

Letters to the Editor
Sacramento Bee

By email
May 28,2020

Dear Editor,

I would like to give a perspective to the Dallas Morning News' editorial piece, titled 'China's economic power cannot come at the expense of freedom - The United States needs to stand with the people of Hong Kong', which was posted in your paper on May 25.

Hong Kong's special status under "One Country, Two Systems" has worked well for Hong Kong as well as for the many overseas businesses established in Hong Kong. It is our greatest strength now and will remain so in future.

A draft Decision to introduce national security legislation for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is under deliberation at the National People's Congress (NPC), the highest organ of state power in the People's Republic of China, during its ongoing annual session.

The Decision is part of a two-step legislative process to establish and improve the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the HKSAR to safeguard national security. Following its approval, the NPC Standing Committee will proceed to draft the relevant legislation based on clearly stated objectives and fundamental principles as laid out in the Decision and the related Explanation.

As stipulated in the draft Decision, the proposed law only targets acts of secession, subverting state power, organizing and carrying out terrorist activities, as well as activities interfering with HKSAR's internal affairs by foreign or external forces.

The five basic principles guiding the drafting of the national security legislation include firmly safeguarding national security, bettering the system of "One Country, Two Systems", governing Hong Kong in strict accordance with the law, resisting external interferences in Hong Kong's affairs and upholding the legal rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people.

Nothing in the proposed national security law will jeopardize the “One Country, Two Systems” principle or erode the institutions that underpin Hong Kong’s success as an international city, including the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a clean civil service, the freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the free flow of information, the free flow of capital, free and open trade and freedom of movement of people.

All of the rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people and international investors will remain unchanged. The vast majority of law-abiding Hong Kong residents, including overseas investors, have nothing to fear.

As a founding member of the World Trade Organization, and an active participant in APEC, Hong Kong remains committed to the global rules-based, multi-lateral trading system. We will always maintain a level playing field and nationality neutral policy for business.

That is why Hong Kong remains a location of choice for international business in Asia. More than 9 000 Mainland and overseas companies have regional operations in Hong Kong, including 1 300 US corporations.

Apart from those fundamental strengths, corporations are attracted to Hong Kong by our business-friendly policies, low taxes, world-class infrastructure, free port status, strategic location, well-educated workforce and market potential.

Safety and stability of an economy are key to provide certainty and confidence for international businesses in making decisions on where to invest, work and live.

Violent social unrest over the past year – which has resurfaced again recently – has had a severe impact on business and investor confidence and adversely affected the bottom line of businesses.

The national security law will ensure that Hong Kong does not become a base for subversion and instability, but rather a safe, stable and welcoming city for people from all over the world.

Hong Kong and the US have a long history of mutually beneficial co-operation not just in areas of trade, business and investment but also in areas of international importance such as the fight against trans-national organized crime, money laundering, drug trafficking, terrorist financing and smuggling.

More than 85 000 US citizens live and work in Hong Kong and there are very deep and broad people-to-people bonds in areas such as education, arts and culture. It is in the interests of both the US and Hong Kong for these links to continue to thrive and deepen.

In the past decade, the US's trade surplus with Hong Kong has been the biggest among all its trading partners, totaling US\$297 billion from 2009 to 2018. US exports of goods and services to Hong Kong as well as Hong Kong's direct investment in the US supported some 210 000 jobs in the US.

Any unilateral change of US policy towards Hong Kong would create a negative impact on relations between the two sides as well as harm the US's own interests.

Hong Kong is and will remain a free, cosmopolitan, open and welcoming city under the rule of law. The long-term stability and prosperity of this vibrant international metropolis under the unique and well-tried "One Country Two Systems" will be assured.

Sincerely,

Ivanhoe Chang

Director, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, San Francisco