

## Tightening grip: On Hong Kong-China relations

### What is the issue?

Recent developments suggest that the “one country, two systems” model of Hong Kong-China relations is coming under unprecedented stress.

### What is the political status of Hong Kong?

- Hong Kong, at roughly 1,100 sq km, is smaller in size than Delhi, and is home to an estimated 7.4 million people.
- It was a British colony from 1841 until sovereignty was returned to China in 1997.
- Hong Kong is now part of China under the “**one country, two systems**” principle.
- Under this, the city of Hong Kong remains a semi-autonomous region with the Basic Law (the city’s mini-constitution) for 50 years from 1997.
- This ensures that Hong Kong keeps its own judicial independence, its own legislature and economic system.
- It has its own laws and courts, and allows its residents a range of civil liberties.
- The constitutional document is a product of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration.

### What happened in Hong Kong after the handover?

- Since the handover, Hong Kong residents have repeatedly protested to protect their Basic Law freedoms, with the first major pro-democracy protest taking place in 2003.
- In 2014, over 1 lakh city residents took part in the ‘**Umbrella Revolution**’ to protest against China’s denial of democratic reforms.
- In 2019, several Hong Kongers agitated against a proposed [extradition law](#) and continued with pro-democracy marches even after the legislation was withdrawn.
- The law allowed the local government to extradite a suspect to places with which the city has no formal extradition accord.
- In effect, this would allow suspects accused of crimes such as murder and rape to be extradited to mainland China to face trial.

### What events indicate China’s hard line approach towards Hong Kong?

- [China’s new national security law](#)- It punishes the protestors with harsh punishments for offences including secession, subversion, terrorist activities, and collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security.
- It led to Hong Kong’s most well-known pro-democracy newspaper, Apple Daily, ceasing publication.
- **Overhaul of Hong Kong’s electoral system**- The electoral reforms reduced the share of directly elected representatives in Hong Kong’s legislature and introduced a new candidate review committee to ensure only patriots can run for office.

- Pro-Beijing candidates swept the patriots only polls with many of the pro-democracy opposition figures either boycotting or unable to contest the elections.
- **Tiananmen vigil** - The annual vigil has taken place in Hong Kong for decades to mark the anniversary of Chinese troops crushing peaceful democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989.
- This year, the park was closed by the police and the anniversary went without commemoration.
- **Removal of Pillar of Shame** - Pillar of Shame, standing in the campus of Hong Kong University was erected in 1997 to commemorate the crackdown at Tiananmen Square.
- It was removed by the construction crew in December 23. Memorials to Tiananmen at three other universities were also removed.

## References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/tightening-grip-on-hong-kong-china-relations/article38050939.ece>

