

Why did South Korea need to revise the KADIZ?

by Sukjoon Yoon

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China's unexpected declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), the CADIZ, in the East China Sea (ECS) on Nov. 23 has caused substantial friction with its neighbors, Japan and South Korea, and with the United States. This will likely impact South Korea's maritime security calculations for years to come, and has obliged South Korea to revise its own ADIZ, the KADIZ.

Since the Chinese declaration, South Korean media have discussed threat scenarios, and pointing out deficiencies of the KADIZ, originally established in 1951. It did not include Ieodo (a.k.a. Socotra, and Suyan in Chinese), a submerged rock southwest of Jeju Island, where South Korea maintains an unmanned marine research station established in accordance with the United Nations Convention Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); nor did it cover Hongdo or Marado, two islands under South Korean maritime jurisdiction. The KADIZ was a technical matter and politically unimportant, but after China's declaration of the CADIZ, which includes Ieodo, South Korea needed to revise the KADIZ to cover Ieodo and other islands that form part of its territory. On Dec. 8, therefore, South Korea declared appropriate extensions to KADIZ, but only after consulting Japanese, Chinese, and US authorities about overlapping ADIZs in the ECS and the Yellow Sea.

Four Reasons to Revise the KADIZ

Four reasons can be identified for the KADIZ revision. The first is that it is a response to the implicit threat from the CADIZ, within which China requires the ready identification, location, and control of all civil and military aircraft, whether over land or sea. Critically, the CADIZ includes Ieodo. Under international maritime law, submerged rocks beyond a nation's territorial seas, generally 12 nautical miles, cannot be claimed as national territory, but China maintains that Ieodo is within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Vice President Joe Biden met Chinese President Xi Jinping on Dec. 4, hoping to persuade him to avoid aggressive enforcement of the CADIZ, but failed to mitigate rising tensions.

The second reason is that the 1951 KADIZ was established by the UN command during the Korean War, and it is time to delineate one that is more appropriate to current, and anticipated, South Korean maritime security requirements. South Korea is no longer the weak and undeveloped country it was at the time of the Korean War, but a middle-ranking economic and military power capable of playing a legitimate

and conceivably influential role in arbitrating between emerging and declining powers in the Asia-Pacific region. The 2nd Seoul Defense Dialogue held in Seoul Nov. 11-13, clearly indicated the South Korean commitment to working toward greater security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. South Korea is actively seeking a new approach to deal with the "Asian Paradox" whereby a high level of economic interdependence in Asia has been a boon for the global economy but political and security cooperation in the region has lagged, seriously compromising the realization of peace and mutual prosperity.

The third reason is to rationalize administrative structures pertaining to regional airspace. With the Chinese unwilling to alter the CADIZ to exclude Ieodo, South Korea had to assert its sovereignty by revising the KADIZ to encompass Ieodo, Hongdo, and Marado. There are three types of zones relating to national airspace over the maritime domain: besides EEZs and ADIZs, South Korea has a Flight Information Region (FIR). Whereas EEZs and FIRs are established according to international law or institutions, such as UNCLOS and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), an ADIZ is a self-defense measure primarily concerned with national security during wartime, and the legal status of an ADIZ is unclear. All these zone types help ensure the safety and freedom of navigation on the surface of the sea and in the airspace above it. China, Japan, and South Korea are members of the ICAO and UNCLOS and share information about scheduled commercial air flights while ensuring freedom of air navigation, despite overlaps among EEZs. Scrambling jet fighters to intercept unidentified air targets and escort them peacefully out of national airspace is an appropriate measure where necessary, and again, national cooperation is essential. South Korea's move to make the boundary of its ADIZ correspond with its FIR is a sensible and rational action intended to tidy up administrative responsibilities in East Asia, and need not cause difficulties for its neighbors.

The fourth reason is that South Korea is following the example set by China and should not hesitate to revise the KADIZ. Any commercial flight entering the CADIZ must communicate with Chinese military authorities on specified frequencies using the Identification, Friend or Foe (IFF) system. Likewise, the South Korean military is exercising its legitimate right to make use of IFF, as part of administrative measures that include sharing flight information with Chinese military authorities, to preserve the safety and freedom of navigation. Current airspace activities over the ECS amount to more than 500 flights a day, and these movements continue to increase and become more complex. Since the ratcheting up of tension over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands caused by the sudden Japanese nationalization of three of them in September 2012, there has been concern about clashes between aircraft, manned and unmanned, near the disputed waters. Given these tensions, the KADIZ has been revised to meet the needs of the current

security environment, ensuring that all areas under South Korean jurisdiction, including the Ieodo marine research station and the islands of Hongdo and Marado, are adequately administered.

What next?

It seems likely that quarrels in the East and South China Seas will continue to heat up, and that the trouble will spread to the airspace above and the waters beneath the disputed territories. Since 2010, the ECS has become much less secure, with more frequent confrontations and the growing possibility of serious consequences arising from miscalculations or misunderstandings over maneuvers around the disputed waters. There have been three decades of clashes between surface vessels in the South China Sea, in which the military and civil law enforcement agencies of China, Japan, and ASEAN have been involved. There is no sign of peace breaking out anytime soon, and China appears to be pouring fuel on the fire. South Korea has simply done what it had to, to stay abreast of this worrying situation.

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