



Taiwan Card Against China

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This article is based on **“Playing the Taiwan card”** which was published in The Indian Express on 02/02/2021. It talks about the benefits and issues of establishing formal diplomatic ties between India and Taiwan.

The standoff at the Ladakh border between India and China continues amid failing talks. Moreover, the Chinese regime undertook several measures that may jeopardize the diplomatic solution.

While the Indian government and the armed forces make it clear that they will do whatever it takes to protect India's sovereignty and integrity, it should also explore options on the foreign policy front.

On the foreign policy front, India has shown its intent to be a part of the Quad security group (which China refers to as “Asian NATO”). However, the Quad continues to suffer from indecisiveness to evolve as a formal military bloc to counter China.

In such a situation, it is imperative that India explore alternate diplomatic and militaristic routes to counter China. One such viable option is establishing formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Background

- In 1949 Chiang Kai Shek, the former Chinese president and former head of state who fled to the island of Formosa (former name for the island of Taiwan) following the victory of Mao Zedong in the long-drawn Chinese civil war.
- Since then Relations between China and Taiwan started improving in the 1980s. China put forward a formula, known as "one country, two systems", under which Taiwan would be given significant autonomy if it accepted Chinese reunification.
- In Taiwan, the offer was rejected, but China insists on concurrence to the One China Policy in all its foreign relations deliberations.

Rationale of Strong Indo-Taiwan Ties

- **Deft Diplomacy:** Though India does not have formal diplomatic relations with the island democracy that Beijing considers a breakaway province, it has slowly been increasing bilateral engagements in the economic, cultural and educational spheres.
This can, with some deft diplomacy, become a bargaining chip at future negotiations.
- **Balancing Pakistan as China's Satellite State:** Some retired diplomats feel India should leverage its relations with Taiwan to balance its ties with China and negate the latter's "alliance" with its all-weather friend Pakistan, which is now dangerously close to becoming China's satellite.
- **Act East & New Southbound Policy:** There is scope for convergence between the Indian government's Act East policy, which advocates closer economic, strategic, and diplomatic engagement with countries in the Indo-Pacific, and Taiwan's New Southbound Policy, which seeks to enhance cooperation and exchange between Taiwan and 18 countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Australasia.
Both policies aim to increase regional influence and gain political and economic benefits from their partners in the region.

Benefits of Establishing Diplomatic Ties with Taiwan

Recognizing Taiwan will entail a lot of benefits for India's foreign policy regime.

- **India as Leader of Democratic World:** Taiwan is a robust democracy with a booming economy.
By establishing formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, India can bolster its legitimacy as the leader of the democratic world, especially at a time when the role of US has been undermined.
- **Expanding Alliance To Counter China:** India can get the support of another powerful ally in its attempt to carve out a new supply chain alliance which India-Japan-Australia formalized recently.
Further, the Quad security grouping can be extended to include new members.
- **Pay Back China in the Same Coin:** China in many repeated efforts has tried to nudge the United Nations Security Council to discuss the Kashmir question.
 - By institutionalizing formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, India can clearly send a message to China that if it does not respect "One India policy", then India will not also follow "One China" policy.
 - Further, recognizing Taiwan will make it clear to China that India is very assertive and that if the need arises, India will not back down from sending dedicated naval and air assets in the disputed South China Sea region to enforce the freedom of navigation principle.

Associated Issues

- Every Indian approach towards Taiwan has met with sharp reactions from China. This has considerably constrained the development of broad-based ties between the two countries beyond the realms of culture, education, and investments.
- As not even the mighty US has so far established formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the recognition of Taiwan may invite severe ramifications for India. For example:
 - China is our second-largest bilateral trade partner and a key export partner of India with regard to raw materials and goods.
 - According to a FICCI report, India imports more than 40% of several important goods like the API (active pharmaceutical ingredients), television, chemicals, chips, textiles and many more, from China.
 - As a possible retaliatory measure, China can stop exports of these items.
 - It can also activate its terror financing networks which, for years, remained a chronic internal security issue for India in the Northeast.
 - China will also collaborate with Pakistan by intensifying terrorism in the Kashmir valley and the northeast of India.

Conclusion

While both China and India have developed considerable military and economic strength, the former has surpassed India to become an economic powerhouse. It has now embraced aggressiveness to enforce an expansionist outlook. In such a situation, providing legitimacy to the existence of Taiwan may be dubbed as a necessary step.

Drishti Mains Question

Establishing formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan will send a strong message to China. Critically Analyse.



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This editorial is based on **“Setback in Myanmar: on military coup”** published in The Hindu on February 3rd, 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube channel.
