



US-Taiwan Relations

For Prelims: India and its Neighbourhood

For Mains: Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

Why in News?

Ahead of the [Quad summit](#) in Japan, the **US President** made a controversial statement giving **affirmative reply** in response to a question with regards to providing **military aid to Taiwan in case of China's invasion**.

- This has raised questions about **whether the US is shifting from its long-standing policy of strategic ambiguity over Taiwan to that of strategic clarity**.
- **Quad** grouping includes **India, the US, Australia and Japan**.



What is the Taiwan Issue?

- **China-Taiwan Relations:**
 - Taiwan is an **island territory across the Taiwan Strait**, located off the coast of mainland China.
 - The ruling **Kuomintang (Nationalist) government of China fled to Taiwan after being defeated by the communist forces in the Chinese civil war of 1945-1949**.
 - Following the **split of China and Taiwan** in the civil war, the **Republic of China (ROC) government was relocated to Taiwan**. On the other hand, The **Communist Party of China (CPC) established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the mainland**.
 - Since then, the **PRC observes Taiwan as a traitor province and awaits reintegration with Taiwan**, if possible, by peaceful means.

- Simultaneously, the **United Nations membership was continued by the ROC maintaining its permanent seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC).**
- **PRC** allied itself with the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)** and **ROC** with **the US** in the cold war further **straining the China-Taiwan relations.**
- Consequently, **two Taiwan Strait crises** of the 1950s happened.
- **Reconciliation of the US with China and the Subsequent Events:**
 - **The US and China reconciled in the 1970s due to the Cold War's shifting geopolitics,** so that the growing influence of the USSR could be countered.
 - This was followed by the **visit of the then US President to the PRC in 1972.**
 - Subsequently, **ROC was displaced by the PRC as the official representative at the UN.**
 - Then, **“One-China Principle”** came into picture.
- **One-China Principle and its impact:**
 - This means that the **nations who want to have diplomatic relations with the PRC** have to **recognize the PRC but not the ROC as China,** breaking the relations with ROC.
 - Simultaneously, **China evolved as a multi-party democracy** alongside the **reformation of its economic system.**
 - Since then, the **two countries became economically entangled and continuously competing.**

How has the standpoint of the US on the Taiwan issue unfolded?

- **The evolution of the US's stance:**
 - **The Shanghai Communique (1972), the Normalisation Communique (1979) and the 1982 Communique** are the three documents **outlining the US-China mutual understanding** on the Taiwan question.
 - As per the **1979 communique,** the **US accepts the ‘one China principle’** considering Taiwan, a part of China.
 - However, the **US started maintaining unofficial relations with Taiwan** in the name of people of both the nations.
 - In the **1982 communique,** China expressed its concerns over the **likelihood of continued supply of arms by the US to Taiwan** as per the provisions of **Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), 1979.**
 - In this way, the **US has balanced its recognition of the PRC along with the concerns of Taiwan.**
- **Impact on Taiwan:**
 - In Taiwan, **Democratic People's Party (DPP) has become the most powerful political force** in Taiwan catering to the pro-independence constituency in Taiwan.
 - The DPP **wants to expand its economic relations away from China.**
 - **China considers Taiwan as a territory with high geopolitical significance** as it is centrally located in the First Island Chain between Japan and the South China Sea.
 - Throughout this region, **military outposts of the US** are scattered. Therefore, it would be a **significant breakthrough for China in case it takes Taiwan's control.**
 - But, the **chances of a peaceful reunification are very slim.**
 - Also, the **tensions are happening in parallel with the [Russo-Ukrainian conflict.](#)**

Way Forward

- Considering China's wearing patience and Taiwan's increasingly pro-independence slant, **a strong message to the adversary becomes essential in the backdrop of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.** It may have reached the point where strategic ambiguity **may be losing its relevance to strategic clarity.**
- However, another plausible interpretation can be that this messaging is aimed by the US for eliciting responses and testing the waters to get a feel of China's game plan for the Indo-Pacific.

Source: TH

