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Hong Kong Protests, China Response
Robert Lawrence Kuhn, August 18, 2019



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Hong Kong protests

Protests were sparked by a China extradition bill

BBC HOST:
Robert Lawrence Kuhn is a long-term adviser to China's leaders and hosts a show on Chinese state television. He joins me live now from New York. It's very good to have you with us Robert. Given that Beijing has recently described the protests as near terrorism, today's peaceful protests somewhat makes a mockery of that claim, doesn't it?



RLK: Certainly, China wants stability for Hong Kong, which is the foundation of economic development, and it wants maintenance of rule of law, which is the foundation of civil society. But China has three "red lines" that cannot be crossed. China will do the absolute minimum that it has to it to support the local Hong Kong government, to support the local police, and do so at all costs.



RLK: But there are these three red lines that cannot be crossed.

First, is moving towards independence or even quasi independence, universal suffrage is sort of on that border.

Second, any use of Hong Kong to undermine the political system of the mainland.

And third, finally, is unrelenting chaos, which would not only disturb Hong Kong but potentially spill over into other areas.



RLK: So, if any of those three red lines seem to be being broached, all things are on the table. But once again, China will do the absolute minimum that it has to do in terms of intervention because it wants to preserve the “One Country Two Systems” concept.



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Hong Kong protests

Roads closed and some transport was suspended



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BBC HOST:
With that in mind though, given there was no violence at the demonstrations and no reported violence at the demonstrations this weekend. Do you think China ratcheted up the rhetoric a bit too quickly in describing those protests as being near terrorism?



RLK: Well, that was certainly the reaction when they took over the airport and disrupted hundreds of flights over several days. One could be legitimately concerned at the ratcheting up of the rhetoric and indeed if you put yourself in the protesters shoes and their objectives, the violence was counterproductive and undermined their own interests. So in that sense the lack of violence is good for the protesters in terms of the vision that they have. But once again China will not allow these three red lines to be broached.



BBC HOST:
Those red lines you mentioned about maintaining order, the economic viability of Hong Kong, and so on. And if China felt that it had to intervene, given how important those elements are to Beijing, how do you balance that against what they could potentially lose as a result of being seen to be heavy handed?



RLK: That's a fundamental question because we have "goods", so to speak, from China's perspective going in opposite directions: Not intervening, allowing the local government to run everything, totally supports the "One Country Two Systems" idea. China will eventually like to use that with respect to Taiwan. But the stability and the requirement of Hong Kong not moving towards independence and no chaos is absolutely sacrosanct.

So China, once again, will do the minimum it has to. But if it has to do, it will.



Robert Lawrence Kuhn
Adviser to Chinese government

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Hong Kong protests

Pro-democracy demonstrations now in 11th week

RLK: There was an announcement literally today. I can't imagine it was coincidental about China's commitment to build Shenzhen as a world city with target dates of 2025 and 2035 and then mid-century to where Shenzhen would become one of the world's leading cities in economics and finance and design and innovation.

I can't help but believe that's a signal to Hong Kong as well.

BBC HOST: Robert Lawrence Kuhn, thank you very much indeed.



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Hong Kong protests

Organisers say '1.7 million people' have taken part