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WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF DALLAS/FORT WORTH

JWAC Lesson Plan Taiwan: Identity Politics

By: David Janise, August 2017

Warm up: Which countries recognize Taiwan as an independent nation? How would you describe the relationship between China and Taiwan? What is the U.S.'s relationship with Taiwan?

Fast Facts:

- China has claimed Taiwan as its territory since 1949.
- China's policy seeks for Taiwan to agree it belongs as part of "one China."
- Taiwan has developed into a vibrant democracy over the past quarter century, which has complicated China's efforts to negotiate political accommodations with Taiwan.
- Polls in Taiwan show the Taiwanese prefer to be independent from China.
- American law requires Washington to help Taiwan maintain an adequate defense. For China, the U.S.'s involvement with Taiwan as a partner and protector remains the most sensitive issue between Washington and China.
- Reunification with Taiwan is a defining goal of the Communist Party in China.

Background:

Following the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Communist Party of China ousted the anti-communist Kuomintang 'Republic of China' government from the mainland and they resettled on the island of Taiwan. Between 1949 and 1991 the Kuomintang 'Republic of China' government held the position that they were the legitimate government of all of China. Today, the issue of Taiwan independence has dominated Taiwanese politics for decades. Currently, the People's Republic of China (PRC) claims to be the rightful government of all China, including Taiwan aka the 'Republic of China' (ROC). Taiwan is considered a rebel province by the PRC and internationally most countries and the UN recognize the PRC as the only legitimate government over both the mainland and Taiwan. However, many countries recognize the de factor control of the ROC over Taiwan.

Activity:

Quickly read this article about President Trump's first phone call in office, with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/03/trump-angers-beijing-with-provocative-phone-call-to-taiwan-president>



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Discussion:

Why would China be upset with President Trump sharing a phone call with the President of Taiwan? What was Taiwan's motivation behind placing this call to President Trump? What new significance does this phone call hold for the world given that this was the first call between the leader of Taiwan and a U.S. President since 1979?

Recap and Reaching Further:

As can be seen, the current relationships between China, the United States, and Taiwan are ones that should be approached with caution and consideration from all sides. Thus, while China and Taiwan are comprised of two separate governments and two separate territories, insofar as the international community is concerned it is only one country with two **competing** governments (with only one seen as internationally legitimate).

Call to Action:

Remaining informed on Taiwan is an important aspect of awareness in regards to East Asia. There is a movement by some in Taiwan for complete independence and to understand the perspective of those who support this movement, and its successes and setbacks, you can read more here:

<https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/do-the-taiwan-independence-movements-symbolic-victories-hide-a-lack-of-practical-hope/>

Works Cited

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