

Hong Kong's fight for freedom

The western democratic world must back the protesters, says **Janet Nichol**, while **Esther Cheo Ying Samson** remembers parading in Beijing on 1 October 1949.



A protest against a teenage demonstrator being shot at close range in the chest by a police officer in Hong Kong on 1 October. Photograph: Vincent Thian/AP

Hong Kong is at the forefront of the worldwide conflict between democracy and authoritarianism. Among those standing up for democratic values on which our western civilization depends are university students and schoolchildren. They, unlike their Chinese counterparts, know what happened in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and remember the event annually by a candlelit vigil.

The democracy protests in 2014, which I saw first-hand as my own students were involved, were entirely peaceful, orderly and restrained. The protests were dubbed the “umbrella movement” due to the use of umbrellas to protect against police aggression. The current protests are still, by and large, peaceful but beset by increased police brutality (Hong Kong protester shot with live round as violence escalates, 2 October). The fears of these young people are real, including

that of extradition to China, attempts to introduce “national education” in schools, the proposed national anthem law, and the kidnapping of five Hong Kong booksellers in 2015.

Our democratic world stands by as an authoritarian juggernaut masses its troops across the border, leaving these students to shoulder our values. As the Foreign Office declared in 2014 that the Chinese regarded the Sino-British “joint declaration” as void, our response should be even stronger. Instead we, along with other western powers, seem to be accepting Chinese aggression as the new normal. Hong Kong needs our support.

Janet Nichol

Littlehampton

- I must be one of the few survivors who took part in the Tiananmen Square parade on 1 October 1949 (Vast parade marks rise to the status of a superpower, 2 October). Aged 17, I was among the hundreds dressed in shabby uniforms, some wearing homespun cloth shoes or straw sandals, armed with old Remington rifles. Now, China has become one of the most powerful nations in the world with a modern army equipped with sophisticated weapons. Never was a truer maxim from Napoleon: “China is a sleeping giant, for when she awakes she will move the world.”

Esther Cheo Ying Samson

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