

Current Affairs

Q.2)

Introduction

"If we had made Taiwan a separate state, it would have led to a fundamental conflict with China, and probably to war"

-Henry Kissinger

The Taiwan issue has become one of the most contentious geopolitical flashpoints in modern international relations. This issue represents a potential trigger for conflict between two of the world's leading powers. This complex dynamic raises the stakes, creating risks not only for China and the U.S. but also for regional allies. Understanding the reasons behind this conflict and how to avoid it is essential in assessing the future of international peace + stability.

Taiwan as a Potential Conflict Between China and the USA: Reasons for Tensions

Military Posturing
and Presence
in the Region

Competing
National Interests
and Sovereignty
Claims

Reasons
for
Tensions

Alliances and Regional
Stability Concerns

Economic and
Strategic Value
of Taiwan

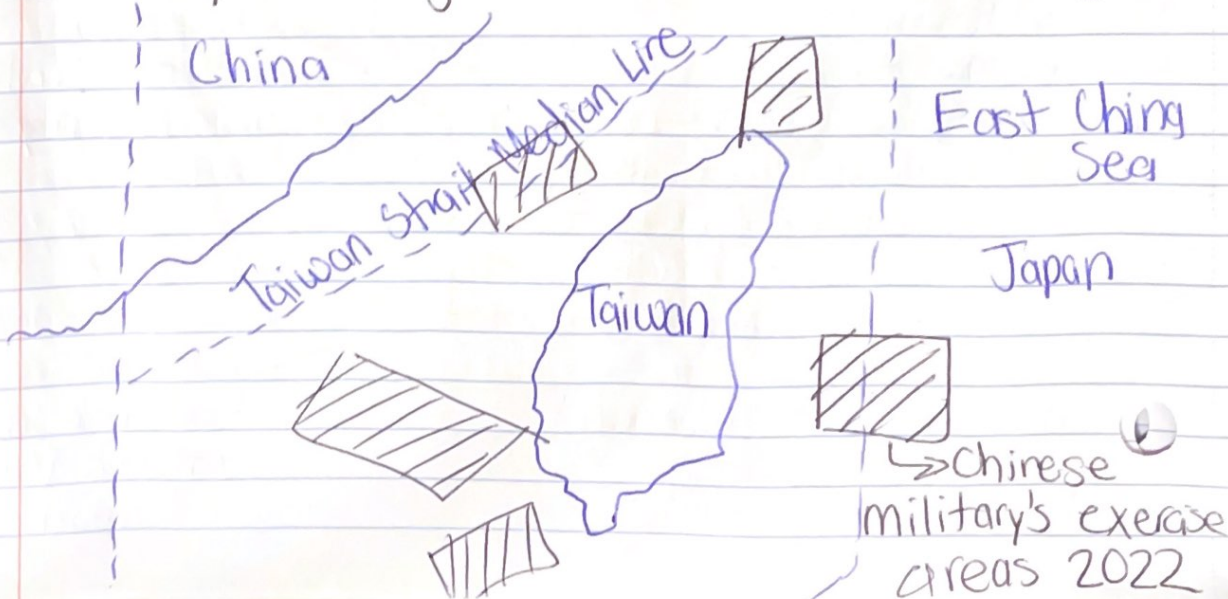
① Competing National Interests and Sovereignty Claims

- China's "One China" policy sees Taiwan as a breakaway province that must ultimately be reunified with the mainland
- US supports Taiwan's self-defense and autonomy, viewing it as part of its broader Indo-Pacific Strategy
- ↳ e.g. US speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan prompted Chinese military drills around the island

② Economic and Strategic Value of Taiwan

- Taiwan is a global leader in semiconductor manufacturing, producing over 60% of world's supply
- US values Taiwan's strategic position in this regard, seeing it as an asset in maintaining technological dominance over China
- in contrast, China's reliance on Taiwanese semiconductors underscores its interest in controlling this resource

③ Military Posturing and Presence in the Region



→ both China and US have significantly increased their military activities in the Taiwan Strait

→ US conducts freedom of navigation operations to challenge China's territorial claims

→ China frequently stages military drills and air incursions around Taiwan

↳ e.g. in 2020, US finalized a \$1.8 billion arms sale to Taiwan

④ Alliances and Regional Stability Concerns

→ US alliances with Japan, South Korea, and Australia add complexity to Taiwan issue, as these allies would likely be drawn into any confrontation of China vs. US

↳ e.g. Japan stated Taiwan's security is integral to its own

Reasons the US and China Must Avoid Conflict Over Taiwan:

Humanitarian Impact on Taiwan's Population

Economic Interdependence and Global Economic Stability

Reasons

Regional Security and Involvement of Allies

Risk of Nuclear Escalation and Humanitarian Catastrophe

① Economic Interdependence and Global Economic Stability

- US and China are deeply economically interdependent, representing two of the largest economies in the world
- a conflict would disrupt global supply chains, particularly in electronics + semiconductors
- a war could trigger a global recession

② Risk of Nuclear Escalation and Humanitarian Catastrophe

- both US and China possess substantial nuclear arsenals, making any conflict risky
- the threat of a nuclear escalation would have devastating consequences

③ Regional Security and the Involvement of Allies

- conflict of US vs. China over Taiwan would likely draw in US allies such as Japan, South Korea, Australia
- could lead to a larger regional war
- this would destabilize entire Indo-Pacific region and disrupt trade, military stability, and political dynamics

④ Humanitarian Impact on Taiwan's Population

- Taiwan's densely populated, urbanized areas would face immense hardship in the conflict
- this would lead to severe civilian casualties, displacement, and infrastructural devastation
- Taiwan's economy would also collapse, inflicting suffering on civilians.

Strategies
to Avoid
Conflict
Over
Taiwan

① Strengthening Diplomatic Channels and Confidence-Building Measures

- direct communication channels and regular diplomatic talks are essential
- can reduce tensions + foster dialogue

② Pursuing Arms Control and Limiting Military Presence

- restraint in arms sales to Taiwan and limiting military drills in the region could help reduce risk

→ regular arms control summits and clear agreements to restrict military activity would address each nation's security concerns + also promote stability in Taiwan Strait

③ Engaging in Multilateral Dialogues with Regional Stakeholders

- involving countries like Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN in discussions about Taiwan could foster a collective approach to regional stability

→ regional forums such as ASEAN-led mechanisms could support diplomatic efforts to avoid unilateral decisions

④ Maintaining Ambiguity and Avoiding Provocative Actions

- US strategy of "strategic ambiguity" has historically helped prevent escalation by not fully committing to Taiwan's defense while dissuading Chinese aggression

Conclusion

The Taiwan conflict carries significant geopolitical, economic, and humanitarian risks that make avoiding it imperative. For both China and US, a peaceful solution is not only preferable but necessary for the stability of the global economy and security of the Indo-Pacific. A peaceful approach would preserve stability in Asia, protect Taiwan's civilians, and avoid the catastrophic impacts that a conflict would have for both countries and the world.

Q.3)

Introduction

"In this moment of tragedy, I want to say to them and to the world, and to terrorists everywhere, that the US stands with Israel. We will not ever fail to have their back"

- Biden on Oct. 7th 2023

The US's unconditional support for Israel has been a consistent aspect of its Middle East policy, shaping its diplomatic, economic, and military interactions with the region. As of 2024, this unwavering backing of Israel continues to shape US image in the Arab world. Understanding how this alignment affects the US image and provides strategic

advantages to other global powers is crucial to assessing its implications on stability and power dynamics in the Middle East

How Unconditional U.S. Support for Israel Affects Its Image in Arab Countries:

① Perceived Bias Against Palestinian Rights

→ Arab countries largely view the US as partial to Israel, undermining Palestinian sovereignty and human rights

→ US support for Israel's settlement expansion reinforces perceptions of US indifference to Palestinian rights

→ continued support fuels resentment and challenges the US image as a fair mediator in regional conflicts

② Diminished Soft Power and Cultural Influence

→ US stance on human rights and democracy promotion is often seen as selective, applied less rigorously to Israel

→ this inconsistency weakens US soft power in the region and reduces the appeal of US-backed programs

③ Alienation of key Allies in the Middle East

→ US support for Israel can strain relations with traditional Arab allies such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt

↳ e.g. in 2023, Saudi Arabia's caution in normalizing relations with Israel highlighted a wariness of backlash from its population

④ Erosion of Influence Over Public Opinion in Arab Countries

- Arab public opinion is strongly influenced by the US approach to Israel
- in countries like Lebanon and Iraq, where pro-Palestinian sentiments are particularly strong, this image has a lasting effect on how the general population perceives American intentions
- this limits the US influence and fosters anti-American sentiment

⑤ Reduced Influence in Multilateral Arab Organizations

- organizations such as the Arab League have historically criticized US policy in the region, especially concerning Palestine
- US alignment with Israel restricts its ability to collaborate with these organizations on wider issues
- ↳ e.g. in 2024, as Arab states look to increase multilateral cooperation, the US risks exclusion from vital discussions, which could have implications for its long-term regional influences

⑥ Complication of US Economic Initiatives in the Middle East

- US has tried to promote economic initiatives such as the Partnership for Infrastructure and Investment in the Middle East
- countries like Qatar and the UAE may be cautious about fully engaging with US-sponsored programs if they see them as favoring Israeli interests

- ⑦ Fostering Extremism and Radical Ideologies
- some extremist groups have long used the US-Israel alliance as a rallying point to gain support and justify anti-American rhetoric
 - groups in conflict zones such as Syria and Yemen may leverage US policy towards Israel as part of their recruitment narratives, appealing to individuals angered by perceived injustices

Ways in Which Unconditional U.S. Support for Israel Provides Space for China and Russia in the Middle East:

- ① Strengthening Diplomatic Relations with Arab Countries

→ China and Russia capitalize on Arab dissatisfaction with US policy towards Israel, positioning themselves as alternative partners more willing to support Palestine

↳ e.g. in 2024, China hosted Palestinian representatives to discuss peace initiatives, portraying itself as a neutral mediator

- ② Expansion of Economic Influence

→ both China and Russia have increased their economic investments in the Middle East, benefitting from a comparative absence of political conditions attached to their support

↳ e.g. Through its Belt and Road initiative, China has secured projects in infrastructure and energy across Arab nations, portraying this as an alternative to US projects perceived to favor Israeli interests

③ Military and Strategic Partnerships

- Russia has used US alignment with Israel to bolster its military presence in Syria and establish stronger military cooperation with countries like Egypt and the UAE
- Russian arms sales and military agreements in the region appeal to countries seeking independence from U.S. influence
- Additionally, China has signed security agreements with regional partners, presenting itself as a viable defense partner that does not impose political constraints

④ Appeal to Arab Public Opinion and Soft Power

- both China and Russia actively engage in public diplomacy campaigns to win Arab hearts and minds, often criticizing US support for Israel
- by publicly supporting Palestinian rights and promoting a balanced approach, these nations gain favor with Arab citizens

⑤ Expanding Influence in Multilateral Forums

- China and Russia actively engage with multilateral organizations in the Middle East, such as the Arab League and OPEC
- their presence in these organizations provides a platform for anti-American narratives, appealing to Arab states seeking alternatives to the US-Israel alliance and strengthening their diplomatic standing in the region.

Conclusion

The U.S.'s unwavering support for Israel continues to reshape its diplomatic landscape in the Middle East, alienating Arab populations, diminishing soft power, and compromising its credibility as a neutral actor. As China and Russia solidify their regional presence, the U.S. risks losing its traditional strategic foothold in the Middle East, a shift with lasting implications for regional power dynamics and American influence.

Q.5)

Introduction

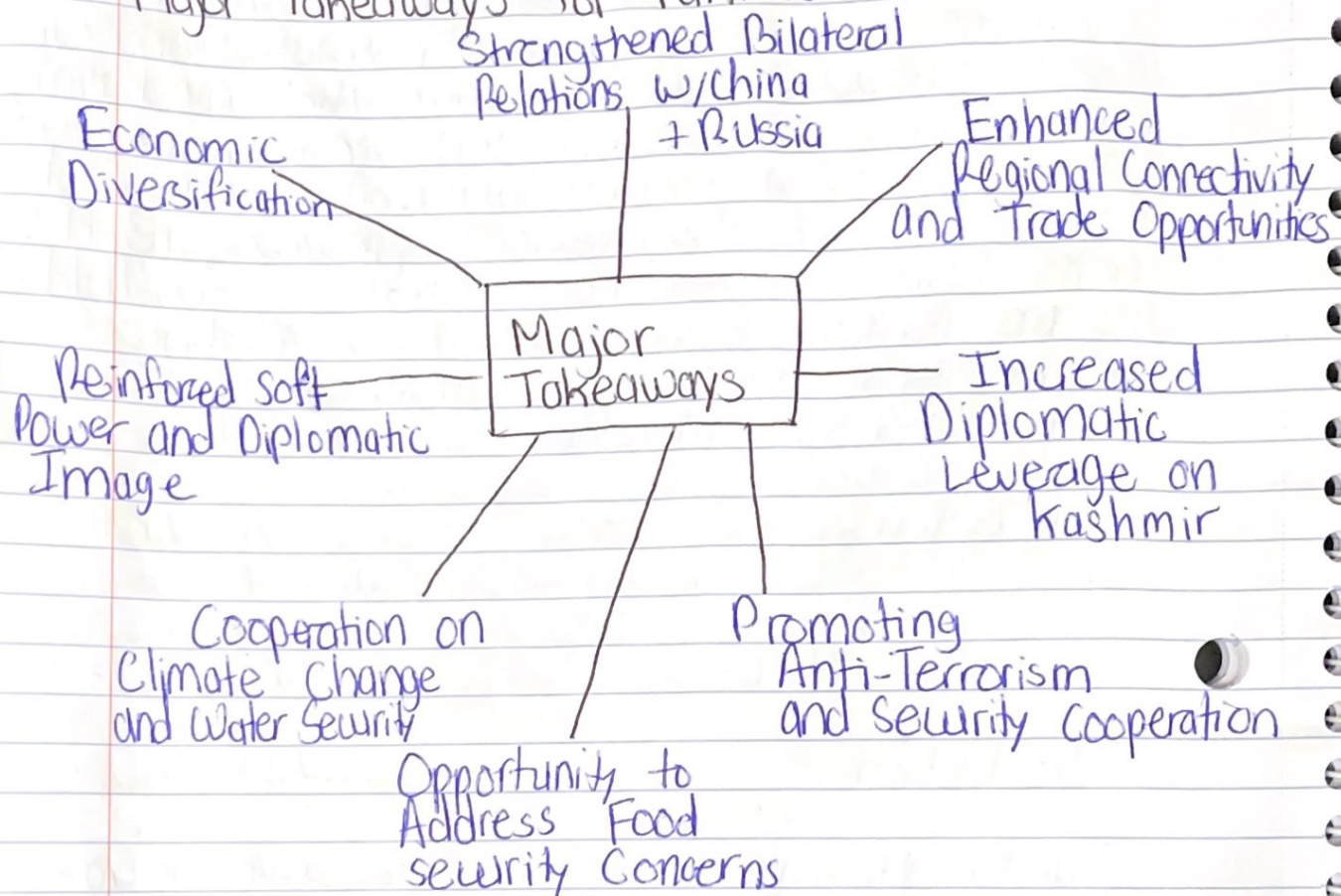
"Together we have the potential to drive socio-economic progress, enhance regional peace and stability, and to improve the quality of life for our citizens"

- PM Shebaz Sharif's remarks at October 2024 SCO conference

The SCO summit in Islamabad in October 2024 was a significant diplomatic event, especially as Pakistan leveraged its geopolitical position and its role as a regional player to engage with SCO member states. This summit allowed Pakistan to strengthen its ties within the region, tackle complex regional issues, and present itself as a cooperative

player amid shifting global alignments

Major Takeaways for Pakistan:



① Enhanced Regional Connectivity and Trade Opportunities

→ Pakistan emphasized its geographical advantage as a bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, and China

→ Islamabad discussed possibilities for expanding trade routes and enhancing infrastructure connectivity through CPEC

→ this focus reinforces Pakistan's role in regional connectivity, aiming to attract greater investment from SCO members

② Strengthened Bilateral Relations With China and Russia

→ SCO platform provided a unique opportunity for Pakistan to deepen ties with major powers China and Russia, moving towards military and economic collaboration

↳ e.g. China expressed further commitment to CPEC and discussed additional investment initiatives

↳ e.g. Russia indicated interest in energy projects in Pakistan, particularly LNC

③ Increased Diplomatic Leverage on the Kashmir Issue

→ Pakistan subtly highlighted its stance on Kashmir by underscoring the importance of peaceful resolutions of conflicts for regional stability

→ by emphasizing this, Pakistan sought to strengthen diplomatic support from countries like China and Russia while raising international awareness

④ Promoting Anti-Terrorism + Security Cooperation

→ Pakistan asserted its commitment to regional security by promoting cooperation in counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, and addressing extremism

↳ e.g. Islamabad's active participation in SCO's RATS demonstrated its willingness to play a constructive role in regional security

⑤ Economic Diversification and Investment

Attraction

- Pakistan positioned itself as a promising investment destination
- this outreach was essential for economic diversification, especially considering Pakistan's need for foreign direct investment to alleviate its economic challenges

⑥ Solidified Cooperation on Climate Change and Water Security

- Pakistan brought up critical issues like climate change and water scarcity that affect the region and collaborated with SCO members on strategies to mitigate these challenges
- this focus on environmental concerns fostered collaboration in several areas

~~⑥ Opportunity to~~

⑦ Reinforced Soft Power and Diplomatic Image

- Hosting an international summit allowed Pakistan to showcase its diplomatic strength, bolstering its soft power
- reinforced Pakistan's image as a cooperative and reliable regional player capable of facilitating constructive dialogue

Conclusion

The 2024 SCO summit marked a notable achievement for Pakistan, showcasing its potential as a diplomatic and cooperative regional player