



**Statement of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio,  
Chairman of the Congressional-Executive  
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Will the Hong Kong  
Model Survive?: An Assessment 20 Years  
After the Handover”**

**Wednesday, May 3, 2017**

As prepared for delivery.

Good morning. This is a hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. The title of this hearing is “Will the Hong Kong Model Survive?: An Assessment 20 Years After the Handover.”

We will have two panels testifying today. The first panel will feature the Right Honourable Lord Patten of Barnes—Christopher Patten—testifying via video link from London. Lord Patten, in addition to serving in the House of Lords was the last British Governor of Hong Kong, and oversaw the transfer to China twenty years ago this July.

The second panel will include:

- Joshua Wong, “Umbrella Movement” Leader and Secretary-General of the new Hong Kong political party, Demosistō;
- Martin Lee, Barrister, founding Chairman of the Democratic Party of Hong Kong, former Member of the Drafting Committee for the Basic Law, and former Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (1985-2008);
- Lam Wing Kee, Founder, Causeway Bay Books, one of five forcibly disappeared Hong Kong booksellers and
- Ellen Bork, a writer whose work on democracy and human rights as a priority in American foreign policy has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the Financial Times among other publications.

- I would also note that translating for Mr. Lam is Ms. Mak Yin Ting, a journalist and veteran leader of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, the territory's leading defender of press freedom.

Thank you all for being here. As has already been noted, today's hearing is timely given the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this July, of the British handover of Hong Kong. Rewatching film footage and commentary of that historic day, we can't help but take note of the pageantry: the raising and lowering of flags, solemn handshakes and national anthems.

Many observers described the handover as signifying the sunset of a once great colonial power and the ascent of a rising China. But there was and remains far more at stake.

On that day in 1997 Lord Patten—who we'll hear from momentarily—spoke of Hong Kong's "unshakable destiny"—a Hong Kong governed by and for the people of Hong Kong. And it is that destiny that animates today's gathering.

However, in recent years, Beijing has consistently undermined the 'one country, two systems' principle and infringed on the democratic freedoms that the residents of Hong Kong are supposed to be guaranteed under the Sino-British Joint Declaration—an international treaty—and Hong Kong's Basic Law.

The rise of "localist" politicians and activists who call for greater political and legal self-determination for Hong Kong has drawn harsh reprisals from the Chinese and Hong Kong governments.

The Chinese government's November 2016 interpretation of Hong Kong's Basic Law effectively prohibited two recently elected Hong Kong legislators from taking office and was viewed as a blow to Hong Kong's judicial independence. The Hong Kong government is currently seeking the removal from office of four other pro-democratic legislators along the same lines.

In March of this year, nine activists were arrested for their participation in the Occupy Central protests in 2014, including two sitting pro-democratic lawmakers. Their arrests came less than 24 hours after the undemocratic "election" of Carrie Lam to serve as Hong Kong's next Chief Executive, drawing widespread condemnation and accusations of a retaliatory campaign aimed at punishing

leaders of the Hong Kong democracy movement and suppressing dissent prior to her taking office.

In late 2015, five Hong Kong-based booksellers, including one of today's witnesses, were disappeared or abducted to mainland China. One of these booksellers, Gui Minhai, a Swedish citizen abducted from Thailand, remains in custody in China, where he will mark his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday this Friday.

The disappearances and abductions of the booksellers, and their coerced "confessions" which were broadcast on Hong Kong television, sent shockwaves through the city and are reflective of a larger troubling trend in the area of press freedom and freedom of expression.

Today is World Press Freedom Day and it bears mentioning that the recently released Reporters Without Borders index ranking countries for their press freedom environment had Hong Kong slipping 4 places in a single year.

In February, Senators Cardin and Cotton joined me in introducing the bipartisan *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act*, which would renew the United States' historical commitment to Hong Kong at a time when its autonomy is increasingly under assault.

The legislation also establishes punitive measures against government officials in Hong Kong or mainland China who are responsible for suppressing basic freedoms in Hong Kong.

Looking ahead, Congress will be closely watching how Hong Kong authorities and the mainland handle the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as whether Ms. Lam moves to reintroduce Article 23, widely despised anti-subversion and anti-sedition legislation first proposed in 2002, which triggered massive protests in which half a million Hong Kongers took to the streets.

I look forward to today's hearing. Without question, there are many layers and complexities to our relationship with China as evidenced by the questions during yesterday's hearing for Governor Branstad to serve as U.S. ambassador to China.

Despite the multitude of challenges, Hong Kong's future, indeed its destiny, must not be sidelined. China's assault on democratic institutions and human rights is of

central importance to the people of Hong Kong and to its status as a free market, economic powerhouse and hub for international trade and investment.

We cannot allow Hong Kong to go the way of Beijing's failed authoritarianism and one-party rule.