

Jean Oi [01:39:02] Thank you very much. And now I'd like to give Mrs. Chan an opportunity to give some reflections on the remarks.

The Hon. Anson Chan [01:39:16] Well a woman always likes to have the last word and I'm having the last word on this occasion. If I listen to Harry and to David, I simply just sit back, fold my hands and do nothing.

[01:39:29] I'm optimistic for a very simple reason and that is simply that there is not much point in being pessimistic, and I take the view that as long as there is a tomorrow, there is always hope. And my experience of 40 years in public service demonstrates that you need to keep that hope alive. You need to keep that hope alive particularly in our generation to make them believe that there is a future. I agree, at the moment what we lack is, first of all visionary leadership, trust and dialogue, particularly with our sovereign power. We have I think by and large an intelligent, hard-working, resilient community. But neither the SAR government nor Beijing have yet learned how to harness their energy and their commitment. We badly need to establish trust with our sovereign power and I think it is a very sad fact that in the 22 years since the handover, there may have been more trust I think in the initial years, but somehow whether it's our own fault or the fault on the part of Beijing, that trust has broken down.

[01:40:54] I would suggest that one of the things that Beijing would do well is to widen their sources of information and not just simply listen to a few political or business elites or to the liaison office, who really does seem to be, despite the fact that some of them have lived in Hong Kong for many years, totally so out of touch with the community's aspirations and really cannot feel the pulse of the community. So, if Beijing were willing to listen to a wider circle of people and who are prepared to give their honest views, then we stand a better chance of establishing a genuine dialogue and perhaps beginning to cultivate that much needed trust.

[01:41:46] I don't have, my crystal ball is not any clearer than anybody else's crystal ball, but I think one way out of the current impasse is if the government was willing to consider in whatever form they care to describe it, setting up an independent commission that will get the facts and establish the truth, then we can consider taking the first step towards reconciliation in a highly polarized and divided Hong Kong society, and I think every Hong Kong person wants to see that. And the commission, far from just targeting the police, is an attempt as I have tried to make clear from the outset when this you know extradition bill first blew up in the face of the government, was to say that this independent commission is an attempt to address the root cause of this unprecedented political crisis that we're facing. Yes, to determine what role, what action was played both by the protesters and by the police, not at finger pointing, not at finding anybody guilty, but once we established the truth, then we can begin this process of reconciliation.

[01:43:13] So in all the circumstances, it's actually a much fairer way of dealing with police grievances because one of the points I made earlier on in my open letter to the Chief Executive way back in June when I suggested three things. I suggested first of all that the Chief Executive stop juggling the semantics and simply declare that she is withdrawing the bill, which it took her three months to do. Secondly, that we set up this independent commission of inquiry because I felt it was unfair to pillory the police force members and their family because they are caught in a political turmoil not of their own making. And they cannot solve this political turmoil, it's up to the government, the chief executive and her team to solve it. So, I have a great deal of sympathy for the predicament that the police find itself in. It must be totally exhausted after four months. And their family members

unfortunately have also been penalized and we have to do something to stop this. And third, I suggested as a way of drawing a line and enabling a fresh start to be made, I suggested at that time that was in June, that the government grant an amnesty to both the police and to all protestors. But of course, with the passage of time, now we're four months into the protest and with increasing and escalating violence that has become much more problematic as I pointed out in my presentation.

[01:44:54] The second thing that the government can do is to offer to reopen discussion on constitutional reforms because if there's one thing that this generation of Hong Kong people is convinced of, is that they must have the right, the fundamental right to elect our own Chief Executive and all members of the legislature. Because they have seen that without the right to elect the Chief Executive and to make him or her accountable for her action, Mrs. Carrie Lam can choose to ignore the pleas of 2 million people taking to the streets because we do not elect her and she is not accountable. Furthermore, on top of that we have a dysfunctional legislature where because the pro-Beijing parties are in the majority and because they have been instructed by the liaison office to unequivocally support the government in this extradition bill, these members chose to ignore their voters who told them that they were extremely unhappy and alarmed by the extradition bill. So, they willingly gave up their prime duty to act as a check and balance against executive power.

[01:46:07] So for these two reasons, Hong Kong people particularly the young, have come to the conclusion that without the ability to elect our own Chief Executive, the only way we can make our voices heard is to take to the streets and because of the government's intransigence over these four months, you are seeing increasing violence. I don't by any means condone violence but the government must realize that the time has come for the government to make the first step.

[01:46:40] Now we are often told in Hong Kong you will not get democracy, you won't get universal suffrage, because of the contagion effect. If Beijing gives it to Hong Kong, then the rest of mainland China would ask for this. Well first of all I do not think that central government is ideologically opposed to democracy. Unfortunately, I think that there is certainly amongst maybe the hardliners, there is a view that giving Hong Kong people the right to vote for their own Chief Executive is a push for independence. That is, I try to point out that it is only a small fraction of people pushing for independence. And ironically, the more repressive, the more Beijing clamps down, the more you give ammunition to the small group pushing for independence to reinforce their view that independence is the only way to go, but for the bulk of the Hong Kong community, they know that economically, socially and politically it is just not practical and it will never happen. So, we must try and convince Beijing that universal suffrage will lead to better governance and we badly need good governance.

[01:48:06] And I hope also that Beijing will come to realize that America's interest, and other liberal democracies interest in the special position of Hong Kong should not be seen by Beijing leaders as foreign interference. I think the way that liberal democracies everywhere look at China vis a vis Hong Kong is this; that China's adherence to its international treaty obligations sends a very clear message to the rest of the world. It's a litmus test of their obligations towards America and every other country in so far as their own international treaty obligations to your country and other countries are concerned. America has huge investments. They have their nationals living in Hong Kong. Hong Kong plays an important strategic role in the Indo-Pacific region. And as genuine stakeholders, I think it's entirely understandable and given the special relationship that we enjoy with

America on the basis of the Hong Kong Policy Act, I think it is quite legitimate for America to express concerns when they see China walking away from the promises that they made not only to the people of Hong Kong but to the international community as regarding basic freedoms, maintaining Hong Kong's lifestyles and the rule of law.

[01:49:48] I spent a great deal of my time in the run up to 1997, and in the years following, going overseas regularly selling the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law and telling people here and elsewhere, put your mind at ease. The two sovereign powers have put their signature to this internationally binding treaty promising that nothing will would change other than a change of flag and a change of sovereign power, that Hong Kong will remain a plural, open society with the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms protected. I did that vigorously and with great enthusiasm. So, my only regret is, if I could have foreseen today what is happening to One Country Two Systems 22 years after the handover, I would still have to go and do the selling, but I possibly would have to do it with a little less enthusiasm. So, from a personal point of view, I feel particularly sad to observe what is happening in Hong Kong to this city that we all love. And I for one feel that although it will not produce instant results, there is no choice for Hong Kong people other than to stand up and to make your voices heard and to persuade Beijing that the best way to maintain stability and long term prosperity in Hong Kong is to revert back to Deng Xiaoping's visionary concept of One Country Two Systems, and that is going to be good not just for Hong Kong but for the nation as a whole.