

**CHINA'S WHITE PAPER ON "ONE  
COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS": CHANGING  
HONG KONG-BEIJING RELATIONS**

YEW Chiew Ping

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## **Executive Summary**

1. On 10 June 2014, China's State Council issued a white paper on "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong. The government's position paper sets down in detail Beijing's comprehensive authority over Hong Kong for the first time since the 1997 handover.
2. Titled "The Practice of the 'One Country Two Systems' Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," the white paper is divided into five subsections, the most controversial of which is section V – "Fully and Accurately Understanding and Implementing the Policy of 'One Country, Two Systems'."
3. The unequivocal assertion of Beijing's authority over Hong Kong in the white paper contrasts with the more open-ended language used in the Basic Law. If the latter serves to assure Hong Kongers of the latitude they are entitled to under "one country, two systems," the former seeks to uphold Beijing's unquestioned authority by squarely setting the limits to that latitude.
4. There also appears to be a new emphasis on how the interpretation and implementation of "one country, two systems" must not depart from the "fundamental objectives" of China's "sovereignty, security and development interests."
5. The white paper was released at a politically sensitive period in Hong Kong. Following the conclusion in May this year of the first phase of public consultation on Hong Kong's universal suffrage for the chief executive, Hong Kong authorities are summing up the findings in a report to the National People's Congress (NPC).
6. The white paper also came ahead of two impending manifestations of public dissent – the Occupy Central Movement and the annual 1 July rally – and a non-official civil referendum on 20 and 22 June, during which Hong Kongers would cast their votes for their preferred mode of universal suffrage for electing the chief executive in 2017.

7. In this light, the white paper is clearly Beijing's attempt to set the tone for the ongoing political debate over universal suffrage, rein in growing dissension in Hong Kong society, and discourage Hong Kongers from taking part in the civil referendum and the Occupy Central Movement.
8. The record turnout of more than 787,000 voters that even exceeded organizers' expectation shows that Beijing's move had backfired. An earlier Occupy Central referendum on universal suffrage in January this year only garnered a total of 62,000 votes.
9. Prospects for genuine universal suffrage in Hong Kong, however, have grown dimmer in the broader context of China's own stalled political reform and President Xi Jinping's hardline stance on political liberalization.
10. Long-standing political tensions have taken a toll on Beijing-Hong Kong relations. With the white paper, the voice of the moderates will be drowned out in the city's growingly radical political landscape and a consensus on political reform now appears to be increasingly out of reach.