Hong Kong

- The 2019 Hong Kong anti-extradition bill protests are a series of ongoing demonstrations in Hong Kong against the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill proposed by the Hong Kong government.
- Hong Kong's relationship with China
  - Hong Kong, a former British colony, was returned to China in 1997 under a policy known as "one country, two systems," which promised the territory a high degree of autonomy.
    - Because of this policy, Hong Kong has thrived with its free markets, independent courts, freewheeling press, open internet and other features that distinguish it from mainland China.
    - The autonomy guaranteed to Hong Kong under a mini-constitution known as the Basic Law, expired in 2047.
      - Recently, however, China's ruling Communist Party under President Xi Jinping has been trying to lessen Hong Kong's autonomy.
      - The Basic Law guarantees that the Chinese authorities cannot stifle dissent in Hong Kong with an iron fist, as they do across the mainland and in the autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang. This has forced the Chinese government to chip away at the independence of Hong Kong's institutions by other means - for example, this extradition bill.
      - Independence is under threat in the eyes of many Hongkongers. Ben Bland, a Hong Kong expert at the Lowy Institute in Australia said, "In recent years, the Hong Kong government has disqualified elected lawmakers, banned activists from running for office, prohibited a political party, jailed pro-democracy leaders, expelled a senior foreign journalist, and looked the other way when Beijing kidnapped its adversaries in Hong Kong."
- What is Hong Kong's Extradition Bill?
  - The bill would allow Hong Kong to detain and transfer people wanted in countries and territories with which it has no formal extradition agreements, including Taiwan and the Chinese mainland.
  - Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive championed the bill in February in response to pleas from the parents of a young woman who was allegedly murdered by her boyfriend while the pair visited Taiwan.

- The boyfriend is in Hong Kong, which does not have an extradition agreement with Taiwan.
  - Critics contend that the law would allow virtually anyone in the city to be picked up and detained in mainland China, a country in which judges must follow the orders of the Communist party. Many believe that if the bill passed, mainland Chinese officials would use it to demand the extradition, for trial on the mainland, not just criminal, but also political activists.
  - The extradition plan applies to 37 crimes, excluding political ones. However, critics fear the legislation would essentially legalize the sort of abductions to the mainland that have taken place in Hong Kong in recent years. It would also open a can of worms that could eventually lead to more crimes being included.
    - Under the law, the chief executive would need to approve an extradition request before an arrest warrant is issued. A Hong Kong court would also be empowered to check that there is a basic case against a suspect.
    - Hong Kong's subordinate status to the mainland would make it difficult for a local leader to reject an extradition request from the mainland superiors.
  - Business executives, who fear they might someday be extradited themselves to uncertain fates in China's opaque judicial system, have been major critics of the bill.
  - pro-Beijing lawmakers hold 43 of 70 seats in the Hong Kong legislature, all but insuring the bill would pass if it came to a vote.
    - In announcing the suspension of the bill on June 16th, Carrie Lam emphasized that it was not being withdrawn outright, as protesters are demanding.
  - On July 9th, Carrie Lam said the bill "is dead", but still refused to officially withdraw it.
    - Lam said, "I have almost immediately put a stop to the amendment exercise, but there are still lingering doubts about the government's sincerity, or worries whether the government will restart the process in the legislative council, so I reiterate here: There is no such plan, the bill is dead."
- The Protests
  - The first protest happened on March 31st with an attendance of 12,000 pro-democracy protesters according to organisers. Police put the peak figure at 5,200.

- ○ The movement gained stronger momentum after a second demonstration on April 28th, attracting an estimated 22,800 people according to police, while organisers claimed 130,000.
- ○ A protest held on June 9th was attended by 240,000 people according to police or over 1 million people according to organisers.
- ○ On June 12th, protests outside government headquarters escalated into violent clashes with police.
  - ■ 22 officers were injured.
  - ■ Multiple rounds of tear gas and rubber bullets were fired at protesters from police in riot gear.
  - ■ Pablo Wang, a freelance journalist based in Hong Kong, was at the protest for over 9 hours. He told USA Today the perseverance of the mostly youthful crowd, who he said were protesting, was unprecedented in Hong Kong.
  - ■ At least 81 people were injured in the violence.
- ● Why the protests continue.
  - ○ Because Lam suspended but did not officially withdraw the bill, lawmakers could still bring it back and act upon it before the end of the year, something protesters fear will happen.
    - ■ "She is trying to delay and hope Hong Kong people forget" said one protester.
  - ○ As protests have continued, opponents to the bill have had their concerns grow. Many argue the police have been overly violent in their response, and other claim the death of a protester has not been properly addressed by the government.
  - ○ On July 21st, protests broke out - the seventh in a series of demonstrations that have taken place in Hong Kong every weekend since early June - to make citizens' displeasure with Carrie Lam known and to call for an investigation into police action at protests.
    - ■ The extradition bill died in early June, however, demonstrations have continued as a platform for citizens to push back against what they call "police brutality" at the protests; Lam's dismissal of protesters as rioters and "stubborn children" and Beijing's growing influence in the city's politics.
  - ○ Violence escalated on the 21st as unknown assailants wearing white attacked the protesters, injuring at least eight people. The affiliation of the group of attackers in white is unknown, but some suspect they have ties to Beijing.

- - Thousands continued to protest on July 27th and 28th and on both days police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at the crowds.
    - On Saturday, riot police unleashed pepper spray and rubber bullets and clashed briefly with demonstrators in a train station in a northern town.
    - On Sunday, riot officers beat back demonstrators who tried to approach the Chinese government's representative office in the territory.

Puerto Rico

- [The best piece I read about the events in Puerto Rico.](#)
- Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of Puerto Rico to bring down Gov. Ricardo Rossello. A texting scandal involving Rossello sparked nearly two weeks of massive anti-government protests in the US territory after years of alleged corruption, a debt crisis and Hurricane Maria.
- Timeline of events
  - July 10th
    - Two former Puerto Rico officials, the island's education secretary Julia Keleher and the head of the health insurance administration Angela Avila-Marrero, were arrested on corruption charges. They were accused of directing millions of dollars in government contracts to politically connected contractors.
  - July 11th
    - After the arrest, the governor returned home from a previously scheduled family vacation outside the US territory and a few messages from a private Telegram chat with his inner circle were leaked. He apologized for referring to a former New York official with an expletive in those messages.
  - July 13th
    - The Puerto Rico's Center for Investigative Journalism published nearly 900 pages of derisive and offensive private chat messages between Rossello and members of his inner circle.
    - The exchanges from the messaging app Telegram ridiculed numerous politicians, journalists and celebrities. The messages were sent in December 2018 and January 2019.

- ■ Two Cabinet members who were part of the chats, Puerto Rico's former chief fiscal officer Sobrino Vega and Secretary of State Luis Rivera Marin, resigned.
  - ○ July 14th
    - ■ Protests began to grow outside Rosello's residence following the release of the leaked texts. The protesters called for Rossello to resign,
  - ○ July 16th
    - ■ Rossello announced he would not step down. In a news conference, he also defended the actions of police.
      - ● "I will continue my work and my responsibility to the people of Puerto Rico." the governor told reporters.
  - ○ July 17th
    - ■ Puerto Rico's Justice Department issued summonses for everyone involved in the private chat group with Rossello.
  - ○ July 19th
    - ■ The president of Puerto Rico's HOuse of Representatives, Carlos Mendez created a special committee to advise him on whether the governor committed impeachable offenses based on the leaked messages.
  - ○ July 21st
    - ■ Rossello announced he will not run for re-election in 2020 and resigned from his role as president of the New Progressive Party
  - ○ July 22nd
    - ■ Hundreds of thousands of people shut down a major highway in San Juan and launched an island-wide strike demanding Rossello's resignation.
  - ○ July 23rd
    - ■ Rossello's chief of staff submitted his resignation, effective July 31st.
  - ○ July 24th
    - ■ Rossello announced his resignation, effective August 2nd.
  - ○ July 28th
    - ■ Puerto Rico's Secretary of Justice Wanda Vazquez Garced said on Twitter she does not want to be Puerto Rico's next governor.
    - ■ According to Puerto Rico's order of succession, the secretary of state should be next in line after the governor, however, the man holding that position, Luis G. Rivera Marin resigned July 13th.
    - ■ As a result, Vazquez was next in line.

- What was in the text messages?
  - [Here you can find the complete 889 page document showing the messages](#).
  - The protests in Puerto Rico began after 889 pages of leaked messages among Rossello and 11 men in his inner circle were leaked. The messages were seen as offensive and insensitive as well as showing a cozy relationship between Rossello and former staff members who now represent special interests.
  - [From a piece in the Washington Post:](#)
    - "All men, they made misogynistic jokes, made fun of gay people, insulted journalists, joked about shooting San Juan's female mayor, made light of Hurrican Maria victims, and joked about the weight of a citizen with whom the governor had posed in a photo."
  - [From a New York Time piece](#):
    - "What they found was shocking: Members of Mr. Rossello's inner circle boasted about unleashing trolls against their critics on social media. They exchanged one meme after another mimicking President Trump, a colossally divisive figure in Puerto Rico. The governor mocked a poverty-stricken woman who had torn down a photograph of him in a government office after being denied food stamps. There were texts about using the government's advertising budget to assert control over newspapers."
  - "There's no other way to describe it: It was an atomic bomb. For the first time, the country could see the ruling class without their masks on." Benjamin Torres Gotay, a prominent Puerto Rican journalist, wrote in El Nuevo Dia.
  - Some of the subjects of the messages included:
    - Former New York City COuncil speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito
      - The initial leaked messages in which Rossello first apologized for, saw him refer to Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Puerto Rico-born former speaker of the New York City Council, as the Spanish word for "whore".
      - The governor wrote that he was upset Mark-Viverito had criticized Tom Perez, chair of the DNC, for backing statehood for Puerto Rico.
      - Rossello wrote, "Our people should come out and defend Tom and beat up that whore,"
    - San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz
      - In the chat, chief fiscal officer Christian Sobrino Vega wrote:

- ○ "I am salivating to shoot her"
      - ● Rossello responded:
          - ○ "You'd be doing me a grand favor"
      - ● Rossello also wrote that Yulin Cruz must be "off her meds" by deciding to run against him.
    - ■ Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin
      - ● Sobrino Vega wrote:
          - ○ "Nothing says patriarchal oppression like Ricky Martin"
          - ○ "Ricky Martin is such a male chauvinist that he fucks men because women don't measure up. Pure patriarchy."
    - ■ A shortage of pathologists at a government forensic agency.
      - ● Sobrino Vega, the former chief financial officer, in one chat was asked about the budget for forensic pathologist. He responded with a joke about the growing pile of dead bodies at the morgue in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.
          - ○ "Now that we are on the subject, don't we have some cadavers to feed our crows?" he wrote in an apparent reference to government critics.
- ● Is there more behind the anger and protests?
  - ○ According to a New York Times piece:
    - ■ "The protests are about much more than just the unseemly chat messages. They amount to a rejection of decades of mismanagement by leaders who always seemed to benefit while ordinary Puerto Ricans suffered. Grievances have been building up over 12 years of economic recession, a debt crisis that has prompted layoffs and cutbacks in public services and the botched response to Hurricane Maria."
    - ■ "The chat messages and the arrests last week of six people with ties to the Rossello government were the last straw for many Puerto Ricans, who said they could no longer tolerate mocking, profanity and corruption, real or perceived, by leaders who were supposed to be fighting on their behalf in Washington and San Juan."
  - ○ Protesters want to be rid of both Rossello and the unelected oversight board created by COngress to manage the finances of the island's government, which owes far more than it can pay to its creditors.

- - - Protesters have been chanting, "Ricky, renuncia, y llevate a la junta" which translates to "Ricky, resign, and take the board with you."
  - In many ways, the events that lead to turnover of the Puerto Rican government began in June.
    - Raul Maldonado Gautier, the secretary of the Treasury and former chief of staff to the governor, told a radio interviewer that there was an "institutional mafia" operating a profit-making business in his department. He said that some of them had threatened him and tried to extort him.
      - Gautier was fired and Erik Rolon, Governor Rossello's deputy chief of staff told reporters, "We cannot allow people in the government who are not loyal to the governor or the central administration."
    - Mr. Maldonado's son, Raul Maldonado Nieves, took to facebook to denounce Governor Rossello as "corrupt." In short order, the police showed up at his house, purportedly to investigate whether he had the proper permits for a cache of firearms he owns, and his lawyer declared that a political war was underway.

Boris Johnson

- On July 24th, Boris Johnson, leader of the Conservative Party, became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.
- Whos is Boris Johnson?
  - The son of a diplomat and an artist, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson was born in New York and grew up in Brussels.
  - At Oxford, Johnson studied classics and became president of the Oxford Union debate society.
  - Johnson first made his name as a newspaper reporter and editor. He was fired from the Times of London for making up a quote, but went on to work as Brussels correspondent for the Telegraph and become Margaret Thatcher's favorite columnist.
  - Johnson became editor of the Spectator magazine in 1999 and continued there even after entering politics. He was elected a member of Parliament from Henley in 2001.

- ○ Johnson had his ups and downs as a member of Parliament. He lost a leadership post after lying about an affair with a Spectator columnist but was elevated again by Tory leader David Cameron.
  - ○ London is traditionally a bastion of the left-leaning Labour Party. But Johnson, a conservative, managed to win two terms as London's mayor starting in 2008.
    - ■ Johnson's victory was seen as a major breakthrough for the Conservative Party, which had been out of power in Parliament for more than a decade at that point.
    - ■ As mayor, Johnson wasted large sums of money of several failed projects, including a scheme to build a pedestrian garden bridge across the Thames and another to build an airport on "Boris Island" in the Thames estuary.
    - ■ In one of his early acts as mayor, Johnson banned alcohol on the London Underground.
  - ○ Johnson is a strong advocate for Brexit, using the phrase "Take back control" in his campaign.
  - ○ Johnson was appointed foreign secretary by newly elected Prime Minister Theresa May (a political rival).
    - ■ Johnson resigned as foreign secretary in July 2018, complaining that May's compromise Brexit plan would shackle Britain to Europe like "a colony".
  - ○ Johnson has promised that the UK will leave the EU by Oct. 31, no matter what.
- ● Boris Johnson's populist persona, reputation for brashness, and bending the truth has earned him several comparisons to Donald Trump.
  - ○ Johnson has managed to generate a considerable amount of controversy for making comments that critics have dubbed racist, sexist, or Islamophobic.
    - ■ In 2002, while criticizing the UK's Africa policy, he referred to Africans as "piccaninnies.
    - ■ In 2007, he likened Hillary Clinton to a "sadistic nurse in a mental hospital.
    - ■ In 2016, he suggested that Barack Obama opposed Brexit because of his "ancestral dislike" of Britain, owing to his "part-Kenyan heritage".
    - ■ In a 2018 column, he described Muslim women who wear burqas as looking like "letter boxes" and "bank robbers".

- Notably, Johnson presided over the London Olympics, where, as the Guardian put it, he demonstrated "his greatest strength as mayor - an ability to generate laughter and a mood of upbeat bonhomie,"
    - Then-Prime Minister David Cameron aptly summed up Johnson's odd appeal: "If any other politician anywhere in the world was stuck on a zip-wire it would be a disaster. For Boris, it's an absolute triumph."
- As a popular Conservative politician, Johnson added legitimacy to the Leave campaign for Brexit. He also publicly broke with then-Prime Minister David Cameron, who advocated for Remain.
    - "Before [Brexit], he never made his color clear," Simon Griffiths, a politics professor at Goldsmiths, University of London, said. "It was widely thought that he doesn't have strong views on it but saw it as a chance to get his name known and a chance to lead a group of people."
    - Johnson effectively became the unofficial leader of the "Vote Leave" campaign.
    - He also used immigration as a major talking point for Brexit, challenging the EU's freedom of movement rules and arguing the open immigration was making the UK less safe.
- The UK is still divided over how, or whether to break from the EU and Theresa May's original, unpopular deal is still the only one on offer from the EU. Johnson said he will renegotiate May's Brexit deal, however, the EU has said it will not renegotiate, and Johnson's plan to break the impasses primarily relies on ideas that the EU has already rejected.
    - Johnson has vowed that the UK will leave the EU on Oct. 31st, with or without a deal.
- Johnson't premiership will live or die by Brexit and it's really the only reason he was given the job to begin with.
    - However, in his speech he vowed to flood the streets with new police officers. He promised to improve health care, to spend more on education, to bolster railroad infrastructure, to promote animal welfare, to improve satellite systems, to increase salaries, to be the prime minister for all of Britain. He even promised to "liberate the UK's extraordinary bioscience sector from anti-genetic modification rules."
- [Frank Luntz, columnist for the Financial Times in London wrote:](#)
    - "I have conducted focus groups in the US and UK for 30 years. Mr. Johnson is singularly the most difficult politician to label or categorise because there really isn't anyone like him on either side of the Atlantic. Trump voters say the president speaks like them and for them. Nobody in the UK thinks Mr. Johnson speaks like they do, and that's his advantage.

They think he's better -- better than them, and better than the career politicians."

- ○ "Politically, both men appeal to populist-leaning voters, but again, that's where the similarity ends. Whereas Mr. Trump is visceral and rooted in the here-and-now, Mr. Johnson is intellectual, effortlessly traversing history to make his case. And while Mr. Johson is not above the occasional attack or insult (which, as often as not, backfires), his message has a much more positive, hopeful, uplifting tone. He is one of the most effective speakers of our time."
- "In Europe, Mr. Johnson has been an unpopular figure ever since his days as a young journalist writing inaccurate articles portraying Europe as a wasteful, bloated bureaucracy determined to do things like enforce one-size-fits-all-condoms." - from a [New York Times column](#).

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