

# Reinforcing trust in HK's future

Assurance on 'one country, two systems' should lay to rest questions on SAR's prospects post-2047

By QUENTIN PARKER

The recent announcement that the "one country, two systems" constitutional approach for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will continue beyond the original 50-year period has probably come as a surprise to many but not to me.

As a keen observer of geopolitics, I had anticipated that this might be in the cards. The announcement makes perfect sense and dovetails with what some more-observant sinologists said: "The Americans plan ahead of the next election cycle; whereas the Chinese plan in century terms."

Indeed, even as a principle, "one country, two systems" embodies a novel, pragmatic and stable path. Any other colonized territory would probably have played hardball and perhaps gone "all in" from the inevitable moment of handover. This was not the case for Hong Kong in the negotiated outcome, and is almost unprecedented in modern history.

Many countries often exhibited short-termism. But China excels in long-term strategy, and despite regular Five-Year Plans, a longer-term vision and approach for the country

is always still evident.

It seems that "patience, prudence and pragmatism" are a key part of the embodiment of China, and that these are the three things that speak volumes about intent and action going forward, as is clearly the case here for Hong Kong SAR. Peace, harmony and social stability are at the heart of this.

Cultural anchors combined with a flexible approach have enabled China to emerge as a powerful nation it has always had the potential to become. It is the unique combination of Eastern and Western thinking and pragmatic seizing of opportunity that has led to a landscape where we now see dim-sum restaurants next to Starbucks, and Gucci next to Shanghai Tang, in modern cities across China.

It is a China that boasts top international companies while simultaneously creating its own iconic brands. A China that has opened up to hosting global talent, while at the same time sending some of its best and brightest overseas to the great universities and enterprises in the West. It is here where friendships, cultural exchanges and diverse opinions can build and foster trust for the better future of us all.

This is what is sorely needed here — trust. Trust from the people of Hong Kong in the Chinese mainland's intent toward the SAR. An intent that is actually full of opportunity, as a key and integral part of the exciting and prosperous Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

An intent that is inherently generous (one only has to see the amazing support coming in every day from the Chinese mainland to help Hong Kong overcome its current COVID wave) and perhaps surprising to many. Only with trust can suspicions and fears, that have had too much traction of late, be replaced with hope and positive expectations.

To achieve this, it is not so much fine words that matter but deeds. This is what will matter to the people of Hong Kong and why this announcement is so important. It is the promise of the future with no time limit.

Today, Hong Kong is only halfway through to completing 50 years of its return to Chinese sovereignty — the territory's 25th handover anniversary comes up in July — and yet the 2047 date has been playing heavily on the minds of many in the HKSAR. It is being weaponized

by some to sow dismay, discord and discontent. Only 25 years to go seems too close for comfort for some citizens, who worry about their unique way of life being snuffed out.

Now, this new announcement has the potential to address such issues head-on and give the Hong-Kong people the confidence and security they crave to plan long-term. It will deliver trust that the Basic Law will be upheld rigorously and that their way of life, traditions and status will be protected robustly under law.

This is likely to result in a tectonic shift in mainstream thinking as the rug gets pulled out from under the feet of those who put forth negative arguments of a purported encroaching future that is seen as unwelcome and threatening.

Hong Kong is the most amazing city I have ever had the good fortune to live in. The people are industrious, ambitious, global and connected but also recently worried and concerned about their future.

This one "new" thing — an indefinite continuation of the "two systems under one country" paradigm beyond 2047 — can now provide confidence about this future. Sure, there have been teething problems and concerns about the National

Security Law for Hong Kong, but perhaps more in relation to its implementation than its intent. I believe the law is there to provide protection, certainty, stability and security after the recent social unrest, and to preserve the very way of life that so many hold dear, without unfettered control of undue, malign external influences.

Nothing in this world is ever perfect, but with proper intent demonstrated, real trust can be built through unwavering adherence to and protection of the Basic Law — our "mini-constitution". Only then can the 2047 date be seen not as a threat, not something to be feared, but just as another year of progress in Hong Kong as a unique global city. A city that is strong, outward-looking and confident. A Hong Kong built on trust in the rule of law and our abilities and security under enduring respect for the two systems operating under one sovereign nation.

*The author is a professor in the Faculty of Science at the University of Hong Kong and the director of its Laboratory for Space Research. The views do not necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

## US' old blame game in crisis

Washington tries to make China a scapegoat, cover up its strategic bungling in Ukraine conflict

By LI QINGSI and SUN SHAOYAN

Since the Russia-Ukraine conflict started more than one month ago, some Western media outlets have been intensifying their campaign against China, accusing it of being an accomplice of Russia in the conflict.

They even cook up stories to claim that China had advance knowledge of Russia's military move and asked Moscow to delay its special military operation until after the Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

Such baseless allegations are aimed at not only vilifying China but also could lead to serious consequences.

If China had any clue about Russia's plan, it would have asked Chinese students and other nationals in Ukraine to leave the country before the conflict broke out. In fact, China's evacuation program began much later than many other countries.

After Russia launched the special military operation, the United

States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and other economies imposed severe sanctions on Russia, with the aim of crippling the Russian economy.

Not content with that, the US and some other Western countries have even asked China to join them in issuing sanctions against Russia.

China is Russia's largest trade partner, and Sino-Russian economic relations have strengthened significantly over the years, benefiting both countries and their peoples.

Perhaps the US and some other Western powers are targeting China because they have not been able to stop China-Russia trade in crude oil and food products despite imposing sanctions on Moscow.

Worse, some US intelligence officials have claimed that China may provide military equipment and other strategic help for Russia.

They spread such malicious rumors possibly because Beijing refused to toe Washington's line on the Russia-Ukraine conflict at the high-level China-US talks held

in Rome recently.

Washington's desperation to strengthen the Western alliance against Moscow shows the US administration underestimated Russia's determination to safeguard its national security and interests.

As such, to cover up its strategic bungling and further its evil designs, the US is trying to make China a scapegoat.

The fact is, the US was instrumental in deepening the Ukraine-Russia tensions, which ultimately led to the conflict, and it did so to garner the support of its European allies to maintain its hegemony.

As for the Beijing Winter Olympics, in the run-up to the sports gala, the US and its allies began spreading panic by claiming Russia would invade Ukraine, although Russia withdrew its forces from the Ukrainian border.

To fulfill its "prophecy", the US seemed to keep pushing Russia until the latter eventually took military action.

The US has also warned China

that it would have to face the consequences of backing Russia in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, exposing its double standard in the crisis.

No matter what it does, the US cannot absolve itself of the malfeasance of creating the Ukraine crisis since 2014. For years, the US had been instigating trouble, nurturing the seeds of antagonism, in the region by, for example, continuing to expand NATO eastward and intensifying the threat to Russia.

The US and its NATO allies did not stop their provocative actions even after Russia said they were violating their promises by continuing NATO's eastward expansion.

And although it has not sent any troops to fight in Ukraine, the US, instead of earnestly trying to end the conflict, has provided a wide range of military equipment to help Ukrainians take on the Russian troops, leading to more bloodshed.

Maybe, the US can gain some transient benefits from the Ukraine-Russia conflict, but the longer the conflict continues, the

more serious will be the boomerang effect on the US.

In contrast, China has been advocating Russia and Ukraine to hold direct talks to restore peace since the conflict broke out, although face-to-face talks between the two sides would not be smooth sailing.

That apart, the Chinese government, as well as the Chinese Red Cross, has provided humanitarian aid for the war-ravaged Ukrainians.

China will continue to make efforts to deescalate the crisis through peaceful talks and help overcome the humanitarian crisis.

It is hoped the US will stop its old practice of blame game and do something truly helpful for peace.

*Li Qingsi is a researcher at the National Academy of Development and Strategy, and a professor at the School of International Studies, Renmin University of China; and Sun Shaoyan is a lecturer at Beijing Union University. The views do not necessarily represent those of China Daily.*