

# Chinese Communist Party moves increasingly centre stage during Hong Kong crackdown

Saturday 10 July 2021, by [AFP](#) (Date first published: 10 July 2021).

## Contents

- [Centenary celebrations](#)
- [‘Love the party’](#)

*“Beijing has turned to direct governance over Hong Kong,” veteran journalist and political analyst Johnny Lau said. “The representatives of the central government do not mind coming forward to the front stage and showing their presence and leadership.”*

**China’s Communist Party has abandoned its tradition of working from the shadows in Hong Kong** as authorities pursue a sweeping crackdown on critics and remould the financial hub in the mainland’s authoritarian image.

While Hong Kong was returned by colonial Britain in 1997, Beijing has historically been wary about making the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) too visible in a city where many hail from families who fled the worst excesses of its rule.

*“There were a few reasons for the CCP to be kept out of sight,” political analyst Willy Lam told AFP. “The CCP was associated with a series of horrendous mistakes including the Cultural Revolution, the three years of famine and so forth.”*

Beijing’s quiet support for leftist riots which killed about 50 Hong Kongers in 1967 — and Beijing’s 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown — also left a deeply ingrained suspicion of the party for many residents.

Ahead of the handover, former paramount leader **Deng Xiaoping** — creator of the “one country, two systems” model where Hong Kong could keep key freedoms and autonomy — moved to calm nerves by assuring residents that they did not need to love the party to be deemed patriots.

*“We don’t demand that they be in favour of China’s socialist system; we only ask them to love the motherland and Hong Kong,” he said.*

With 90 million members, the party is ubiquitous on the mainland but in Hong Kong it has been all but invisible.

The party itself has never registered as an official entity and the city’s proxy leaders have always denied being members — at least while in office.

## Centenary celebrations

**But the CCP has moved increasingly centre stage in recent years**, culminating most prominently in this month’s festivities marking the centenary of the party’s founding. Hammer and sickle flags have sprung up across the city in recent weeks along with huge billboards proclaiming the anniversary.

The local government hosted an exhibition titled *"A Hundred Years of Prosperity and Greatness"* while Beijing's four government agencies also held a prominent symposium with a series of bellwether speeches.

It was the first time high-profile events had been put on for a party anniversary in Hong Kong and it offered a vivid illustration of how far

### **Deng's definition of patriotism has changed under President Xi Jinping.**

*"Safeguarding the leadership of the CCP is safeguarding 'one country, two systems',"* Luo Huining, director of Beijing's Liaison Office, said in his symposium speech.

*"Those who raise a hue and cry for ending the one-party rule... are the real enemies of Hong Kong's prosperity and stability,"* he added.

The party's increased visibility comes as authorities enforce a political orthodoxy on the once outspoken city in response to huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago.

Beijing has imposed a sweeping national security law that criminalised much dissent and rolled out a campaign dubbed *"Patriots rule Hong Kong"* to vet people's political views.

Protests have been all but banned using anti-coronavirus measures and **most of the city's pro-democracy opposition leaders are now in jail, facing prosecution or have fled overseas.**

### **'Love the party'**

*"Beijing has turned to direct governance over Hong Kong,"* veteran journalist and political analyst Johnny Lau told AFP.

***"The representatives of the central government do not mind coming forward to the front stage*** and showing their presence and leadership.

*"With 'Patriots rule Hong Kong' and the new security law... authorities have implied that people now have to love the country and love the party,"* he added.

Hong Kongers with connections to Beijing's officialdom have suggested the same.

In an interview published Wednesday by ultra-nationalist mainland media outlet Guancha.cn, Lau Siu-kai, a former chief adviser at Hong Kong's central policy unit, said the Chinese Communist Party had once been considered a *"sensitive phrase"* in the city.

As a result the party had chosen not to carry out its activities publicly.

But that approach, Lau Siu-kai, said, was now *"outmoded"* because democracy protests had tried to turn Hong Kong into *"an infiltration base that could be used by opposition forces to challenge the CCP's rule"*, he said.

Now that Hong Kong's democracy opposition had been *"utterly defeated and scattered"*, he added, it was time for the party to *"seize the power of discourse"*.

Hong Kong officials have embraced that idea.

After new laws were passed ordering all public office holders to make oaths of loyalty, Erick Tsang — the secretary for constitutional and mainland affairs — said there was now no room for political ambiguity.

*"You cannot say that you are patriotic but you do not love the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party or you do not respect it,"* he said.

*"This does not make sense."*

---

**P.S.**

<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/07/10/communist-party-moves-increasingly-centre-stage-during-hong-k>

[ong-crackdown/](#)

Related article

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article58879>