

General Studies – 1; Topic: World history

One-China policy

1) Introduction

- The One China policy is the recognition in the US of the long-held position in Beijing that there is only one China, and Taiwan is part of that.
- Any country wishing to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing must acknowledge there is only “One China” and sever all formal ties with Taiwan.
- As a part of the policy, Washington maintains a robust, non-official relationship with Taiwan, including continued arms sales to the island.
- The One China policy is also different from the "One China principle", which is the principle that insists both Taiwan and mainland China are inalienable parts of a single "China"

2) Background

- The policy can be traced back to 1949 and the end of the Chinese civil war.
- The defeated Nationalists, also known as the Kuomintang, retreated to Taiwan and made it their seat of government while the victorious Communists declared the People's Republic of China.
- Both sides said they represented all of China.
- Initially, many governments including the US recognised Taiwan as they shied away from Communist China.
- But the diplomatic winds shifted as China and the United States saw a mutual need to develop relations beginning in the 1970s, with countries cutting ties with Taipei in favour of Beijing.
- Many however still maintain informal relations with Taiwan through trade offices or cultural institutes, and the US remains Taiwan's most important security ally.

3) Who are the winners and losers?

- Beijing has obviously benefited the most from the policy, which has cast Taiwan out into the diplomatic wilderness.
- Taiwan is not recognised as an independent country by much of the world nor even the United Nations.
- It undergoes extraordinary naming contortions just to participate in events and institutions like the Olympic Games and the World Trade Organization.
- The fact that most of the international community follows the US in recognising Beijing means that Taiwan has been left isolated on the global stage
- Washington maintains unofficial relations with Taiwan through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) which serves to assist and protect US interests in Taiwan and the US remains Taiwan's most important security ally.

4) Opposition to One-China Policy

- The One-China principle faces opposition from supporters of the Taiwan independence movement, which pushes to establish the "Republic of Taiwan" and cultivate a separate identity apart from China called "Taiwanization".
- It has resulted in Taiwan's diplomatic isolation from the international community.
- But even in its isolation Taiwan has not entirely lost out.
- It maintains vibrant economic and cultural ties with neighbours, and leverages on its emotional relationship with the US to extract concessions.

5) Trump's views on 'One China' policy

- Trump has questioned the validity of the 'One China' policy.
- Trump's phone call with President Tsai Ing-wen was the first such contact with Taiwan by a U.S. president-elect or president since President Jimmy Carter switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in 1979, acknowledging Taiwan as part of "one China."
- This testy exchange has sparked off inevitable speculation about the future of the US-China relationship, undoubtedly the most important relationship of the early 21st century.
- He said it was not up to Beijing to decide whether he should take a call from Taiwan's leader.
- He also blamed China for devaluing its currency, and not cooperating with Washington on North Korea and the South China Sea.
- Trump appears to believe that China has risen in recent times by taking undue advantage of the existing international world order
- Therefore, to "Make America Great Again" he seeks to renegotiate US ties with China, primarily on the economic front.
- Some U.S. analysts warned that Trump could provoke a military confrontation if he presses the Taiwan issue too far.
- China is more likely to let the whole relationship with the United States deteriorate in order to show its resolve on the Taiwan issue

6) How should India respond?

- India has refused to endorse the "one-China" policy since 2010
- As long as negotiations between the US and China do not see the emergence of a G2, India should probably cautiously welcome it.
- It should simultaneously strengthen its ties with all the major global powers, including the US, Russia, China, and Japan.
- For India to agree to a one-China policy, China should reaffirm a one-India policy,