



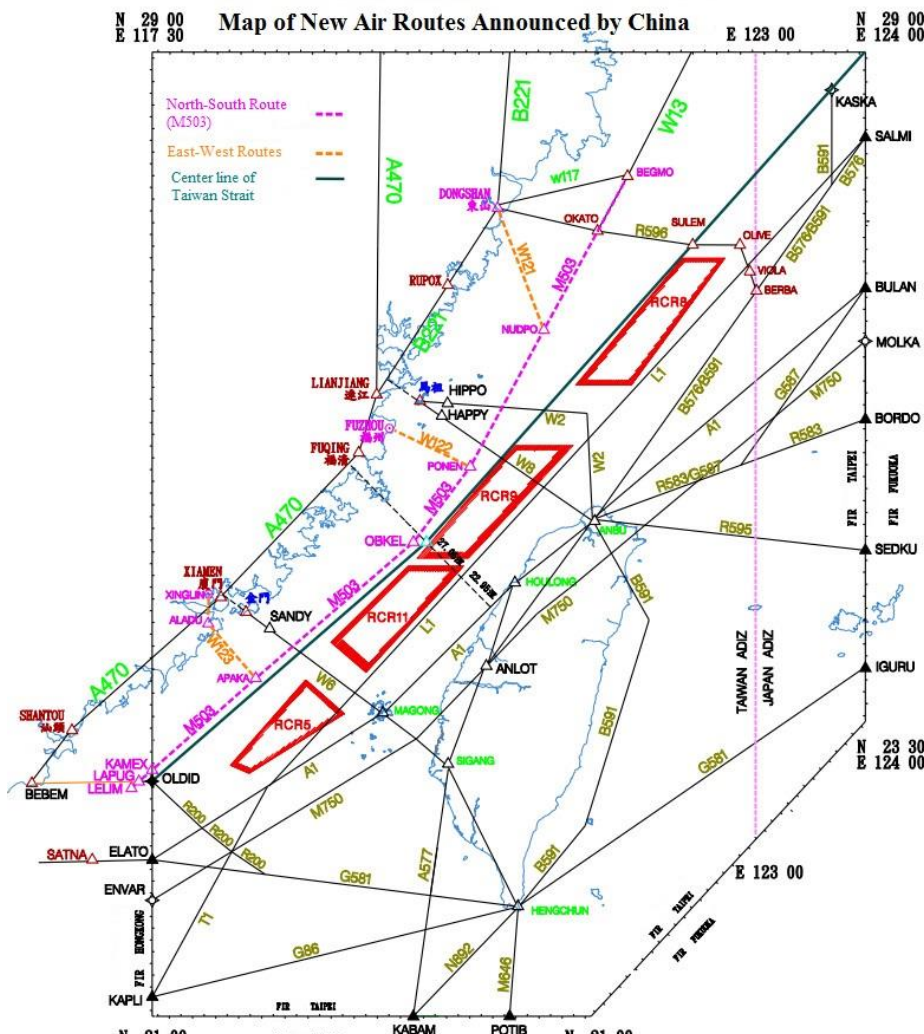
# Prospects & Perspectives

## M503 Flight Route Disputes

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China’s Civil Aeronautics authority announced on Jan. 4, 2018 that flights between the south and north of the country would begin using the M503 northward, W121, W122, and W123 flight routes, saying the move was to alleviate air traffic and reduce flight delays.

Taiwan authorities accused China of not negotiating with them before opening the routes. Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen said the move “not only seriously affects aviation safety, but also damages the current situation in the Taiwan strait.”



China persists in pressuring Taiwan to accept its unilaterally established “one China principle” and the “1992 Consensus” as a political basis for interaction. Therefore, China said that the collapse of communication channels between China and Taiwan resulted from Taiwan authorities' refusal to recognize the “1992 Consensus”. Undoubtedly, China is using this action to punish Taiwan authorities.

Resource: Civic Aeronautics Administration, MOTC Taiwan (R.O.C.), *EToday*, <<https://www.ettoday.net/news/20150113/450792.htm>>.





It must be noted that China's action has changed the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. According to US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who previously served as the Chairwoman of the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, "China's new flight routes around Taiwan, activated without consulting Taipei, threaten aviation security and the cross-Strait status quo." She is right. All decisions involving activity across the strait should be decided by both countries. These decisions certainly harm the longstanding cross-Strait status quo.

In response to China's action, specifically in protest of China's unilateral decision to launch a northbound M503 route, Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) provisionally has delayed approval of applications by two China-based airlines to operate additional cross-Strait flights during the Lunar New Year holiday. During the Lunar New Year holidays, the demand for flights between Taiwan and China normally surges. It is estimated that about 50,000 passengers will be affected by the decision. In fact, China regards the Taiwan businessmen who invest and work in China as hostages to force Taiwan administration to accept the "1992 Consensus". The communist regime clearly wants to create a rift between the Taiwanese people and their government. This intention will seriously damage mutual trust in the cross-Strait relationship.

China claims this route gained approval from the Ma administration in 2015 pre-negotiation. The rise of the M503 route dispute, however, may lead Taiwan authorities to

recheck or suspend all negotiations and agreements with China between 2008 and 2016. These agreements were formed based on the "one China principle" and the "1992 Consensus". More and more Taiwanese regard these preconditions as the crux of the complex and serious situation in cross-Strait relations.

The economic dimensions of national security are complex, are interrelated, and possess wide ramifications for Taiwan. In the policy arena, these complexities and ramifications result in responsibilities that are shared, overlapping, and sometimes ambiguous among government agencies. Thus, we miss the point if we regard M503 route disputes merely as simple economic affairs. In this respect, it is a new challenge from Beijing for the Taiwan government. Wisely, most Taiwanese people agree that the national interest and national security should continue to be priorities, even as positive exchanges continue between Taiwan and China.

China's emphasis on sovereignty and on maintaining its freedom of action implies that, for a large country, it is relatively bereft of allies or friends. China's current unilateral activation and expansion policy carries a host of policy implications for the United States, the Asia-Pacific region, and even the world. The international community should urge China to start negotiations with Taiwan as soon as possible. Otherwise, there will be a downward spiral of conflict in this region. China's action shows that the status quo is not something frozen, but is the result of contending forces. A rising China will make the status quo no longer exist. The



international community risks a bad outcome in the future because of their inability to look reality in the face and act on it.

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