

CITY ON EDGE: ON HONG KONG PROTESTS AGAINST EXTRADITION LAW

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The mass protests in Hong Kong this week against an extradition Bill the city legislative council is planning has brought the focus back on the difficult relationship between the territory's Beijing-appointed authorities and its pro-democracy movement. The legislation, championed by Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam, will allow the local government to extradite a suspect to places with which the city has no formal extradition accord, including mainland China. Ms. Lam argues it is needed to close a loophole in the criminal justice system that, she says, has let criminals evade trial elsewhere by taking refuge in Hong Kong. But the protesters see the Bill as an attempt by Beijing to increase its influence in matters to do with the city. The extradition law would practically allow the city authorities to send any suspect wanted by Beijing to mainland China, where the judiciary is unlikely to go against the wishes of the establishment. Activists point to the abduction of Beijing's critics and the growing authoritarian nature of the city government, with instances of elected lawmakers being disqualified, activists banned from running for office, a political party prohibited and a foreign journalist expelled. They fear that the new legislation would further erode the freedoms people enjoy under the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution.

When Hong Kong was handed over to China in 1997, both sides had agreed that the city would remain a semi-autonomous region with the Basic Law for 50 years. When the extradition agreements were finalised, Taiwan and mainland China were excluded because of the different criminal justice systems that existed in those regions. But China has steadily tried to deepen its influence. In the case of the extradition Bill, two members of the Politburo Standing Committee have called for its approval. But Hong Kong has always resisted top-down changes. In 2003, the city's first Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa's bid to pass stringent security legislation triggered mass protests, which forced him to back down. In 2014, the local authorities' proposal to change the city's electoral system attracted more protests. In less than five years they are back: a million people assembled at the legislative council on Wednesday, demanding withdrawal of the extradition Bill. These incidents suggest a fundamental contradiction between the way Hong Kong is ruled by the pro-Beijing elite and the expectations of civil society. The local authorities' insistence on going ahead with unpopular measures such as the extradition Bill is only sharpening this contradiction. Beijing should reach out to the people of Hong Kong, alleviate their fears and concerns and assure them of their rights guaranteed under the "one country two systems" model. Else, Hong Kong is likely to remain caught in a cycle of protests and repression.

Please enter a valid email address.

As Prime Minister Modi returns to power, he must swear by the Indian civilisational ethos

Join our online subscriber community

Experience an advertisement-free site with article recommendations tailored for you

Already a user? [Sign In](#)

To know more about Ad free news reading experience and subscription [Click Here](#)

or Please whitelist our website on your Adblocker

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com