

British Government Encourages Mass Emigration from Hong Kong to Affect China

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In late June, China's National People's Congress passed Hong Kong's new national security law, later signed by Chinese President Xi Jinping. The new law imposes a special security regime in the autonomous territory of Hong Kong, prohibiting foreign interference and preventing the development of terrorist or subversive political activities. Criticism was immediate across the western world, although the Hong Kong regional government itself supports the measures and recognizes their need currently. The protests against Chinese sovereignty, markedly supported by Western powers, have increased exponentially since the law was passed.

Many Western countries are already announcing measures against China because of the situation in Hong Kong. In the UK, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced that if China proceeds with the new security law, millions of Hong Kong citizens will be eligible to receive the British National Overseas passport. With this passport, Hong Kong residents could enter the UK freely, without a visa, and stay in the country for six months. In addition, it would be possible for these citizens to renew their residence for twelve months, subsequently acquiring British citizenship. In other words, Boris Johnson is granting British citizenship to Hong Kong residents to affect China.

Chinese diplomats responded to Johnson's statements by saying that the act constitutes a real diplomatic affront. The Chinese Embassy in London recalled in a [public note](#) that London in the past had already committed to not grant British citizenship to Chinese citizens of Hong Kong. The note also states:

"If the British side makes unilateral changes to the relevant practice, it will breach its own position and pledges as well as international law and basic norms governing international relations. We firmly oppose this and reserve the right to take corresponding measures. We urge the British side to view objectively and fairly the national security legislation for Hong Kong, respecting China's position and concerns, refrain from interfering in Hong Kong affairs in any way".

Dominic Raab, British secretary of foreign affairs, said that China can do nothing to prevent Hong Kong citizens from leaving for the United Kingdom. According to the British chancellery, London will use all its diplomatic influence to boycott Chinese law in Hong Kong and encouraging mass emigration will be one of the main tactics. Raab and the British government do not see these measures as violations of the mutual promises and terms agreed by the United Kingdom and China when both countries transferred the sovereignty of Hong Kong to Beijing. On the other hand, China sees the British attitude as a neo-colonial one, as expressed by Liu Xiaoming, Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom, when

publishing in a social network: “Hong Kong is part of China and Hong Kong affairs are China’s internal affairs. The UK has no sovereignty, jurisdiction or right of “supervision” over Hong Kong whatsoever. Gone are the days when Hong Kong were under British colonial rule”.

While both countries faced serious diplomatic tension, protests on the streets of Hong Kong have hardened, with increasingly violent acts on the part of protesters – and, consequently, more severe responses by the police. Water cannons, tear gas, pepper spray and other mechanisms were used to contain the demonstrations, which were also marked by acts of vandalism and several illegalities.

In fact, what China is doing is not different than any other country in the world – even “Western democracies” – would do in a similar situation: fighting, with exceptional measures, secessionist demonstrations. Separatism, in any country, poses a threat to the very existence of the National State and every government has the right to introduce special measures to prevent its territories from achieving political independence, especially in situations where protests receive clear financial and material support from foreign powers, such as the protests in Hong Kong, encouraged by several western countries.

All Western democracies call for strict exceptional measures when they detect threats to national security. Exceptional measures in the United States are still in force today due to the September 11, 2001 incidents, with hundreds of terrorism suspects being imprisoned without the right to defense each year. Recently, in the face of protests for the independence of Catalonia, the Spanish police used exceptional measures, acting violently against the demonstrators and, equally, there was no international commotion. In fact, when legality and normality are not enough to guarantee order and there is a real threat to the state, appealing for the exception is the right of any government.

On the other hand, we can contemplate the new British project. Having left the European Union and being economically helpless in the face of a world in transition, the United Kingdom begins to draw new global projections. And apparently, London’s current bet is Asia. The Chinese Embassy is correct to compare British attitudes to a new colonialism, as that is exactly the British project. One must also take into account the interest in the massive entry of immigrants into the country: after all, this same mass will form a new working class of cheap and precarious labor, forming something like a new slave market in the 21st Century.

British Asian projection and Chinese sovereignty are two projects that clash each other. Only one will win this dispute. In fact, China can make the British measure fail by simply closing its borders and preventing emigration. So, when that is done, what will be London’s next step?

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