



## It is time for India to invest in ties with Taiwan

### Context:

- The India-China border stand-off in the Galwan Valley, following China's incursion into Indian territory, is a **reminder of India's perennial problems with China**.
- The clashes have confirmed is that this is not just about differing perceptions of the boundary, **but China's blatant attempts to change the status quo**.
- This is in clear violation of the **Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in the India-China border areas signed in 1993.
- The present scenario sets that it is the time for India to engage Taiwan meaningfully.



### About Taiwan:

- China has **claimed sovereignty over Taiwan** since the end of the **Chinese civil war in 1949**, when the defeated Nationalist government fled to the island as the Communists, under **Mao Zedong**, swept to power.
- Taiwan has been independent since 1950, but which **China regards as a rebel region** that must be reunited with the mainland – by force if necessary.
- China insists that **nations cannot have official relations with both China and Taiwan**, (One China Policy) with the result that **Taiwan has formal diplomatic ties with only a few countries**. The US is Taiwan's most important friend and protector.
- Despite its diplomatic isolation, **Taiwan has become one of Asia's major economic players**, and one of the world's top producers of computer technology.

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- **Tsai Ing-wen** is Taiwan's president elected in January 2016 who hails from the pro-independence **Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)**.
- Taiwan is the most populous country and largest economy **that is not a member of the United Nations (UN)**.

### What is the importance of Taiwan?

- **Taiwan** is already a part of the **United States' Indo-Pacific vision**.
- It is an **important geographical entity** in the Indo-Pacific region.
- India's vision of the **Indo-Pacific is inclusive** and it must encourage the participation of Taiwan and other like-minded countries.
- Under this, **Taiwan aims to increase its international profile** by expanding political, economic, and people-to-people linkages.
- India is already a major focus country in **Tsai Ing-wen's New Southbound Policy**, launched in 2016.
- The New Southbound Policy is **not about reducing dependence on China** but reaching out to countries of importance.
- Taiwan has officially started looking towards the six South Asian countries — **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**.
- **India** is a steering wheel for Taiwan's deepening engagement in the South Asian region.

### India's engagement with Taiwan:

- **India does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan** yet as it adheres to the **One-China policy**.
- However, during the then Chinese premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India in December 2010, India took a bold step by not mentioning support for **China's One-China policy** in the joint communique released on December 16.
- In 2014, when **Narendra Modi came to power**, he invited **Taiwan's** representative to India ambassador Chung-Kwang Tien, along with Lobsang Sangay, president of the Central Tibetan Administration to his 2014 swearing-in ceremony.

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- India's China policy and its focus on stabilising relations with Beijing have **led to the marginalisation of Taiwan.**

### Way Forward:

- While ties with Taiwan **should not be solely viewed through China's lens**, but both the countries should **introspect on their policies** and reach out to each other.
- It is **high time India engages Taiwan bilaterally** and also positions India-Taiwan ties in the regional context.
- Another move lies in **recognising Taiwan**. Taiwan has had remarkable success in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, it was not even offered an international platform where it could **share its best practices.**
- India too **has not tried to engage Taiwan** in dealing with the pandemic.
- Similarly, Taiwan's possible role in the **emerging Indo-Pacific order** has been under-appreciated.
- India's foreign policy priorities, particularly concerning the Indo-Pacific, **should accommodate Taiwan.**

### Conclusion:

- Along with **military preparedness and aligning interests** with key countries, Taiwan needs to be included prominently in its **long-term strategy towards China.**
- India can no longer just rely on the transactional and need-based policies of major powers, rather should **explore more options.** This makes sense when **Taiwan is willing to strengthen ties with India** and even domestic debate is tilting in favour of this. It is time for India to review its policy towards Taiwan and engage with it more comprehensively.