

## US congressman questions trade deal

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A US congressman said that the cross-strait service trade agreement increases the risk of a direct conflict between China and the US.

Democratic Representative Alan Grayson, a member of the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, wrote US Secretary of State John Kerry seeking a full analysis of potential effects the deal may have on US interests.

Grayson said that the trade deal is a possible step toward political and economic integration “between the two political entities,” adding that the integration “may be disadvantageous both to Taiwan and to the US.”

Student-led protesters occupied the legislature’s main chamber on March 18 to protest the government’s handling of the trade agreement.

The protesters demanded that an oversight bill for cross-strait agreements be passed before the service trade pact — signed with China in June last year but still pending in the legislature — be reviewed.

Protesters left the chamber on Thursday last week, after Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) acceded to their demand.

Grayson wrote that Taiwan and China are “vastly disproportionate in size,” which has implications for the deal.

“Economic integration between China and Taiwan will necessarily bring more political influence in Taiwan for the Chinese government, both directly and through the increasing power of Chinese state-owned enterprises in the Taiwanese economy,” Grayson wrote.

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“It is clear that increasing influence and ultimately annexation are the aims and stated policy of the Chinese government,” he added.

In consideration of the deep economic, political and military links between the US and Taiwan, Grayson said that the trade deal increases the risk of a direct conflict between Washington and Beijing.

“On the face of it, it seems prudent to consider these risks and make it clear to the Taiwanese government that it bears full responsibility for maintaining and defending its sovereignty in all respects, including economic ones,” he wrote.

“Given the [US] State Department’s responsibility in this area, I would appreciate it if you would share analysis of this trade deal, and how the increased influence of China in Taiwan that it entails may impact American interests,” he wrote.

Grayson has previously said that Taiwanese groups had “vehemently” protested the trade deal and that it was highly controversial.

A US Department of State source on Monday said Kerry had not received Grayson’s letter, but was expected to reply later this week, after he had studied it.

Last month, US State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf said that the US hoped discussions on the trade pact could be carried out peacefully.

“We certainly support Taiwan’s vibrant democracy, which allows for this kind of robust political dialogue,” she said.

“We have welcomed steps taken by both sides on the Taiwan Strait — that they’ve taken to reduce tensions and improve relations between Taipei and Beijing,” she added.

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