hong Kong by 2047 by introducing pro-Beijing influences in Hong Kong education and politics, a move that many criticized as "brainwashing and political indoctrination" (Bradsher). Since school curriculum in China is designed to invoke high degrees of patriotism and support for the Chinese government, by depicting figures like Mao Zedong and others as heroes, a great number of parents, teachers, and students all vehemently opposed the proposition.

This opposition would rise once more when a decision in 2014 by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) to mandate CCP approval of candidates for the position of Chief Executive of Hong Kong caused public uproar, as many Hong Kongers saw this as a ploy to control their right to democracy through the appointment of a CCP puppet (Kaiman). Many protestors occupied government buildings and streets for 79 days through peaceful protest. They resisted attempts by the police to forcibly remove them by wielding umbrellas as protection against pepper spray. This movement became symbolically known as the Umbrella Revolution (雨伞革命). Although protestors either voluntarily abandoned protest sites, or were ultimately removed by the police, their advocacy resulted in this proposal being shut down in the Hong Kong legislature.

Subsequently in 2016, it would be Hong Kong street food vendors who took to the streets in the "Fishball Riots," when government officials tried to shut down hawker stalls for hygienic and health reasons. Hong Kong cuisine is some of most renowned in the world, and there are many proud culinary traditions that Hong Kong possesses, such as the Dai Pai Dong, (大排档) or "big license stall," adopted in many places across China. Between the government officials' intervention in first limiting the use of kerosene that

was vital to the cooking processes of these open food courts, to now attempting to shutter them off for good, the crackdown could be seen as an attack on Hong Kong's way of life (Gunia).

*A protester holds an umbrella on an occupied road outside HK government headquarters in 2014 (Gunia)*

## Prelude

In 2018, Chan Tong-kai, a Hong Kong native, murdered his pregnant girlfriend Poon Hiu-wing in Taiwan while on vacation. Upon returning to Hong Kong, he admitted to the crime, but due to a legal loophole in the Hong Kong legal codes and the lack of an extradition agreement between Hong Kong and Taiwan, he could not face any charges (Sui). In response, the Hong Kong legislature, under the advocacy of members of pro-Beijing party Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, introduced the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill in February of 2019. This bill, if passed by the legislature, would establish mechanisms to allow the extradition of individuals to any nation that lacks a formal extradition agreement with Hong Kong (Sui). However, many feared that this would allow for the Chinese government to threaten Hong Kong's democracy which it had been promised as a special administrative region. Given that this was not the first time the Chinese government became involved in Hong Kong's political affairs, Hong Kong residents became wary of this new piece of legislation, and soon many became gravely concerned.

## Mayhem

There were many fears over the potential implications of this extradition law. In addition, these fears were justified by the fact that the Chinese government had in years past already infringed upon the sovereignty of Hong Kong through kidnapping-extraditions, and the thought of any potential law that would enable such action through official legal channels were concerning. Many protestors flocked to the streets in fierce opposition to the bill. In June of 2019, up to two million Hong Kong residents took to the streets in peaceful protests in order to express their opinions against the extradition bill and to exercise their freedom of assembly. The movement's five primary goals: 1) for the protests to be recognized as a protest, not a "riot"; 2) amnesty for arrested protesters; 3) an inquiry into alleged police brutality by a third, independent party; 4) universal suffrage; 5) withdrawal of the extradition bill. While the demands were reasonable and initial marches peaceful, interactions between both police and protesters turned violent. Reports of police shooting protesters with rubber bullets to police inaction when protestors were beaten by mobs led to rising tensions from both sides. Some protestors resorted to force when confronted by police, and due to the resistance by protestors, reports of police brutality were prevalent (BBC). The protests eventually took on a violent character, leading to looting, vandalism and assault. In response to this, the Pro-Beijing proponents within the Hong Kong government and the Chinese government decided to take further action in establishing public

order. The curtailing of certain rights under the Basic Law strongly influenced the eventual passage of the National Security Act by China in 2020. Instances like when a J.P. Morgan Banker from the Chinese mainland was punched in the face by a protester after making a statement that "[w]e are all Chinese," were the headliners of a countermovement against so called "extremists," who were disrupting public order (Liu).

### Aftermath

Despite the fact that the 2019 Extradition Bill was shelved, Hong Kong residents continued to protest for their rights and liberties in general, expanding from the focus of just the extradition bill. Because of the continuing turmoil in Hong Kong, the Chinese government announced in May of 2020 that it would bypass the Hong Kong legislature and pass its own National Security Law (NSL), an unprecedented move that saw Beijing for the first time step in and make decisions on Hong Kong's behalf (Solomon & Adela). The new law would allow the Chinese government to crack down on activities it deemed as "subversive" and present a new challenge to Hong Kong's fight for democracy. Under the Basic Law, the government began making major arrests as recently as the start of 2021 (Solomon & Adela). Because of this, many treat the future of Hong Kong as grim. However, any hopes for a democratic Hong Kong will have to coincide with a democratizing China. While certain democratic rights, such as free speech, are limited in mainland China, in recent years, resistance against the Communist government, as seen in the Blank Paper Protests during COVID-19, for example, has been prevalent, with a history of government opposition spanning as far back as the Tiananmen protests in 1989. However, in those years, because the best economic opportunities were exclusive to government jobs, many feared risking their paths toward social mobility over government opposition. As the new generation continually chooses to become involved in private industries or going abroad rather than in state-owned companies or politics, the opposition towards China's authoritarian governmental practices will only become stronger. In addition, despite government control over the internet through the "Great Firewall," many ordinary citizens, and even companies, now have access to virtual private networks (VPN) that lets them bypass government censorship, gaining significant exposure to Western and democratic values, despite such acts being illegal under Chinese law.

## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

In response to the protests, the Hong Kong government began police crackdowns on the protestors. After China's National Security Law went into effect, the Hong Kong police, acting in the interest of the Chinese government, began arresting numerous officials, journalists, and scholars, among others accused of "conspiring to subvert state power" (Yu). The most notable instance of this occurred on January

6th, 2021, when Hong Kong police arrested over 50 opposition lawmakers and activists for participating in an independent primary not sanctioned by the Hong Kong government. While Chief Executive Carrie Lam made it clear that the National Security Law (NSL) would only be used against small groups of criminal elements, this wave of arrests, which doubled the number of individuals arrested under the NSL, shows the contrary (Davidson). Since these arrests, the NSL has continuously been cited in the arrests of pro-democracy activists, under charges like "conspiracy to collude with foreign forces" and "conspiracy to sedition" (Lau). Rather than assure the public through equitable interpretations of the law and applying the NSL to relevant cases, its use upon political opposition groups and sedition threatens to once again trigger the delicate sociopolitical climate in Hong Kong, potentially setting the stage for a new wave of protests and resistance against the Hong Kong government and the CCP.

## PAST UN RESPONSE

The United Nations has limited say in this particular issue due to the fact that Hong Kong is considered Chinese territory. Because the Chinese government does indeed hold sovereignty over Hong Kong, it is difficult to confront any violations of Hong Kong's rights as a special administrative region. However, the United Nations had set the precedent that allowed China to dictate the future of Hong Kong by approving China's bid in 1972 to remove Hong Kong from the U.N. list of non-self-governing territories after admitting the People's Republic of China in lieu of the Republic of China to the United Nations in the same year. The British during this time did not object to such a petition, and consequently, Hong Kong was declared a "Chinese territory under British administration," relinquishing its right to become independent (Carroll). This gave the People's Republic of China the full right to ultimately determine Hong Kong's future without consulting the people of Hong Kong. Thus, apart from China's implementation of its own National Security Law (NSL) in 2020, the U.N. had very little say given that the 2019 Hong Kong extradition bill, in addition to previous education and voting legislation in 2012 and 2014, were all drafted by Hong Kong's own legislature. However, an independent panel of UN-appointed human rights experts urged China to repeal the National Security Law due to concerns over its "overly broad interpretation" and its use that eventually led to child arrests (United Nations). In addition, the panel denounced the passage of the NSL by the National People's Congress without consultation with the Hong Kong people. Because Hong Kong is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), but China is not, the passage and application of the NSL that undermines rights prescribed in the ICCPR complicates the issue further (United Nations).

# INTERNATIONAL ACTION AND RESPONSE

In 2019, the United States Congress passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, placing sanctions on all state officials and the Chinese government for its role in the Hong Kong Extradition Bill (Library of Congress). This bill was initially introduced in 2014 during the Umbrella Protests but only voted on in 2019 due to the resurgence of protests in response to the Hong Kong Extradition Bill. In 2020, the United States removed special status from Hong Kong, which, previously under the United States–Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992, gave Hong Kong a separate, preferential status from that of China in areas such as trade. Although this was seen as a check upon China's growing influence on Hong Kong affairs to dissuade any further encroachment on its sovereignty, this most significantly hurt the people of Hong Kong as opposed to mainland China since Hong Kong lost its most important financial backer in a game in which Hong Kong's most crucial leverage comes from its preferential economic trade conditions.

# NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANZATIONS INTEGRAL IN THE RESPONSE

## Initial Response

Although China since 2017 has prohibited political activities by foreign NGOs, Hong Kong under the Basic Law allowed for a great deal of NGO activity. When the Hong Kong protests broke out, NGOs in Hong Kong and around the globe came together in solidarity to protest. Organizations like Amnesty International submitted grievances to the United Nations, outlining the human rights violations performed by the government during the protests. In addition, when China announced plans to introduce the National Security Law, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Freedom House, among 83 other NGOs, submitted a joint letter to the National People's Congress of China, asking the government to scrap the plans to implement this policy on grounds of the human rights violations it poses. However, China levied sanctions against active NGOs in Hong Kong, such as the National Endowment for Democracy and Human Rights Watch, after the passage of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act (Reuters).

## Limitations

These efforts were vastly limited by the economic position that China held internationally since many organizations, especially corporations, were unable to express support without receiving a major financial hit. For instance, on October 4th, 2019, Daryl Morey, then-General Manager of the Houston Rockets of the National Basketball Association (NBA), tweeted the "Fight For Freedom Stand with Hong Kong" slogan of the advocacy group Stand With Hong Kong on his personal Twitter account. The tweet was

quickly deleted, but he received backlash from many Chinese nationals and the government. The Chinese Basketball Association suspended all cooperation with the franchise, followed by numerous other Chinese businesses. Tencent (TCEHY) Sports, the NBA's exclusive digital partner in China, said it would "suspend live streaming for Houston Rockets games, as well as news about the team" (He). This prompted NBA commissioner Adam Silver to address the issue, stating that "the NBA will not put itself in a position of regulating what players, employees, and team owners say or will not say on [different viewpoints over different] issues… We simply could not operate that way" (Deb). NBA superstar LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers, when also asked about the situation, responded that Morey "wasn't educated on the situation at hand" (Scott). This comment sparked criticism on an unprecedented scale, as many criticized the NBA for acquiescing to China's demands. However, this is simply the reality of business, when China has such leverage internationally as an economic power.


The Twitter post by Houston Rockets General Manager Daryl Morey before it was taken down promptly (Smith).

# CAST STUDIES

## Case Study 1: Macau

Macau is very similar to Hong Kong in the sense that it is the only other Special Administrative Region in China and is also a former colony that had been ceded to a colonial power during the era of "unequal treaties" during the Qing Dynasty. Thus, the Chinese government uses Macau as an example of the peaceful co-existence of a "one country, two systems" policy, justifying its actions against Hong Kong dissent to its politics (Barrios). However, Macau has many differences from Hong Kong. Foremost, it has actively opposed Portuguese rule since the 1960s. Inspired by the Cultural Revolution in China, riots and demonstrations occurred during the 12-3 Incident in December of 1966, as locals rebelled against Portuguese colonial rule after a series of violent police crackdowns. Portuguese officials eventually apologized and ultimately allowed the Chinese government to assume de facto control of Macau until its eventual transfer in 1999 (Barrios). Thus, Macau essentially had approximately an additional 30 years of exposure to Chinese rule compared to Hong Kong, and a heightened familiarity with Communism. It is also important to note that Macau primarily relies on tourism and gambling as part of its economy. Being

the only place in China where gambling is legalized, much of the economy in the small, 19-square-kilometer city is dependent on casinos and the hospitality services that accompany them. Macau's government also relies heavily on the taxation of casinos for their government funding, making them more reliant on the mainland.

## Case Study 2: Singapore

While it is easy to get caught up in the politics of this issue, one must keep in mind that "full democracies" are few and far between. Despite approximately half of the world having a democratic system, only 24 were classified under the Economist Democracy Index as "full democracies." The vast majority of nations are a mix of flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. Even states like Singapore, despite seeming democratic, is actually a de facto one-state system led by the People's Action Party. The government controls many elements of daily life, including housing, and opposition to the People's Action Party can mean being disqualified from certain benefits that the government provides or even incarceration. For example, Singaporean officials in 2005 demanded the imprisonment of expatriate and pianist Melvyn Tan, now a naturalized British citizen, to be imprisoned due to never enrolling in mandatory military service due to his change of citizenship. (Mattison) This form of government intervention and authoritarianism under the guise of a democracy can be seen in this quote from Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of Singapore:

"I am often accused of interfering in the private lives of citizens. Yes, if I did not, had I not done that, we wouldn't be here today. And I say without the slightest remorse, that we wouldn't be here, we would not have made economic progress, if we had not intervened on very personal matters—who your neighbour is, how you live, the noise you make, how you spit, or what language you use. We decide what is right. Never mind what the people think" (BBC).

Sounds very authoritarian doesn't it? Despite this, Singapore receives very little coverage in Western media in regard to certain authoritarian practices, while Chinese authoritarianism is put under a microscope. There are many theories and explanations of this issue, such as a legacy of anti-Communism stemming from the Cold War. The main point is, the biggest accomplishment of Lee Kuan Yew, regardless of whether or not he facilitated it through truly democratic processes, is transforming Singapore into a powerful economic hub in the Asia-Pacific region like Hong Kong. Something that Hong Kong could potentially learn from and adapt in the near future, is living with this "benevolent authoritarianism" that Lee Kuan Yew prescribed, since democratic ideals have shown to be inferior to economic development in both Singapore and Hong Kong, as even the Umbrella Revolution—despite overwhelming initial support—was ultimately undermined by locals when the protests interfered with economic activities such as business operations and commutes. As seen with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, military intervention by the West against a nuclear power like China would be unlikely, and if China were to force a reintegration of Hong Kong after 2047 when the agreement under the terms of the Sino-British Joint Declaration elapses, whether Hong Kongers like it or not, they would be forced to accept this ultimatum. As seen throughout the course of the Hong Kong protests, because of China's economic power, it is unlikely that overwhelming international support from the private sector will actively support Hong Kong and its cause.


## CONCLUSIONS

The Hong Kong issue is not a matter of "if" but rather "when." Time is ticking until 2047 when Hong Kong will be officially absorbed into the People's Republic of China when the 50-year grace period set by the Sino-British Joint Declaration elapses. While the Hong Kong people have every right to protest the infringement of their rights currently during this 50-year period protected by the "one country, two systems" agreement, the legal future of Hong Kong, whether the populace likes it or not, is a complete return to China. Thus, the biggest issue is how to address the eventual return of Hong Kong, through the establishment of a new set of rules of governance, while protecting its global status as a favorable economic hub. As Chinese statesmen, I hope that you can all come to committee with interesting and innovative solutions on how to facilitate the smooth reintegration of the two systems.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can the Chinese government effectively reintegrate Hong Kong into China after political unification in the face of such resistance? More specifically, how can the structure of special economic zones be implemented as part of the strategy to unify Hong Kong by 2047 when the agreement of the Sino-British Joint Declaration Expires?

2. Does Hong Kong need democracy to survive? If so, how can democracy be implemented while not conflicting with the political functions of China? What is the conflict of interest between economic growth, rising standard of living, and democratic rights?

3. How can Hong Kong adapt to live under authoritarianism while maintaining its identity in the near future?

4. How does Hong Kong protect its economy while allowing for freedom of expression and demonstration? What measures could be taken to address protests and their impacts in a more peaceful manner?

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