

Dear all

These virus months have changed us all. Inward focus is the norm so it may have escaped notice that tensions are escalating dramatically in Hong Kong and by extension in Taiwan.

Earlier this month, Xi Jinping summoned China's "parliament" to its delayed annual meeting to promulgate a new law that brings critical democratic freedoms, allowed under Hong Kong's special status, to an end.



He also announced that

## China's military says it is prepared to protect security in Hong Kong, as protests grow

PLA commander says 10,000 troops are prepared to 'safeguard' city's sovereignty as Beijing warns against 'underestimating' China



Meanwhile

## 'I won't allow this to be the end of Hong Kong': campaigner on his long fight for democracy

Martin Lee's father brought his family from China to the city for safe haven. Despite new security laws planned by Beijing, he won't give up on his ambition



and

**Taiwan**

## Taiwan promises 'support' for Hong Kong's people as China tightens grip

President Tsai Ing-wen pledges 'necessary assistance' after a resurgence in protests against newly proposed security legislation from Beijing



Also Japan airlines repatriated Taiwanese as well as Japanese who had become stranded in Russia where the virus is also escalating



Japan Airlines evacuates Taiwanese from Moscow -

I spent a long time on the phone over the weekend with a Taiwanese friend. She let me know that China also plans an August military “exercise” centering on an island that belongs to Taiwan, though it lies several hundred kilometers to the south.

This morning I found an agonized email in my inbox from the Japanese friend who told me about the JAL rescue flight. Japan’s government has begun saying explicitly that it is on the side of democracy and freedom.

These times are newly intense in NE Asia.

Why do I feel the need to pass these fears on to all of you?

I am a child of an internationalist era, a time when nations clearly recognized that international peace depended on international interactions.

Realistically, I cannot imagine that international attitudes will deflect China from its attack on Hong Kong. I even bet the bankers are allowed safely to leave before the storm really hits. But I fear for the people of Hong Kong, and also for Taiwan. The people in Tibet and Uighurs in Xinjiang have suffered agonizingly at the hands of the Chinese government. I cannot let the prospect of yet more agony pass unremarked.

What can any of us do to stop what’s coming? Refugees from Hitler’s time would say: at very least welcome those who flee.

Those of us who lived the Cold War can add — break the trade connections and do it now. This virus has already shown we can live without Chinese goods. Each of us can make a stand simply by awareness of the origins of things we buy.

Those of us who saw the end of Apartheid can add that economic actions have real consequences. Nonetheless, whether China changes or not depends on the people of China and not on us.

Rob and I miss our travels but our nomadic instincts are still powerful. We will see you again sometime

In peace

Helena