

China vs Taiwan: RSTV – Big Picture

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Context:

- The Taiwanese Parliament has passed the **Anti-Infiltration Bill** which sent the relations between Taiwan and China to a new low. This has been passed in the wake of the news that China has been influencing the media in Taiwan through illicit means, to influence the upcoming political elections.
- Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has rejected the Chinese President Xi Jinping's call for unification under a "**One Country Two Systems**" approach and vowed to defend the island nation's sovereignty. She maintained that the Hong Kong model would not work for Taiwan, as **democracy and authoritarianism cannot co-exist** in the same country.
- China, however, claims Taiwan as its territory and wants to bring it under Beijing's control even if it requires the use of force.

Larger Background:

- After the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Taiwan was under the control of Japan.
 - But with the end of World War II, the **Republic of China (ROC)** began ruling Taiwan with the support of its allies- the USA and the UK.
- China initially had two political parties- the **Kuomintang (KMT)** or the ROC and the **Chinese Communist Party (CCP)**.
 - However, the KMT had to flee to Taiwan after the **Chinese Civil War as the communist forces led by Mao Zedong became victorious**.
 - The undemocratic policies combined with wartime corruption made the Republic of China Government vulnerable to the Communist threat, while the **Chinese Communist Party (CCP)** gained popularity due to their early efforts on land reform and had the popular support of the peasants for its unflagging efforts to fight against the Japanese invaders.
- **KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek** and a few from his party fled to Taiwan in 1949 after which they dominated Taiwan's politics for a long time until the emergence of the **Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)**.
 - The DPP grew out of the Taiwanese democracy movement that rebelled against the Kuomintang (KMT) dictatorship and advocates a Taiwan-centred national identity.
- Contact with China was completely severed for a long time. Taiwan rejected the Chinese proposal of "one country, two systems" during the 1980s, but it did relax its rules on visits to and investments in China.

One-China Policy:

- The One China policy recognizes the long-held position in Beijing that there is only one China, and that Taiwan is a part of that.
- According to the One-China policy:
 - Any country wishing to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing must acknowledge there is only "One China" and sever all formal ties with Taiwan.
- The One China policy is also different from the "One China principle", which insists that both Taiwan and mainland China are inalienable parts of a single "China."

What is the “one country, two systems” approach?

- The principle of “one country, two systems” was first proposed by Deng Xiaoping as a way to restore the relationship between the communist mainland with historically Chinese territories (Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau)—that had capitalist economies.
 - This system was initially proposed to Taiwan.
- The Taiwanese had demanded that if they were to accept the one country, two systems approach:
 - The People's Republic of China (PRC) should be renamed as the Republic of China and,
 - Democratic elections would have to be conducted in mainland China. This was however not accepted by mainland China.
- He had suggested that there would be only one China, but the distinct Chinese regions such as Hong Kong and Macau could retain their own economic and administrative systems, while the rest of China uses the socialism with Chinese characteristics system.
- In 1984 the concept was enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, in which the two countries agreed that Britain would hand over sovereignty of Hong Kong to China.
- China is responsible for defence and foreign affairs but Hong Kong runs its own internal security.

Sān tōng or the Three Linkages:

- It was a proposal by the PRC in 1979, to open up three direct links between the Taiwan Straits and China, which are:
 - Postal services
 - Trade and
 - Transportation
- The “Three Links” were officially established in 2008, in an agreement between the Taiwan-based Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS).
- It has offered several advantages:
 - Travel distance was shortened
 - It led to an increase in business opportunities for Taiwan.

It steered an increase in the economic interdependence between the two countries, but it raised concerns about Taiwan being pulled into mainland China.

Sunflower Movement:

- The KMT relaxed the trade barriers with China in 2010 under the **Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA)** in an attempt to revive Taiwan's struggling economy.
- The results were not as intended. It hit Taiwan's economy harder and made it completely dependent on China. It proved to be a disadvantage to Taiwan's small-and-medium-sized enterprise manufacturing.
- The activists protested the passing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) by the ruling party Kuomintang (KMT) at the legislature without clause-by-clause review.
- The movement had originated from an organic dissatisfaction with the ruling party's policies.
- The term "Sunflower Student Movement" referred to the use of sunflowers by the protesters as a symbol of hope, as the flower is heliotropic.

Why did the ruling DPP pass the Anti-Infiltration Bill before the upcoming elections?

- The Bill criminalises political activities backed or funded by ‘hostile external forces’-referring to mainland China.
 - The introduction of the Bill is a move to counter the threat of Chinese interference in the political matters of Taiwan through the illicit funding of politicians and the media.

- It would also act as a shield against China's motives to subvert the island's democracy.
- The present scenario of Hong Kong, wherein the people's personal liberties, their democracy, and their freedom of speech is being curtailed under the "one country, two systems" approach, is also a cause of worry which led to the introduction of the Bill.
- The Bill is in line with the views of the Taiwanese public, who are against the unification of Taiwan with mainland China.
 - The bold gestures made by President Trump's administration in support of Taiwan has bolstered the confidence of the Taiwan Government.
- A few critics also point out that this move by the government is to silence any form of dissent ahead of the upcoming Presidential and the assembly elections
- The Taiwanese president has clarified that the act is against infiltration and not exchange, thus it would not affect the common public who are engaged in business or studies in China.

Taiwan's Impact on China:

- The Taiwanese have made an immense contribution to the economic and technological development of China. This has facilitated China in becoming the second-largest economy in the world.
- But this relationship between China and Taiwan can only be categorized as commensalism, wherein Taiwan only derives a few benefits.
 - The Taiwanese, having come to this realization, are trying to become independent and invest in other countries such as India and New Zealand to prevent them from becoming completely dependent on China.

What does the future look like for Taiwan?

- The upcoming elections will play a crucial role in determining the future relationship between Taiwan and China. The current approval ratings for the DDP indicate that the party might emerge victorious in the upcoming elections.
- Taiwan is looking to invest in other countries to reduce their dependence on China, as most of the Taiwanese have invested in China.

