**Forum:** GA 4 – Political

**Issue:**The issue of the rights of the citizens of Hong-Kong

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**Introduction**

Protests in Hong Kong have acquired a greater character, capturing international attention and concern. These aim to manifest a general discontent with the Extradition bill which not only enables Hong Kong to extradite criminal suspects to places with which it does not have an extradition treaty, including mainland China, Taiwan and Macao but also threatens the independence of Hong Kong's legal system. The case of Poon Hiu-wing, a woman who was murdered by her 19 year old boyfriend Chan Tong-kai in Taiwan, triggered the protests as Hong Kong government used Taiwan's request for Chan to be extradited as an opportunity to present the polemic extradition bill, that caused concern among journalist organizations, business groups and international governments.

These events are closely linked to Hong Kong's past and will influence its future. China and Hong Kong have a strongly complex political relationship as Hong Kong was handed back again by the UK to China under the condition of “one country, two systems”, which provided political and legal autonomy, this included the right to vote, freedom of press and assembly among others. This agreement had an expiration date as it will be valid until 2047, however China is already taking action towards Hong Kong’s freedom under the rule of its authoritarian leader Jin Pining.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Amnesty**

Juridic act that consists of the removal of legal punishments offered to citizens who break the law. When amnesty is obtained, the individual convicted of a crime becomes innocent, because the crime they had been accused of has disappeared and, with it, the responsibility for serving the previously established penalty.

**Extradition**

Process that impulses a State’s authority to deliver a subject accused of a crime to another nation, allowing the authorities of this second State to establish a judicial process against the subject in question, determining its corresponding sanction

**Activism**

Act by which a group of people manifest themselves in an organized way against or in favor of something throughout mobilizations and actions. Its main objective is to carry out a social, cultural, ambiental, economic or political change.

**Citizenship**

Condition granted to the citizen of being a member of an organized community and allows access to a set of rights and duties related to the society in which it lives. One of the citizenship requirements for citizens to exercise their political rights is nationality. However some people , despite being nationals of a State, do not possess political rights, because they may have been revoked or denied. For example,mental disabled legally declared individuals are excelled of voting, which may be mandatory for those over 18 years of age.

**Issue Overview**

**Historical Background**

The Hong Kong region has been inhabited by the Chinese since the Neolithic era. At first they formed a small fishing community, being the refuge place for pirates and opium smugglers. In the 17th century, the region witnessed the clashes between the Ming dynasty and the Ping dynasty, participating in the history of China itself. Pirates came to buy chinese goods such as tea and porcelain that was significantly more expensive back in England. However the conservative Chinese government restricted trade with foreigners to the port of Canton and local authorities tax imports at very high rates. The British reversed this imbalance by smuggling opium, causing an epidemic of opium addicts.

China and Britain entered into a conflict that would lead to a fundamental event in 1842: China ceded Hong Kong island to Britain after the First Opium War. Hong Kong started a process of westernization, the differences between China became more evident inside the culture. During the Second World War it was invaded by the Japanese Empire through military repression. It was handed again to China under a policy called “two countries, one systems” which enabled Hong Kong to have its own system in a limited democracy until 2047. After the Japanese defeat Hong kong was in deplorable conditions, however its state improved with the chinese civil war, with the arrival of businessmen that escaped from communism and to refuge in the island. When the west blocked China for its role in the Korean War Hong kong emerged from disgrace and its economy took a drastic change that allowed the development of finance, manufacturing, electronics and consulting.

**Latest Events**

The House of Representatives approved on Wednesday, November 20th, a bill that validates Hong Kong activists and imposes sanctions to the authorities guilty of human rights abuses, which is interpreted as a warning to China. From this, China has responded by making Beijing ban US military ships from anchoring in autonomous territory. In addition, it will also impose sanctions on various US NGOs, which are blamed for having endorsed "the chaos in Hong Kong."

The protest that started due to the extradition bill has become a much wider issue as it has generated an anti government movement, in the last days of February 2020 more than a hundred of people have protested against Hong Kong's government decision to make use of public health installations near residential zones as treatment centres for 19 Covid-19 patients.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

* **China:** China has not limited itself to denounce the “unrested violence” performed by Hong Kong protesters stating protesters are disrupting peace and spreading social chaos as well as attacking police members.
* **United Kingdom:** The posture of the United Kingdom is hard to delimitate. China political representatives have accused the United Kingdom of “being two-faced in its approach to [Hong Kong](https://www.theguardian.com/world/hong-kong) – pretending to be even-handed in the face of the violent demonstrations, but in reality supporting the demands of the protesters”.
* **United States:** United states has manifested its concern towards the protests in Hong Kong, condemning the actions taken by the police, and asking the Hong Kong government for responsibility to restore the peace in Hong Kong and stating that the Chinese Communist party must “honor their promises to the Hong Kong People”, as The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo states, making reference to the Sino-British Joint Declaration.
* **United Nations:** The United Nations has begged both the police and the members of the protests to stop violence, specially has asked the protestors to express their views and exercise their right of freedom of expression in a non aggressive way in order to restore peace in Hong Kong. It has also pointed out that the use of weapons opposes the international code and rules.
* **Taiwan:** Taiwan has been one of the hardest critics towards Hong Kong’s extradition bill. The government's attempts to start negotiations with Hong Kong by proposing a special agreement have been ignored. Taiwan’s president ,Tsai Ing-wen , did not limit himself to express in social media his support to the protesters in Hong Kong.
* **International Trade Union Confederation:** The International Trade Union Confederation radically condemns the oppression towards the protesters and demands “the authorities to respect the fundamental rights of all people in Hong Kong, and fulfil its obligations under international law. The ITUC stands for the legitimate concerns and demands of the people must not be denied, and the international trade union movement stand in full solidarity with them” (ITUC, 2019)
* **Human Rights Watch:** The non-governmental organization has publicly declared their opposition to the bill due to the fact that it could be used as a tool of extortion or threaten social groups who criticize the chinese and Hong Kong government.

**Possible Solutions**

**Creating opportunities of dialogue between the government and the protesters**

The levels of violence and social chaos would decrease if the government acted in a more flexible manner towards the issue, being open to negotiation and generating instances of communication between the protesters and the local authorities.

**Giving specific training to policeman**

The polemic measures taken by the police have been internationally criticised, with the introduction of a course that can provide security workers the correct education to deal with violent protests, the social tension will be relieved.

**Educating the population on human rights**

The awareness and knowledge about rights such as: The right of protest, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, will not only strength the democratic development in Hong Kong but also decrease the levels of violence during the protests.

**Useful reference material**

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