

Global effort to counter HK law

Written by Liberty Times Editorial
Wednesday, 15 July 2020 08:28

The situation in Hong Kong is changing rapidly. In just one week, China expanded its power by promulgating a new National Security Law for the territory, appointing new national security personnel and announcing implementation rules for the law.

The national government in Beijing and the local Hong Kong government have implemented a plan to turn the territory into a “one country, one system” model by outlawing Hong Kong residents’ desire for freedom and democracy. Beijing is also extending its dictatorship to the world by forcing all other countries to abide by the law by implementing all-encompassing global restrictions.

After China’s National People’s Congress passed the law, Mainland Affairs Council Minister Chen Ming-tong (陳明通) sarcastically said that “this is an imperial edict aimed at the whole world” and criticized Beijing for wanting to control everyone on the planet.

“This law shall apply to offenses under this law committed against the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region from outside the region by a person who is not a permanent resident of the region,” Article 38 of the law states.

This is a piece of terror legislation that aims to punish anyone, regardless of where they are, making China and its wolf warrior mindset the biggest threat to democracy around the world. Beijing no longer shrinks from threatening other countries.

The Hong Kong government’s 116-page-long implementation rules for Article 43 state that, among other things, “the department for safeguarding national security of the Police Force of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region may take measures that law enforcement authorities, including the Hong Kong Police Force, are allowed to apply under the laws in force in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in investigating serious crimes.”

The rules expand monitoring methods as far as possible and exhaust all monitoring possibilities. They also stipulate that any party — including Taiwanese and all other foreign political organizations and their representatives — will be fined and detained if they do not provide information on their Hong Kong-related activities.

Many democracies have offices and activity centers in Hong Kong, and China's goal is clearly to cut off all external assistance and contacts for Hong Kongers. Hong Kong is no longer free and open, and it is becoming fully integrated with the rest of China.

Last month, which marked the first anniversary of the protests against a proposed extradition law, Hong Kong Secretary for Security John Lee (李卓人) accused the US and Taiwan of playing a major role in the "anti-government" movement by fanning the flames and encouraging people to take to the streets.

On June 9 last year, more than 1 million people participated in the huge demonstration to protect Hong Kong and protest against the proposed extradition treaty. In Taiwan, with a population more than three times the size of Hong Kong's, it would be difficult to get 1 million people to take to the streets together, not to mention organizing a demonstration of that magnitude in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government is ignoring the Taiwanese government's oft-stated policy of showing concern without interfering to support its argument of meddling by so-called "foreign forces." It does so because it dances to Beijing's tune, externalizing domestic failures and increasing the suppression of Hong Kongers.

The changes in Hong Kong are no longer focused on ending "one country, two systems." Instead, it is all about Beijing extending its intervention in Hong Kong to the rest of the world. Since about the time of the 1997 handover, Beijing has relied on investments, population flow and other methods to bring about quantitative change in Hong Kong as a means to effect qualitative changes in its autonomous political project and mold the so-called "one country, two systems" model to its political liking.

The level of press freedom is a good measure of political freedom, and a closer look provides ample evidence that self-

ensorship has increased in Hong Kong over the past 23 years. The only media outlet that still dares criticize the National Security Law is the *Apple Daily*, founded by businessman Jimmy

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Now that Hong Kong is no longer ruled by the “one country, two systems” model, it has become a base for pro-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) forces that on one hand are taking advantage of the special status bestowed on Hong Kong by many other countries to infiltrate those countries, while on the other hand, using the National Security Law to try to force the governments, businesses and people of other countries to fall in line and cooperate by extraditing people and handing over information, in effect making them accomplices in the suppression of Hong Kongers.

These pro-CCP forces are trying to run Hong Kong based on this model to export China’s authoritarian ideology to the rest of the world.

Taiwan has very close exchanges with Hong Kong and is also at the receiving end of this approach, as the anti-democratic storm stirred up by Beijing is also an attack on the world at large and an attempt to test the limits of democracy.

Some governments have already responded to the changing situation. In late May, US President Donald Trump said he would cancel Hong Kong’s preferential treatment status. That was later followed by announcements by the US Bureau of Industry and Security that it was “suspending any license exceptions for exports to Hong Kong, re-exports to Hong Kong, and transfers (in-country) within Hong Kong ... that provide differential treatment than those available to the People’s Republic of China,” and ending exports of defense equipment and sensitive technology to Hong Kong.

The US Congress also passed the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, which authorizes the US administration to impose sanctions against Hong Kong and Chinese officials that implement the law, eroding freedom in the territory.

The Canadian government announced that it is suspending its extradition treaty with Hong Kong and prohibiting the export of sensitive military equipment to the territory.

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In addition, major US tech companies, such as Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and Google have stopped processing user data requests from the Hong Kong government.

Major democratic states have responded in different ways. The UK, for example, has focused on protecting the people of Hong Kong by agreeing to extend a path to citizenship to about 3 million eligible Hong Kongers. Japan is planning to offer preferential measures to attract financial sector talent, while the EU has stopped at issuing verbal statements to the effect that implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law may have “very negative consequences.”

These reactions, from watching from the sidelines to taking action, shines a light on the varying impact China’s actions have had on countries in the democratic camp. It also highlights the global democracy crisis.

Taiwan, currently at democracy’s forefront, is vigilant to the changes in Hong Kong, and has become an important channel for the support of Hong Kongers after the government extended low-key assistance to Hong Kong residents last year and established the Taiwan-Hong Kong Services and Exchanges Office earlier this month.

Considering the limited countermeasure options available, Taiwan’s actions on Hong Kong should — in addition to evaluating the force of the Hong Kong government’s implementation of the law and the harm it will cause — include close cooperation with other countries, for example by sharing information and intelligence, and striving to achieve complementarity and consistency with the response of other countries.

Even more important is that in attacking Hong Kong, Beijing is also taking aim at Taiwan, as evidenced by the provocative actions of the Chinese air force and navy.

If Taiwan wants to assist Hong Kong residents, it should take advantage of the US’ determination to contain China and move quickly to reinforce its military and psychological defenses and strengthen the nation.

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2020/07/15](#)