

Hong Kong's Next Steps North

Last weekend three separate transit railways in Hong Kong were lit on fire and vandalized during the protests. From an onlookers perspective, this violence and vandalism villainizes the protestors, and doesn't help achieve their end goal. While the protests started as a march against the Extradition Bill, they shifted more towards general discontent with how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has failed their promise to give Hong Kong the autonomy it was promised until 2047. As a result the protestors, who previously were only protesting the actions of the Hong Kong government are shifting directions to protest the CCP more directly.

As the HK protest march forward, their retaliation seems aimless in order to achieve the 5 demands. It took an entire summer of marching in the streets in order for them to even have the first demand met. Even though the bill was withdrawn, some skeptics view it as a way to delegitimize the rest of the protestors on their way forward to achieve all five of their demands. Knowing that the CCP will do do anything up to military suppression, the people of HK need to adjust their tactics as they move forward in the fight for universal suffrage. Therefore the people of Hong Kong must look towards other activist movements and methods that have worked in China in order to properly and effectively bring about a change from the mainland. More importantly, it'll have to look towards and convince the citizens of mainland China to help support in their plea for suffrage.

One successful movement to look towards in China in the feminist rights activists. They're most recent success revolves around the "Occupy Men's Toilets" in which the activists gathered en mass to prevent entry for all males into their bathrooms in order to protest the

overwhelmingly low percentage of female bathrooms in public spaces compared to men's bathrooms.¹ Once the public was more aware of the issue, pressure was placed on the government to make a change about it. While the government was hesitant to do much about the issue at first, it slowly made contact with feminist aligned NGO's and eventually made policy changes that reflected the sentiment being protested.

The approach that the Feminist voices attribute to their success is referred to a "bottom-up" approach, in order to change the minds of the public through public demonstration and social media presence.² When the public has more awareness and the government feels more pressured, the organizations representing the ideas can step in to try push for change on the legislative level. Hong Kong has done a great job of implementing the first step of this process through its social media outreach, however it is lacking in two main directions. First of all, there is not a central NGO to represent Hong Kong's interests, and secondly, while it's done a good job of expanding to the population of Hong Kong it needs to reach out to the population of the mainland if it wants to have a chance at changing mainland policies regarding their sovereignty.

If Hong Kong wants to make any impact besides widespread disruption throughout it's city, it needs an adaptation of its framework and the development of a universal value that not only everyone in the city can get behind, but the people of the mainland could rally behind as well. By appealing to a universal value for their plight, it allows a central foundation that could form an NGO to operate on a more involved level. An NGO would let people provide support for the protestors in a direct way and also give the protestors a representative who speaks on their behalf. As a consequence of this, the people of Hong Kong need to find a leader to pioneer their

¹ 'A "bottom" up Chinese approach to transform interaction treaties to domestic gender equality practice' Feminist Five

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movement and abandon the leaderless movement that has made their protests successful so far. This however won't compromise the movement since they've proven they don't need a leader to function. This would actually give the leader security, given that China would have to recognize that even if they removed the leader, the protesters would not be affected.

If Hong Kong wants to fight for its own sovereignty, it needs to abandon the notion of western countries saving them. If the goal of the people of Hong Kong is to help change the CCP, then it'll have to work within the framework of the CCP. Even if the west did step in to bail them out today, China is still directly adjacent, meaning it's a problem that must be dealt with eventually anyway. The more the CCP sees western imagery and calling to the west for aid, the less the CCP will want to comply with any request from the protestors. There has been a rising Chinese nationalism, and the outreach we've seen from the HK protestors gives an easy avenue for the CCP to delegitimize their movement in the eyes of the rest of mainland China.

This however could be quite difficult to manage, since many of the protestors who grew up in Hong Kong feel no connection to the mainland in any way and have developed a nationalistic identity of their own within Hong Kong. While this identity seems to be in direct opposition to the mainland, it can be viewed more as Hong Kong's unique relation with the rest of China. By playing into nationalism and the idea that the protestors would want to see a great China could resonate with the general populace of the mainland. Using this notion of nationalism to expand the audience of their protests, the movement would start to gather more support from mainlanders. While this by no means guarantees success for the people of Hong Kong, it will improve their chances than if they were relying on the west to bail them out. The more support that is gained, the better chance that they have of making an influence.

Ultimately, now that Hong Kong has had measured success and have the world's attention, they must adjust their advocacy tactics in order to fully make a change. Instead of looking outward for another entity to bail them out, they must find a central goal to rally behind and look inward towards the CCP and the people of China. Hong Kong is in the unique position that it is not affected by Chinese censorship in the same way as the rest of China, and by using this to their advantage they can attempt to spread the truth about their movement to the rest of the people in China. By embracing part of Chinese nationalism, they will be able to gather more support from the average citizens. By creating a larger social media presence, and moving their protests north to the mainland, they can do their best to directly fight against the propaganda being handed out by the CCP. By changing the minds of the people in the mainland they have an avenue to not only improve their situation in Hong Kong but possibly change all of China for the better as well.