

## Diluted agreement appeases China

Written by Taipei Times Editorials  
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The US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on Wednesday approved the proposed Taiwan policy act (TPA) with a 17-5 bipartisan vote, after some of the bill's more controversial proposals were removed.

US Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, who was the bill's initiator, said the removed proposals were only "minor" compared with the bill's core defense proposals, which authorize US\$6.5 billion in grants to Taiwan for arms purchases over a five-year period.

Arms sales provisions are crucial to Taiwan's defense, but the removed proposals should not be shrugged off. Had the bill remained intact, it would have added formality to the Taiwan-US relationship. Taiwan's representative office in the US would have been renamed to something more meaningful, and Taiwan would have been officially recognized as a "major non-NATO ally" of the US, which it undoubtedly is. Those provisions were removed so as not to upset Beijing, but it is precisely because Beijing protested against the TPA that the bill should be passed in its original, unaltered state.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian (朱鳳蓮) on Wednesday said the TPA violated the "one China" policy and the US' other agreements with China such as the Three Joint Communiques.

It is ironic that China claims the US broke its agreements with Beijing after China broke its agreement with the UK over Hong Kong.

However, it is crucial to send a clear message to China that it cannot dictate the laws of the US or the actions of its officials.

Director of the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund Bonnie Glaser wrote on Twitter that the TPA had to be altered to prevent Beijing from complaining that the US was "diluting" its agreements with China regarding Taiwan.

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In response, political commentator Michael Turton wrote, “If the US did nothing, Beijing would still make the same claims. The purpose of Beijing’s noises is to gain it victories like this. Congrats, you’ve handed Beijing a victory that cost it nothing.”

That is why US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi had to persist with her visit to Taiwan last month after China threatened to take action if the trip went ahead. While smaller European countries such as Lithuania and the Czech Republic are defying China at the risk of economic sanctions and political coercion, what sort of message does it send if the US backs down in the face of Chinese threats?

The US should abandon the “one China” policy and work toward the establishment of formal ties with Taipei. When Washington established ties with China under former US president Richard Nixon, perhaps it was aiming to contain the Soviet Union. Perhaps it considered that China as a rival would be an economic threat, whereas China as a friend might eventually democratize following economic growth under capitalism. Whatever the mindset of Nixon and his administration, Russia and China are now antagonistic and threatening. There is no benefit to the US in continuing to adhere to the “one China” policy and there is no reason to dilute Taiwan-US relations to appease Beijing.

China would never dilute its own legislation or modify its behavior to appease the US or other countries. China passed a law in January last year that would authorize its navy to fire at other countries’ vessels in internationally contested waters. China ignored international protests over the law.

Last month, China released a white paper on Taiwan in which it said it “will not renounce the use of force” to achieve unification. China again ignored international protests. Appeasing China does not deter its aggressive and coercive behavior. It does not prevent China from moving forward with its ambitions over Taiwan. The Taiwanese government should clearly convey to Washington that unambiguous support for Taiwan and the establishment of formal relations are the only way forward.

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