

## Ma's 'low-profile' trip insults Taiwan

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) returned to Taiwan late on Tuesday night after making an unexpected visit to Singapore earlier in the day to pay tribute to the late Singaporean prime minister Lee Kuan Yew (李光耀).

Given that Singapore does not have official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, it is understandable that the president wanted to keep his visit low-profile. However, to have the visit conducted in such a manner — to the point that almost everyone in the nation was kept in the dark that the president had gone overseas — and the fact that government officials called the trip “personal” in nature, did not change the universally known fact that Ma is the president of the Republic of China (ROC). In truth, the whole affair is sad and pathetic.

So much for Ma's “flexible diplomacy” policy, which appears to have become a “private wake diplomacy.”

If, as Ma administration officials say, that “wherever the president goes, he is always the president,” and Ma's own assertion upon arriving at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport on Tuesday night that “wherever I go, it is impossible for me to do it in a private capacity,” why then was the government so ambiguous in the first place with responses to the question of Ma's capacity while making the trip?

Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote: “If you want to be respected by others, the great thing is to respect yourself. Only by that, only by self-respect, will you compel others to respect you.”

The truth is, Ma, after his so-called “low-profile” trip, has not only downgraded himself from the head of the ROC, he has failed again to uphold Taiwan's dignity. Furthermore, he also allowed China to take advantage of the whole situation, as made evident by remarks by China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Fan Liqing (范麗青), who urged Singapore to observe the “one China” principle when dealing with Taiwanese paying tributes to Lee Kuan Yew, since Lee had always upheld the “one China” policy himself.

China's statement also came as another slap in the face of Ma and the so-called “1992

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consensus.” Ma has constructed his entire cross-strait policy on this fabricated “1992 consensus” by insisting there is this supposed tacit understanding between the KMT and Beijing that both sides acknowledge there is “one China,” with each side having its own interpretation of what China means.

The fact that Fan made it clear in the statement on Tuesday that China sees Ma as merely a “Taiwanese person” clearly indicates that China does not have the same interpretation as Ma — because such an interpretation would be tantamount to an acceptance of two Chinas, a situation that is completely unacceptable to Beijing.

An equally alarming notion resulting from Ma's trip to Singapore is the fact that he has demonstrated to the Taiwanese public that he is capable of leaving the nation without letting the people know. Given the fact that Ma has several judicial cases pending against him, and that he is only currently protected under the umbrella of Article 52 of the Constitution — which stipulates that the president shall not be liable to criminal prosecution — many people cannot help but wonder whether Ma could, via the excuse of a “private trip,” abscond from Taiwan any time in a bid to evade judicial prosecution.

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