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 arrangement 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-oblivious sinologists said: “The Americans plan ahead of the next election cycle; whereas the Chinese plan in century terms.”

Indeed, even as a principle, “one county, two systems” embodies a novel, pragmatic and stable path. Any other colonization 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, and even had a one-time strategy, and despite regular Five-Year Plans, a longer-term vision and approach for the country is always still evident.

It seems that “prudence, prudence and pragmatism” are a key part of the embodiment of China, and that these are the three things that speak volumes about history 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 be. It is a 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 a China that has an entire foreign ministry devoted to 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 mainland 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 the SAR. 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. But Chinese plans and the direction they have been going has been playing heavily on the minds of many in the HK SAR. It is being weaponized by some to sow disarray, discord and discontent. Only 35 years to go seems too close for comfort for some citizens, who worry about their unique way of life being snuffed out.

Yet 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 the way of life, traditions and status will be protected robustly under law.

If the US is likely to provide a tectonic shift in mainstream thinking as people get pulled out from under the feet of those who put forth negative concerns 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 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 Sciences at the University of Hong Kong and the director of the 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 strengthen the Western alliance and put additional pressure on Moscow. This is likely to result in a tectonic shift in mainstream thinking as people get pulled out from under the feet of those who put forth negative concerns about their future.

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