

## Reading between the lines

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on Thursday published its *Annual Report to Congress*, which should make for interesting reading not only in Washington, but also in Taipei — in the Presidential Office, the ministries of foreign affairs and national defense, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and elsewhere — especially chapters 5 and 6, which cover Taiwan and Hong Kong.

The commission's members are not wearing the West's decades-old blinders — that engagement with China could lead to meaningful reform — but see that Beijing has become a clear threat to democracy not just in Asia, but around the world.

Commission vice chair Robin Cleveland wrote in the report's introduction that the aspirations of Taiwan and Hong Kong require the US to reconsider "the commitments we made under the one country, two systems model."

The five recommendations that the report makes for US policy toward Taiwan urge the US Congress to have the US secretary of state report on actions to counter China's isolation of Taiwan internationally, pass legislation to enhance Taiwan-US security cooperation and raise the threshold for congressional notification on defense sales to Taiwan to the highest level; direct the Pentagon to prepare a 15-year action plan to deter any attempt by Beijing to take Taiwan by force; and instruct the US director of national intelligence to study the impact of an event in the Taiwan Strait on the supply of high-tech products to the US.

The five recommendations on Hong Kong are equally far-reaching, the most important of which is the call for legislation to suspend the territory's special economic status if Beijing resorts to armed intervention by the People's Liberation Army or People's Armed Police.

While the 12-member commission's recommendations are non-binding, they do influence US lawmakers and policymakers — and should be a wake-up call to those in similar positions in other nations.

This year's report was based on eight public hearings and the testimony of 77 witnesses, who

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ranged from US government officials to businesspeople to think tank members and other researchers. They must have made it clear to the commission that, as its chairwoman Carolyn Bartholomew told a news conference in Washington on Thursday: “If there were flickers of opening up in China, they have been firmly extinguished.”

Her statement, as with the report’s findings and conclusions, is a strong rebuttal to the KMT’s delusions that the cross-strait openings created during former president Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) terms in office could spur change in China.

It is also a rebuttal to those — whether in Taiwan, the US or elsewhere — who lay blame for the breakdown in cross-strait communications and the increase in cross-strait tensions solely at the feet of President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), rather than where it truly belongs, with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) and the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) leadership.

It is not Tsai and the DPP’s refusal to recognize the KMT’s fictitious “1992 consensus” that caused the freeze, but the delusion of Xi and his cohort that they understand the needs and wants of their “Taiwanese compatriots.”

The same blinkered approach that the CCP leadership has long had toward Taiwan has been in clear evidence in Hong Kong over the past few years.

Just as Beijing can no longer dismiss opposition to its demands to annex Taiwan as the fault of the DPP or pro-independence supporters — who are not one and the same — the past five months show that it cannot pretend that calls for greater democracy in Hong Kong are just the work of students and malcontents.

Beijing and the CCP have no one to blame but themselves.

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