

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article6850>



Hong Kong

The dragon and the goose that lays the golden eggs

- IV Online magazine - 2020 - IV549 - October 2020 -

Publication date: Saturday 10 October 2020

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In his latest book, Hong Kong activist Au Loong Yu uses the image of the dragon and the goose that lays the golden eggs to symbolize the conflict between the Chinese regime and the people of Hong Kong. [1]

The latter territory plays a key role in financial flows between China and the rest of a planet over which Xi Jinping dreams of establishing his suzerainty. In 2019, Hong Kong experienced the biggest mobilizations in its history. Young people were the main drivers. They were outraged by Beijing's desire to bring Hong Kong into line with standards in the rest of China. The announcement of a bill to extradite residents to the Chinese mainland for judgment ignited the powder.

Despite the dynamism and courage of the participants, this movement suffered from two major difficulties:

- ▶ a very unfavourable objective balance of forces: mainland China is nearly 200 times more populated than Hong Kong, and it is one of the most powerful and repressive states in the world;
- ▶ the Chinese regime is able to develop a formidably effective strategy and to allocate considerable material and human resources to it.

The Hong Kong movement has experimented with a succession of different tactics: mass non-violent demonstrations, more violent decentralized clashes, grassroots actions in neighbourhoods, presentation of candidates for local elections, a proliferation of militant trade unions and so on. Faced with the regime's omnipotence, convergent action by the populations of the mainland and Hong Kong would have been necessary. But only a minority of Hong Kong people have acted in this direction. In fact a much more powerful wing exhibiting xenophobia in relation to those from the mainland has taken hold, making such convergence even more difficult.

Much of the international left has failed in its duty of elementary solidarity. For their part, some Hong Kong people sought support from foreign governments, especially that of the United States, which facilitated Beijing's propaganda that the movement was due to "foreign interference".

From January 2020, the Covid pandemic made the protests even more perilous, and the balance of power deteriorated even further.

All this allowed Beijing to set up a coherent counter-offensive. This took a decisive step on 30 June, 2020 with the promulgation of a law on "national security" which was even more repressive than the extradition bill that the government had been forced to withdraw. The growing repression mainly affects young people, but also academics, political leaders, trade unionists and so on. In 15 months, more than 10,000 people have been arrested.

Reasons for hope, however:

- ▶ on 24 November, 2019, as the movement seemed at a complete stalemate after the demoralizing end of the occupation of universities, the opposition won a landslide victory in local elections, demonstrating that the vast majority of the population still remained favourable to the movement;
- ▶ around the same time a multitude of new militant unions appeared. The public hospital sector union launched a

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successful strike over five consecutive days in early February which forced the government to finally take some basic measures in the face of the then booming Covid pandemic.

There are therefore elements for a long-term resistance strategy to emerge. It remains for the international left to contribute, in particular by getting involved in solidarity in the face of repression.

PS:

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[1] *Hong Kong in Revolt: The Protest Movement and the Future of China*, Pluto Press 2020. For an online presentation with the author on 24 October see [Socialist Resistance](#) or [Socialist Resistance on Facebook](#).