

Don't make travesty of Peace Prize

American politicians who nominate leaders of HK's 'Umbrella Movement' risk making a mockery of the Nobel award

By **TIM COLLARD**

US Republican Senator Marco Rubio and Representative Chris Smith, the respective chair and co-chair of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China, have announced that they would support leaders of the 2014 "Umbrella Movement" in Hong Kong, Joshua Wong, Nathan Law and Alex Chow, for this year's Nobel Peace Prize. The commission is an independent agency with a mandate from Congress to monitor human rights in China.

There is nothing wrong with nominating people from another part of the world for a prize intended to reward global efforts for peace. The late South African president Nelson Mandela was a fine example, having attracted worldwide admiration for his role in bringing about a peaceful transition to non-racial democracy in his country.

But the leaders of the "Occupy" movement in Hong Kong in 2014 were no Nelson Mandela. They risked very little — only short prison sentences since overturned

on appeal — and their actions were clearly counterproductive. Hong Kong could have had a chief executive elected by universal suffrage now if it hadn't been for the 2014 turmoil. How has this contributed to peace?

It is not that we don't know what is motivating this. It is always possible to gain a bit of extra support in the United States by taking positions which will be interpreted by the electors as "standing up to China".

It is part of the American electoral cycle; every now and then it seems advantageous, for electoral purposes, to take up positions reminiscent of the Cold War, only to resile to a more constructive position once practical cooperation becomes necessary.

Neither Senator Rubio nor Representative Smith are known for the intensity of their engagement with China, otherwise they would have known where it makes sense to make a stand and where it does not. But I suspect they have no interest whatsoever in what reactions in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region or the mainland will be. They are only interest-

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ed in impressing other Americans who have no knowledge of or interest in China.

American society is notoriously somewhat insular: It is a common, but shortsighted, view among US politicians that all they need to do is bang the patriotic drum rather than sit down and genuinely engage with the rest of the world.

The Nobel Prize should be more important than that. It should not be a stick for one country to beat the other over the head with. That is hardly going to be conducive to world peace. Ideally, it should honor figures who, like Mandela, have earned international recognition for what they have achieved, or at least tried to achieve, for interna-

tional peace and understanding.

With growing maturity, it can be hoped that the "Umbrella Movement" protesters of 2014 will learn from their experiences, and come to use their undoubted intelligence to make a more constructive and effective contribution to the SAR and to China in general under the "one country, two systems" principle.

But no good result will ensue from proposing globally recognized honors for them on the basis of what they have done so far, which includes inciting violence and causing injuries.

No harm is done by focusing the attention of the world on Hong Kong. In the context of current global economic relations, most publicity for the city is good publicity — especially in the context of the historic Belt and Road Initiative, the plan to boost connectivity and free trade between China and the rest of the world. But not this.

Hong Kong, utterly committed to steering a very difficult course through uncharted waters ("one country, two systems" has never been tried before), has managed to negotiate the difficulties presented by the "Occupy" protests of 2014,

while both maintaining peace on the streets and not demonstrating excessive severity in enforcing the law. No one with the slightest acquaintance with the SAR could deny it remains a stable, though vibrant, society.

The successful maintenance of this balance, while also sustaining the vital role of the SAR's independent judiciary, is what the special administrative region should be judged by. Any discussion of an international celebration of a few young activists, who were judged according to law and given fairly light punishments, would cast Hong Kong in the role of a despotic tyranny, which it is not and never has been, before or after 1997.

My friends in America, please resume some common sense, and don't make yourselves look ridiculous.

Hong Kong will continue as a region subject to the rule of law, and causing disruption to such an entity can never be described as a contribution to world peace.

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Great prospects for digital economy

China leads in many sectors and its rich innovation experience can help other countries make the necessary transition

By **BEN SHENGLIN** and **CHEN XUERU**

The digital economy is usually defined as economic growth that has been driven by innovation of information technologies. So the digital economy could be shown in the information industry and digital industry development that are brought by technology innovation in basic telecommunication services, software services and Internet technologies. To a larger extent, the development of the information industry and digital industry also brings new growth modes for other sectors, including agriculture, industry and services.

The digital economy is large and the key to global growth. By the end of November, seven of the world's top 10 listed companies with the highest market value belonged to the digital economy. Tencent and Alibaba, two representatives of China's rapid growth in the digital economy, were among the top 10.

From a global perspective, China, as the second-largest country in terms of the size of its digital economy, has been growing rapidly in this sector. In the past 20 years, China's digital economy has grown by 25.1 percent annually — about three times the growth rates of the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom.

After 20 years' development, China has become the global leader in many sectors of the digital economy and has rich innovation experience. In 2015, Chinese online retailers' trade value was less than 1 percent of that of the whole world. But now China's online retailers' trade value accounts for about 42.4 percent of the global total. In the mobile payment sector, China in 2016 surpassed \$790 billion, which is about 11 times that of the US. In the financial technology sector, Chinese investors' total investment volume exceeds \$7.1 billion, compared with the US' \$5.4 billion.

The development of the digital economy has also gradually changed

our lifestyles. During the Singles Day (Nov 11) e-commerce event in 2017, online sales revenue topped 250 billion yuan (\$39 billion), and about 91 percent was paid through mobile phones. Behind these huge figures are the development and innovation in payment technology. Chinese technology companies have used strong technology innovation and data processing abilities to push forward the development of the digital economy. A big group of Chinese technology companies, including Alibaba, Tencent, Huawei and Xiaomi, also went abroad.

Undoubtedly, in the digital economy and related areas, China has great opportunities and exciting prospects, due to such factors as the big Chinese market, technological progress, rich capital from China and overseas, and the ecosystem for innovation in recent years.

In the future, data will become the most important resource, and China's large population and market will also present advantages in data resources. Moreover, an

increasing number of new scenarios for the digital economy will emerge, with digital retailing, digital social networking and digital finance more profoundly affecting lifestyles and social progress, and China will definitely play a leading role in this sector.

While helping countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative to realize digital transition, the training of digital skills and construction of infrastructure are of equal importance. Only when digital skills of people in these countries and regions have increased will smartphones and other digital devices be able to function there. The Belt and Road Initiative is a China-led drive to boost trade and connectivity between Asia, Europe and Africa along the ancient Silk Road routes.

Although the infrastructure of India is relatively poor, the payment software Paytm nonetheless has rapidly gained more than 200 million users. Kenya's infrastructure is also bad, but it has advanced

technology in the mobile payment sector. Experience shows that digital finance is very likely to be developed in the less-developed regions and will develop on a large scale once the opportunities arise.

The digital economy has led us into a new age, and China's experiences in the digital economy sector show that the digital economy can change our lives and offer opportunities for less-developed countries to overtake other countries in this field. In the future, China will definitely innovate more in this sector, and fintech enterprises and digital economy companies should seize the opportunities and take the challenges to make breakthroughs.

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