

# THE HONG KONG HANDOVER: A 20-YEAR TIMELINE

## July 1, 1997

After 156 years as a British colony, Hong Kong is handed over to the People's Republic of China under the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Under the “one country, two systems” principle, Hong Kong will retain independent political, legal, and economic systems until 2047.

## May 24, 1998

Hong Kong holds its first post-handover elections.

## September 2002

The Hong Kong administration proposes Article 23, which requires Hong Kong to “enact laws on its own” to protect national security. Specifically, Article 23 refers to treason against the Mainland Chinese government under certain circumstances.

## July 1, 2003

500,000 demonstrators march to protest Article 23, claiming that the legislation would restrict freedom of speech. Eventually, Article 23 is withdrawn indefinitely.

## April 11, 2004

China rules that democratic reforms in Hong Kong will need to be pre-approved by the central government — giving China the right to veto any moves towards full democracy.

## July 1, 2004

200,000 demonstrators march to demand full democracy.

## September 12, 2004

Pro-China parties retain their majority in the Hong Kong legislative elections — but China is accused of creating a “climate of fear” to rig the results.

## December 20, 2004

Chinese President Hu Jintao publicly rebukes Tung Chee-hwa.

## March 10, 2005

Tung Chee-hwa resigns as chief executive. He is succeeded by Donald Tsang.

## September 2005

Pro-democracy members of the Legislative Council make an unprecedented visit to the Chinese Mainland.

## December 2007

China says that it will allow Hong Kong to directly elect its chief executive in 2017 and its legislators by 2020.

## September 7, 2008

In the Hong Kong legislative elections, pro-democracy candidates win more than a third of the seats, therefore retaining veto power over future bills.

## May 2010

Five opposition MPs in Hong Kong resign to pressure China into granting Hong Kong full democracy, triggering their own by-elections — and are subsequently returned to their seats.

## May 2010

The Democratic Party holds its first talks with senior Chinese officials since the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 to negotiate an electoral reform package.

## July 1, 2012

Leung Chun-ying takes office as chief executive. He makes his inauguration speech in Mandarin, the language spoken in Mainland China, rather than Cantonese.

## July 2012

A PRC-backed plan for “moral and national education” is to be introduced in Hong Kong schools by 2015. Thousands protest, likening the curriculum to brainwashing. Following intense backlash, Leung Chun-ying revokes the 2015 deadline.

## June 2014

Hong Kong holds an unofficial referendum. More than 90% of its 800,000 participants vote to give the public a say in shortlisting candidates for chief executive. China condemns the referendum as illegal.

## August 2014

China decides that only pre-approved candidates will be allowed to run in the 2017 election for Hong Kong’s chief executive.

## September-November 2014

In the “Umbrella Revolution,” demonstrators protest Beijing’s decision to limit voters’ choices in the 2017 elections. They are met with tear gas and pepper spray from riot police.



*A pro-democracy demonstrator with an umbrella, which Hong Kongers used to shield themselves from police pepper spray and tear gas. (Xaume Olleros, AFP/Getty Images)*

## 2015

By the end of the year, five Hong Kong-based book publishers who sold material critical of the Chinese Communist Party would disappear — and subsequently turn up in Chinese custody.

## August 2016

Six pro-independence candidates are disqualified from Hong Kong’s upcoming legislative elections in September.

## September 4, 2016

Hong Kong’s legislative elections see the highest turnout since Hong Kong was first handed over to China in 1997.

## November 15, 2016

The high court disqualifies two pro-independence legislators from taking their seats in the Legislative Council after they refuse to pledge allegiance to China during the swearing-in ceremony.

## March 26, 2017

Carrie Lam, deputy to Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, wins the Electoral College to become Hong Kong’s next chief executive.

## June 2017

Chinese President Xi Jinping states that any attempts in Hong Kong “to challenge the power” of China are “absolutely impermissible.”

## July 14, 2017

Four more pro-independence members-elect of the Legislative Council are disqualified because of their mannerisms when taking their oaths to office. The pro-democracy camp loses its veto power in government.

## August 2017

Three leaders from the 2014 Umbrella Movement are jailed.