

Why it's imperative that India and Taiwan build deeper diplomatic ties

Both nations should consider cooperation in business and trade to keep China's aggression at bay



India and Taiwan Increased Trade Illustration by Greg Groesch/The Washington Times [more >](#)

By Nehginpao Kipgen and Shivangi Dikshit - -September 8, 2020

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

India has been supportive of the “One **China**” policy to date, but at the same time has also maintained relations with **Taiwan**. The tensions between **India** and **China** in recent months have made imperative the forging of greater ties between **New Delhi** and Taipei.

India is hesitant to make firmer diplomatic dealings with **Taiwan**, but they can cooperate and or collaborate in areas of their shared interests and goals in Southeast Asia, the major theater of Chinese influence.

Both countries have introduced policies to have a greater presence in Southeast Asia. **India**'s Act East Policy (AEP) promised intensified economic, strategic and diplomatic interactions in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific, especially with states that share common concerns with **India** on **China**'s growing economic and military strength and its consequences for the evolving regional and global order.

The AEP aims to broaden [India](#)'s eastern partners and bring nations like Australia and New Zealand close to [India](#). The policy intends to assure [India](#)'s existence in the region in economic, political and military spheres.

Similarly, after coming to power in 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen wanted to expand [Taiwan](#)'s economic partners. Her government launched the New Southbound Policy (NSP) to enhance cooperation and exchange between [Taiwan](#) and 18 countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia and Australasia.

[Taiwan](#)'s NSP can be seen as an attempt to create its own identity, like other countries which have significant benefits to offer to the world. It is a step by the government to reclaim its identity and also build relationships with neighboring countries in areas such as business, trade, education, tourism and people-to-people interaction.

Another similarity between AEP and NSP is that both nations aim to expand their presence in Southeast Asia and in the larger Asia-Pacific. They both want to increase trade, cultural ties and people-to-people ties with the region. They also aim to gain political and economic benefits from their partners in the neighborhood.

As both AEP and NSP have similar goals, it would be wise for [India](#) and [Taiwan](#) to work together in achieving their common goals. The rising aggressiveness of [China](#) in the region has prompted countries in Southeast Asia as well as outside powers and groups like QUAD to rethink their relations with [Taiwan](#).

[India](#) is facing increasing pressure from [China](#) at its northern borders and at its northeastern frontier areas. [New Delhi](#) has taken certain actions against Beijing and is moving closer to countries that can balance or challenge the Chinese aggression.

Due to the One [China](#) policy, [Taiwan](#) shares a complex form of relationship with [India](#). Though [India](#) may hesitate in providing [Taiwan](#) stronger diplomatic support globally, it can enhance its bilateral relations. Both [India](#) and [Taiwan](#) should consider cooperating with each other in areas such as education, science, information technology, health care and agriculture to strengthen their economy and reduce their dependence on [China](#).

The rise of [China](#) is highly dependent on its economic and military powers, as well as its relations with states in Southeast Asia and around the world. Both [India](#) and [Taiwan](#) should

aim to reduce the economic dependence of the Southeast Asian economy on [China](#) by making larger investments and trade bilaterally, as well as with Southeast Asia.

Often, [India](#), [Taiwan](#) and the Southeast Asian nations are unable to take aggressive actions against [China](#) due to their exceedingly integrated economic ties. Lesser dependence on [China](#) will allow the nations to have the leverage to take tougher steps to curtail Beijing's influence.

Currently, nations and the MNCs are looking for Chinese alternatives in the field of science and information technology, and in the manufacturing sector. [Taiwan](#) is a leading power in the field of science and technology, and it can be a reliable substitute to [China](#). [India](#) should establish itself as a manufacturing hub that would make it an alternative to [China](#). [New Delhi](#) and Taipei should aim for firmer ties with Southeast Asia in these areas.

Larger interactions with the region will allow Taipei to maintain its position as the Asian Silicon Valley. [Taiwan](#) along with Indian companies can develop a safe and secure 5G network for Southeast Asia and beyond. On the other hand, [India](#) with its dipping GDP must project itself as a hustle-free manufacturing hub for such projects, which will allow [New Delhi](#) to support its economy and also projects like "Digital India Initiative" and "Make in [India](#) Initiative."

Other than economic relations, [India](#) and [Taiwan](#) can collaborate in areas such as assistance and disaster relief. These would allow both to increase their presence in the region. Such steps will permit them to counterbalance the influence of [China](#). They can also collaborate in providing maritime security to the region. This will also fall in line with the aims of [India](#) and the ASEAN to promote the UNCLOS to solve maritime disputes in the region.

[India](#) shares cordial relations with nations in the region. Deeper relations with [India](#) will allow [Taiwan](#) to further develop its relations with the ASEAN nations. [Taiwan](#), which has an aging population, requires partners to continue its economic growth and for maintaining its security.

Therefore, [Taiwan](#) needs to make efforts to improve its relations with the ASEAN member states as it brings together a significant proportion of the global population, including major economic and military powers to the region.

[India](#) and [Taiwan](#) share cultural ties with Southeast Asia. Buddhism, which finds its roots in [India](#), is largely practiced in Southeast Asia. A virtual experience of places of religious importance can and should be encouraged.

Both states can even encourage tourism by having lenient travel policies for the citizens of Southeast Asian nations. They can have joint tourist tours and plans with the ASEAN nations to enhance people-to-people interaction in the region.

Both states could promote educational ties with the region. A special focus should be on students and youth who are the future leaders and voice of the respective nations. Their viewpoints will shape the upcoming policies of ASEAN and Southeast Asia.

It is essential that both [India](#) and [Taiwan](#) create an image of promising partners in the eyes of the people in the region and beyond. Joint research and educational collaborations by think tanks, research organizations, educational institutions can play a major role in enhancing people-to-people relations between [India](#), [Taiwan](#) and Southeast Asia.

Therefore, it is imperative that [India](#) and [Taiwan](#) build deeper diplomatic ties. It will be for the benefit of both parties to establish closer relations in all possible areas to check and counter the increasingly aggressive [China](#).

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