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‘Taiwanization’ in the Strait Conflict: Public Opinion’s Effect on Peace vs Conflict

An Honor’s Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Honors Studies in
International and Global Studies

By

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Introduction

Since the election of Tsai Ing-wen, the Taiwan Strait Conflict has been rising in tension. Many scholars state that interdependence leads to peace; however, Taiwan and China extensively trade with one another, and peace has not occurred. To understand why the Taiwan Strait continuously suffers from conflict, one must explore mechanisms that can alter the effect of commercial interdependence on peace. In a democracy, this power would reside with the voting public. To understand why Taiwan's trade relations have not led to peace, we must examine the Taiwanese public opinion. Most believe that peace has not come about because Taiwan does not desire unification and lacks the power to challenge China. By viewing this issue in this way, one is disregarding the legitimate influence that the people of Taiwan have on their political parties in Taiwan. Although Taiwan is a small island, the decisions of the Taiwanese government could launch the world into a massive war. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the policies of each Taiwanese president regarding mainland China. The Taiwanese people have favored maintaining the status quo in the Taiwan Strait Conflict, but recent surveys show that the public is starting to consider taking steps toward independence.¹ Should this trend continue, China will resort to war. Therefore, one must understand how this trend formed and how it influences the political parties of Taiwan. I call this phenomenon of Taiwan's public viewing the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a common enemy while utilizing grass-root movements to embrace its identity and alter mainland policy – Taiwanization. Many scholars have used this term in the past, and because my terminology differs, I will denote my term with the capital 'T.' Taiwanization steers Taiwan away from peaceful trade and creates tension between Taiwan and China.

¹ National Chengchi University, "The Presidential Approvals as Tracked in Telephone Interviews, 2019.09~2022..09," accessed February 28, 2023, http://teds.nccu.edu.tw/files/archive/239_11e13a72.jpg.

To comprehend how Taiwanization has impacted the Taiwan Strait Conflict, it is necessary to examine Taiwan's historical legacy and how it shaped the island's distinct identity. This is rooted in the Japanese colonial legacy of Taiwan. Once, China regained control of Taiwan, the Taiwanese were subject to suppressive government rulings that united ethnic divides against a common enemy in the Kuomintang (KMT). The Taiwanese would eventually go on to embrace the island's own unique culture through literature, art, food, pop culture, etc. Once this occurred, political ideologies (separate from the KMT) started to gain support. This eventually led to the creation of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). After Taiwan became a democracy, its citizens gained the ability to influence the government on important issues, including relations with the PRC. This allowed Taiwanization to occur and start pushing the island away from unification under any circumstance. Taiwanization gained complete legitimacy on the island after the Sunflower movement, this is because this protest pushed Taiwan away from free trade with China. A major takeaway from this protest is that it occurred without PRC aggression, therefore demonstrating Taiwanization's growth in influence. After one understands the historical development of Taiwanization, one must recognize how it has altered presidential policies in the democratic era.

In the 2000 election, the topic of economic policy was of great importance because Lee Teng-hui's "No Haste, Be Patient" policy was under criticism by the Taiwanese public and business elites. Chen Shui-bian, a member of the DPP, capitalized on this by going against this party's historical stance and favoring freer trade with the mainland. This willingness to adapt to the public would lead Chen Shui-bian to become the first president affiliated with the DPP. Because the DPP favors a referendum for independence, after Chen became president, China increased its aggression and eventually signed the Anti-Secession law. Chen Shui-bian

subsequently shifted towards protectionist measures. Just as Chen Shui-bian ran on economic openness, so did the KMT in the 2008 election. Ma Ying-jeou won this election for various reasons, one of which was his willingness to pursue free trade with China. Compared to other presidents, Ma favored interdependence with China over anything else. Ma became so determined in his economic policy, that he forgot to acknowledge the public opinion and caused the Sunflower movement. Tsai Ing-wen ran on a platform that reflected the public's dissatisfaction with previous policies, and became the first president to be elected with a public opinion for favoring protectionary policies. Accordingly, Tsai has been able to focus on bilateral relationships better than previous presidents because the Taiwanese public now values political gains over economic incentives.

Taiwan has historically preferred economic gains over political incentives, but this has come to change in recent years. The status quo of the Taiwan Strait is a volatile region that relies on both Taiwan and China to communicate. Yet, because actors are inclined to lie in a conflict like this one, trade is the only mechanism that can be utilized to demonstrate a zone of possible agreement. After the Taiwanese public began to prioritize political gains over economic benefits, the opportunities for free trade were reduced. This shift destabilized the status quo because both Taiwan and China rely on trade to determine rational actions in the Taiwan Strait. This explains the current conflict in the Taiwan Strait and reflects the importance of what happens next. Two outcomes can occur from this tension. First, the unfavorable outcome that no one desires – war. Second, the status quo is re-established with trade, but the zone of the region shifts away from its original spot. Peace has not occurred in the Taiwan Strait because Taiwan cannot fully trade with an overpowerful China and Taiwanization increases tension in the strait. For peace to occur, Taiwanization must grow without the retaliation of PRC aggression.

Literature Review

After the interwar years, it became obvious that a philosophy for international development and trade was necessary to avoid the recurring economic turmoil leading to political crises and war. The solution adopted was to create an infrastructure of economic interdependence to improve transnational relationships and increase mutual dependency. Although multiple sources created the foundation of what would become interdependence, this is not the topic of this paper. Thus, the thought of Immanuel Kant and his writing on “perpetual peace” will suffice in understanding the logic of interdependence. Kant believed “the spirit of trade cannot coexist with war, and sooner or later this spirit dominates every people.”²In Kant’s opinion, the humanistic nature of individuals to pursue trade, coupled with proliferating interactions, results in a gradual predominance of peace over war. This philosophy coincides with the modern liberalist idea that economic interdependence increases a nation-state’s opportunity cost to an extent that the benefits of peace will not be sacrificed for war. Interdependence is now commonly used by world leaders and scholars and has become a primary principle of diplomacy, international law, and multilateral negotiations.

Although the modern era seems to idealize interdependence resulting in peace, the realization of this practice has not prevailed in global peace as hoped by its supporters. Despite the presence of interdependence in the world today, it is not hard for one to observe the mass amounts of genocide, trade barriers, and wars occurring. Increases in trade do not result in peace as Kant predicted but rather foster components of conflict. Gartzke, Li, and Boehmer argue that

² Immanuel Kant, “To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 125.

economic interdependence is a device that allows costly signaling to occur.³ Using this perspective, economic linkages are components with dynamic effects that are used to signal an actor's zone of possible agreement. Under certain conditions, this could lead to peace (although it often does) or war. Economic signals occur simultaneously in multiple markets by increasing barriers when political action is taken against another nation.⁴ Conflict is inherent to any negotiation, which defines why trade could never lead to peace but rather an alternative that is better than war.

Brett Benson and Emerson Niou present the idea that the logic behind trade being better than war, but not necessarily leading to peace, is incomplete. This is because this opinion does not explore the reality of nations exploiting economic relationships for political gains.⁵ Liberalism is not the only form of ideology embedded in nation-states; it is ill-conceived to believe that states will not revert to realist practices to obtain relative gains. Trade barriers are more than costly signals, they are contraptions of force that trickle out into any number of outcomes. These outcomes could be anywhere from regional trade restrictions or war. Jack Levy furthers this viewpoint by stating, "a satisfactory theory of economic interdependence and conflict...must incorporate concerns about the opportunity cost...with loss of trade, the influence of multiple domestic actors...the role of governments...and the outcome of state-societal bargaining."⁶ Interdependence has multiple factors that must be understood before one can comprehend its implications in a conflict. Modern issues have proven that economic

³ Erik Gartzke, Quan Li, and Charles Boehmer, "Investing in Peace: Economic Independence and International Conflict," *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001): 404.

⁴ Gartzke, Li, and Boehmer, "Investing in Peace," 418.

⁵ Albert O. Hirschman, "The Question of 'Economic Aggressions' During World War I," in *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (University of California Press, 1945), 53.

⁶ Jack Levy, "Economic Interdependence, Opportunity Costs, and Peace," in *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate*, ed. Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2003), 140.

interdependence is more complicated than classical liberalism believed. Other factors like politics and national identities have significant influences on interdependence and its usages in steering negotiations.

Governments prioritize policies and incentives to maintain stability and appease the population that has the power to overthrow rulings. According to this premise, governments frame trade practices in a setting of peace or conflict based on the values of the population that holds voting power. In a democracy like Taiwan, this would be associated with the public while in China this would be associated with CCP members. According to Benson and Niou, states are either political-first or economic-first.⁷ Political-first refers to a nation that is willing to give up economic revenue and free trade to prioritize political incentives and security. While an economic-first nation would prefer to expand trade and its benefits over political gains. Using this framework, Benson and Niou develop a game theory to describe the future of the Taiwan Strait Conflict. Under these parameters, interdependent trade is utilized by Taiwan and China to measure the cost and benefits of war compared to peace. The foundation for a nation's decision to be political first or economic first is dependent on "expectations of the future economic environment that determines whether its policies will be moderate or hard line, peace inducing or war inducing."⁸ For the nation to alter its global economic policies in favor of political gains it must do so with a rational desire for stability and future success. However, as stated above, every nation adheres to some form of a ruling population that is associated with the stability of a government. Some scholars acknowledge the importance of other factors that explain how

⁷ Brett V. Benson and Emerson M. S. Niou, "Economic Interdependence and Peace: A Game Theoretic Analysis," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2007): 44.

⁸ Dale C. Copeland, "Theory of Economic Interdependence and War," in *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 47.

different governing bodies interact in an interdependent world. Yet, what is often ignored in these analyses is the importance of the public's opinion in a democratic nation.

When observing a democracy, the concept of political first vs economic first can only be determined by the public's opinion. Although some might view this claim as emboldened, one can see the criticalness of public opinion with the relevance of public diplomacy in foreign policy. Public diplomacy refers to states seeking to promote the national interest of another state through persuading foreign audiences.⁹ While public diplomacy pertains to governments influencing citizens of other nations, the same ideology of wanting to influence citizens can apply to a nation's civilians. Regardless of whether a government is autocratic or democratic, it frames propaganda and policies based on its intended audience. Therefore, if a government is seeking conflict with a nation it is interdependent with, it must first analyze the ramifications this conflict will have on its target public. In a democracy like Taiwan, this would be the voting public. Should consequences be too detrimental it is likely that the public will attempt to vote out the ruling party. If a public values economic revenue over political gain, then a ruling party in a democracy will likely adopt an economic first strategy. Michal Onderco points out that "attitudes towards sanctions can be shaped from geopolitical, economic and ideational factors."¹⁰ His findings display that culture matters more than economic factors. However, his conclusion is inherently flawed because it only deals with the EU's public approval of sanctions on Russia for the invasion of Ukraine. If one is observing another conflict, one would find differing results because cultures alter what an actor values. Taiwan has faced the obstacle of the PRC for almost

⁹ Benjamin E. Goldsmith and Yusaku Horiuchi, "Spinning the Globe? U.S. Public Diplomacy and Foreign Public Opinion," *The Journal of Politics* 71, no. 3 (2009): 864.

¹⁰ Michal Onderco, "Public Support for Coercive Diplomacy: Exploring Public Opinion Data from Ten European Countries," *European Journal of Political Research* 56, no. 2 (May 2017): 413.

a century, this conflict is embedded into Taiwan's cultural identity. As the atmosphere of the Taiwan Strait changes, so does the Taiwanese opinion on how to deal with China.

Political-First Interdependence

Public opinions often fluctuate, demonstrating why a nation will switch between economic first and political first agendas. In a democracy, if a government becomes hostile to an interdependent nation before evaluating the effects on the public, the ruling party will likely be voted out. Public opinion is not identical, therefore a democratic nation's decision to be economic first or political first should be considered more of a spectrum than two distinct choices. Nevertheless, understanding the public's opinion is important when perceiving a conflict that could spiral out of peace into war. This can visibly be seen in the Taiwan Strait Conflict where tensions have recently grown to the point of war. Taiwan's interdependence with China started when Taiwan reopened its borders with mainland China in 1987. Since then, the ROC and PRC governments have become increasingly entwined. Taiwan's outward foreign direct investment to China grew from zero percent in 1987 to as high as 53 percent in 2005.¹¹ Taiwan and China's economic interdependence has only grown; however, the percentage of investment has been distributed asymmetrically. For instance, China is Taiwan's biggest trading partner.¹² However, this is in contrast with the fact that Taiwan only accounts for a marginal amount of China's GDP. This asymmetry, along with China's forceful attempts to keep the nation of Taiwan isolated, has made Taiwan's government adopt a dynamic approach to its foreign policy.

Taiwan's foreign economic policy has fluctuated a lot in reference to China. Under the initial start of Lee Teng-hui's rule, Taiwan steadily increased its economic interdependence with

¹¹ Chien-Kai Chen, "The Effect of International Relations on Cross-Border Economic Ties: A Case Study of Taiwan's Economic Policies Toward China," *International Journal of China Studies* 7, no. 1 (April 2016): 62.

¹² "Market Overview," Taiwan – Country Commercial Guide, International Trade Administration, September 2022, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/taiwan-market-overview>.

China. This would change between 1995-96 after President Lee visited the United States. Lee's actions received praise from the Taiwanese public but were not well received by China. The CCP responded to this visit by launching military exercises to intimidate both Taiwan and the United States.¹³ These actions resulted in one of the most critical points in the Taiwan Strait Conflict. Lee responded to this by introducing his "No Haste, Be Patient" strategy. "No haste, be patient" entailed investments in China to not exceed 50 million US dollars and bans on investment in major infrastructure projects, real estate, and certain manufacturing in China.¹⁴ Lee believed the Taiwanese business elite's investments in China were jeopardizing the national security of Taiwan in favor of economic gains. According to Chien-Kai Chen, "the policy of 'no haste, be patient' was unpopular among not only the Taiwanese business elite but also the general public. The enduring pro-economic growth tendency at the elite level...[made] the general public in Taiwan inclined to see economic growth as one of the most crucial national goals."¹⁵ By Lee prioritizing political first agendas in response to China's hostility, without considering the effects on the voting public, he ultimately killed the electability of the KMT in the upcoming 2000 election.

Chen Shui-bian has a similar story about how his economic policies changed in response to domestic demand. Just like Lee Teng-hui, Chen desired economic openness at the start of his term. Accordingly, Chen replaced the "no haste, be patient" policy with "active opening and effective management." Years later, when the PRC passed the Anti-Secession Law, Chen reevaluated his stance and replaced his economic-first approach with a political-first agenda.

¹³ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan Strait Crisis," in *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 216.

¹⁴ T.Y. Wang, "Lifting the 'No Haste, Be Patient' Policy: Implications for Cross-Strait Relations," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 15, no. 1 (2002): 132.

¹⁵ Chien-Kai Chen, "The Effect of International Relations on Cross-Border Economic Ties," 67.

Chen accomplished this by initiating his “active management and effective opening” policy. Once again, this was criticized by the Taiwanese business elite and the Taiwanese public.¹⁶ Ultimately, the KMT regained power in the next presidential election. By looking at these two instances, one notices, Taiwan’s public has generally prioritized an economic-first strategy. Both the KMT and the DPP utilized this information to improve electability. But when China increases its aggression, each party reverted to a political-first agenda. This can also be noticed in Ma Ying-jeou’s election. It can be confirmed that public opinion has played an incredible role in how Taiwan’s political parties approach the Taiwan Strait. Based on this premise, one needs to evaluate how the domestic culture in Taiwan has altered modern trends in Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait Conflict.

The China factor has great significance in Taiwan, but one should not forget to consider the public’s opinion in Taiwan. I have stated before that the public is a crucial component of a nation’s democratic policy and stability. It is also important to consider that Taiwan’s status as a nation is a very ambiguous question. Yet, it is a self-governing geographic region that utilizes trade. Thus, qualifying the usage Taiwan in this framework. For nations to succeed in maintaining stability, or in Taiwan’s case the status quo, public opinion is a vital factor. Many Taiwanese considered themselves Chinese fifty years ago, but this has quickly changed as each year passes. Taiwanese citizens are starting to see themselves as completely different from mainland China and many statistics and polls are proving this. According to Shelly Rigger, “the idea that Taiwanese are solely or predominately Chinese has all but faded away, leaving a mixture of Taiwanese and Chinese identities as the predominant preference...the younger generations are less divided in their view than the older ones, a trend that might help ease

¹⁶ Chien-Kai Chen, “The Effect of International Relations on Cross-Border Economic Ties,” 71-72.

Taiwan's political divisions in the future.”¹⁷ Rigger bases this assumption on polls taken from the generation that lived under Japanese colonization to the current democratic generation. Based on this data, each generation has trended away from a Chinese identity to a Taiwanese one. This is one reason why the PRC is growing in anxiety and its determination to reunify Taiwan with the PRC.

This cultural shift is also of great magnitude because it is domestically altering the stances of political parties in Taiwan while intensifying the international conflict in the Taiwan Strait. It is important to note here, that this shift has not led all of Taiwan wanting independence, which is proven by polls that assess domestic support for Taiwan's independence. Data found that most Taiwanese support the status quo unless there is a guarantee for no military conflict.¹⁸ This confirms that public opinion in Taiwan has the foundation of maintaining the status quo above anything else. Taiwan's culture has continued to grow for decades and this has led to the island's democratization, shifts in foreign policy, and willingness to become aggressive with China. The PRC continuously cites Taiwan as a part of China and is not afraid to use force, if need be, to meet the idealized goal of unification.¹⁹ Nevertheless, unification becomes increasingly less likely as Taiwan grows its culture, unless China decides to take drastic measures. The current culture forming in Taiwan has accelerated tension in the Strait and changed Taiwan's government approach.

¹⁷ Shelley Rigger, “Looking Toward the Future in the Taiwan Strait: Generational Politics in Taiwan,” *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 2 (2011) 73.

¹⁸ Scott L. Kastner, “Domestic Dynamics in China and Taiwan,” in *War and Peace in the Taiwan Strait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 94-5.

¹⁹ Scott L. Kastner, “What has Changed Between China and Taiwan?,” *The Washington Post*, November 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/11/10/china-taiwan-strait-xi-reunification/>.

The Emergence of Taiwanization

The Taiwan that one sees today has little resemblance to where it was a century ago. Before Taiwan became a democratic nation that produces vital information technology on the global market, it was a colonized land with internal conflict. Taiwan is inhabited by many ethnic groups that migrated at different points and until recently the island witnessed multiple conflicts between these groups. The last massive migration was by the KMT and its supporters, who fled the Chinese mainland to eventually recapture China. Under the initial reign of the KMT, the idea of Taiwanese as an identity that incorporates all those living on the island would have seemed impossible. These ethnic groups have distinct histories and cultural customs that still play a role on the island today, yet one now witnesses the fusion of these into a homogenous Taiwanese culture. This culture did not form by coincidence; many domestic and international actors tried to repress it, and violent and peaceful protests occurred, but the idea of being Taiwanese continued to grow. This culture not only led Taiwan to become democratic but also allowed the Taiwanese people to believe Taiwan was a separate nation from the mainland. It is important to note, that this Taiwanese culture was not inevitable. Instead, it should be viewed as responsive to multiple factors, such as: colonization, conflict with the PRC, domestic coalitions to embrace identity, interactions between multiple ethnicities, etc. Despite all the international pressure, isolation, and domestic conflict, Taiwan has maintained its status quo by altering its national and international approaches to incorporate the trends forming in its culture and public opinions.

I refer to this dynamic process of Taiwan forming its own culture that is reshaping its public's opinion to influence government policies as Taiwanization. Taiwanization is imperative in understanding the Taiwanese public opinion and how this affects the current government policies. As many scholars have done in the past, Man-houng Lin uses taiwanization as term to

denote Taiwan forming a national identity separate from the PRC.²⁰ This usage is not wrong in the sense of taiwanization being a national movement. However, I use the term to reflect the gras-root movements by the Taiwanese people to embrace a national identity that is altering the mainland policy of the KMT and DPP. As states before, because my terminology differs, I will denote my term with the capital 'T' moving forward. Furthermore, it should be known, that my usage of Taiwanization does not refer to the citizens of Taiwan forgetting their ethnicities. The island of Taiwan is filled with different ethnicities and indigenous groups, and all have played a major role in the development of Taiwanization. This phenomenon does not force cultural homogeneity, but rather fosters a national unity that provides equity for all the cultures and citizens living on the island. The KMT would suppress all languages and cultures separate from the mainland. However, Taiwanization would help these group regain respect and control up until the point that the citizens of Taiwan could enact political change.

While the PRC considers Taiwan as a region of China that was separated by Japanese colonization, this definition does not account for the history of colonization on the island. The island was originally inhabited by the Austronesian indigenous groups. After the island was incorporated into the modern world, it was colonized by the Dutch, the Ming Dynasty, the Qing Dynasty, the Japanese, and the KMT. According to Arif Dirlik, “colonization and resistance to it have framed the forces that have propelled the island’s cultural formation giving it a unique identity...which is not merely a local version of some abstract “Chineseness” but an independent identity.”²¹ The separation of Taiwan by the Taiwan Strait allowed the island enough sovereignty to remain outside the realm of Beijing’s power, this created a separate identity on the island. Arif

²⁰ Man-houng Lin, “Money, Image, and the State: Taiwanization of the Republic of China, 1945-2000,” *Twentieth-Century China* 42, no. 3 (2017): 275.

²¹ Arif Dirlik, “Taiwan: The Land Colonialism Made,” *Boundary 2* 45, no. 3 (2018): 8.

Dirlik also states, “recognizing Taiwan...as a separate national formation with a distinct identity of its own formed out of interactions between Aboriginal cultures, successive waves of Hoklo and Hakka immigrants...and post-1945 “refugees,” stamped by complex legacies of the island’s colonial experience, calls into question the ideology of “Sinicization.””²² The impact of colonization represents that an identity of Taiwan being separate was forming for centuries. The modern conflict in the Taiwan strait started once the ROC regained control of the island and repressed this identity building.

At the end of World War II, a binary social class system (that ignored ethnic ties) was introduced by the ROC to organize Taiwan– Taiwanese and Mainlanders.²³ While the Austronesian indigenous groups, Hakka, and Hokkien were mostly ignored by the Mainlanders, these ethnic groups would become major players in future protest. This Taiwanese grouping is a vital moment because it was one of the first circumstances to unite ethnic rivalries against the mainland. Along with the ROC blatantly ignoring ethnicities in Taiwan, this homogenous identity was further tied together by the Taiwanese believing themselves to be better developed than the mainland and having an unwillingness “to be drawn into the economic and political miseries plaguing the mainland.”²⁴ The Taiwanese reluctantly went along with the new leadership of the KMT, which enforced its rules intending to eliminate Japanese influence and develop Chinese nationalism. On February 27th, 1947, a mass protest broke out across Taiwan in response to KMT police officers killing a Taiwanese citizen. This came to be known as the 2-28 incident. On March 8, 1947, the KMT sent in troops to restore order, and “as soon as they

²² Dirlik, “Taiwan: The Land Colonialism Made,” 9.

²³ Shelley Rigger, “Building Taiwan,” in *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

landed, the soldiers opened fire at everyone in sight. Bayonetting, rapes, and robberies were followed by the looting of homes and buildings.”²⁵ Once the KMT re-established control, the state was placed under martial law, where it remained until 1987. Because the 2-28 Incident displayed the KMT’s ruthlessness, this became a vital moment in starting Taiwanization.

The actions taken by the KMT to repress the 2-28 movement created an atmosphere of a common enemy among the ethnic groups in Taiwan. According to Theodore McLaughlin and Wendy Pearlman, “any movement has an institutional equilibrium constituted by the rules...that distribute power and resources among its members...a movement may come to be characterized by greater cooperation...depending on these members’ satisfaction with the preexisting equilibrium.”²⁶ In other words, this details that coalitions will form, despite historical divisions, if it is believed that cooperation will lead to an advantageous future. When pertaining this analysis to the 2-28 incident, it can be observed that the ethnic groups in Taiwan united in protest because of their common enemy in the KMT. Although the protest was subdued by the KMT’s brutal response, the 2-28 incident would not be forgotten. The formation of a united Taiwanese culture was starting to form. However, another dynamic layer would be added to the Taiwanese culture, when the KMT retreated to the island after losing the civil war to the CCP.

When the KMT migrated to Taiwan, the island became the focal point in relaunching the mission to recapture mainland control from the CCP. The KMT was besotted to increase the presence of nationalism in Taiwan, thereby ensuring the safety of the nationalists’ mission. This desire, coupled with the fear endowed in the Taiwanese after the 2-28 incident, resulted in

²⁵ Sylvia Li-chun Lin, “Prologue: Looking Backward,” in *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan: The 2/28 Incident and White Terror in Fiction and Film* (Columbia University Press, 2007), 4.

²⁶ Theodore McLaughlin and Wendy Pearlman, “Out-Group Conflict, In-Group Unity? Exploring the Effect of Repression on Intramovement Cooperation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (2012): 42.

minimal acknowledgment of other issues. To accomplish the unification goal, the KMT believed they had to wipe out all existence of Japanese influence in Taiwan. This corresponded with a swift and forceful shift to the usage of Mandarin in education and mass media.²⁷ Besides the Mainlanders, most had little practice with Mandarin and struggled to make sense of the society they now lived in, “as one would expect, these policy decisions deepened the social divide between the Taiwanese and Mainlanders.”²⁸ Taiwanese who had little knowledge of Mandarin struggled in school and society. Along with this, many Taiwanese spent their entire lives learning Japanese and were stripped of their language. Taiwanese continued to face discrimination from their common enemy, over most aspects of government, which only furthered the divide. But one should also consider the difficulties of the Mainlanders who now lived on an island where they knew little cultural norms.

The practices of the KMT gave mainlanders many advantages, but in the process, mainlanders became isolated from the majority of the population. Their homes were separated from the Taiwanese and their families were either dead from war or stuck on the mainland. This created a dystopic setting where most yearned to go back to their homeland. However, these thoughts could not be made public. As stated above, the KMT was determined in its plan to defeat the CCP, thus making Chiang Kai-Shek and the KMT nervous about any defacto “communist supporters” living among them leading to constant surveillance.²⁹ Based on these findings, it can be understood that mainlanders were also dissatisfied with the leadership of the KMT. Mainlanders had the advantage to succeed economically in Taiwan, but they still suffered from an authoritarian government that refused to trust any citizens living within its borders.

²⁷ Shelley Rigger, “Building Taiwan,” 30.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Shelley Rigger, “Building Taiwan,” 31-2.

Overtime, this suppression, coupled with the realization that the PRC would not fall after it gained a nuclear arsenal and recognition from the United Nations and the United States, led all inhabitants of Taiwan to come to terms with the national identity of being Taiwanese.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, one can see this Taiwanese culture forming in the “Hometown Literature” movement. The “Hometown Literature” movement was writers and artists comprising materials that embraced Taiwan’s history and culture. This literature movement represents a significant shift in Taiwan’s domestic attitude towards embracing itself as an entity separate from mainland China. According to Angelina Yee, “the nativist movement in its initial stage was...symptomatic of cultural colonization and exile psychology...It was therefore mainly anti-imperialist and largely anti-capitalist. Government measure to contain this literary trend only provoked further politicization.”³⁰ Examples of distinct Taiwanese cultural items that formed out of this movement can be noticed in art, pop-culture, food, and literature. For instance, restaurants that produced home-style favorites like three-cup frogs appeared in Taipei’s toniest neighborhoods, thousands of books on Taiwan’s history and culture were published, traditional art forms like puppet theater and Hokkien operas were revitalized, and even Austronesian art became popular.³¹ Yee provides many examples of this nativist thought, including Huang Chunming’s “Kanhai de rizi” (Days of Gazing at Sea).³² The brief summary of “Days of Gazing at Sea” is as follows, a prostitute becomes impregnated by a seaman. Contravening social norms, she has the baby in her hometown where she eventually helps the village overcome its misery. Her actions result in her regaining the respect of her society. The

³⁰ Angelina C. Yee, “Constructing a Native Consciousness: Taiwan Literature in the 20th Century,” *China Quarterly*, no. 165 (2001): 94.

³¹ Shelley Rigger, “Building Taiwan,” 33.

³² Angelina C. Yee, “Constructing a Native Consciousness,” 95.

allegory metaphor of this story is that the Taiwanese can overcome their misery no matter the difficult situations surrounding their lives. But this story was not just limited to the Taiwanese because it provided a metaphor to appreciate the city one lives in. By doing this, this story could also reach Mainlanders who felt home sick on the island. Stories like this one exemplify Taiwanization because they prospered in formalizing Taiwan's national identity, despite political obstacles.

Those oppressed by the KMT's authoritarian rule produced material that went against Chinese nationalist thought because they wanted their identities to be respected. As the Taiwanese started to stand up for themselves, the KMT took drastic measures to suppress what they identified as ideas dangerously close to communist thought.³³ Nevertheless, this literature movement would continue to flourish and with it, a change in public opinion would occur. These ideas mark a willingness of Taiwan to embrace its land, culture, food, and art to an extent that reinforced the changing political arena.³⁴ The political shift that came from the Taiwanization of domestic literature would provide outlets for ideologies to form separate from the KMT, most notably the Dangwai.

Dangwai literally means "outside the party." This political group was formed to challenge KMT rule and foster the democratization of Taiwan. Members of the Dangwai started to gain support, but in 1978 the US established diplomatic ties with the PRC. Chiang Ching-Kuo and the KMT used this event to postpone the upcoming local elections in Taiwan. Some believe the elections were postponed because the Dangwai support was growing and the KMT feared it was losing stability. This resulted in mass protest, most notably the Kaohsiung Incident. The

³³ Angelina C. Yee, "Constructing a Native Consciousness," 96.

³⁴ Shelley Rigger, "Building Taiwan," 33.

Kaohsiung incident did have minimal violence, but these altercations were later over-played in the media by the KMT.³⁵ The KMT used the Kaohsiung Incident to round up Dangwai members including Lin Yi-hsiung. Lin Yi-hsiung, along with the other Dangwai members, was tortured in prison for his political ideologies. When Lin's wife came to visit one day, he did not deny he was being tortured despite the KMT requiring him to deny the allegations. That very day, his mother and two of his children were stabbed to death in their home. This brought further national outrage against the KMT's unjust ruling and practices. The Kaohsiung incident was a set of tragic events, yet it led to the Dangwai, who would become the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), gaining incredible support throughout the country in the mid-1980s. This marks a major moment in the Taiwanization of Taiwan because it would help lead to the democratization of the island, ergo allowing the public opinion to have more control over government policy.

A few years after the Kaohsiung Incident, when Chiang Ching-Kuo lifted martial law, the political scene in Taiwan started to change drastically. This is because martial law made free press outside the KMT approval illegal. Once national media could support Dangwai's ideas, it was just a matter of time till separate parties formed, including the DPP in the mid-1980s. Along with this, radio stations could finally speak in Hokkien and Hakka which helped bridge the gap of opportunity being withheld from ethnic minorities.³⁶ The DPP wanted to increase political and civil rights on the island and supported an increase in democratic opportunity with equality between the Taiwanese and Mainlander dichotomy. Many DPP members also supported the idea of Taiwan deciding its independence through a referendum, including Chen Shui-bian who

³⁵ J. Bruce Jacobs, "The Kaohsiung Incident, the Arrests, the Indictment and the Murder of Lin I-hsiung's Family," in *The Kaohsiung Incident in Taiwan and Memoirs of a Foreign Big Beard* (2016), 28.

³⁶ Shelley Rigger, "From 'Free China' to Democratic China," in *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 77.

would later become president.³⁷ Since the formation of the DPP, along with Lee Teng-hui ending the period of national mobilization for the suppression of the Communist rebellion, the elections in Taiwan have become incredibly competitive on the local and federal levels of government. This competition has also required the KMT and DPP to reevaluate their respective stances to maintain support. This is an important fruition of Taiwanization because it displays the ability of the Taiwanese to succeed in their political discourse against authoritarianism. Furthermore, democracy has created an atmosphere on the island where the Taiwanese identity grows and the Mainlander-Taiwanese divide dissipates. Protest in Taiwan might have started with the Taiwanese combatting Mainlander control, but it soon turned into an identity movement that expounded Taiwan as a sovereign entity from China.

Before and during the presidential election of 1996, Lee Teng-hui coined a new term to represent the growing homogenous Taiwan culture – “New Taiwanese.” After the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis, Lee and the rest of Taiwan recognized that the debate over independence must now include the CCP along with the KMT.³⁸ In accordance with this debate, Lee recognized that the ethnic divides that plagued Taiwan for centuries must be dissolved. In his KMT nomination acceptance speech, Lee states, “Everyone knows Taiwan is a society of immigrants. Except the aboriginal compatriots in the earliest period... Only one needs those who identify with Taiwan and sympathize with Taiwan, who are willing to strive and struggle for Taiwan, it is they who are Taiwanese... We must encourage a concept of ‘New Taiwanese.’”³⁹

³⁷ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “Shifting Ground,” in *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 180.

³⁸ Shelley Rigger, “Making Peace with the China Inside and the China Outside,” in *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 146-47.

³⁹ Lee Teng-hui, quoted in Bruce J. Jacobs and I-hao Ben Liu, “Lee Teng-Hui and the Idea of Taiwan.” *The China Quarterly*, no. 190 (2007): 385.

The fact that Lee was a part of the KMT makes this revelation even more surprising; Lee was changing the KMT from an authoritarian regime into one that is democratic and accepting of the Taiwanese identity. This new Taiwanese identity, coupled with democracy replacing authoritarianism, led to all Taiwanese citizens finding a new enemy in the CCP.⁴⁰ Lee supported this approach with his Go-South policy, which encouraged the Taiwanese business elites to move investments out of China and into southeast Asia.

The foundation of the Go-South policy is rooted in the “hollowing out” theory. According to Ping Deng, this theory applied to the Taiwan Strait refers to how “migration of capital and jobs to coastal China could lead to both a capital shortage in Taiwan and a hollowing out of the island’s industrial base.”⁴¹ Because China’s economy is so powerful, many Taiwanese fear that without careful consideration the island would likely become economically isolated. Since Lee Teng-Hui, every Taiwan President besides Ma Ying-jeou has adopted some fashion of the Go-South policy. These policies are highly political and are debated against by the Taiwan business elite. However, they are crucial in evaluating how Taiwan has maintained the status quo by economically securing itself. Ma Ying-jeou attempted to end the trend of establishing a Go-South policy by supporting policies to open complete free trade with the mainland.

The resulting Sunflower Movement – a massive student movement against free trade with China – is understood as one of the best representations of Taiwanization. In 2013, the CCP and KMT decided to start resolving easier issues in the Conflict, one of those being direct free trade to improve interdependence. This would result in Taiwan’s legislative branch attempting to ratify the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), an agreement that would significantly

⁴⁰ Rigger, “Making Peace,” 147.

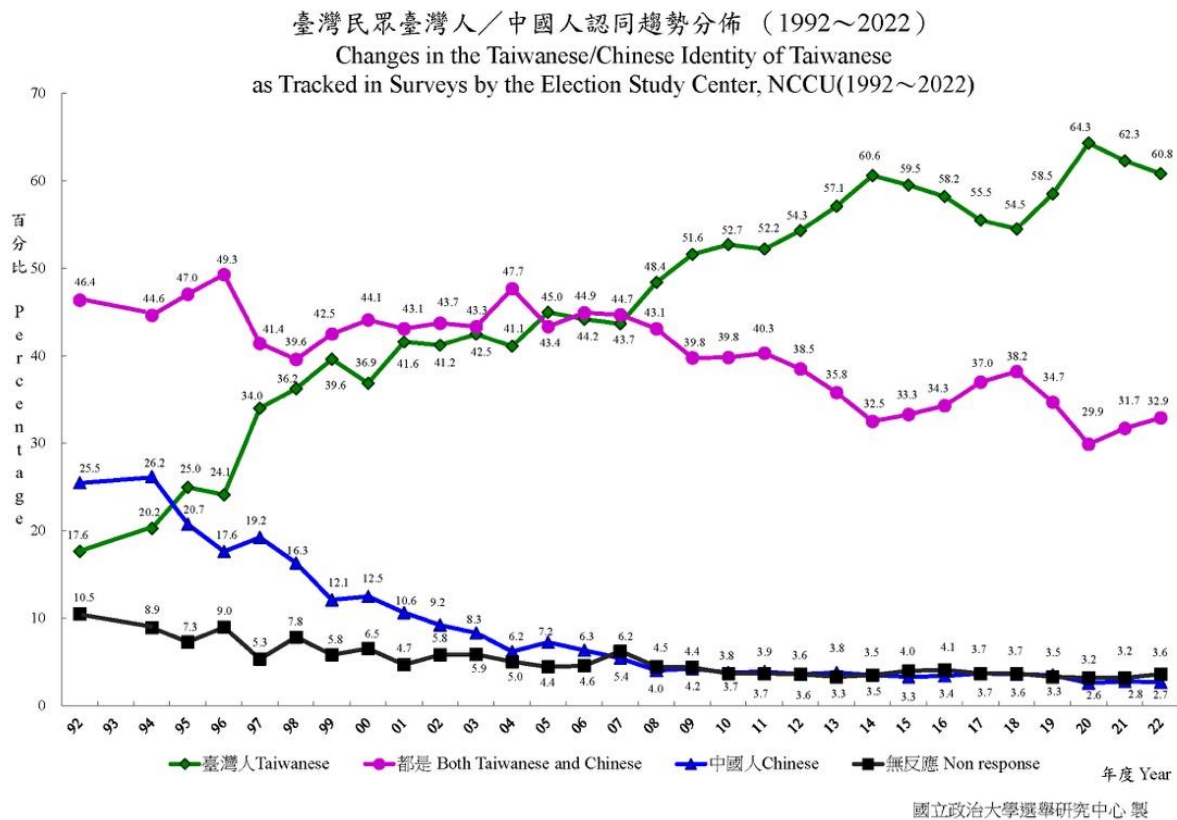
⁴¹ Ping Deng, “Taiwan’s Restriction of Investment in China in the 1990s: A Relative Gains Approach,” *Asian Survey* 40, no.6 (2000) 972.

reduce trade barriers.⁴² Taiwan students responded to this by starting a sit-in protest that evolved into a twenty-four-day protest that occupied the Legislative and Executive Yuan. After this protest started, the majority of Taiwanese citizens demanded to withdraw the CSTA and enact the Cross-Strait Agreement Supervision (CSAS). Although Ma Ying-jeou continued his support of the CSTA, the immense public backlash forced Ma to become “more accommodating to the idea of codifying the CSAS law and convening a national affairs conference.”⁴³ Furthermore, this resulted in more Taiwanese citizens claiming to be Taiwanese (not Chinese) overnight and the victory of the DPP’s Tsai Ing-Wen in 2016. The Sunflower Movement represents how Taiwanization has shifted public opinion into correlating PRC-ROC interdependence with negativity.

⁴² Scott L. Kastner, “Is the Taiwan Strait Still a Flash Point? Rethinking the Prospects for Armed Conflict Between China and Taiwan,” *International Security* 40, no. 3 (2015) 68-69.

⁴³ Ming-sho Ho, “Occupy Congress in Taiwan: Political Opportunity, Threat, and the Sunflower Movement,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015) 70.

Figure 1: Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese identity of Taiwanese



Source: <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/upload/44/doc/6961/People202212.jpg>

Public surveys have also served as an indicator of how Taiwanization has altered the generational outlooks of Taiwanese citizens. For Instance, since 1992, National Chengchi University collects annual data to generate information on how Taiwanese citizens view their identity. While polling always has room for error, they provide a good basis for evaluating common trends in public opinion. Results from figure 1 above reflect that those identifying as strictly Taiwanese were less than those that considered themselves Chinese and those that considered themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese. However, between 1996-97 there was a drastic jump in those identifying as solely Taiwanese. As stated above, this was during the beginning of Taiwan’s democracy, the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Conflict, and Lee Teng-hui’s

increased usage of “New Taiwanese.” After this period, the Taiwanese identity steadily rose to overcome those that identify as both Taiwanese and Chinese. One notices another rapid increase in the Taiwanese identity during the presidency of Ma Ying-jeou. Specifically, the biggest increase comes between 2011-2014. This was during the same period that resulted in the Sunflower Movement. Currently, expressions of Taiwanese identity are near the highest it has ever been, this is because Taiwan has once again found itself in heightened tension with the PRC. Most likely, tension has risen because an increase in Taiwanese identity is complimentary to an increase in China’s fear of Taiwan declaring independence. This data reflects that Taiwanization is having its biggest influence in the past decade, thus explaining China’s increased fear of Taiwan declaring independence. Taiwanization has led the Taiwanese public to embrace its identity against the CCP. In turn, this has affected both the foreign policy of the political parties in Taiwan and the tension between the PRC and ROC.

Taiwan started as an ethnically divided island. These include the Hakka, Hokkien, Ami, Atayal, Paiwan, Bunun, Puyuma, Rukai, Tsou, Saisiyat, Tao, Thao, Kavalan, Taroko, Sakizaya, Mainlanders, and Taiwanese. Once the Chinese nationalist gained control, the KMT used an oppressive authoritarian regime to ignore ethnicities, maintain stability, and increase Chinese values. This strategy would backfire horribly for the KMT. Not only did the KMT unite the ethnic groups against themselves, but the KMT also fostered the formation of a Taiwanese identity. One can start to notice this identity in early revolts like the 2-28 incident. During the 1960s, Taiwanization grew through Taiwanese citizens standing up for themselves by representing Taiwanese culture through the “Hometown Literature” movement. This movement, coupled with the formation of the Dangwai, formalized a united Taiwanese culture against authoritarianism. The KMT reverted to harsh punishment to regain control, but this again led to

the Kaohsiung Incident. The ramifications of the Kaohsiung incident would lead the Taiwanization phenomenon to eventually establish a democracy. Once this occurred, Taiwanese citizens could finally shape the government to reflect public opinion. This would lead to the first democratically elected president, Lee Teng-hui, taking action to improve his popularity. For example, his trip to the US. This caused China to change its stance and take a volatile military approach. China has always been a factor in Taiwan; however, after the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis, Taiwan realized that its fight for independence must now focus on the PRC and its resolve. Current accounts that reflect Taiwanization altering the Strait Conflict include the Go-South policy, the Sunflower Movement, and a new generational outlook on identity. By understanding the historical perspective of how Taiwanization has domestically changed the Taiwan government, one can better understand the ever-changing dynamic foreign policy of Taiwan. Taiwanization has maintained the status quo while also increasing the current tension in the Strait Conflict. Furthermore, it allows one to better analyze supported arguments on the future of the Taiwan Strait Conflict.

Taiwan's Modern Shift to Political-First Agendas

The rise of Taiwanization, which led to a democracy, created an atmosphere where the DPP could flourish. Since Taiwan started democratic elections, the DPP has won four out of seven presidential elections. Most notably, in the 2020 election, Tsai Ing-wen, the current president, gained the highest number of presidential votes in Taiwan's democratic era.⁴⁴ Because the DPP has historically supported a referendum to decide independence and is associated with the Taiwan Independence Movement, tensions generally grow in the Taiwan Strait Conflict when a DPP member is elected president. Normally, China utilizes military exercises on the coast of Fujian to sway Taiwanese voters away from voting for DPP candidates. Under these volatile circumstances, one wonders how the DPP can remain competitive in elections. Furthermore, when pertaining to interdependence, the DPP usually sides with a political first agenda. This is not to say election results reflect Taiwanese citizens as consistently political first; in fact, many election polls demonstrate that economic development is, and has been, a primary priority of Taiwanese voters.⁴⁵ But if this was always true, then there would be little need to vote against the KMT – a party that advocates for close economic ties with China. Therefore, one must recognize how Taiwanization has led public opinion to transition from economic-first to political-first ideals. In this transition, one can recognize the power Taiwanization has had on shifting political stances toward independence, thus increasing the conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Interdependence has not led to peace in the Taiwan Strait Conflict and likely will not, should this trend continue.

⁴⁴ Democratic Progressive Party, "About the DPP," accessed February 20, 2023, <https://www.dpp.org.tw/en/about>.

⁴⁵ Mainland Affairs Council, "How Should our Government Handle Taiwanese Investment on Mainland China?," accessed March 1, 2023, http://ws.mac.gov.tw/001/Upload/OldFile/public/MMO/MAC/9703e_9.gif.

Chen Shui-bian:

A major topic in Taiwan's 2000 presidential election, was the Lee administration's "No Haste, Be Patient" policy. The slight economic stagnation that the private sector felt from this policy resulted in most of the public viewing economic openness as a necessity moving forward. Public opinion polls between 1997-99 reflect that the Taiwanese public had an overwhelming consensus for policy change to occur.⁴⁶ Until the end of 1999, the margin between changing Lee's economic policy or maintaining it – was thirty percent or more. If not for China's attempt to politicize its aid package to Taiwan in 1999 after an earthquake, the opinion over "No Haste, Be Patient" would have continued to be seen negatively.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, most presidential nominees, even the KMT, expressed their dissatisfaction with economic procedures to gain votes.⁴⁸ Although the DPP was generally attached to an independent platform, it adjusted its interdependence stance to win support from those aggravated with Lee's economic decision-making. Chen Shui-Bian would win the election, despite China's protest over a DPP-led government, becoming the first Taiwan president to be affiliated with the DPP.

President Chen came into power during a politically tense time. Chen found himself in a situation where he needed to rescue Taiwan from economic deterioration, while also not alienating himself from hardline DPP members who supported independence. In response, Chen created the Economic Development Advisory Conference (EDAC) to alleviate the political pressure he felt from all parties. According to Chen, his administration would "faithfully respect the conclusion reached at the conference and the government should have 100 percent

⁴⁶ Chen Chien-Kai, "The Effect of International Relations on Cross-Border Economic Ties: A Case Study of Taiwan's Economic Policies Toward China," *International Journal of China Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016): 67.

⁴⁷ Chen, "The Effect of International Relations on Cross-Border Economic Ties," 68.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

determination to implement the conclusions without any reservations.”⁴⁹ The EDAC would go on to recommend hundreds of policy changes, including opening restrictions between Taiwan and China. Thus, Chen lifted the “No Haste, Be Patient” policy and replaced it with his “Active Opening, Effective Management” policy. This policy received bipartisan support due to its backing from Taiwan’s private sector; however, it was still controversial. For instance, unemployment went up as investments in China skyrocketed, resulting in individuals, such as teachers, lobbying for higher restrictions.⁵⁰ Moreover, many debated the future of the semiconductor market with fewer restriction. Essentially, this argument was rooted in the Taiwanese seeing semiconductors as vital to Taiwan’s relevance to the world economy.⁵¹ Some feared China’s relative labor cost would hollow out this vital market, similar to Lee Teng-hui’s fear in the 1990s.

Chen would continue his policy until his second term. As the topic of interdependence with China grew in controversy, Chen’s public support would gradually decrease. To save his presidency, Chen would start to become more aggressive with China and trade restrictions. There are multiple factors for why this occurred. First, Chen and his family became involved in a corruption scandal. By changing his stance towards China, Chen hoped he could salvage enough support to remain effective. Second, Chen expected support from Washington and Beijing because of his efforts to increase interdependence, despite his party’s normal stance. Third, China passed the Anti-Secession Law in 2005, which formalized China’s usage of aggression

⁴⁹ Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), “President Chen Listens to Reports on Progress of Economic Advisory Conference,” press release, last modified August 8, 2001. <https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/779>.

⁵⁰ Syaru Shirley Lin, “Active Opening, Effective Management: The 2001 Economic Development Advisory Conference,” in *Taiwan’s China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan’s Cross-Strait Economic Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 110.

⁵¹ Syaru, “Active Opening, Effective Management,” 116-20.

should Taiwan declare independence.⁵² Once tensions grew, Chen would revert to a political-first approach when pertaining to China, just as Lee Teng-hui had done before. This pattern demonstrates that Taiwan during the early democratic era was economic-first until China became aggressive.

Chen replaced his economic approach with the “Active Management, Effective Opening” policy. Although this policy did not impose any new restrictions, it reflected the government’s switch from prioritizing openness to focusing on restrictions.⁵³ Before active management, many Taiwanese companies evaded restrictions and illegally invested high amounts. Once Chen Shui-bian altered his stance, Taiwan’s government started to strictly impose restrictions, halt major investment projects, and encourage the Go-South principles. The business elites of Taiwan lobbied an incredible amount to overturn this policy. However, this period was when the Taiwanese identity started to become the main consensus among civilians. According to Syaru Lin, “once this consensus began to emerge, consideration of Cross-Strait economic policy could focus on balancing the full range of national interests, including growth, stability, equality, and security...the differences of opinion no longer revolved around choosing between the extreme policies of across-the-board restrictions or large-scale liberalization.”⁵⁴ By Taiwanization altering public identity, the Taiwan business elites were limited in their influential power over voting trends. This is not to say that active management was considered a successful policy

⁵² “Anti-Secession Law,” promulgated by the National’s People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China on March 14, 2005. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/fd/d-cn2005042601/d-cn2005042601en.pdf.

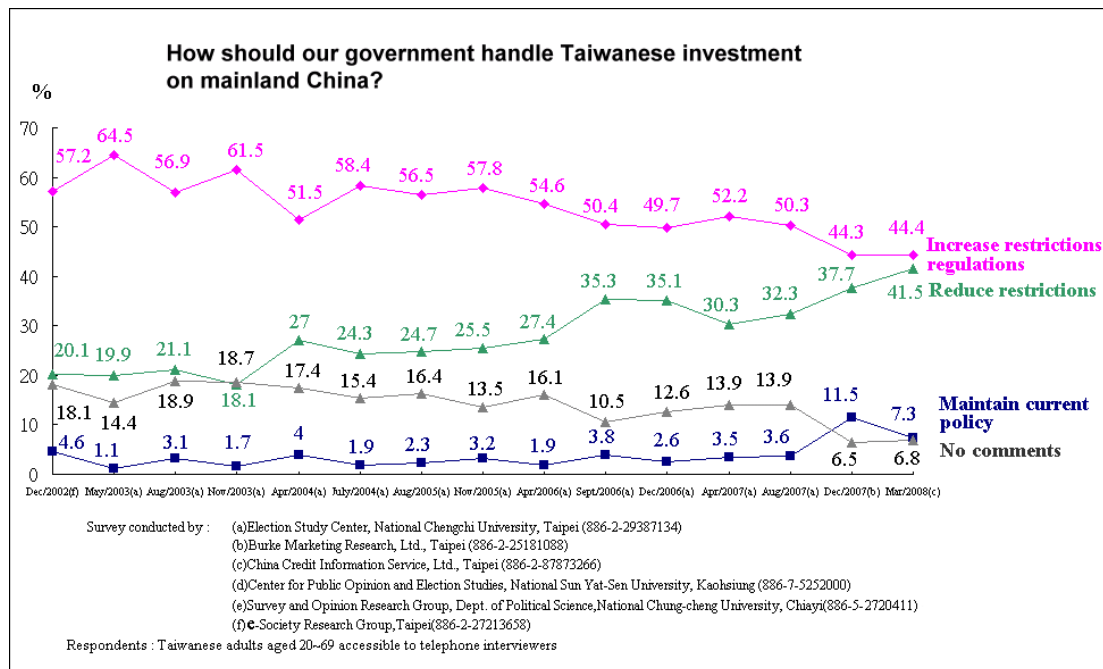
⁵³ Chen, “The Effect of International Relations on Cross-Border Economic Ties,” 68.

⁵⁴ Syaru Shirley Lin, “Active Management, Effective Opening: The 2006 Conference on Sustaining Taiwan’s Economic Development,” in *Taiwan’s China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan’s Cross-Strait Economic Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 160-61.

altercation. Opinions on utilizing economic liberation or protectionism were highly debated and became a highly important subject in the upcoming 2008 elections.

Figure 2: How Should Our Government Handle Taiwanese Investment on Mainland

China?



Source: http://ws.mac.gov.tw/001/Upload/OldFile/public/MMO/MAC/9703e_9.gif

The figure above demonstrates how, before the 2008 presidential election in Taiwan, the topic of interdependence with the PRC became an important political subject. When Chen Shui-bian launched his “Active Management, Effective Opening” policy, the gap between increasing regulations and reducing regulations was relatively wide. However, this gap would decrease over the next two years. Political parties capitalized on this public divide by aligning themselves with opposing stances to capture swing votes. Shelley Rigger states, “the Democratic Progressives’ central dilemma...[is] that economic integration could not be reversed...but they were still quite Sino-phobic. They feared that living under KMT leadership...was sapping Taiwanese people’s

will to resist unification.”⁵⁵ The DPP would become socialized with the “Go-South” policy and preach interdependence as a trap by the PRC to slowly force unification. The KMT took the other stance. Although the KMT does not support unification, it recognizes China as a factor that cannot be ignored. Thus, interdependence should be prioritized to result in peace.

The presidency of Chen Shui-bian was filled with high tension between the PRC and ROC. Therefore, the KMT sent two party members to negotiate with China and ran on an economic openness platform. The KMT would win the 2008 election because they promised to ease tension in the Taiwan Strait. During this time, Taiwanization was starting to influence public opinion to favor restrictions, but its influence was still reliant on the PRC’s increasing aggression. When public opinion would revert to favoring economic-first policies, the party outside of power would capitalize on this by running on an economic liberalization platform. Similar to how Lee Teng-hui left office, so did Chen Shui-bian. Both presidents started their presidencies with economic openness but would create restrictions in response to the PRC. The not-ruling party would adjust its stance on cross-strait relations to gain swing votes in the next presidential election.

⁵⁵ Rigger, “Making Peace with the China Inside and the China Outside,” 154.

Ma Ying-jeou:

Ma Ying-jeou, like his predecessors Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, came into his presidency at a time when the public favored improved trade relations. Coinciding with this, Ma's government signed numerous economic policies to liberalize trade between the ROC and PRC far beyond the extent of his predecessors.⁵⁶ This can most notably be observed in the early portion of his first term when Taiwan passed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). The ECFA specifies a guideline for economic integration with the PRC by encouraging trade relations, avoiding marginalization from regional trade agreements, and setting up a timetable for future negotiations.⁵⁷ The passing of the ECFA was monumental in subduing tensions with Beijing. The ECFA's success led Ma to continue to push the boundaries of interdependence. The importance Ma put on economic liberalization would lead his government to ignore public opinion and secretly pass the controversial Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) without acknowledging the Cross-Strait Agreement Supervision (CSAS) first. According to Ming-sho Ho, "the post ECFA evolution led to the KMT's government confidence that the CSSTA's passage would be successful...However, the KMT clearly underestimated the backlash from civil society, business, and professional interest that would be negatively affected by the CSSTA."⁵⁸ Many Taiwanese criticized the government for bypassing bureaucratic procedures to pass the CSSTA, a policy that was negatively seen because it would liberalize protection policies without asking for reciprocal action from the PRC. Once the KMT passed the bill without allowing DPP input or reviewing the CSAS, the Sunflower Movement

⁵⁶ T.J. Pempel, "Drinking Poison to Quench a Thirst? The Security Consequences of China-Taiwan Economic Integration," in *The Economy-Security Nexus in Northeast Asia* (2019) 25.

⁵⁷ Mainland Affairs Council, "Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) Background," accessed January, 17, 2023, <https://www.mac.gov.tw/public/data/051116322071.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Ho, "Occupy Congress in Taiwan," 77.

was sparked. President Ma ignored the public and prioritized economic-first agendas over public opinion.

The Sunflower Movement marks a vital moment in the Taiwanization of the ROC's foreign policy. This is because this "grass-root" movement went against economic-first agendas without PRC aggression underlying political-first justification. Moreover, economic openness and increased travel between Mainland China and Taiwan did not result in peace as classical liberalist would have predicted.⁵⁹ While most business elites supported Ma, his "discourse and policies intensified the frustration of Taiwanese, who had already been badly affected by their stagnation standard of living as well as the economic slowdown and growing social inequalities."⁶⁰ The Sunflower Movement signifies the embodiment of Taiwanization changing the future course of Taiwan's foreign policy in the Strait. The public grew weary of economic development not equitably supporting average Taiwanese citizens and feared being boxed in by the power of the PRC. In response, for 24 days, students and citizens occupied the Legislative Yuan and eventually the Executive Yuan. While the public demonstrated tremendous backlash, Ma was stern in his stance and would not reverse action.

Although the Sunflower movement was not successful in overturning the CSSTA, it did succeed in the government acknowledging the need to put the CSAS on the legislative agenda. This movement also created a wedge between KMT leadership over the party's mainland policy. Specifically, this can be seen in Wang Jin-pyng's mediation with the Sunflower Movement protestors. Ming-sho Ho states, "[Wang's] endorsement of the demand to legislate the CSAS as a precondition of reviewing the CSSTA ran counter to Ma's insistence on the simultaneous

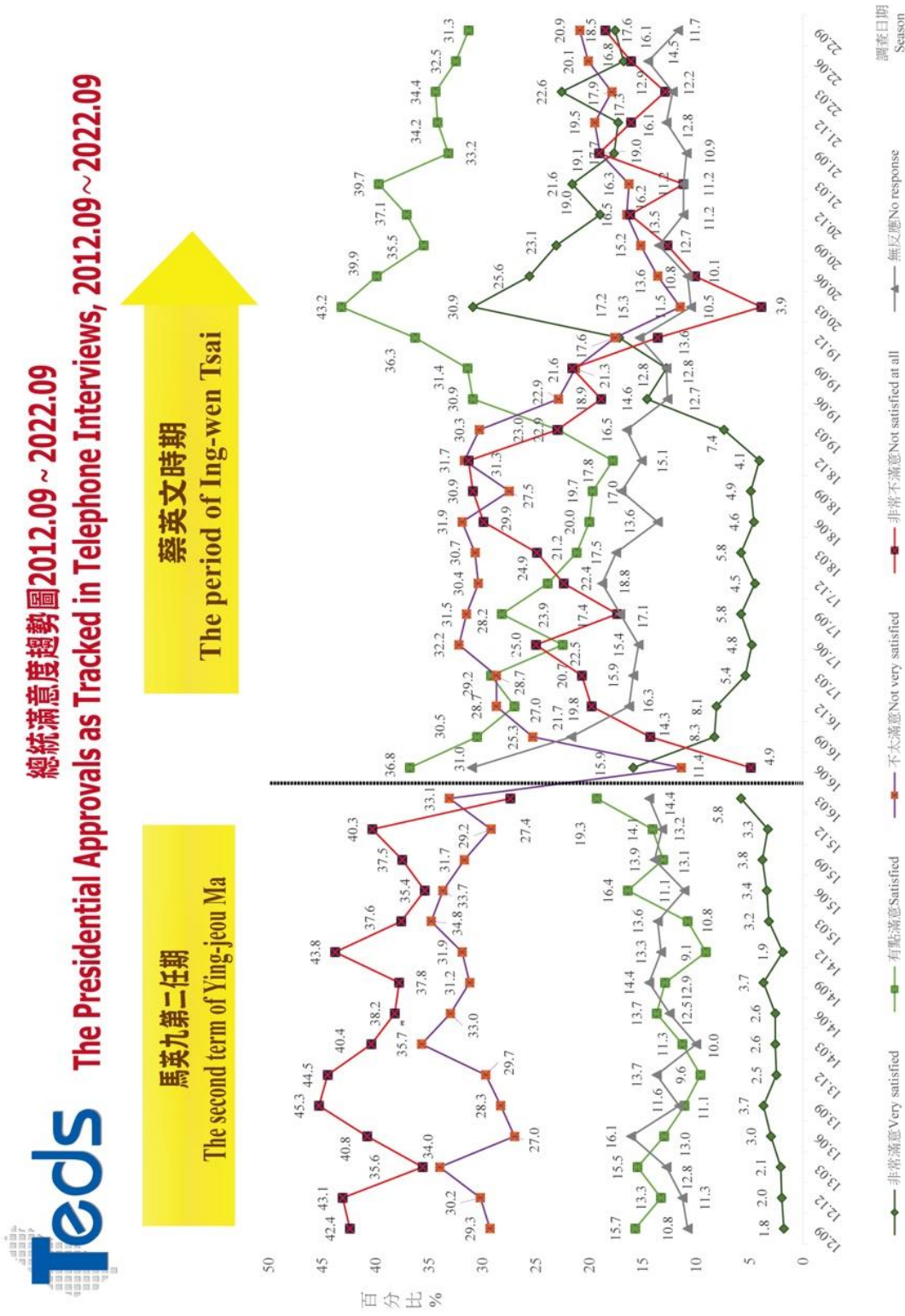
⁵⁹ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "Changing Identities in Taiwan Under Ma Ying-jeou," in *Taiwan and China: Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (University of California Press, 2017), 29.

⁶⁰ Cabestan, "Changing Identities in Taiwan Under Ma Ying-jeou," 50.

processing of both. Wang's move was clearly an indication of the widening rift among KMT leadership."⁶¹ While Ma, his advisors, and the KMT have many differences in policy objectives, there was little difference in their approach toward the Taiwan Strait Conflict. This would come to change with the Sunflower movement – which demanded that public opinion not be ignored in favor of economic elitist objectives, even if those objectives were not purposely designed to be detrimental to Taiwan's security. The Sunflower Movement was just before the 2014 midterms and polling after this movement displays huge dissatisfaction for Ma Ying-jeou and the KMT.

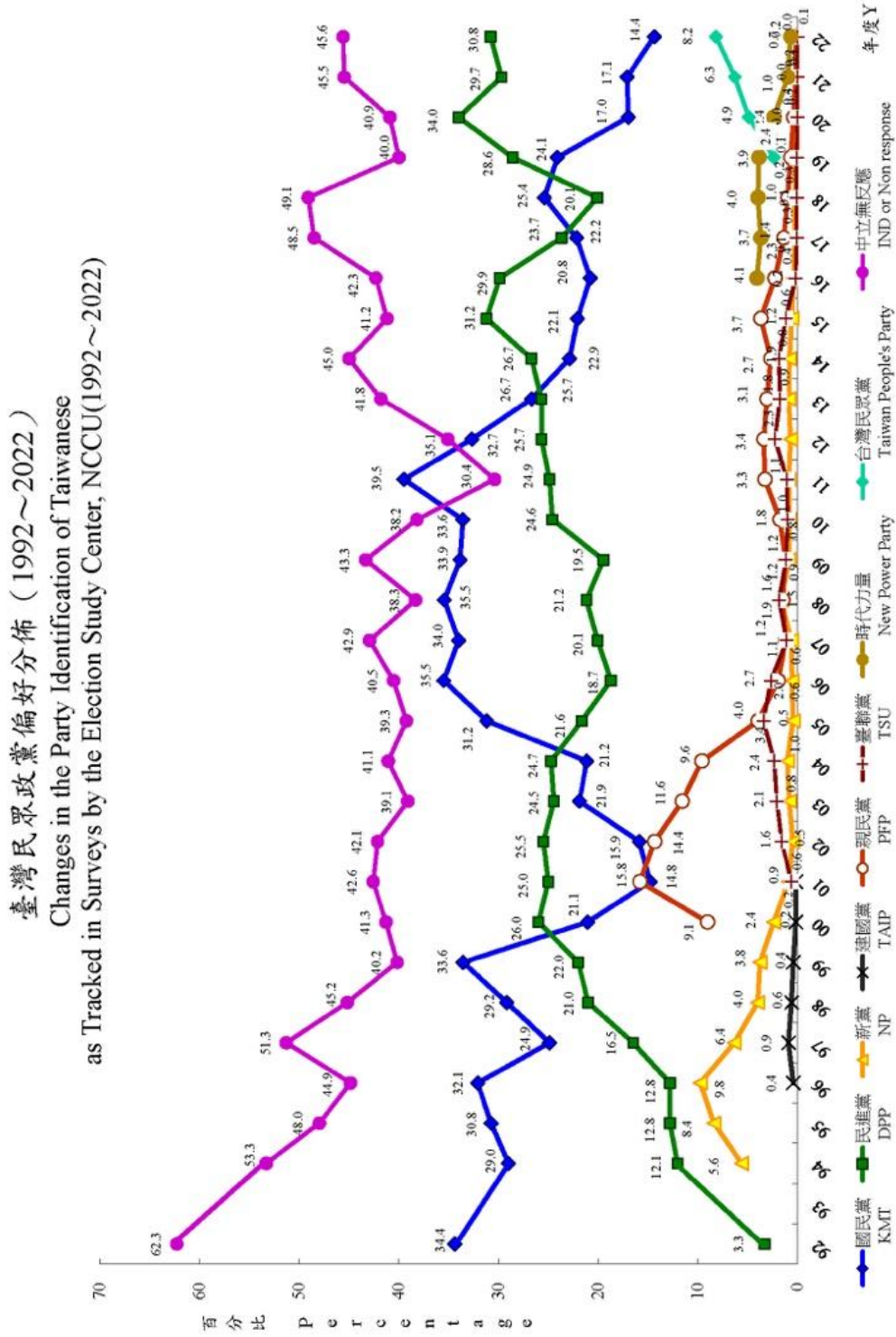
⁶¹ Ho, "Occupy Congress in Taiwan," 91.

Figure 3: The Presidential Approvals as Tracked in Telephone Interviews



Source: http://teds.nccu.edu.tw/files/archive/239_11e13a7a2.jpg

Figure 4: Changes in the Party Identification of Taiwanese



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Source: <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/upload/44/doc/6964/Party202212.jpg>

Figure 3 demonstrates most of Taiwan's public was dissatisfied with Ma throughout his second term. However, the highest point of his dissatisfaction was between September 2013 and December 2014. This coincides with when tensions were growing because of how the CSAS, CSSTA, and Sunflower Movement were handled. Figure 4 also reflects how the KMT lost most of its support starting under Ma's second term. While the KMT support fell, the independent party and DPP support base grew. This most likely occurred because long-time KMT supporters were leaving the party because Ma's mishandled cross-strait matters in accordance with public opinion. Because Ma was the chairman of the KMT, his disapproval also affects the electability of the KMT. Bhim Subba states, "the infighting among the KMT central leadership, corruption and Ma's "obsessive" pro-mainland economic and political policies, were important factors in Taiwanese electorates' alienation from the pan-blue coalition. Besides, the party's trump card of "maintaining the status quo" vis-à-vis China was hijacked by the DPP itself."⁶² The 2016 election reflects many revelations in how Taiwanization was coming into its "golden age." First, this election not only resulted in the DPP regaining the presidency but also the legislative yuan becoming pan-green for the first time since competitive elections were started in Taiwan. Second, the DPP switched from its historical stance to reiterate the status quo to gain more support before the election. Thirdly, this all occurred without the CCP being aggressive in the Taiwan Strait, ergo demonstrating how public opinion was no longer economic first until China's aggression.

⁶² Bhim B. Subba, "Taiwan's 2016 Elections: Inclusive Politics and Status Quo Continuum," *China Report* 52, no. 3 (2016) 218.

Tsai Ing-wen:

Tsai Ing-wen was the first president of Taiwan to come into office with a public opinion that valued political-first agendas above everything else. Because of this, she was able to conduct political and economic policies that went against an economic first initiative, unlike the presidents before her. This is evident in her “New Southbound Policy” (NSP). Although every president (besides Ma) formally announced a Go-South policy, Tsai’s immediate reversion to counterbalancing China-Taiwan economic linkages demonstrates the DPP’s resolve to a political first agenda. This is confirmed by Tsai’s popularity at the start of her first term. Tsai’s popularity does go down over her first two years; however, it booms in 2019 and remains high moving forward. Many factors go into explaining this boom; for instance, it occurred during COVID-19 and a period when China was increasing its aggression in the Taiwan Strait. Nevertheless, Tsai continued her NSP throughout her two terms, a phenomenon that no other democratically elected president could have done before. As we have seen above, the Taiwanese public generally shifts to supporting protectionism once mainland China increases its aggression. Tsai, on the other hand, started her economic counterbalancing before this aggression started, so when it did happen, China unintentionally improved Tsai’s initiatives. If mainland China maintained a positive attitude towards a DPP president, the Taiwanese public may have shifted their support back to the KMT. This outcome did not occur because China’s anxiety grows when a DPP candidate is elected. This is because the DPP party historically stands with a national referendum to decide statehood. Now that Taiwan has broken its cyclical trade approach, if Taiwanization continue towards a political first nation, it is important to observe if the long-run economic strategy of Taiwan provides the island with the financial safety net it needs.

President Tsai's NSP was designed to improve relations with the ten countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), six states in South Asia, Australia, and New Zealand.⁶³ While President Tsai has not officially stated the NSP was designed to counterbalance trade with mainland China, this policy signals Taiwan's determination to foster regional ties with other nations. According to the Center of International Studies, The NSP consists of four pillars, five flagship programs, and three innovative fields.⁶⁴ The four pillars are promoting economic collaboration, conducting people-to-people exchanges, enhancing resource sharing, and systemizing regional links. As one can see, the NSP prioritizes both economic investment and bilateral relations. Many previous "Go South" policies have failed to gain traction, due to the private sector and public opinion valuing economic development, a resource mainland China easily offers. As stated before, Taiwanization created a shift in public opinion. But this was also coupled with China's economic development altering Taiwan's private sector. According to Ngeow Chow Bing, "the higher labour cost and the difficult-but-necessary economic structural transformation that is going on in China – a transition... to more consumption-based growth – will increasingly make China a less attractive place for Taiwanese investors."⁶⁵ This new support for going south by Taiwan's private sector will only increase the likelihood of Tsai's NSP policy becoming efficient.

Some scholars believe the NSP is not sustainable, let alone capable of thriving enough to replace investment in China. For instance, in 2018, Kwei-Bo Huang argues a "pessimistic view about the upcoming performance of the NSP... [because of] the budget issues, the inter-agency

⁶³ "Southbound Policy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed March 1, 2023, <https://southbound.csis.org>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ngeow Chow Bing, "Taiwan's Go South Policy: 'Déjà vu' All Over Again?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 39, no. 1 (2017) 119.

coordination issue, and the ‘China’ factor.”⁶⁶ However, this opinion does not consider the cointegration of the exports and imports of Taiwan and the target nations of the NSP. By using the statistical method of cointegration with international trade, one can mathematically confirm if the economic principles of a nation are feasible in the long run. Chii Torng Liew and Tuck Cheong conducted this research in 2019 and found that Tsai’s NSP was feasible. According to Liew and Cheong, “the empirical results based on...cointegration approach as well as error correction term (ECM equation) show a long-run relationship (equilibrium) between Taiwan’s exports and imports by [six of the ten ASEAN-10 countries]...This finding highlights that trade balance of Taiwan with ASEAN-10 ...is not in violation of their international budget constraint.”⁶⁷ The results from this experiment explain that should Taiwan continue the NSP, the desired results will eventually come to fruition in the long run. China might still obtain most of Taiwan’s investment and trade, but the current economic policy has created an outlet for Taiwan to avoid becoming financially boxed in by the PRC. This research was based on the “Go-South” policies from 1989-2017, and also included the economic policies of Ma Ying-jeou. Thus, every democratically elected president has maintained long-run international trade success with ASEAN-10 nations. However, Tsai’s NSP does not just focus on economic feasibility, it also brings in another dynamic of bilateral relations.

Tsai’s NSP prioritizes the bilateral relationship just as much as sustainable trade. One does not need to look further than the four pillars of the NSP, two of which prioritize organization outside of trade, to understand that Tsai is attempting to maneuver around the

⁶⁶ Kwei-Bo Huang, “Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy: Background, Objectives, Framework and Limits,” *Revista Unisci* 46, no.1 (2018) 57.

⁶⁷ Chii Torng Liew and Tuck Cheong Tang, ““New Go South Policy”: Are Exports and Imports of Taiwan with ASEAN10 Cointegrated?,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations* 5, no.1 (2019) 350.

PRC's blockades. Chen Shui-bian's "Go South" policy also attempted this soft-power approach but failed. Chen's policy overemphasized democracy, which did not blend well with authoritarian nations.⁶⁸ In contrast, "Tsai's soft power strategy will no de-emphasize Taiwan's democratic achievements, but rather focus more on the achievements of Taiwanese people in culture, education, business, science and technology."⁶⁹ This shift in soft power has been advantageous to Taiwan's political first approach in two ways. First, it allows Taiwan to expand its relations with nations it could not in the past. Second, it emphasizes the importance of Taiwanese identity as separate from China. The PRC has responded to Tsai's approach with coercion, in the hope of further isolating Taiwan. A factor that has only benefited the DPP and Taiwanization. Lindsay Black states, "pressuring Taiwan could have adverse effects for China. First, China is foregoing the potential economic benefits...Second...Taiwan has increasingly looked to Japan to realize the NSP. Third, Chinese pressure provides DPP members with potential victories at home."⁷⁰ Tsai Ing-wen's political first approach has continued economic feasibility with the ASEAN-10, expanded relations with Japan and ASEAN-10, angered the PRC, and fostered the Taiwanization of the island to further support the DPP.

Tsai Ing-wen has also utilized a political-first approach outside of the economic field. Particularly, one can see this in her denial of the 1992 Consensus. The 1992 Consensus was agreed upon by Taipei's Straits Exchange Foundation and Beijing's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits. In this meeting, it was decided that there was one China with respective interpretations. In 2019, in response to Xi Jinping, Tsai Ing-wen states, "I must

⁶⁸ Ngeow, "Taiwan's Go South Policy: 'Déjà vu' All Over Again?," 120.

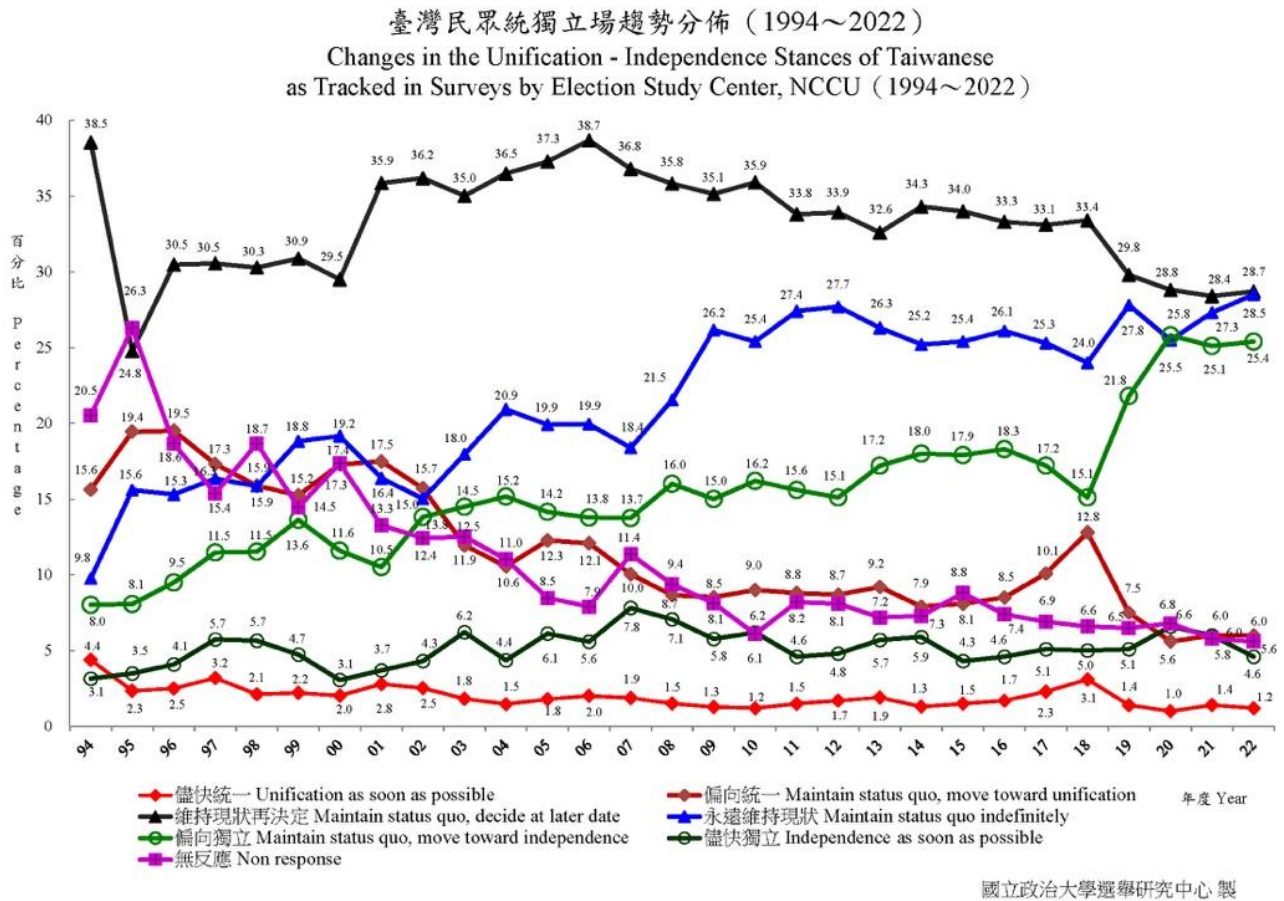
⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Lindsay Black, "Evaluating Taiwan's New Southbound Policy: Going South or Going Sour?" *Asian Survey* 59, no. 2 (2019) 270.

emphasize that we have never accepted the ‘1992 Consensus’...I want to reiterate that Taiwan absolutely will not accept ‘one country, two systems,’ and this opposition is also a Taiwan Consensus.”⁷¹ Tsai Ing-wen became the first Taiwan president to openly deny the 1992 consensus. While the PRC did not respond well to this, Tsai’s popularity increased rapidly during this time, as can be seen in figure 3. This monumental moment in Taiwanization displays how the Taiwanese public is further distancing itself from a Chinese identity and towards a Taiwanese one.

⁷¹ “President Tsai issues Statement on China’s President Xi’s “Message to Compatriots in Taiwan,”” Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), June 1, 2017, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/5621>.

Figure 5: Changes in Unification – Independence Stances



Source: <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7801&id=6963>

Figure 5 displays this ever-growing shift away from China. Since the PRC was diplomatically recognized by the US, the debate on Taiwan declaring independence has been controversial. Since the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Conflict, most have wanted to maintain the status quo and push off the decision till a later date. The idea of maintaining the status quo gradually developed. However, the idea of moving towards independence has had a significant increase since Tsai Ing-wen has taken office. Based on this Figure 5, one can observe that Taiwan is

starting to consider independence in the future. This explains why Xi Jinping and the PRC have recently increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Because the US supports Taiwan, the idea of Taiwan declaring independence could potentially lead to a deadly Sino-American conflict. Yet, Taiwanization continues to steer the public in favor of actions against the PRC. As public opinion embraces the Taiwanese national identity, political parties (especially the DPP) will take political actions previously unlikely in the past. It is important to note, that this change does not necessarily mean that independence will be declared soon, or ever, it indicates that Taiwan is starting to grow aggressive in pushing boundaries.

Tsai Ing-wen has not adopted an aggressive approach towards the PRC, but she has utilized public opinion to push objectives We have seen above how this was done economically and domestically, but Tsai has also embraced public opinion to expand allies outside of south and southeast Asia. Most notably this can be seen in 2022 after the Ukraine War started. Many scholars are now drawing connections between Ukraine and the future of Taiwan. Tsai responded to this by supporting Ukraine while also stating, “our military is committed to defending our homeland and continues to improve its ability...so that we can prevent external forces and their collaborators from using the situation in Ukraine...in an attempt to undermine morale among the Taiwanese people.”⁷² By doing this Tsai was improving bilateral relations, calming domestic anxiety, and reiterating to the CCP that Taiwan would not surrender without a fight. Tsai also utilized her position to bring the United States Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, to Taiwan. This was the first visit from a high-up US official in many decades. After this visit, Tsai advocated on Twitter for democracies to stand together and face common

⁷² Tsai Ing-wen, Twitter Post, February 25, 2022, 3:02 am, <https://twitter.com/iingwen/status/1497134974511681537?cxt=HHwWgsCoifiU8sYpAAAA>.

challenges.⁷³ In other words, Tsai was signaling to the PRC that the Taiwan-US relationship was better than ever. In 2022, Taiwan also hosted visitors from Germany, Japan, and other nations. China once again increased military action in Fujian in response to this, which Taiwan capitalized on by receiving \$1.1 billion in anti-ship and air-to-air weapons from the US.⁷⁴ Tsai's popularity in Taiwan is because she has capitalized on the political-first public to push multiple agendas that embrace the identity of Taiwanese.

After Taiwan became a democracy, the effects of Taiwanization influenced the way the KMT and DPP approached China. This phenomenon has led different presidents to adopt different strategies. Before Tsai Ing-wen, every president came into an atmosphere where the public was economic-first. Presidents responded to this by adopting economic policies that encouraged investment in mainland China. Both Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian would continue this until China increased aggression in the Taiwan Strait. Ma Ying-jeou, on the other hand, would continue to be economic-first policies, despite the Taiwanese public fearing the island was becoming boxed in. Taiwan's public responded by initiating the Sunflower movement. Tsai Ing-wen became the first president that could come into office under a public that wanted political-first initiatives. In response, she created the NSP which angered Xi Jinping back to a coercive stance. This only benefitted Tsai because it increased her domestic popularity and allowed her to expand the status quo boundaries by improving relationships with multiple countries, most notably the US. Now that we understand how Taiwanization got us here and how

⁷³ Tsai Ing-wen, Twitter Post, August 3, 2022, 5:05 am, <https://twitter.com/iingwen/status/1554770418623426560?cxt=HHwWgMCt1and05MrAAAA>.

⁷⁴ Ellen Nakashima, "U.S. is Set to Sell Taiwan Weapons as China Warns of Dire Consequences," Washington Post, September 2, 2022, accessed March 10, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/09/02/taiwan-weapons-us-sale-china/>.

it has affected the agendas of both political parties, we can better evaluate academically supported arguments for the likely future of the Taiwan Strait.

What Could the Future Look Like?

The conflict in the Taiwan Strait represents one example of why interdependence does not always lead to peace. Trade did not create long-lasting peace in the Taiwan Strait because of two reasons. First, after Taiwan turned democratic, its public gained the power to create political change from the bottom up. Taiwanization and China's coercion are linked, with the former growing stronger in response to China's coercion. This practice has become a cyclical atmosphere – when Taiwanization occurs, China responds with aggression, and vice versa. Before the Sunflower Movement, Taiwan's democratic government faced domestic divide between prioritizing political or economic agendas. Taiwan would lean towards economic first agendas but would revert to political first in response to China's coercion. The Sunflower Movement is a monumental outlier of this system because the Taiwanese public became economic first during a détente period where China was not utilizing force. After the Sunflower Movement, the DPP would consolidate historic victories over the KMT, thus marking the shift towards a political first Taiwan. Without cross-strait tension to explain this shift, it can be concluded that Taiwanization finally outweighed economic gains. The second reason interdependence did not lead to peace is that the PRC is not a democratic state. According to Christopher Gelpi and Joseph Grieco, "For Kant, then, economic linkages exchange between nonrepublics is likely to be associated with inequality, exploitation, and ultimately violence."⁷⁵ Taiwan and China could not use trade for peace because the two actors differ in government structure and power. For instance, the CCP does not adhere to the public, as the Taiwanese political parties do, thus the CCP can pursue a consistent approach to unification without fear of

⁷⁵ Christopher Gelpi and Joseph M. Grieco, "Economic Interdependence, the Democratic State, and the Liberal Peace," in *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate*, ed. Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins (Ann Arbor; University of Michigan Press, 2003), 47.

public backlash. Along with this, China is incredibly more powerful than Taiwan, leading to the caveat that should Taiwan pursue economic linkages, China would be able to box Taiwan into the CCP agenda.

The current rise of conflict in the Taiwan Strait can be understood based on interdependence leading to conflict and Taiwanization. Based on national identity trends in Taiwanese politics, in 2016, Shirley Syaru wrote four possible outcomes for the future of the Taiwan Strait. First, Taiwan would continue to integrate with China socially and economically and eventually unite.⁷⁶ However, Syaru acknowledges that this is unlikely due to the outcomes of Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang.⁷⁷ Furthermore, as polls have confirmed, Taiwanese public opinion has continued to shift away from the idea of being Chinese or desiring unification. Second, China could become democratic which would make the Taiwanese public identify both as Chinese and Taiwanese again.⁷⁸ While this could occur, the CCP does not look anywhere close to losing power. Shelley Rigger, in 2010, also demonstrates that the younger generation does not identify as solely Chinese.⁷⁹ Utilizing this generational data and comparing it with national identity trends shown in Figure 1, one can see that this pattern has continued and the younger Taiwanese citizens are less likely to consider themselves Chinese. A third possibility is that China's identity and political agenda will change in a way that the PRC no longer desires unity between Taiwan and China.⁸⁰ Syaru does not believe this outcome is likely because it would tempt those in Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang to attempt splitting again. The last

⁷⁶ Syaru Shirley Lin, "Conclusion," in *Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan's Cross-Strait Economic Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 220.

⁷⁷ Syaru, "Conclusion," 220.

⁷⁸ Syaru, "Conclusion," 222.

⁷⁹ Rigger, "Looking Toward the Future in the Taiwan Strait," 73.

⁸⁰ Syaru, "Conclusion," 222.

outcome predicted is that the Taiwanese identity will grow until Taiwan ceases to desire unification.⁸¹ The current conflict we see today is because Syaru's fourth prediction is starting to become true, and Beijing must decide between war or the status quo.

Scott Kastner uses a model of bargaining theory to understand the future of the Taiwan Strait. Kastner believes that war can arise because of information problems or doubting the credibility of other leaders.⁸² By Taiwan not knowing China's point of no return (where war is favorable), coupled with the tendency for CCP leaders to lie, the ROC could make a grave mistake that would initiate a war. However, through mechanisms like trade and negotiation, Taiwan has been capable of upholding the status quo. On the other hand, Kastner explains that the rise of China is shifting the PRC's "red line" closer to the status quo, should the PRC pass this point then war would be likely. The one saving grace for Taiwan has been the US and its deterrence, but this cannot be relied on forever. Overall, Kastner believes that the system is volatile but is unlikely to lead to war unless one of the outcomes mentioned earlier occurs. Kastner uses a model based on bargaining theory to describe this interaction. Kastner's model can be understood as follows.⁸³ Unification and independence lie on opposite ends of a line. In the middle is the status quo and on opposite sides of the status quo are the points of no return for Taiwan and China. Taiwan has a higher cost of war than China, therefore, Taiwan will not initiate a war. However, China is moving towards the status quo line, so war will either occur or Taiwan will reevaluate the status quo. Kastner also states, "Taiwan revisionism is potentially

⁸¹ Syaru, "Conclusion," 223.

⁸² Scott L. Kastner, "Conclusion: The Most Dangerous Place on Earth?," in *War and Peace in the Taiwan Strait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 181.

⁸³ Scott L. Kastner, "The Problem of PRC Revisionism," in *War and Peace in the Taiwan Strait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 157.

dangerous in the context of information and credible commitment problems.”⁸⁴ This model is correct in understanding the normal fluidity of the Taiwan Strait conflict, but it can be expanded by implementing the importance of trade in outcomes of peace versus conflict.

Most of the actors in the Taiwan Strait prefer to maintain the status quo because it diminishes the chances of war. The status quo represents an environment of peaceful deterrence, where Taiwan maintains some sort of sovereignty but does not move towards declaring independence. However, if one is using the framework of Kastner, then the status quo is not stagnant but rather moves in accordance with China and Taiwan’s zone of possible agreement. The stability of this zone relies on trade because “higher trade flows could increase the menu of options for signaling resolve in a dispute by opening up the range of possible trade sanctions.”⁸⁵ For trade to lead to peace actors must be economic first, for this is when nations value trade over war. By valuing trade, signaling can occur outside of the realm of military action, which explains why trade generally leads to peace. Democratic Taiwan has often switched between economic and political first agendas. This system brings conflict because Taiwan does not fully engage with China (due to power differences) but maintains the status quo in a range that will not lead to war. Taiwan, up until the Sunflower Movement, was able to periodically engage with the PRC in a less hostile environment because there was more support for trade. Once the Taiwanese public forced the government to move towards political first agendas, without PRC coercion, the pattern of the status quo was damaged. The damaging of the status quo has created information signaling less available, resulting in both actors taking opposite and reactionary approaches. This explains

⁸⁴ Scott L. Kastner, “The Problem of Taiwan Revisionism,” in *War and Peace in the Taiwan Strait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 131.

⁸⁵ James D. Morrow, “Assessing the Role of Trade as a Source of Costly Signals,” in *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate*, ed. Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2003), 90.

the current rise in tension because both actors are trying to reestablish a status quo closer to their ideal before trade becomes stable again, or the least desired option of war becomes a reality.

The unpredictability of reestablishing a stable status quo is the growing Taiwanization on the island. In Brett Benson and Emerson Niou's game theory, "if Chen is replaced by an economic-first presidential candidate. Taiwan would liberalize trade...If China chose not to coerce, then...both China and Taiwan are economic-first, and economic interdependence would result in a peaceful status quo."⁸⁶ President Chen was replaced by an economic-first president but this did not lead to peace because Taiwanization is associated with supporting a political first agenda. Should this trend continue, then the option of war will become more likely. It is important to remember that my definition of Taiwanization does not refer to Taiwanese citizens forming a separate culture. Instead, it refers to how an identity of seeing the PRC as a common enemy has altered the mainland policy of both the KMT and DPP. Therefore, Taiwanese culture is not creating conflict, but rather public opinion altering the ROC's mainland policy away from any form of interdependence is creating conflict. Taiwanization is reactionary to multiple factors, as seen in previous sections, but it is also correlated with an increase in PRC coercion. This has collided with the stability of the status quo because Taiwan now seems to be fully supportive of political first agendas. Currently, it seems the future holds two options: war or the stability of the status quo is re-established. Therefore, what happens now is vital for the future of the Taiwan Strait conflict.

Based on trade, public opinion, and the ever-moving status quo there seem to be two outcomes that could occur. First, is the least favorable outcome for anyone – war. Lack of information and mistrust is flourishing between Taiwan and China. If this continues, Taiwan's

⁸⁶ Benson and Niou, "Economic Interdependence and Peace," 54.

chances of making a miscalculation are heightened. Under this circumstance, the cost of war would not outweigh the benefits for China so war would occur. However, two factors that make this unlikely are the US involvement and the degree to which China wants to resolve the conflict without war. The involvement of the US could influence China enough to avoid war since the US would increase the cost of war by drastic measures. The PRC has not militarily attacked Taiwan yet, which gives reason to believe that China desires to maintain credibility across the globe by representing its resolve to peacefully come to terms with disputes. Moreover, it could be argued that the magnitude of global unification against Russia, has made China reevaluate the cost of war with Taiwan to be higher than foreseen. Along with this, the PRC believes Taiwan and its citizens to be a part of China, therefore, it would not attack unless Taiwan declared independence. It is incredibly hard to predict what the PRC will do in the future, but there is reason to believe that China is not willing to attack Taiwan unless Taiwanization continues to push China across the status quo line.

The other option that could occur is for the stability of the status quo to be re-established. Within this outcome is three sub-outcomes. First, China coerces Taiwan back into the status quo before Taiwanization can make the public accept war. Under this condition, trade would be re-established and the status quo would be drastically moved towards the unification end of Kastner's model. This outcome seems likely because Taiwanization has not taken root long enough to influence Taiwan towards accepting the cost of war. However, many did not predict the Taiwanese public to protest freer trade in 2016, but it did. The second outcome that could occur is the status quo is re-established in favor of Taiwan. The chances of this occurring are incredibly small. In fact, the only way for this to occur is if the US deters China long enough for Taiwan to establish enough economic linkages with other nations. These economic linkages

could give Taiwan enough alliances to improve global political standings, therefore, giving Taiwan more leverage to open trade completely with China. There is no telling how long this would take to occur, which is why this outcome is unlikely. All parties are scrambling to re-establish the status quo before war starts, which is why Taiwan would not have enough time to accomplish this. The third outcome of re-establishing a stable status quo is that an agreement can be reached that does not put China in a domain of loss but also allows Taiwanization to flourish independently from the actions of the PRC. The biggest issue with this is that my definition of Taiwanization, historically, has shown that Taiwanization increases with Chinese coercion and vis-versa. For the third option to occur, the cyclical cycle of Chinese coercion and Taiwanization could not be re-established with interdependence. This form of stability would be best for trade leading to peace, but this process would be incredibly complex and require Taiwan and China to announce their points of no return. Although this outcome is best for interdependent peace, it also does not seem likely.

Conclusion

The classical liberal argument that trade results in peace is a linear solution for dynamic conflicts. Interdependent peace is an ideology built on Kant's perpetual peace philosophy which only describes trade between republics, or in today's terms – democracies. Not every actor in the international market is democratic, which explains why trade alone does not lead to peace in every conflict. A better way to evaluate the effects of trade in a conflict is to determine if an actor is political-first or economic-first. An actor is political-first if they are willing to sacrifice economic gains for political wins. An actor is economic-first if they prioritize trade and financial revenue over political initiatives. To determine a government's stance, one must examine the opinions of those who have voting power. One example of trade resulting in conflict is the Taiwan Strait. Although Taiwan and China have increased trade dramatically in the past half-century, the conflict has either maintained the status quo or resulted in periods of high tension. To better understand why trade has not led, one needs to evaluate the voting public in these actors. In China, this would rest with the CCP, while in Taiwan, this power would reside with the voting public. Because Taiwan is a democracy, one can evaluate trends in Taiwan's public opinion and correlate this to shifts in mainland policies. Taiwan's public has historically preferred an economic-first agenda but has shifted to a political-first agenda when the PRC increases its aggression. This would change during Ma Ying-jeou's presidency. Taiwan's shift towards preferring a political-first agenda occurred because of the growing Taiwanization. Taiwanization has been utilized by many scholars, but the definition for this essay refers to how an identity of seeing the PRC as a common enemy has grown and altered the mainland policy of both the KMT and DPP. Trade has not led to peace in the Taiwan Strait Conflict because Taiwanization has led the Taiwanese public opinion to embrace political-first agendas.

To understand the effects of Taiwanization today, it is important to realize the historical legacy of how this phenomenon formed. The Taiwanese identity has been distinct from mainland China for centuries. This is because it was a colonized land with multiple different ethnicities. These ethnic groups migrated at different times and were ruled by different governments. The colonial legacy in Taiwan is vital in understanding how Taiwan's identity would grow to see itself separate from the mainland. Particularly this can be seen with the transition from Japanese control to the Qing dynasty. Shortly after Taiwan was returned to China, the 2-28 incident would occur, resulting in Taiwan fearing the mainland government as a common enemy. Tensions between Mainlanders and Taiwanese would rise again after the KMT was forced to migrate to the island. The KMT drastically changed the societal structure of Taiwan after this migration. Both Taiwanese and Mainlanders would struggle under the white terror of the KMT. The KMT would continue this suppressive rule until Taiwan started to embrace its own identity. One instance that this can be seen is the Hometown Literature Movement. Taiwan also started to form new food, pop culture, etc. The embracing of Taiwanese identity led to the formation of the Dangwai, which was created to help the democratization of Taiwan.

As the Dangwai started to gain momentum, the KMT decided to postpone the local elections on the island. While the KMT states this was because the UN recognized the PRC on the security council, some believe it was to avoid the Dangwai from winning elections. The Kaohsiung Incident would occur after this postponement and civil unrest grew against the KMT. Lee Teng-hui in response to this civil unrest coined the term "New Taiwanese." As Taiwan became a full democracy, the Taiwanese public could influence the policies of the ruling government. Furthermore, with free elections, the KMT was no longer seen as the common enemy of the Taiwanese people but rather the CCP. Therefore, the concept of Taiwanization

gained more power after Taiwan became a democracy. Specifically, the growth of Taiwanization can be seen in the favorability of the go-south policies, the Sunflower Movement, and the growing Taiwanese identity. Younger generations increasingly identify as solely Taiwanese. This has led to an increase in PRC anxiety because there is a fear that Taiwan will continue this national identity trend till the island no longer desires unification. By understanding the historical development of Taiwanese identity, one can better comprehend how Taiwanization formed. The natives of Taiwan have always felt different from mainland China, and the cruel rule of the KMT only furthered this divide between Taiwan and China. Once Taiwan became a democracy, the KMT could no longer be seen as a common enemy of the Taiwanese people, thus the common enemy unanimously became the CCP. Taiwanization would gain influence from this and start to force the KMT and DPP to adjust stances to gain votes.

After democratization, one can see the importance of Taiwanization in the Taiwan Strait by observing the transition between each Taiwan president. Specifically, this can be seen by observing cross-strait trade policies, election results, reactions to PRC aggression, and trends in public opinion. The first instance one can see Taiwanization taking dramatic effect is the 2000 election. In response to Lee Teng-hui's "No Haste, Be Patient" policy, Chen Shui-bian shifted from the historical DPP stance and ran on an open trade policy. Chen Shui-bian would continue his "Active Opening, Effective Management" policy until the PRC passed the Anti-Secession law. To maintain public support, Chen Shui-bian adopted a political-first stance in response to the Anti-Secession law. Generally, the Taiwanese public favors economic goals until it sees security as an issue. However, the periods of Taiwan as political-first are often short-lived because the Taiwanese public usually sides with the business elites who prefer free trade. This is why Lee Teng-hui, Chen Shui-bian, and Ma Ying-jeou all came into the presidential office with

a public opinion that supported free trade. Ma attempted to break this cycle by furthering economic relations with the PRC. This created a short-lived détente period, that was broken by the Sunflower movement. The Sunflower movement represents the embodiment of Taiwanization because the Taiwan public broke the cycle of an undecided Taiwan public. This allowed for the DPP to grow in support and Tsai Ing-wen to win by a historical margin and become the first president to come into office with a public opinion that supports political-first agendas. The PRC has not responded well to Tsai's presidency, which has only furthered Tsai's support because Taiwanization increases with PRC aggression.

That status quo has always been the goal of democratic Taiwan, but this has started to change with Tsai Ing-wen. Surveys display that Taiwanese citizens are starting to support the status quo but with steps to move towards independence. This represents that Taiwan is starting to approach the finish line of the PRC's fear – that Taiwan will unanimously no longer desire unification under any circumstances. Because China has more power than Taiwan, some scholars believe this trend will move the status quo closer to China's ideal. However, the status quo rests on information because the status quo is a volatile region. Yet, for the status quo to maintain, free trade must continue because trade allows the actors to represent their zone of possible agreement. Due to Taiwanization leading the Taiwanese government to a political-first agenda, Taiwan no longer prioritizes economic gains with China. This explains why the conflict has risen because the status quo was destabilized after Taiwan became political-first without PRC aggression. The cycle of PRC aggression and increasing Taiwanization led the Taiwanese public to a point where it consistently favored political gains and security over economic incentives.

What happens now is vital for the future of the Taiwan Strait Conflict. I identified two outcomes that could occur: war or the status quo being re-established. War seems unlikely, but

should Taiwan pass China's line of no return, the CCP will enact war. The more likely outcome is that the status quo will be re-established, but this could take multiple forms. Trade did not lead to peace in the Taiwan Strait because China is not democratic and has more power than Taiwan. For peace to occur the cycle of PRC aggression in response to increases in Taiwanization must be stopped. Therefore, when the status quo is re-established, it must be in a fashion that gives Taiwan more freedom but does not put China in a domain of loss. The question of whether that outcome is possible or not is beyond this essay. Taiwan's public has had an incredible amount of influence on the Taiwan Strait conflict. To better understand the current conflict, trends in the Taiwanese public must be observed. After review, it can be understood that Taiwanization steers Taiwan away from peaceful trade and creates tension between Taiwan and China. By correlating the mainland policy of the Taiwanese government with public opinion, one is capable of seeing when trade can lead to peace or conflict.

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