

Ma wimps out over defense zone

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Does an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) involve sovereignty? According to President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration, the answer is apparently not a definite "yes."

On May 29, 2010, in a statement released in response to Japan's proposed plan to expand its ADIZ westward, which would leave it overlapping parts of Taiwan's ADIZ, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it found Japan's decision unacceptable, as it would affect Taiwan's airspace and national sovereignty.

Fast-forward to Tuesday and the Ma government's stance has changed noticeably.

In his first public comment on China's East China Sea ADIZ that includes the disputed Diaoyutai Islands (釣台), which both Taiwan and Japan also claim sovereignty over, Ma said Beijing's move does not involve "airspace" or "territorial sovereignty."

In other words, in the eyes of the Ma government, an ADIZ was a matter of national integrity and sovereignty three years ago, but not now.

This striking difference is not only absurd, but baffling for many, who wonder whether it may be yet another example of the cowardly Ma government lacking the backbone to stick up for the nation's authority and dignity when it comes to dealing with Beijing.

Furthermore, many cannot help but wonder what constitutes treason if a head of state blatantly harbors double standards that appear tantamount to assisting Beijing in violating Taiwan's sovereignty.

In fact, as long ago as December 2007, then-president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) sounded a warning over China's possible move to designate a new ADIZ. In remarks with then-visiting US Representative Eni Faleomavaega, who at the time doubled as the chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, Chen specifically noted that "we consider China's plans an attempt to alter the

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status quo in the Taiwan Strait. They will pose a great threat to peace and stability in the Strait and damage the status quo. We hope the US and Japan will jointly tackle this serious issue.”

Ma is fond of comparing himself with Chen and claims to have more international vision than his predecessor. However, we need to look at how pathetically Ma has failed in the defense of the nation's sovereignty.

Following China's declaration of its new ADIZ, Japan aligned itself with the US in condemning the move and refusing to comply with Beijing's rules for aircraft flying through the zone. South Korea and Australia subsequently expressed their grave concern over the matter, condemning China.

Taiwan, under Ma's leadership, however, has been relatively quiet, and the government has failed to assert the nation's dignity.

Not a single word of condemnation nor protest was uttered by the Ma administration, just quiet rhetoric expressing regret.

The high-profile welcome for China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits Chairman Chen Deming (陳德明) has been in stark contrast. This no doubt creates an impression within the international community that Taiwan is aligning itself with Beijing rather than the democracies of Japan, South Korea and the US.

Ma often claims that tensions across the Strait have been “dramatically reduced” under his presidency, thereby “contributing to regional stability and prosperity.”

However, if this so-called reduction in cross-strait tension is achieved purely through failure on the part of the government to defend Taiwan's dignity and sovereignty, what good is this fraudulent cross-strait “peace”?

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Despite Ma's trumpeting of the Republic of China's sovereignty in his speeches, he has wimped out on the international stage.

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