

## Technology waiting for how to act after the new law in Hong Kong

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### Body

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There was a time when tech companies couldn't afford to miss the Chinese market. They wanted to take advantage of their huge mobile user base and cheap offer of well-trained developers. However, after a decade in which Google, Twitter and Facebook tried and failed to take root, it has become difficult terrain.

Last week, Hong Kong passed a far-reaching national security law that put its political climate much closer to Beijing's.

As a result, technology has already begun to wonder whether it is no more what they lose than what they earn being present in China, which now more than ever includes Hong Kong.

Faced with this offensive, the U.S. giants announced a temporary ceasefire.

Facebook, Twitter, Google, Zoom and LinkedIn, which belongs to Microsoft, reported that they will stop processing requests from Hong Kong government agencies while reviewing the new law. Apple is the only one in the group that has not yet taken a stand - it's also the technology that has the most business in China: the company is still "assessing" what to do.

But pausing is not the solution but a way to buy time. Companies are waiting to see how the world reacts, particularly the U.S. government, to new laws requiring companies to assist in national security investigations by freezing user accounts, sharing private data, and/or removing postings. If the pause continues for too long, firms that have offices in Hong Kong could be accused of committing crimes against national security.

These companies may look to mainland China for the political difficulties they will face. The Zoom video calling platform experience, which has developers in China, serves as an example. Zoom promised to update its technology so that it is possible to remove individual users based in China from a group meeting at the government's request (before that, only any meeting could be finalized). In June, the company suspended the accounts of several U.S.-based Chinese-American activists who were commemorating online the massacre of pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square.

The Zoom experience could become the norm. American companies will struggle to please their U.S. shareholders and at the same time the increasingly authoritarian rulers of Beijing and Hong Kong. Zoom's compliance with Beijing's censorship orders was rightly criticized by U.S. lawmakers, although investors continued to buy shares, one of the winners of global quarantine.

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