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**Will the Hong Kong Model Survive?
An Assessment 20 Years After the Handover**

*Congressional Executive Commission on China
Excerpts of remarks by Rep Chris Smith
May 3, 2017*

Two and half years ago, tens of thousands of Hong Kong's residents peacefully gathered in the streets, yellow umbrellas in hand, seeking electoral reform and greater democracy.

Joshua Wong was at the forefront of that movement—along with Nathan Law and Alex Chow and so many young student leaders. The Umbrella Movement was not only composed of students, but included veterans of the democracy movement in Hong Kong, including Martin Lee.

It is good to see Joshua and Martin here today, bringing together the generations of advocates committed to Hong Kong's freedom and autonomy.

Joshua Wong and all those associated with the Umbrella Movement have become important symbols of Hong Kong's vitality and its freedoms. They are now part of Hong Kong's unique brand and any effort to detain, censor, or intimidate them damages that brand.

Over the past two years, Senator Rubio and I, along with other members of the China Commission, have introduced the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act and we have worked in Congress to maintain the State Department's annual report on Hong Kong.

We have issued statements of concern about the political prosecutions of Joshua and other Umbrella Movement leaders; the unprecedented interventions by the Chinese government in Hong Kong's courts and political affairs, and the abductions Hong Kong booksellers and other citizens.

We have also discussed the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms with both U.S. and Chinese officials.

I want to commend Senator Rubio for his leadership on human rights issues and on Hong Kong. We have worked together closely and I am honored to work with him on the China Commission. Senator Rubio is a true champion of the globe's oppressed and persecuted.

As long as I have the privilege of serving as a Chair of the China Commission, I promise to continue shining a light on Hong Kong. Maintaining Hong Kong's autonomy is a critical U.S. interest.

The U.S. also has a clear interest in Beijing abiding by its international agreements—in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

The democratic aspirations of the people of Hong Kong cannot be indefinitely suppressed. I promise to stand with Hong Kong and call attention to violations of basic human rights as long as I serve in Congress.

Though Beijing's increasingly rough oversight of Hong Kong may not be as brutal as that pursued on the Mainland, it is no less pernicious. The ultimate goal is eroding Hong Kong's guaranteed freedoms and the rule of law and intimidating those who try to defend them.

This year will be the 20th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong. Unfortunately it seems the territory's autonomy looks increasingly fragile.

We are coming up on another anniversary as well, the 25th anniversary of the Hong Kong Policy Act.

At this juncture we should be examining both the health of the "one country, two systems" model and examining the very assumptions that underlie U.S.-Hong Kong relations. What can be done differently, what new priorities should be set?

The Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 was based on the assumption that freedom, the rule of law, and autonomy promised to Hong Kong would be protected and respected.

It was also based on the assumption that time was on the side of freedom—that trade and investment would eventually bring political liberalization and human rights to Mainland China.

As Chairman Rubio and I have been saying for some time, one can no longer base U.S. policy on the "fantasy" that China's future will be more democratic and more open.

Mainland China has become more repressive, not less. Prosperity has turned a poor authoritarian country into a rich authoritarian country with predictable results for China's rights defenders, ethnic and religious groups, labor and democracy advocates, foreign businesses and Hong Kong's autonomy.

Some will argue that the best course of action would be to retreat into a hard realism, recognize China's interests and spheres of influence and protect U.S. interests. We could ignore what is happening in Hong Kong and shift responsibility to the British or some undefined international body.

I disagree.

We don't need a new realism to govern our China policy. Instead, we need a new idealism—a renewed commitment to democratic ideals, to human rights, and the rule of law in ways that compete directly with the Chinese model in Asia and Africa and elsewhere.

Chinese leaders need to know that the United States stands for freedom of expression, the freedom of religion, Internet freedom, the rule of law, universal suffrage, and an end to torture as critical interests, necessary for bilateral relations, and linked to the expansion of mutual prosperity and integrated security.

The U.S. should also push back hard against the erosion of freedom and autonomy in Hong Kong.

It is in everyone's interest that Hong Kong remain a free and prosperous bridge between China and the West, but the city's unique vitality and prosperity are rooted in its guaranteed freedoms. If Hong Kong is to become just another Mainland Chinese city, we will have to reassess whether Hong Kong warrants special status under U.S. law.

The arc of history does not bend toward justice without concerted action from all freedom-loving peoples. If the U.S. and the international community does not defend the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong's citizens now, there is little hope that freedom can take root in China's future.

