

Taiwan in India's Indo-Pacific

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India's Act East policy approaches can be seen as an extension of its policies in the Indo-Pacific region, with Southeast Asia as its core.¹ It was initially developed under its "Look East" policy in 1991 to bring Southeast and East Asian countries into its policy outlook. The major scope of the India's Indo-Pacific vision extends from the eastern coast of Africa to the western Pacific Ocean region which includes both maritime and continental dimensions. The key pillars to such vision first lies at "Free, Open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" which means respect the International Law primarily the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), second, it is to support its security and strategic cooperation and economic engagement in the region, thirdly, connectivity and development which includes issues such as climate change and cultural connections.

However, on many occasions, Taiwan has been missing from the Act East policy outlook. The reason is India's own policy of recognizing the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole stakeholder of Mainland China in 1950.² This policy has led to the de-recognition of the Republic of China (ROC) as the representative of the mainland. Since the ROC government moved to Taipei in 1949 and India recognised the PRC, the ROC has received no further engagement. It has gradually diminished in policy circles in New Delhi. With India's strategic relationships with Japan and South Korea and booming trade, India's trade in the region has gradually increased. This article will introduce the recent debates on increasing India's relations with Taiwan amid strained India-China relations.

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1. "Question No-1456 India's Act-East Policy," *MEA-India*, July 28, 2023, <https://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/36927/QUESTION+NO1456+INDIAS+ACTEAST+POLICY>.

2. *Ibid.*

India’s engagement in the region can be grasped through several angles. Historically, the countries in the region, primarily with Japan and South Korea, have been long-term partners of India. New Delhi has been involved in the Tokyo trials to bring justice after World War II and has also played a key role in providing humanitarian assistance during the Korean War. Given a strong presence of both Korean and Japanese companies in India, the bilateral relations have increased significantly on all sides. As per the trade data (see Table 1), India’s trade in the region has seen significant growth potential. The data below reflect exports from India, Japan, South Korea, China, and Taiwan to each other. Table 1 helps us understand the massive trade flows India has with East Asian countries, including Taiwan, known for its semiconductor prowess.

Table 1: Number of exports in billion USD in the year 2024

	India	Japan	South Korea	China	Taiwan
India		5.73	5.88	14.9	2.714
Japan	18.36		46.38	125	46.5
South Korea	18.66	29.6		132.9	38.7
China	120.46	152.01	146.23		77.5
Taiwan	7.89	25.8	28.7	105	

Source: Author compilation from open sources.^{3,4,5}

Table 1 clearly shows that India-Taiwan trade is almost 10 billion USD, suggesting greater potential for further development. Currently, most trade between India and Taiwan is focused on electronics, machinery, semiconductors, and minerals.

Since 1991, India’s refocus on Southeast and East Asia led to a fresh start of engagements with the region. This led to the gradual opening of India’s relations

3. “Bilateral Trade,” *Administration, International Trade*, March 6, 2026, <https://www.trade.gov.tw/english/BilateralTrade/BilateralTrade.aspx?code=7030&nodeID=4618&areaID=2&country=SW5kaWE=>.

4. “Japan Exports to India,” *Economics Trading*, March 7, 2026. <https://tradingeconomics.com/japan/exports/india>.

5. “South Korea Exports,” *Economics Trading*, March, 2026, <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-korea/exports>.

with Taiwan, which remained short of formal diplomatic ties but focused more on economic and cultural ties. In 1995, under a mutual agreement, both New Delhi and Taipei established offices that served as de facto embassies in each other's capitals. The Indian office is known as the India-Taipei Association (ITA), whereas Taiwan's office in New Delhi is presently called the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre in India (TECC). By 2026, Taiwan has added two other offices in Mumbai and Chennai, marking a significant increase in its presence in India. The bilateral relations also got a boost since 2016 when Taiwan's former president Tsai Ing-wen initiated a refurbished policy named "New Southbound Policy (NSP)". Under NSP, India became one of the major countries with which Taiwan aimed to strengthen its relations. Similarly, India's Taiwan policy did not involve any specific policies towards Taiwan but rather a gradual opening of economic and technical cooperation.

The Taiwan Strait, along with the East Asian region, has become increasingly important to Indian policymakers. India has been a vocal observer of the rising tensions not only in its neighbourhood but also in other major potential flashpoints around the world, such as the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. India has been more actively voicing its concerns in the region since the Chinese military exercises around Taiwan in August 2022.⁶ The military exercise followed Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, visiting Taiwan in August 2022.⁷ India's response to the drill was showing concerns and urged avoiding any unilateral actions to change the status quo, de-escalation of tensions and efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region".⁸ Since then, India has on multiple occasions raised concerns about the potential for conflict in the region.

India's concerns are genuine, as more than 10 per cent of its trade passes through the Taiwan Strait. As per a report by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 14.70 per cent of India's imports and 13.60 per cent of its exports transit through the Taiwan Strait, valued at approximately 170 billion USD. This is significantly larger than the United States's 3.20 net imports and 2.70 per cent of its net exports, totalling 154 billion USD.⁹

6. Silvia Shih, Steven Yeo, Sylvia Lee, Yingyu Chen, Meg Wu, Maps: China's 72-hour 'Taiwan Blockade', August 15, 2022, <https://www.cw.com.tw/graphics/pelosi-visits-taiwan-en/index.html>.

7. "US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Visit to Taiwan Fruitful; Underlines Staunch US Support for Taiwan," MOFA-Taiwan, August 3, 2022, https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1328&s=98251.

8. "Transcript of Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson," MEA-India, August 12, 2022, https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/35635/Transcript_of_Weekly_Media_Briefing_by_the_Official_Spokesperson_August_12_2022.

9. "Crossroads of Commerce: How the Taiwan Strait Propels the Global Econom," CSIS, October 10, 2024, <https://features.csis.org/chinapower/china-taiwan-strait-trade/>.

Taiwan has also gradually increased its investment in India. It now stands as India's 16th-largest trading partner and 12th-largest export destination. Taiwan's investments in 174 cases amount to 1573 million USD, whereas India's investments in Taiwan stood at 763 cases, resulting in 78 million USD in total.¹⁰ Semiconductor giants such as Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp (PSMC) and Foxconn from Taiwan have been investing in India and forming joint partnerships with Indian counterparts, resulting in massive employment for Indian workers.¹¹ These companies would be crucial in talent cultivation in India's semiconductor journey. Taiwanese companies can also become crucial partners for India's "Digital India" and "Make in India" initiatives, which align with a long-term approach to developing bilateral ties.

Strategically, Taiwan is also key to India's vision of a FOIP. India's policy of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) also highlights Maritime Security as one of its pillars. India and Taiwan mutually share this vision. With China's growing assertiveness towards India on the land border, the Philippines in the ocean, and air and water incursions against Taiwan, and to some extent against Japan as well, these countries naturally face the same issues. Territorial disputes with China have led these countries to form partnerships in both multilateral and bilateral forums. Though Taiwan is not recognised as a country, it interacts through several Track 1.5 and 2 dialogues. India, a member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), has voiced concerns about the importance of peace and stability in the region, although as a group it has not directly mentioned Taiwan or China.¹² This is largely due to India's own refusal to see Quad as a grouping against any other country. In its joint statements, the Quad has also emphasised peace and the maintenance of the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

Both India and Taiwan are now members of the United States' "Pax Silica," a group of countries that holds that economic security is national security and vice versa.¹³

10. "Bilateral Trade (Taiwan-India Economic Relations)," *ITA-Taiwan*, October 14, 2025, <https://www.trade.gov.tw/english/BilateralTrade/BilateralTrade.aspx?code=7030&nodeID=4618&arealID=2&country=SW5kaWE=>.

11. Mondal, Shalini, "Foxconn Hires 30,000 Workers at Bengaluru iPhone Plant in Record Ramp-up: Report," *Excellence in AI Journalism*, December 22, 2025, https://analyticsindiamag.com/ai-news-updates/foxconn-hires-30000-workers-at-bengaluru-iphone-plant-in-record-ramp-up-report?trk=public_post_comment-text.

12. "Joint Statement from the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Washington," *Quad*, July 1, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/07/joint-statement-from-the-quad-foreign-ministers-meeting-in-washington>.

13. "United States and India Sign Pax Silica Declaration," *US-DoS*, February 20, 2026, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/02/united-states-and-india-sign-pax-silica-declaration#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20welcomed%20India,Emirates%2C%20and%20the%20United%20Kingdom>.

Though the agreement with Taiwan was more of an endorsement of the “Pax Silica Declaration,” it offers an opportunity for a platform where India and Taiwan, along with other like-minded countries, can work together to secure their economies, which are pooled in the alliance. With India’s large talent pool and Taiwan’s technological prowess, both sides can learn from each other and work on new technologies. India and Taiwan can also form partnership on developing sustainable energy from renewable energy sources. India being a growing economy needs large amount of energy whereas Taiwan in the past few years have been constantly facing energy crisis due to shutdown of its nuclear reactors. Both countries can work on energy such as solar, where India is a founding member of the International Solar Alliance. By knowledge sharing they can be mutually beneficial to each other and to the world.

All such developments have been crucial for India-Taiwan relations. Although non-diplomatically, both India and Taiwan's ties have surged ahead. There has been a growing number of people-to-people connections as well. The ties between India and Taiwan will largely be shadowed by India-China relations, given the complex geopolitical realities. It will be beneficial for the two sides to engage with each other and form partnerships through several non-political means.