



China: Riot police in action during a protest in the Central district Hong Kong
Photo: Keith Tsuji/ZUMA Wire

are Buddhist or Christian – are well aware that the assault on religion in China today is the most systematic since the lethal cultural revolution when believers were incarcerated, tortured, some burnt alive, some sent to labour camps.

The Communists publicly paraded believers through cities and towns and forced them to wear cylindrical hats detailing their crime of belief.

Hong Kongers know about the self-immolation of despairing Buddhist monks. They know about the demolition of Christian churches and Marian shrines. Unlike the Vatican, they remember how Bishop Kung was incarcerated for 30 years.

And how ironic that Hong Kong's Carrie Lam, who has presided over unspeakable violence, is a Catholic.

Having peered over the wall and seen this same relentless and shocking ideology, incapable of respecting difference, coming their way in the armoured vehicles and tanks of the Red Army and soldiers cleverly camouflaged in the uniforms of the once proud Hong Kong Police Force, it is incredible that we have the temerity to wonder why the people in Hong Kong take to the streets.

Yet, while the geese are waking Hong Kong's citadel, we in the West drowsily slumber and fall asleep at out posts – wishing away what Hong Kong has seen all too clearly.

What thought was given, what due diligence was done, before UK local authorities and the National Health Service bought more than 1.3 million surveillance cameras from Hikvision a Chinese CCTV company?

Hikvision has been advertising cameras that racially profile Uighur Muslims, providing surveillance equipment in Xinxiang.

When it comes to China, we seem to think that money is all that matters: just business as usual. Contracts signed in other people's blood.



Having, this week, been offered over £1 billion to hand over British Steel to China; having this week discovered that the BBC have produced a promotional video in support of Huawei's bid to take over our telecommunications industry; having been alerted to endless examples of Chinese attempts to buy up our universities and colleges; is it too much to hope that the UK might wake up to some harsh realities? Probably not.

Why not sell them Buckingham Palace, Ascot, Wimbledon and

The current crisis has created tensions between the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, and China's all-powerful president, Xi Jinping (right)

Lords, while we are at it?

Perhaps we already have.

In addition to incarcerating his people behind a hideous wall of Communist conformity, President Xi has been erecting one other Wall.

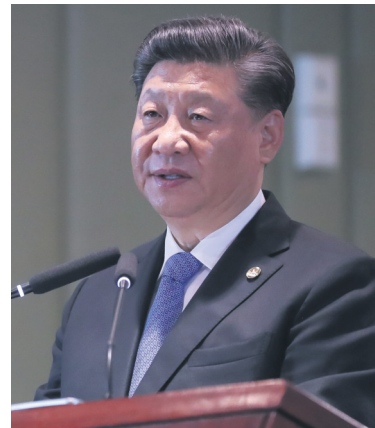
In 2013 Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee published a scathing report on Huawei's potential infiltration of GCHQ and our intelligence and security operations.

China's history of cyber-attacks is an essential element of their relentless campaign to build a wall against the flow of information.

Xi's "cyber sovereignty" is also designed to open a window into every aspect of what they see as a lazy and indifferent, hedonistic, liberal West.

Before Xi came to power the internet began to offer a space for Chinese citizens to explore their ideas and beliefs and to become familiar with friends across the world.

Now, China is home to the biggest



ensorship operation in the world.

Xi's Great Firewall – and now his "Great Cannon" and "Golden Shield" – replace information as well as blocking it.

In defiance of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – which promises citizens the opportunity to access information and news – what Xi boasts is the Great Firewall.

Happily, many smart Chinese people know their way around the wall and mock the Emperor while doing so. They tell you that Xi's phrases "strong nation" and "wall nation" share a phonetic pronunciation in Chinese (*qiangguo*); that trying to build these new cyber walls simply demonstrate weakness.

But that doesn't stop China from trying. Harvard estimates that 448 million comments on social media are tampered with every year. It is said the State employs two million people to do this.

Ultimately, President Xi will have to come to terms with the real world of Hong Kong, the real world of Taiwan – both of which illustrate the great country China could be if Mao and the Cultural Revolution had not intervened; if bridges had been built rather than walls.

On its new trajectory, China's dream – to be an alternative America

– is turning into a nightmare, for itself and for its neighbours.

President Xi should understand that being a father of the "Great Firewall" will never endear him to a rising generation who want China to be one of the world's great nations, not a walled-up prisoner of its own narrow ideology.

They will simply come to openly despise him.

And that generation have never forgotten or forgiven the Communist Party's massacre of 10,000 young pro-democracy campaigners in Tiananmen Square, 30 years ago.

As they see their university campuses turned into battlefields, Hong Kong remembers Tiananmen, too.

Yes, you can try and build a wall, but people will look over it, they will tunnel underneath it; they will undermine its foundations; and they will find ways around it.

Berlin had a wall, and look what happened to that. That's the human spirit.

This is the real point of the bravery of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement; the real point of the protests; the real point of why the west needs to stop sitting on top of the wall and come down on the side of those who stand with us and believe in our values, our interests, and our security.

That's why Hong Kong's stand is like the Alamo – a battle that may be lost, but a war which was ultimately won.

And don't underestimate the faithful and brave people of Hong Kong. Our great English Bard created the character of Tom Snout, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream".

In a play within the play Tom plays the part of the wall which separates Pyramus and Thisbe. The two lovers whisper to one another through Snout's fingers – which represent a gap in the wall.

Is it too much to hope that, like those lovers, we might do the same?



A protester watches as flames take hold at the main university campus