

HONG KONG: The Umbrella Revolution

CONDUCTING AN INQUIRY

1. Analyze and make inferences based on photos of the skyline of Hong Kong. Create a list of three inquiry questions regarding these images (the questions should relate to the culture, economy, government of Hong Kong). With your questions in mind, conduct research to answer your questions.
2. Analyze and make inferences based on photos of the recent "Umbrella Revolution" in Hong Kong. Add three additional inquiry questions. With your questions in mind, conduct research to answer your questions.
3. The protest was led and sustained largely by university students. Why do you think it is that many political protests and revolutions originate and are supported by university students?



Qualities of a Democratic State

- All power is derived from the people. The people vote for a government that rules for a set duration.
- The elected representatives of the people meet in parliament and pass laws and approve budgets.
- There is an opposition to the government that keeps its eye on the government and provides alternative ideas to the public.
- A system of checks and balances ensures that power is not concentrated too heavily in one person or governing body.
- All state power is founded in the law.
- Citizens participate and support democratic processes.

CONSIDERING DEMOCRACY

1. What do you think are the most important qualities of a "democracy"?
2. Consider the list of qualities of a democratic state.
 - a) If one of these qualities was eliminated do you think it would be possible to have a democracy? Why or why not?
 - b) Are there different forms of democracy in the world today?
 - c) What do these different forms of democracy "look like"?
3. Elected officials, spokespeople and many citizens of the People's Republic of China consider their nation a type of democratic government. Is this a reasonable belief? Why would other democracies object to this reasoning and claim instead that China is an anti-democratic dictatorship?

4. What benefits would universal suffrage bring to China (culturally, politically, economically)? What challenges and obstacles would universal suffrage bring to China? Why do you think of the claim that China would not be "suitable" as a full democracy?

QUOTES ABOUT DEMOCRACY

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each quote?
2. Research the biography of one of the originators of a selected quote. How might that person's beliefs and attitudes be reflected in her/his life experience?
3. What difference does living in a democracy make in your life?
4. Why do you think people in some parts of the world are fighting for "more democracy"?
5. Why do you think people in some parts of the world are uninvolved and apathetic towards democracy?

// Democracy is the worst form of government, apart from all the others. **//**
– Winston Churchill

// Democracy is not a spectator sport. **//**
– Marian Wright Edelman

// Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary. **//**
– Reinhold Niebuhr

// Democracy cannot be forced upon a society, neither is it a gift that can be held forever. It has to be struggled hard for and defended everyday anew. **//**
– Heinz Galinski

// We who are members of the Communist Party repudiate the exclusive identification of democracy with capitalism. We declare that democracy can be widened, take on new aspects, become truly a rule of the people, only when it is extended to the economic life of the people. **//**
– Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

// The well-being of democracies regardless of their type and status is dependent on one small technical detail: The right to vote. Everything else is secondary. **//**
– Jose Ortega y Gasset

CHINA AND HONG KONG: One Country, Two Systems

Hong Kong has a unique relationship within the nation of China. This relationship is unique due to past colonial wars and resulting treaties that led to the two vastly different political systems in China and Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is considered a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China. On July 1, 1997, the People's Republic of China was handed sovereignty over Hong Kong, ending more than 150 years of rule by Great Britain. This period of foreign rule gave Hong Kong a distinct culture.

Hong Kong has a high degree of autonomy in all political matters except foreign affairs and defense. According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 and Hong Kong Basic Law, Hong Kong gets to keep its political (i.e. democratic), economic (i.e. capitalist) and judicial systems and unique way of life (i.e. more personal freedoms) and continues to participate in international agreements and organizations under the name, Hong Kong, China.

Hong Kong residents have freedom of speech, of the press and publication, of association, assembly, communication, movement, conscience, religious belief, marriage, as well as the freedom to form and join trade unions and to strike. These are freedoms that are not fully enjoyed by the people of mainland China. The socialist system of economics and politics is not enforced on Hong Kong as it is practiced in mainland China. This agreement to allow for Hong Kong "uniqueness" remains in effect until 2047. The goal of universal suffrage for Hong Kong was deferred from the original agreement until 2017. So while Hong Kong has a type of democracy; it doesn't have universal suffrage, a basic tenet of democracy.

Hong Kong has its own mini parliament. Its representatives are either elected by direct election or by electoral college. Those resident in Hong Kong for more than seven years are eligible to vote in direct elections, however only one-third of the council is elected directly. The remaining two thirds are elected by a 20,000 strong functional constituency made up of businessman and professionals such as doctors, lawyers and engineers. These groups form into broad parties formed through mutual interests, almost always business related.

The chief executive is the head of the government and answers directly to Beijing, the capital of China. The chief executive is elected by 800 members drawn from the functional constituency. He/she is not directly elected, and Beijing tells many of the functional constituency parties who they should support. For this reason, Hong Kong is seen as a undemocratic democracy. The current chief executive is Leung Chun-ying who took office on July 1, 2012.

Universal suffrage is a political hot topic in Hong Kong. Many Hong Kongers are very concerned about a lack of democracy and are pressuring Beijing to introduce universal suffrage. 2017 is the next election date in Hong Kong.

Anger erupted in September 2014 when Beijing announced that it would not allow open nominations for the position of chief executive. The National People's Congress (China's parliament) wants to ensure that no candidate in Hong Kong's elections makes the ballot against China's will.

Did you know?

In the 1990s, fearful of what might happen in 1997 when Hong Kong was scheduled to transition from British to Chinese rule, about 60 000 of Hong Kong's most successful professionals moved overseas (mainly to Canada and Australia). What effect do you think this migration had on Hong Kong? What effect did it have on Canada? Consider asking a community member who emigrated from Hong Kong to talk about life during that time period.

Questions

1. How does Hong Kong differ from China politically and economically?
2. What nation colonized Hong Kong?
3. What is universal suffrage and why is it critical to democracy?
4. How is the chief executive of Hong Kong elected?
5. Why did Hong Kongers expect more democracy in 2017? Why were they disappointed?

Further Research

1. Why do you think the Umbrella Revolution ended with little real political change?
2. Why do you think it is difficult for rulers in Beijing to ignore the demands of Hong Kong?
3. What was the response to the Umbrella Revolution in other democracies?
4. Research the reasons why Hong Kong was a colony of Britain.
5. Research the beliefs and lives of a political dissident in China. Video review

VIDEO REVIEW

Pre-viewing

Record qualities (words and phrases) that you associate with the following terms:

Revolution	Protest/Demonstration

While viewing

- Hong Kong is a democratic region in the middle of a communist country.
 TRUE FALSE
- Protests and demonstrations are frequent in China. TRUE FALSE
- How many protestors engaged in the demonstrations? Circle one.
 a) Hundreds b) Tens of thousands c) One hundred thousand
- Why does Hong Kong have more freedoms than the rest of China?

- To which other protest was the Umbrella Revolution compared? Circle one.
 a) The G20 riots b) Tiananmen Square c) The Arab Spring
- Why did more protestors join the students?

- What freedom in particular do the people in Hong Kong want to protect?

8. What social media app was used by the protestors and why was it effective?

9. What other group appeared to heighten the tensions?

10. Beijing's main tactic was to wait out the student protest. TRUE FALSE

11. The student protestors never met with government officials. TRUE FALSE

Post-viewing

1. Return to the words and phrases that you associated with the word "revolution." Do you think the "Umbrella Revolution" is aptly named or not? Why or why not?
