



Cooperation between Taiwan and India: External Environment, Issues and Format

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Taiwan and India started to contact each other in mid-1990s, and it had experienced a period of try and error over what could be done by the both sides. At that time, India launched a Look East policy with a goal to engage East and Southeast Asia, while Taiwan experienced a growing trend moving west to China by Taiwanese businessmen. Stability could be maintained along the India-China border.

Nevertheless, thing has changed rapidly in the past decade, and this change is really beyond our imagination. Key factor is Xi Jinping's ascendancy to become China's top leader, he launched ambitious and aggressive foreign policy in the name of the great rejuvenation of Chinese nationals. His policy, such as ADIZ in East China Sea, BRI, and associated AIIB, and new type of IR between major powers, has been regarded as something to challenge the established power of the US.

Evolving External Environment

In fact, both India and Taiwan has felt the pressure under Xi's foreign policy. For India, border tension has arisen since Xi took power. In 2013, there was a so called "tent stalemate," in 2017, there was a stand-off in Doklam, and in 2020 there was a fight in Ladakh. They all happened in Xi's era. For Taiwan, in 2013, China unilaterally announced the M-503 flight route without prior consultation with Taiwan and Taipei protested on the ground that the flight route is very close to the virtual middle line in the Taiwan Strait. Since 2016, China started to dispatch fighters and warships to fly and navigate around Taiwan in the name of routine training. In brief, both India and Taiwan are under China's growing challenge and threat.

There is no doubt that both India and Taiwan have different policy toward China for different reasons. Nevertheless, the both sides are faced military challenge/threat from China. For India, China poses a threat in the land area, while for Taiwan, present threat appears in the air and sea, and Chinese navy's present in Indian Ocean has become

apparent in the past decade. This threat can give the both sides opportunity to work together.

Issues

The above stated Chinese military's activities can be a common issue of mutual concern, and cooperation can be made in this regard.

Briefly speaking, the both sides can exchange information of Chinese military's activities and discuss their significance and implications. India can share PLA army's strategy and tactics in handling border patrol and operation, deployment of force and infrastructure development through years, and analyze their strength and weakness.

It is true that PLA ground force does not constitute imminent threat for Taiwan. Nevertheless, the above information on PLA army's activity in the border tension can shed light on how PLA develops strategy in handling activity beyond their immediate border, and Taiwan can draw from this experience to ponder its strategy.

Same can be said of PLA's growing presence around Taiwan by deploying their fighters and warships. India can draw these activities to make comparison with PLA navy's activities in Indian Ocean.

Format

Given the fact that India has different China policy from that of Taiwan, keeping a low profile is probably necessary.

Some format can be adopted. First of all, security dialogue should be established. This dialogue can be done by authorized institutes, if track-1 dialogue is too sensitive. This dialogue aims to improve our understanding of regional development.

Secondly, it is suggested for India to dispatch at least one military liaison official to its office in Taiwan. Doing this way can make relevant activity routine.

Thirdly, the both sides can send their military officials to military related think tanks of the other side. Doing so can exchange information, deepening our mutual understanding on certain issues of mutual concern.

If condition allows, military officials from the both sides should be approved to pursue professional military education (PME) of the other side.

Further, exchange of technical information is also needed. India and China imported some Russia made systems, such as S-400 air defense system. It can be considered to allow Taiwan to get access to relevant technical information so that Taiwan can develop penetration tactics for self defense purpose.

Conclusion

China's rise has become an issue of common concern. This creates need for the both sides to ponder how to react to challenge and threat posed by China's rise. There is an urgent need for the both sides to work together. This cooperation is better sooner than later so that each side can have more time to develop its own strategy.

Editor's Note: the views expressed in *Asia Insights* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy or the position of their institutions.

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