

“Hands Off Hong Kong” - The Cry that Seldom Is Heard

Where are the self-styled anti-war activists - like DemocracyNow?

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Through the summer the world has watched as protests shook Hong Kong. As early as April they began as peaceful demonstrations which peaked in early June, with hundreds of thousands, in protest of an extradition bill. That bill would have allowed Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region of China, to return criminals to Taiwan, mainland China or Macau for crimes committed there – after approval by multiple layers of the Hong Kong judiciary. In the wake of those enormous nonviolent demonstrations, Carrie Lam, CEO of Hong Kong, “suspended” consideration of the extradition bill, a face-saving ploy. To make sure she was understood, she declared it “dead.” The large rallies, an undeniable expression of the peaceful will of a large segment of the Hong Kong population had won an impressive victory. The unpopular extradition bill was slain.

But that was not the end of the story. A smaller segment continued the protests. (The Hong Kong police at one point estimated 4,000 hard core protesters.) pressed on with other demands, beginning with a demand that the bill be “withdrawn,” not simply “suspended.” To this writer death by “suspension” is every bit as terminal as death by “withdrawal.” As this piece is sent to press, news comes that Corrie Lam has now [formally withdrawn the bill](#).

As the summer passed, two iconic photos presented us with two human faces that captured two crucial features of the ongoing protests; they were not shown widely in the West.

First, [Fu Guohao](#), a reporter for the Chinese mainland newspaper, Global Times, was attacked, bound and beaten by protesters during their takeover of the Hong Kong International Airport. When police and rescuers tried to free him, the protesters blocked them and also attempted to block the ambulance that eventually bore him off to the hospital. The photos and videos of this ugly sequence were seen by netizens across the globe even though given scant attention in Western media. Where were the stalwart defenders of the press in the US as this happened? As one example, DemocracyNow! (DN!) was completely silent as was the rest of the U.S. mainstream media.

Fu’s beating came after many weeks when the protesters threw up barriers to stop traffic; blocked closure of subway doors, in defiance of commuters and police, to shut down mass transit; sacked and vandalized the HK legislature building; assaulted bystanders who disagreed with them; attacked the police with Molotov cocktails; and stormed and defaced police stations. Fu’s ordeal and all these actions shown in [photos](#) on Hong Kong’s South China Morning Post, a paper leaning to the side of protesters, gave the lie to the image of these “democracy activists” as young Ghandis of East Asia. (The South China Morning Post is based in Hong Kong and its readership is concentrated there so it has to have some

reasonable fidelity in reporting events; otherwise it loses credibility – and circulation. Similarly, much as the New York Times abhorred Occupy Wall Street, it could not fail to report on it.)

Which brings us to the second photo, much more important to U.S. citizens, that of a “Political Counselor” at the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong who in August was pictured meeting with, Joshua Long and Nathan Law, at a hotel there. The official was formerly a State Dept functionary in the Middle East – in Jerusalem, Riyadh, Beirut, Baghdad and Doha, certainly not an area lacking in imperial intrigues and regime change ops. That photo graphically contradicted the contention that there is no US “black hand,” as China calls it, in the Hong Kong riots. In fact, here the “black hand” was caught red-handed, leading Chen Weihua, a very perceptive China Daily columnist, to tweet the picture with the comment: “This is very very embarrassing. ... a US diplomat in Hong Kong, was caught meeting HK protest leaders. It would be hard to imagine the US reaction if a Chinese diplomat were meeting leaders of Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter or Never Trump protesters.”

And that photo with the protest leaders is just a snap shot of the ample evidence of the hand of the U.S. government and its subsidiaries in the Hong Kong events. Perhaps the best documentation of the U.S. “black hand” is to be found in Dan Cohen’s [superb article](#) of August 17 in The Greyzone entitled, “Behind a made-for-TV Hong Kong protest narrative, Washington is backing nativism and mob violence.” The article by Cohen deserves careful reading; it leaves little doubt that there is a very deep involvement of the US in the Hong Kong riots. Of special interest is the detailed [role and funding](#), amounting to over \$1.3 million, in Hong Kong alone in recent years, of the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED), ever on the prowl for new regime change opportunities. Perhaps most important, the leaders of the “leaderless” protests have met with major US political figures such as John Bolton, Vice President Pence, Secretary Pompeo, Senator Marco Rubio, Democratic Rep. Eliot Engel, Nancy Pelosi and others, all of whom have heartily endorsed their efforts. This is not to deny that the protests were home grown at the outset in response to what was widely perceived as a legitimate grievance. But it would be equally absurd to deny that the U.S. is fishing in troubled Hong Kong waters to advance its anti-China crusade and regime change ambitions.

That said, where is the U.S. peace movement on the question of Hong Kong?

Let us be clear. One can sympathize with the demand of many citizens of Hong Kong to end the extradition bill or even the other four demands: an inquiry into police handling of their protests; the retraction of a government characterization of the demonstrations as riots; an amnesty for arrested protesters; and universal suffrage. (The first three all grow out of violence of the protests, be it noted.) But that is the business of the citizens of Hong Kong and all the rest of China. It is not the business of the U.S. government. Peace activists in the US should be hard at work documenting and denouncing the US government’s meddling in Hong Kong, which could set us on the road to war with China, potentially a nuclear war. And that is a mission for which we in the U.S. are uniquely suited since, at least in theory, we have some control over our government.

So, we should expect to hear the cry, “US Government, Hands Off Hong Kong”? Sadly, with a few principled exceptions it is nowhere to be heard on either the left or right.

Let’s take DemocracyNow! (DN!) as one example, a prominent one on the “progressive” end

of the spectrum. From April through August 28, there have been 25 brief accounts (“headlines” as DN! calls them, each amounting to a few paragraphs) of the events in Hong Kong and 4 features, longer supposedly analytic pieces, on the same topic. Transcripts of the four features are [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). There is not a single mention of possible US involvement or the meetings of the various leaders of the protest movement with Pompeo, Bolton, Pence, or the “Political Counselor” of the US Hong Kong consulate.

And this silence on US meddling is true not only of most progressive commentators but also most conservatives.

On the Left when someone cries “Democracy,” many forget all their pro-peace sentiment. And similarly on the Right when someone cries “Communism,” anti-interventionism too often goes down the tubes. Forgotten is John Quincy Adams’s 1823 dictum, endlessly quoted but little honored, “We do not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy.” Where does this lapse on the part of activists come from? Is it a deep-seated loyalty to Empire, the result of endless indoctrination? Is it U.S. Exceptionalism, ingrained to the point of unconsciousness? Or is it at bottom a question of who the paymasters are?

On both sides anti-interventionism takes an especially hard hit when it comes to major competitors of the US, powers that could actually stand in the way of US global hegemony, like Russia or China. In fact on its August 12 program, DN! managed a story taking [a swipe at Russia](#) right next to the one on Hong Kong – and DN! was in the forefront of advancing the now debunked and disgraced Russiagate Conspiracy Theory. In contrast, the anti-interventionist movement is front and center when it comes to weaker nations, for example Venezuela – and quite properly so. But when one puts this advocacy for weaker nations together with the New Cold War stance on China and Russia, one must ask what is going on here. Does it betoken a sort of imperial paternalism on the part of DN and like-minded outlets? It certainly gains DN!, and others like it, considerable credibility among anti-interventionists which can help win them to a position in favor of DN!’s New Cold War stance. And the masters of Empire certainly understand how valuable such credibility can be at crucial moments when support for their adventures is needed from every quarter.

Fortunately, there are a handful of exceptions to this New Cold War attitude. For example, on the left [Popular Resistance](#) has provided a [view](#) of the events in Hong Kong and a superb [interview with K.J. Noh](#) that go beyond the line of the State Department, the mainstream media and DN! And on the libertarian Right there is the [Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity](#) and the [work](#) of its Executive Director Dan McAdams.

We would all do well to follow the example of these organizations in rejecting a New Cold War mentality which is extremely dangerous, perhaps fatally so. A good beginning for us in the U.S. is to demand of our government, “Hands Off Hong Kong.”

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