

KMT should follow Ma Ying-jeou to Itu Aba

Written by James Wang 王健
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Former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) looked like a snake oil salesman when he held up a half-empty bottle of fake “Taiping Island water” at a news conference, while simultaneously attempting to smear the name of National Taiwan University professor Chiang Huang-chih (黃光圉), saying “not one word is true” of an article written by Chiang last year.

Ma continued to sound like a “professional student” (informer for the government): As an angry young man, he chimed in with China in his defense of the Diaoyutai Islands (釣台), and as an angry old man, he is working hard to show that Itu Aba Island (Taiping Island, 太平島) is really an island and not a “rock.”

Now that the Permanent Court of Arbitration has passed its ruling on the South China Sea dispute between China and the Philippines, Ma is attempting to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted and draw attention away from the main issue with trivial diversions and by shifting the blame onto someone else.

US officials have always used the neutral term “claimant nation” when discussing South China Seas disputes, whether referring to Taiwan, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia or Brunei. In fact, the greatest damage inflicted upon Taiwan in the tribunal’s verdict was its repeated reference to Taiwan as the “Taiwan Authority of China.”

However, Ma’s belated “advice” on the dispute surprisingly contained no objection to the name the tribunal chose to give to Taiwan. This is because Ma and Chinese President Xi Jinping’s (習近平) so-called “1992 consensus” is all about there being only “one China.” By signing up to the “1992 consensus,” Ma has surrendered Taiwan’s claimant status as a sovereign nation.

Despite not having protested against the tribunal’s undermining of Taiwan’s status, Ma nevertheless chose to criticize the administration of President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), saying it only passively defended sovereignty over Itu Aba: This is utter nonsense.

On Thursday last week, the New York Times published a report, including photographs, of Tsai aboard a warship issuing instructions to naval officers. The report was spread across four columns and was a clear demonstration of Taiwan’s status as a sovereign nation. This kind of

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positive publicity for the nation is priceless and it is something that Ma would not even be able to buy with money.

It should come as no surprise that Ma, a man who was thoroughly brainwashed in his youth — and then handed an important position of power — is himself a firm believer in the power of brainwashing. This is why he suggested changes to high-school curriculum guidelines and organized training camps to create a connection in the minds of the younger generation with an island 1,637km from Taiwan. Did he really believe that would be effective?

In an article published by the Chinese-language United Daily News, Ma offered the government 10 pieces of advice on how it should go about upholding Taiwan's rights in the South China Sea. Two of the most vivid and feasible suggestions were to develop the island's industries — such as the “Taiping Island water” he brandished during the news conference — and to encourage Taiwanese to register their households on the island.

There is no time to lose: The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) should lead by example and enlist their party's most loyal members to move to Itu Aba and establish a new party-run business for the export of “Taiping Island water.” The KMT would be able to shock the world with its new evidence of the existence of Itu Aba “Island.”

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Translated by Edward Jones

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