One China Policy

Why in news?

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The new U.S. administration has agreed to **honour the long-standing 'One China Policy,** after previously placing it in doubt and infuriating China.

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What is the 'One China' policy?

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- The One China policy is a key cornerstone of Sino-US relations. It is the **diplomatic acknowledgement of China's position that there is only one Chinese government.**
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- Under the policy, the US recognises and has formal ties with China rather than the island of Taiwan, which China sees as a breakaway province.
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- China insists Taiwan is an inalienable part of one China. So, any country that wants diplomatic relations with mainland China must break official ties with Taipei.
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- Since, the US established formal diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1979, it had to sever ties with Taiwan and closed its Taipei embassy. This has resulted in Taiwan's diplomatic isolation from the international community.
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What is behind the China-Taiwan divide?

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- The 'One-China' policy can be traced back to 1949 and the end of the Chinese civil war.
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- The defeated Nationalists, also known as the **Kuomintang, retreated to Taiwan** and made it their seat of government while the victorious Communists began ruling the mainland as the People's Republic of China.
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- Both sides said they represented all of China. Since then China's ruling Communist Party has threatened to use force if Taiwan ever formally declares independence.
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- Initially, many governments including the US recognised Taiwan and they shied away from Communist China.
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- But the mutual need to develop relations with China begun in the 1970s, and as a result, the US and other countries started cutting ties with Taipei in favour of Beijing.
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What happened in the recent weeks?

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- The speculation that the new U.S. administration would improve ties with Taiwan and use the policy as a bargaining chip against China was effectively killed when U.S. stated commitment to honour the One China policy.
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- Some reports suggest that Beijing drew a One China red line for further cooperation on key issues between U.S. and China.
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What does it signify?

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- Picking a fight with China over a sensitive issue, that too, in the initial weeks of forming the new administration shows bad diplomatic judgment on the part of U.S.
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- So, this could well be a reality check for the U.S. for its future engagement with China.
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- This doesn’t mean that the U.S. must accept with China on all global issues. There are areas where both can cooperate; areas where they compete; and areas where they disagree.
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- The challenge before the U.S. is to address issues with Beijing without disrupting the Sino-U.S. equilibrium.
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Source: The Hindu, BBC

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