

Pelosi visit would be best support

Written by Gerrit van der Wees
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It is essential that US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi stands her ground and pushes through with her plan to visit Taiwan.

Last week, the Financial Times reported that Pelosi — who has been a member of the House since 1987 — plans to lead a congressional delegation to visit Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia, with Taiwan possibly in the itinerary.

A visit to Taiwan was already planned this spring, but was canceled because some members of the delegation had contracted COVID-19.

Pelosi, who has always been positive about relations with Taiwan, is eager to visit the country before she retires from the US Congress.

For Taiwan, such a parliamentary visit is important because it has few diplomatic relations, and these visits represent a political boost, and thus constitute an important counterbalance to the threats and intimidation from the Chinese side.

The government in Beijing tries to prevent such visits by threatening the visitors' countries. Sometimes that has the intended result, but often it also has the opposite effect.

With the latest reports about a potential visit by Pelosi, the threats and wording were sharper than usual. It is important that Pelosi and the administration of US President Joe Biden weigh the risks and make the right decision.

It is necessary to understand the psychology of the Beijing government. The tactic on the Chinese side is always to overreact — “wolf warrior” diplomacy — to corner the other side, whether it be the US, Taiwan or other countries.

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A US diplomat who served in Beijing for many years explained it this way: “Chinese diplomacy is like driving a car in Beijing: There are no real traffic rules, the one who pushes the hardest gets to the destination first.”

It is therefore important to push back hard and not to be intimidated, he said.

For a Pelosi visit, that means adopting a policy that includes the following elements:

First, continue with the plan to visit, and express broad support for Taiwan and its democratic system. Taiwanese have fought hard for their democracy and deserve the support of the international community.

Second, ensure that the US military maintains the necessary capacity “to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan,” as the US Taiwan Relations Act says.

Third, emphasize that a visit would not represent a change to the “one China” policy, which means that the US recognizes the Beijing government as the government of China, but it does not mean that Washington regards Taiwan as part of China. When the policy was implemented in the 1970s, there were two regimes that claimed to be government of all of China, thus the US recognized “one China.”

Fourth, make it crystal clear that the “one China” policy means something very different from the “one China” principle propagated by Beijing. That “principle” has never been endorsed by the US or Europe.

Fifth, express indignation about the unacceptable threats, in particular as expressed in the Global Times, Beijing’s propaganda tool. These threats against the safety of Pelosi are outrageous and unacceptable.

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This discussion is not just a dilemma or discussion for the US, but also of great importance for Europe. Several European countries, such as Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Norway, have also been threatened and intimidated by China.

To have a sufficient counterweight to China, it is necessary that the US and Europe jointly push back against China's aggressive behavior, and work more closely together in their support for Taiwan so that we can ensure that it continues to exist as a free and democratic nation-state, and becomes a full and equal member in the international family of nations.

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