

As China Imposes New Hong Kong Law, U.S. And Allies Take Steps To Retaliate



Protesters against the new national security law gesture with five fingers, signifying “five demands — not one less” on the anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover to China from Britain in Hong Kong on Wednesday. -Vincent Yu/AP

Attempts to dissuade China’s ruling Communist Party from asserting more authority over Hong Kong didn’t work. Now that China is imposing a new national security law on the territory, world powers are looking to punish Beijing.

The law hands the central government almost unchecked legal power in the former British colony, which was promised a “high degree of autonomy” for 50 years when it was returned to China in 1997. Drafted secretly and enacted swiftly

on Tuesday, it is considered by many analysts to be even harsher than expected.

Policymakers, activists, and analysts outside China say it's critical now for governments from Washington to Tokyo to back their words with action by cranking up pressure on China's leadership while trying to help the people of Hong Kong.

In the short run, few expect China's emboldened leadership to blink. Over the long run, though, the hope is that pressure will lead to change.

"Obviously, more now has to be done that they have pulled the trigger," Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., said at a hearing on Hong Kong's future in the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday.

"We need to meet this as never before. We didn't do it after Tiananmen Square," he said, referring to the June 4, 1989, crackdown on pro-democracy protesters. "We acquiesced and they took note of that and said, 'You know, give it a little time and people will just let it go.' "

Economic pressure and sanctions

In late May, the Trump administration decertified Hong Kong for not being sufficiently autonomous from China. The U.S. has begun steps to remove elements of the special treatment that the territory has enjoyed for decades because it was different from other Chinese cities.

On Monday, the State Department announced an end to the sale of military equipment and other technologies to Hong Kong. The Commerce Department suspended preferential treatment and export license exceptions for Hong Kong the same day.

The steps may complicate China's plans to turn the sprawling Pearl River Delta in southern China into a coordinated economic powerhouse with Hong Kong as the technology hub, says Ho-Fung Hung, a professor of political economy at Johns Hopkins University who follows Hong Kong affairs.

Hung says China had been expecting access to certain technologies via Hong Kong that are unavailable on the mainland, but that has changed.

Source:

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