

## Ma's appeasement policy a worry

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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China has said it will start using the controversial M503 air route, which it had designated unilaterally, today. Taiwan's government has not only failed to put up any significant opposition, but even went as far as defending China's actions — and this appeasement is only likely to put Taiwan in a more dangerous situation.

Members of the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) on Friday staged a surprise protest over the government's inaction on China's decision to implement the air route. Political activist groups blocked the main entrance of the Legislative Yuan while TSU legislators took over the podium to protest the air route, urging the government to take action.

Sadly, but not surprisingly, though the government said that it is not happy with the new air route, it still sides with China, instead of backing its own people as it should.

In fact, when China first announced the air route, which runs close to the median line in the Taiwan Strait — the de facto boundary between Taiwan and China — the government voiced its concerns over national security and protested, leading China to move the route to the west by six nautical miles (11km) and postpone its implementation.

Responding to China's "compromise," Mainland Affairs Council Minister Andrew Hsia (夏立言) said at the time that he was not satisfied.

However, when China pressed on and declared that it will start using the flight route, the government changed its mind overnight, and said that the decision was acceptable.

While the government might be powerless to overturn the decision, and the civilian flight route might not really pose a threat to Taiwan's national security — as some government officials said — it does not mean that the government cannot at least express a firm opinion, especially considering that China had designated the flight route unilaterally, without consulting Taiwan.

The government's reaction should not surprise anyone, because it has held a placatory attitude

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when dealing with cross-strait issues since President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) took office in 2008, and the controversy surrounding the M503 flight route is only the latest example.

Ma has been bragging about his “achievements” in maintaining peaceful development in cross-strait relations, and the number of agreements that his government has signed with China during his term.

However, that the government under Ma's leadership never hesitated to make concessions on just about everything to China in cross-strait talks, is nothing to be proud of.

Ma would even tell the public that some agreements must be signed, sometimes even going as far as saying that they should be inked before a certain date — putting pressure on Taiwan's own negotiators and giving Chinese negotiators the upper hand.

No one negotiates like this, not in business — and never in politics.

Responding to criticism, Ma defended himself by saying that there is always “give and take” in negotiations. However, there is a big difference between “give” and “give up.”

Ma's attitude in dealing with cross-strait issues might remind some people of former British prime minister Neville Chamberlain in the 1930s, who, in an effort to avoid a war with Nazi Germany, agreed to many unreasonable demands by Adolf Hitler.

Chamberlain's appeasement policy eventually failed to spare millions of Europeans from war, and it is worrisome that Ma's appeasement policy might also only serve to maintain a phony peaceful development in cross-strait relations.

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