



## Project Democracy coup machine drives Hong Kong ‘protests’

By Richard Bardon

27 Aug.—Any time the governments, mainstream media and the bulk of “left”- and “right”-wing pundits across the Anglosphere unite in support of some “pro-democracy movement”, it is safe to assume that said movement was created or has been co-opted by the Anglo-American empire for its own geopolitical purposes—none of which has anything to do with democracy. This was true of the 2011 uprising by so-called “moderate rebels” that launched NATO’s ongoing proxy war on Syria; of the 2013-14 “Maidan” protests-turned-riots in Ukraine that overthrew the elected government, installed neo-Nazi thugs in its place, and precipitated a civil war; and of the violent pro-fascist mobs who tried, but failed, in 2014 and again this year to dislodge the government of Venezuela. And it is likewise true of the past four months’ civil unrest in the former British colony of Hong Kong, where what began as a series of genuine political protests has long since been taken over by violent radicals backed by the British and US governments, via the “Project Democracy” regime-change machinery used to destabilise and overthrow governments around the world for over 30 years.

The Hong Kong protests began in late March, after members of the regional government proposed a law to allow extraditions to Taiwan, mainland China and Macao, among other places with which Hong Kong has no formal extradition treaty. The “Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019” would have closed a loophole that literally lets Hong Kong residents get away with murder, so long as they commit it elsewhere. It was introduced after a 19-year-old Hong Kong man murdered his pregnant girlfriend during a trip to Taiwan in March 2018, and managed to make it home before her body was found; he admitted his guilt to the Hong Kong police, but they could neither charge him with, nor allow his arrest for a crime committed outside their jurisdiction. The Hong Kong government sought to remedy this by allowing the High Court to approve, on a case-by-case-basis, police cooperation with and extradition to jurisdictions with which no formal treaty exists. “The proposed law covered 46 types of crimes that are recognised as serious offences across the globe”, among them murder, rape, kidnapping, immigration violations, drug offences, robbery, burglary and arson, reported Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers, co-directors of political news website Popular Resistance, for Consortium News on [19 August](#). The list initially included business and financial crimes as well, but this was dropped after powerful business interests lobbied against it. “Hong Kong’s two pro-business parties urged the government to exempt white-collar crimes from the list of offences covered by any future extradition agreement”, Zeese and Flowers wrote. “There was escalating pressure from the city’s business heavyweights. The American Chamber of Commerce, AmCham, a 50-year-old organisation that represents over 1,200 US companies doing business in Hong Kong, opposed the proposal. ... Proponents of the bill responded by exempting nine of the economic crimes and made extradition [available] only for crimes punishable by at least seven years in prison.” These changes

notwithstanding, big-business advocates continued to oppose the bill, while anti-China agitators among Hong Kong’s liberal media promulgated scare stories aimed at convincing the public that the bill was somehow a threat to the autonomy Hong Kong enjoys under the “one country, two systems” model adopted upon its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 after some 150 years of British colonial occupation.

### Usual suspects

Chief among these agitators is Jimmy Lai, sometimes described as the “Rupert Murdoch of Asia”. A protégé of radical free-market economist and British Crown agent Milton Friedman (see Almanac), “Lai established his credentials by pouring millions of dollars into the 2014 Occupy Central protest, which is known popularly as the Umbrella Movement”, US journalist Dan Cohen reported 17 August for news website [The Grayzone](#). “He has since used his massive fortune to fund local anti-China political movers and shakers while injecting the protests with a virulent brand of Sinophobia.” Having built a mainland business empire on the back of his clothing label Giordano, “In 1989 [Lai] threw his weight behind the Tiananmen Square protests, hawking t-shirts on the streets of Beijing calling for [China’s then-leader] Deng Xiaoping to ‘step down’”. Lai’s actions provoked the Chinese government to ban his company from operating on the mainland. A year later, he founded *Next Weekly* magazine ... [and] soon became Hong Kong’s media kingpin, worth a whopping US\$660 million in 2009. Today, Lai is the founder and majority stakeholder of Next Digital, the largest listed media company in Hong Kong, which he uses to agitate for the end of what he calls the Chinese ‘dictatorship’. His flagship outlet is the popular tabloid *Apple Daily*, employing the trademark mix of raunchy material with a heavy dose of xenophobic, nativist propaganda.” As to who is giving Lai his marching orders, Cohen reported: “This July, as the Hong Kong protests gathered steam, Lai was junketed to Washington, DC for meetings with Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Advisor John Bolton, and Republican Senators Ted Cruz, Cory Gardner, and Rick Scott.” Other so-called democracy activists, including 2014 Umbrella Movement leaders Joshua Wong and Nathan Law, were photographed early this month meeting with Julie Eadeh, the political counsellor at the US Consulate General in Hong Kong, whom Chinese state media reports characterised as a “State Department subversion expert” in the vein of Victoria Nuland, the Obama Administration assistant secretary of state who directed the 2014 Maidan coup in Ukraine.

Chinese-born, Bali-based political commentator Carl Zha added in a 23 August [interview](#) with [The Grayzone’s](#) Max Blumenthal and Ben Norton that Lai uses the *Apple* and his other media outlets to blame all Hong Kong’s social and economic ills—the soaring cost of housing; the loss of manufacturing jobs; over-reliance on the service economy, particularly the financial sector, which is dominated by British and US banks; zero real wage growth in a decade; and the resulting lack of prospects for young people—on Beijing, when the real problem is the local banking and real-estate oligarchs who essentially control the

legislature, and have set the rules to suit themselves since the British departed. This is largely the result of the faux-democratic system the British set up in the last decades of their occupation, in which only half the legislature's 60 members are directly elected, while the rest represent economic sectors—so-called “functional constituencies”. Whilst this arrangement does allow primary producers and other minority interests a voice in government, its primary result is that corporations, including foreign ones, get to vote on legislation. (To this author's knowledge, the only other place that happens is the City of London.)

Mint Press News reported 13 June that besides Lai, the main organising force behind the protests has been a suite of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) backed by the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a State Department front established in 1983 to meddle openly in other nations' affairs behind a smokescreen of “promoting democracy abroad”, in lieu of covert operations by the Central Intelligence Agency. “The NED has four main branches, at least two of which are active in Hong Kong: The Solidarity Centre (SC) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI)”, Mint Press reported. “The latter has been active in Hong Kong since 1997, and NED funding for Hong Kong-based groups has been ‘consistent’, says Louisa Greve, [NED] vice president of programs for Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. ... In 2018, NED granted US\$155,000 to SC and US\$200,000 to NDI for work in Hong Kong, and US\$90,000 to HKHRM [the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor].... Between 1995 and 2013, HKHRM received more than US\$1.9 million in funds from the NED. ... NDI has worked with the Hong Kong Journalist Association, the Civic Party, the Labour Party, and the (Hong Kong) Democratic Party. ... [SC has also] given US\$540,000 to the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions in the course of just seven years. The coalition cited by Hong Kong media, including the *South China Morning Post* and the *Hong Kong Free Press*, as organisers of the anti-extradition law demonstrations is called the Civil Human Rights Front. That organisation's website lists the NED-funded HKHRM, Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, the Hong Kong Journalists Association, the Civic Party, the Labour Party, and the Democratic Party as members of the coalition.”

The HKHRM was founded by another Tiananmen alumnus, Baptist minister Rev. Chu Yiu-ming. Like Lai, Chu fled to Hong Kong in the wake of that failed Anglo-American-backed “uprising”, where he became an agent of both the CIA and Britain's foreign intelligence service MI6, playing a key role in those agencies' “Operation Yellowbird”, the covert exfiltration from the mainland of over 400 dissidents. Whilst Chu was prominent in the 2014 Umbrella Movement demonstrations, poor health has reportedly precluded his active participation in this year's follow-up performance, though no doubt he remains influential behind the scenes.

### From protest to riot: the ‘Maidan’ template

Large-scale protests, both those against the government and the sometimes larger—though never reported as such by the establishment media—counter-demonstrations in support of the government and police, have largely petered out since Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam pronounced the extradition bill “dead” on 9 July. Since then, what the British, US and Australian governments and media continue to refer to as “protests” have in fact descended into a series of violent attacks on police and disruptions to public order by a hard core of no more than a few

thousand radicals. As anti-war activist, broadcaster and former UK Labour MP George Galloway put it on the 24 August episode of his Al Mayadeen TV talk show Kalima Horra (“Your Say”), “The protests quickly ... turned into a violent regime-change operation. The Parliament building was broken into, sacked, and set on fire—a bit like the Maidan in the Ukraine. And, insult of all insults, the British colonial flag was hoisted inside.... China promptly denounced British involvement in affairs in Hong Kong. Now, would that surprise anyone, if ‘perfidious Albion’ was continuing to interfere in the political life of its former colonies?” Colony or no, he pointed out, Hong Kong is still crawling with MI6 agents. Other “protestors” have thrown Molotov cocktails at police, as well as into busy intersections to disrupt traffic. They besieged police headquarters in late June with makeshift barricades, which they set on fire, and shone high-powered handheld lasers—capable of causing permanent damage, even blindness, to unprotected eyes—into the faces of personnel who tried to douse the flames. And they've attacked police and other emergency services personnel with metal poles, baseball bats, and bricks flung from makeshift catapults.

Why they should do so is made clear by one Fred Chan Ho-fai in the headline of a guest column in the 30 June *New York Times*: “A Hong Kong protestor's tactic: Get the police to hit you.” He wrote: “An important idea that has been circulating ... is called the Marginal Violence Theory, and it holds that protesters should not actively use or advocate violence, but instead use the most aggressive non-violent actions possible to push the police and the government to their limits. This is what some protesters have been doing.... And if they prompt the police to respond with unnecessary force ... then the public will feel disapproval and disgust for the authorities. The protesters should thoughtfully escalate nonviolence, maybe even resort to mild force, to push the government to the edge. That was the goal of many people who surrounded and barricaded police headquarters for hours on 21 June.”

This tactic comes straight from the playbook of Oxford-trained American political theorist Gene Sharp—specifically, his 1973 three-volume magnum opus *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, and 1993 handbook *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A conceptual framework for action*. Both, but especially the latter, which has been translated in over 40 languages, have been the bible of every MI6/CIA-backed “colour revolution” and regime change since the 1986 Yellow Revolution against Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, through the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989 (in which Sharp later boasted he had been personally involved), the well-known 2003 Georgian “Rose”, and 2004 Ukrainian “Orange” revolutions, as well as failed attempts against Russia (“White”, 2012) and other Anglo-American geopolitical targets.<sup>1</sup> The 2014 “colour” (umbrella) revolution in Hong Kong failed too, but the empire does not give up so easily.

The Chinese central government in Beijing is of course far too strong to be brought down by a relative handful of violent radicals in Hong Kong, regardless of how much backing they receive from the USA, Britain or anyone else. Rather, the aim is most likely to turn Hong Kong into a place that can be a permanent source of destabilisation against China, in keeping with British imperial “balance of power” geopolitics.

1. “The British Empire created the ‘colour revolutions’ as an act of war”, *EIR*, 13 June 2014.