

Coverage of the announcement that eight Republican members of the US Congress and four of their Democratic colleagues on Wednesday nominated three of the leaders of Hong Kong's Umbrella movement, and the movement as a whole, for this year's Nobel Peace Prize has been both illuminating and disappointing.

It was no surprise that many newspapers and wire agencies chose to focus on China's reaction to the announcement or to imply that there was some kind of implicit bias on the part of the nominators.

Reuters, for example, went with "US Congress members irk China by nominating Hong Kong activists for Nobel Peace Prize," when the reality is that China not being irked by something would actually be news.

The South China Morning Post started by saying that "a US congressional group known for its criticism of China" made the nomination, although the letter was signed by US Senator Marco Rubio and US Representative Christopher Smith, chairman and co-chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China respectively, four other members of the commission, and six who are not members of that body.

The 18-year-old commission, made up of nine senators, nine representatives and five members of the US president's administration — although the administration has yet to fill those seats — does not itself qualify under the Nobel Foundation's rules to be a nominator. Nominators have to be members of national assemblies, national governments or international courts of law. They can also be university professors or rectors, or former peace prize winners.

The coverage also painted the commission simply as a critic of China, ignoring the fact that its mandate is to monitor human rights and the development of the rule of law in China, including documenting cases of political prisoners.

Wednesday's letter to the Norwegian Nobel Committee was also just a formality: Nominations for this year's prize had to be submitted by Thursday, and Rubio and Smith, when they released the commission's latest report on Oct. 5 last year, said that they intended to nominate

Nobel news coverage disappoints

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Joshua Wong (黃之鋒), Nathan Law (盧瀚霆), Alex Chow (周庭) and the entire Umbrella movement for this year's prize.

The reaction to the nomination from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been depicted as "strongly worded," but it sounded like almost every other statement the ministry has made in response to any criticism of Beijing, its leaders or its policy over the past several decades.

The ministry said the US lawmakers should "stop meddling with" the country's internal affairs and reiterated that the 2014 Occupy protests that defined the Umbrella movement were illegal.

Taiwanese should applaud the nomination of Wong et al both because they are an inspiration to all those who seek greater democracy for themselves and others, and because this nation, perhaps more than many others, can appreciate their efforts and sacrifices.

Taiwanese should also support the nomination to counter those who try to marginalize their legitimate aspirations as citizens of this nation.

For far too long, international news agencies and journalists have insisted on framing reports about political, economic or social developments in this nation on the basis of what they think the reaction will be in Beijing. Inevitably the phrase "amid rising tensions" is added, with the occasional "escalating tensions" thrown in for variety. However, a quick Internet search would show that cross-strait or Taipei-Beijing tensions have been rising, escalating, mounting for more than two decades, and not, as so many reports have it, "since Taiwan's pro-independence president was elected."

Who knows if Wong and his colleagues will be awarded the peace prize in nine months? One thing is certain, however: Coverage will be painted in terms of a win or loss for Beijing's prestige.

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