

# TAIWANESE ATTITUDES TOWARD MAINLAND CHINA

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## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Background</b>	<b>7</b>
Pre-Democratic Era	7
Democratic Era	9
Lee Teng-hui 1988-2000	9
Chen Shuibian 2000-2008	11
Ma Ying-jeou 2008-2016	14
Tsai Ying-wen 2016-Present	16
<b>Chapter 3: Theory and Hypotheses</b>	<b>19</b>
Party Identification	19
Belief in Democracy	20
Attitudes toward the U.S.	22
Generational Differences	24
Socioeconomic Status	25
<b>Chapter 4: Data and Methodology</b>	<b>27</b>
Introduction to the Asian Barometer Survey	27
Party Identification	29
Belief in Democracy	29
Attitudes toward the U.S.	31
Generational Differences	33
Socioeconomic Status	33
Regression Analysis	35
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>47</b>
Asian Barometer Survey	47

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In recent years, Taiwan has shot into the international spotlight with fresh news articles published about it every day. Especially since the eruption of the 2019 Hong Kong protests, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) aggressive response, and the adoption of the Hong Kong National Security Law, many scholars and policymakers alike have been asking: "Is Taiwan next?"

With the rise of Xi Jinping's regime, the CCP's stance toward Taiwan has become progressively more aggressive than previous years. In the realm of international trade, Taiwan's tech industry possesses great importance. As the home of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC), the world's leading microchip and semiconductor producer, an increasing number of countries are beginning to recognize their dependency on Taiwan. Especially as the threat of invasion grows, Taiwan's position is becoming "a choke point in the global supply chain that's giving new urgency" to maintaining good relations with Mainland China (Crawford: 2021). Despite their reliance on their semiconductor industry, most countries and multilateral trading blocs face heavy pressure from Beijing to restrict signing free trade agreements with Taiwan (Maizland: 2022).

The CCP's standpoint has only become clearer in the past few months with U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. Immediately after confirming Pelosi's arrival on the island in early August 2022, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) initiated a three-day combat drill operation. During this confrontation, PLA troops conducted various military operations ranging from firing missiles into Taiwan's surrounding waters to naval assault training for a

potential amphibious invasion of the island. This level of aggression between Mainland China and Taiwan has not occurred since the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1996.

Although so-called cross-strait relations have been exceptionally intense in recent years, most Taiwanese people continue living business as usual. Having traveled to Taiwan a few times in the past five years, I have gotten to experience this first-hand. While standing beneath the overhang of a quaint corner coffee shop in the Taiwan countryside, an aged taxicab pulled up in front of me, ready to take me to the nearest train station. With a smoldering cigarette hanging from his lip, the driver met me warmly with “Have you eaten?”, a typical greeting in Chinese. After setting out to the train station, passing fenced off industrial parks, he asked me something interesting. “Have you been to the Mainland? (你去過大陸嗎?)” he said in a thick Taiwanese accent. Since my Chinese speaking proficiency level was not high enough to start a discussion about cross-strait politics, I answered with a simple “yes” and responded asking if he had gone too.

In English, one may not immediately notice the terminological discrepancy that appears here. In Taiwan, the term people use to refer to Mainland China has become politicized. For example, the way that Taiwanese media outlets refer to Mainland China often changes based on their party affiliation. Pan-blue leaning media outlets such as China Times (中國時報) tend to use “the Mainland” to refer to Mainland China, while Pan-green leaning outlets like Liberty Times (自由時報) use the term “China.” Respective news outlets also categorize articles involving Mainland China differently with the China Times giving “the Mainland” its own section, while the Liberty Times categorizes Mainland China as “international” news.

Although, at face value, this terminological discrepancy between “the Mainland” and “China” seems trivial, it sparked a question within me early on. Referring to Mainland China

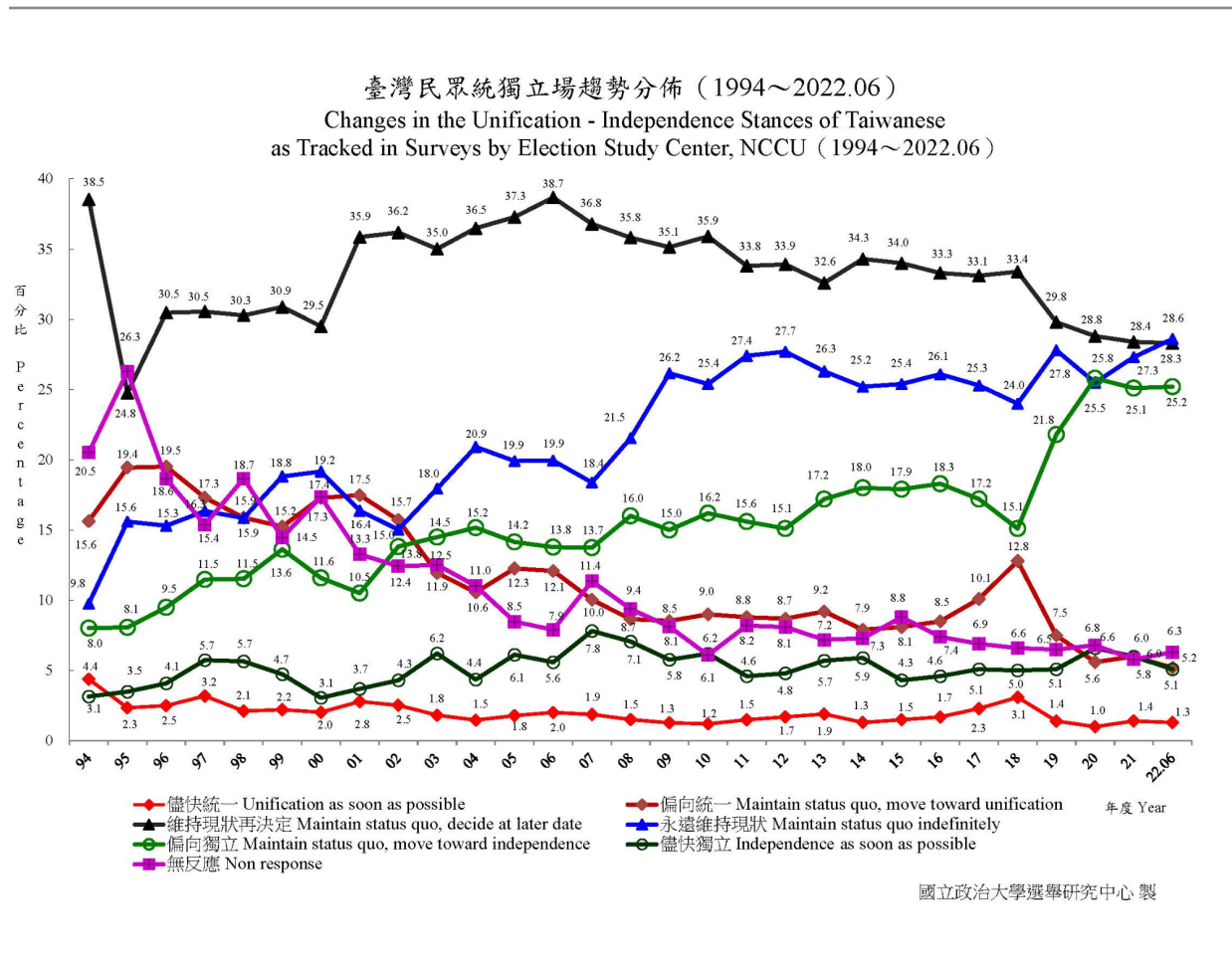
simply as “the Mainland” has a frequently overlooked implication. The term “Mainland” implies that Taiwan is part of China, emphasizing it as a region or province separated by the Taiwan Strait. Undoubtedly, Taiwan is indeed geographically separated, but it is also governmentally separated from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In Taiwan, the legal definition of “the Mainland” is “the territory controlled by the Chinese Communist Party” (“Enforcement Rules for the Act Governing Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area”: 2018). Taiwan’s official definition of “the Mainland” only continues to blur the gray area of what the term “China” really means. Taiwan enjoys de-facto independence from the PRC, operating their own governing institutions and ministries. However, Taiwan’s constitution also asserts that there is only one-China, the Republic of China, which includes Taiwan as well as “the Mainland.” Hence, this raises the larger question of how Taiwanese people view themselves with respect to Mainland China.

In terms of Taiwan’s significance to current issues in international relations regarding the PRC, the sentiments of Taiwanese people must also be considered. It is also important to examine the factors that influence their attitudes.

Within the Taiwanese population of 23 million, there is a broad variation of attitudes people have towards Mainland China. While some people vehemently oppose all aspects of Mainland China, there are others that profoundly express their approval, calling for cross-strait unification. For example, prior to the 2022 Winter Olympics held in Beijing, several popular Taiwanese musicians collaborated with a Mainland Chinese media company to produce a music video. Although, at face value, the video seemingly tries to provoke nostalgic familial feelings felt by many Han Chinese before the lunar new year, there are several lyrical references that subtly yet clearly suggest Mainland China and Taiwan are “one family” (Chen: 2022). As a result

of their participation in the video, these celebrities faced criticism from those who believe they are merely the CCP’s puppets being used to exercise pro-unification soft power over Taiwanese youth. Undeniably, these celebrities and their critics represent two extremes on the spectrum of Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China.

Figure 1: Changes in Taiwanese Public Opinion toward Unification-Independence

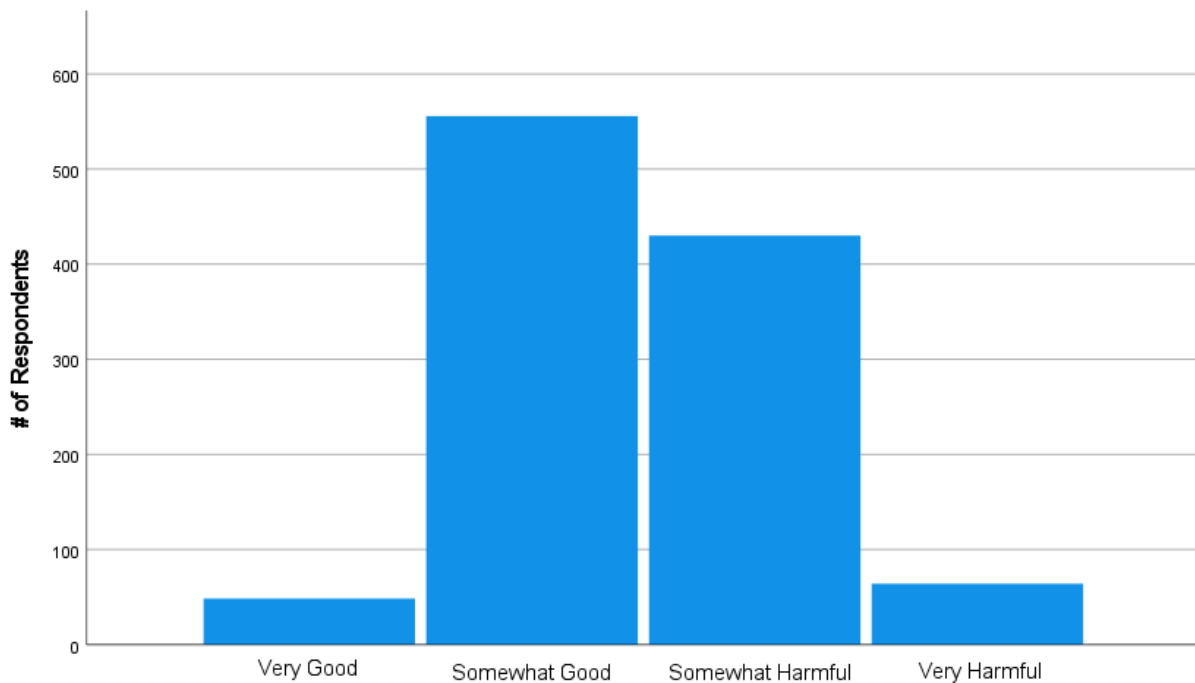


Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University

Despite these two extremes, neither represent the majority of Taiwanese popular sentiment. Shown in Figure 1, when asked about their opinions towards unification or independence, most Taiwanese tend to be neutral, or at least think the current status quo should

be maintained (Election Study Center, National Chengchi University). A similar trend can be found in the Asian Barometer dataset. Shown in Figure 2, when presented with the question: “Does China do more harm or good to Asia?” respondents’ views tend to congregate neutrally rather than at either pole. This raises the question of what factors distinguish neutral people from those who lean closer toward the extremes.

Figure 2: Survey Respondents' Answer to: “Does China do more harm or good to Asia?”



Source: *Asian Barometer Wave 5 Survey Data*

A plethora of research exists addressing Taiwan’s macro-level political and economic importance, especially in terms of the U.S.-China relationship and Taiwanese domestic politics. However, the sphere of literature concerning individual-level public opinion in Taiwan is much less common. Scholars of Taiwanese public opinion most frequently examine two categories:

national identity and cross-strait integration. Numerous polls and surveys are conducted yearly on a variety of platforms to try gauging public sentiment towards these matters. Despite the expansive research done and data collected for these two variables, the separate issue of Taiwanese public opinion toward Mainland China specifically has not been researched as extensively. This thesis examines the attitudes that Taiwanese people have toward Mainland China and the factors that explain their views. Rather than investigating Taiwanese sentiment towards the people of Mainland China, this paper more specifically explores public opinion with respect to the PRC's impact internationally. The questions are explicitly listed as follows:

- 1) How do Taiwanese regard Mainland China on the international stage?
- 2) What factors explain changes in Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China?

Before answering these questions, one first must contextualize what created the often chaotic and complex cross-strait relationship. This paper begins by exploring the historical background behind Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China starting in 1949. After understanding the events that formed Taiwanese society from generation to generation, we use it with help from contemporary Taiwanese public opinion literature to develop a theoretical framework and related hypotheses. After defining the theory and hypotheses, Taiwanese public opinion data from the Asian Barometer Survey is used to conduct linear regression analyses and examine their implications in respect to the hypotheses and existing literature.



## Chapter 2: Background

### Pre-Democratic Era

When considering their geographical relationship, it is unsurprising that Taiwan and Mainland China would share a deep, rich historical and cultural relationship. However, the relationship between the two has become increasingly more significant within the past century, growing in tandem with the rise of the CCP.

Following their retreat from China's mainland in 1949, the Kuomintang (KMT) government led by Chiang Kai-shek reestablished the Republic of China (ROC) on the island of Taiwan. Prior to the ROC's reestablishment, the Taiwan population consisted of a few groups of people including the Minnan people (originally Fujianese immigrants), Hakka people, and local Aboriginal groups. However, despite the prior presence of these groups, the ROC successfully established a formal government on the island.

Five years after the KMT's exodus from Mainland China, cross-strait relations began intensifying rapidly. In 1954 Chiang Kai-shek ordered new deployments of troops to the KMT controlled islands of Kinmen and Matsu, both located just off the coast of Mainland China. Seen as "outward appearances of supporting a future Nationalist invasion of the Mainland," the PRC launched a strike on several of Taiwan's outlying islands. Following many violent exchanges, fighting briefly began to die down in 1955 after the United States signed a Formosa Resolution, promising to defend some of the islands. These exchanges became known as the First Taiwan Strait Crisis (Elleman:2021).

In the following three years, cross-strait tensions remained intense. Finally in 1958, Mainland China made a second effort to expel the KMT presence from their offshore islands.

With the goal of breaking up the KMT naval blockade which had been limiting trade for nearly ten years, the PLA began shelling Kinmen and other KMT naval command posts. After 44 days of shelling, Chiang Kai-shek and the United States reached an agreement to reduce KMT military presence on the outlying islands. This agreement also had the effect of removing the KMT naval blockade. Over the next 20 years, occasional exchanges of artillery fire occurred around the islands, ending only in 1979 with the rise of Deng Xiaoping and the PRC's diplomatic recognition by the United States (Cai: 2011; Elleman: 2021).

After his death in 1975, Chiang Kai-shek's son Chiang Ching-kuo rose to power. Throughout his tenure as president, cross-strait relations gradually de-escalated through the 1980s. This is partially the result of Deng Xiaoping's reconfiguration of the PRC's Taiwan policy goal from the "liberation of Taiwan" to the "peaceful reunification of the motherland." In response to the PRC's policy change, in the mid-1980s Taiwan relaxed its "ban on commercial and cultural exchanges with Mainland China" (Cai: 2011). Additionally, in 1987 Taiwan removed the ban on Taiwanese residents visiting their relatives in Mainland China. Cai argues that the relaxation of the cross-strait environment was "accompanied by a sense of rising Taiwanese identity" (Cai: 2011). While the Taiwanese public shifted their focus away from Mainland China as an enemy, they attached more importance to Taiwan as their home. Therefore, it appears that as cross-strait tensions deescalated in the later years of the Chiang era, public opinion towards Mainland China became less hostile compared to the early years. Thus, older generations of Taiwanese grew up amid a more hostile cross-strait environment compared with younger generations.

## Democratic Era

### Lee Teng-hui 1988-2000

Following the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988, Lee Teng-hui became president resulting from his prior status as Chiang's Vice-President and the new head of the KMT. After coming to power, Lee initially held the same contention as his predecessors, however following his official election in 1990 he acquired the political support to implement his own policy agenda rather than uphold Chiang's policies. The issue that defined Lee's cross-strait relations policy was his opposition to Beijing's "one country-two systems" (一國兩制) proposal (Bush: 2005). Considering this disagreement, Lee sought to work with Beijing in the early 1990s to reach a breakthrough that had been unprecedented for the past nearly four decades. As the PRC recognized the possibility of reaching an agreement on unification, Lee began building structures to create a space for cross-strait relations such as the National Unification Council (NUC) and Mainland Affairs Council. The culmination of these efforts resulted in what is formally known as the 1992 Consensus (九二共識).

The term 1992 Consensus refers to a resolution passed in Taiwan proposing a principle of one China, not to be confused with the PRC's one-China principle. The resolution stated, "Taiwan is part of China, and the mainland is part of China as well," painting a gray area over who the rightful ruler of China is (Wei:2016). As a result, the KMT adopted the view of "One China-respective interpretations"(一中各表). Although this fundamentally contradicted Beijing's contention that Taiwan is part of the PRC's one China, it was not challenged because Taiwan still conformed under the ill-defined "one China" position rather than voicing that each were their own separate entities (Wei: 2016). The 1992 Consensus henceforth kickstarted a period of rapprochement from 1992 to 1995. Cole provides an interesting argument about the 1992

Consensus stating that the Consensus “serves little other purpose than to suggest that an agreement was reached between the two sides ... In other words, it has no power, no institutional value, and is by no means indispensable to constructive dialogue between the two sides” (Cole: 2020). The Consensus’s seeming lack of structure set the stage for continued debate over the coming years as the new Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) unexpectedly gained power and influence in Taiwan’s political sphere.

Although both sides enjoyed a period of relative peace during the rapprochement period from 1992-1995, Beijing developed fears as Taiwan began taking steps closer to becoming a full-fledged democratic system. In response to Taiwan’s impending first formal democratic election, Beijing decided to take military action. Triggering the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis, the PLA fired two rounds of missiles near important shipping routes located in the Taiwan Strait between 1995 and 1996. These actions further concretized a negative cross-strait environment during the remainder of Lee’s presidency.

Throughout the years under the Lee administration, Taiwanese popular sentiment towards national identity experienced vast changes. From June 1992 to June 2000, roughly 45% of the population on average identified themselves as both Chinese and Taiwanese. However, during this timeframe, the percentage of people that identified as purely Taiwanese nearly doubled, increasing from 17% to 37%. Additionally, the amount of people that identified themselves as strictly Chinese was halved, decreasing from 26% to 13%. These numbers saw the greatest change following the 1995-1996 missile crisis. From June 1995 to June 1997, the amount of people that identified as Chinese dropped from 25% to 19%. Furthermore, the amount Taiwanese identifiers increased from 25% to 34% (Sobel, Haynes, and Zheng: 2010). This demonstrates that many from the generation of people who lived through this crisis experienced a change in their

political mindset resulting from the impacts of Mainland China trying to meddle in Taiwan's domestic political affairs.

### **Chen Shuibian 2000-2008**

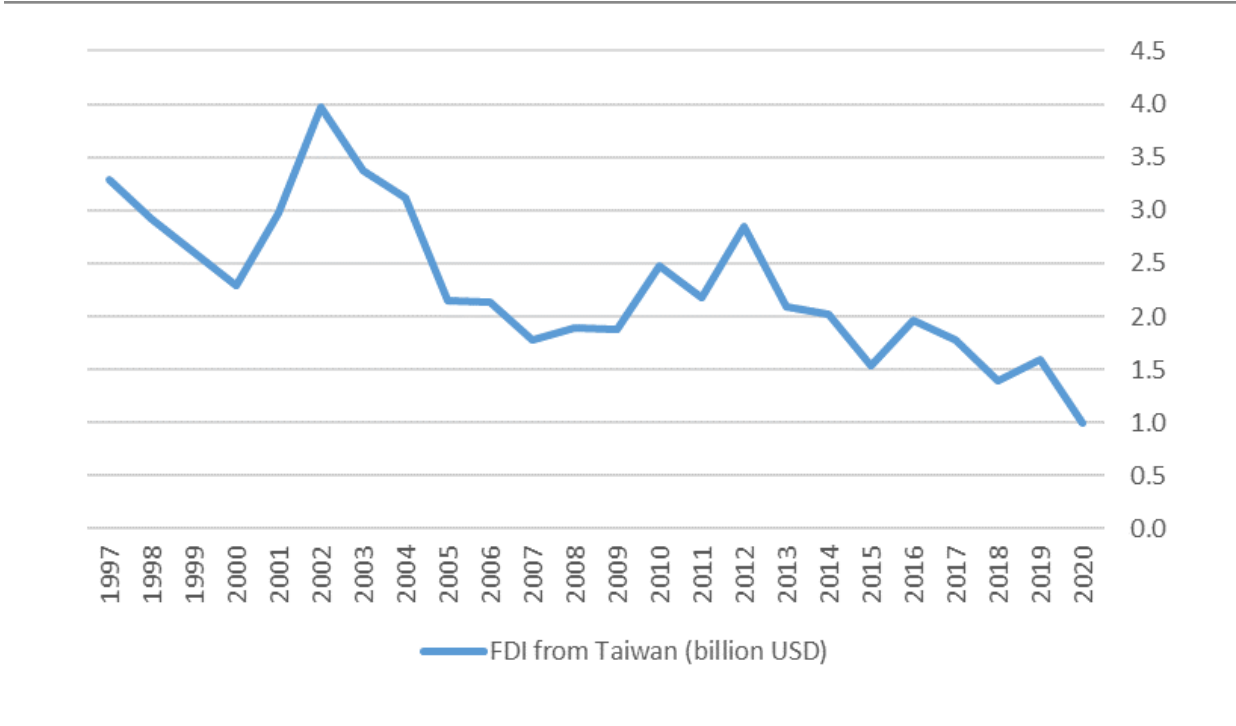
Despite the possibility of further provoking Beijing, in 2000 the people of Taiwan elected Chen Shui-bian, chair of the anti-unification Democratic Progressive Party, to serve as president. Chen rejected the 1992 consensus, claiming that the consensus was exclusionary towards DPP policymakers (Wei: 2016). Not only did the election of an anti-unification party candidate obstruct the PRC's Taiwan policy, but the election also served as the ROC's first successful peaceful transition of power. For a nation with a developing democratic system, the first peaceful transition of power often signifies the solidification of a democratic state for years to come. Thus, a strengthened Taiwan democracy created greater concerns in Beijing over Taiwan's sovereignty.

Surprisingly, after Chen assumed office, the PRC took a less assertive stance regarding the Taiwan issue. During his candidacy, Chen emphasized that Taiwan's stance toward Mainland China would follow his "five nos" policy (新五不政策). These five nos included: "no declaration of independence; no change in the 'national title'; no 'state-to-state description in the Constitution'; no referendum to change the status quo; no abolition of the National Unification Council nor the Guidelines for National Unification." Although Beijing held much distrust in Chen Shui-bian and his unideal Mainland policy, they wearily loosened up their previously aggressive Taiwan policy.

Calmer cross-strait relations during Chen's first term came because of two factors. One factor is the PRC and Taiwan's successive accessions to the World Trade Organization (WTO) from late 2001 to early 2002. Since the WTO created a platform for both sides to loosen mutual

trade restrictions, imports, exports, and foreign direct investment (FDI) all experienced extensive increases in the following years. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the increase in FDI from Taiwan in Mainland China and the increase of Mainland China’s imports and exports with Taiwan, respectively. The resulting change in political and economic atmospheres surrounding their accessions prompted mutually encouraging attitudes and goodwill (Fewsmith: 2007). Members of the newly elected DPP were invited to visit Mainland China shortly afterward. Both sides also established a cross-strait hotline to address the issue of criminals fleeing between either side. The second factor that helped influence calm relations is the rise of Hu Jintao as the CCP general secretary and PRC president. Notably, compared with other Chinese leaders such as Mao Zedong or Xi Jinping, Hu Jintao’s Taiwan policy was relatively relaxed. While other leaders expressed more urgency, Hu’s approach patiently allowed Taiwan to develop peacefully without forceful intervention.

Figure 3: Taiwanese Foreign Direct Investment in Mainland China.



Source: *National Bureau of Statistics of China*

Despite the optimistic attitudes during this period, Chen Shui-bian's reelection rekindled Beijing's concerns for the Taiwan issue. During Chen's second presidential campaign, he put greater emphasis on moving Taiwan toward independence, claiming the PRC and Taiwan were two separate nations on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Additionally, he called for a change to the constitution to make Taiwan a "normal" country. Furthermore, he added the name "Taiwan" in parentheses to the ROC passport cover (Wei: 2016). As a counter to the Chen administration's actions, Beijing retaliated with the 2005 Anti-Secession Law to target Taiwan in case they declared independence. The new law allows the PRC to effectively "employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity" (Anti-Secession Law 反分裂国家法: 2005). In other words, it asserts that Beijing had the right to use military force in the event of Taiwanese succession. Although the establishment of the new Anti-Secession Law characterized the remainder of cross-strait relations under Chen, the opposing KMT party leaders consequently began working with Beijing to reaffirm the 1992 consensus and stabilize relations at least until the next election (Wei: 2016).

During the Chen years, maintaining the status quo once again characterized the majority of Taiwanese public sentiment towards the issue of independence and unification. However, interestingly people that favored immediate independence consistently outnumbered those who favored immediate unification. Additionally, the percentage of those that favored the status quo now, with unification in the future experienced a large, sustained decrease after 2000. Before 2000 these figures consistently polled at 20% or higher, but for the eight following years it consistently polled near 11% (Sobel, Haynes, and Zheng: 2010).

From June 2000 to December 2007, the percentage of people that identified as Taiwanese increased from 37% to 44%, while the percentage of those who identified as Chinese decreased

from 13% to 5%. The percentage of those who identified as both continued to stagnate at around 45% (Sobel, Haynes, and Zheng: 2010).

### **Ma Ying-jeou 2008-2016**

Following a politically unstable period of cross-strait relations under the Chen administration, KMT chair Ma Ying-jeou rose to power, winning the 2008 presidential election. Not only did Ma's election further solidify Taiwan's democratic system with a second transition of power, but it also marked the start of a new period of rapprochement between Taiwan and Mainland China.

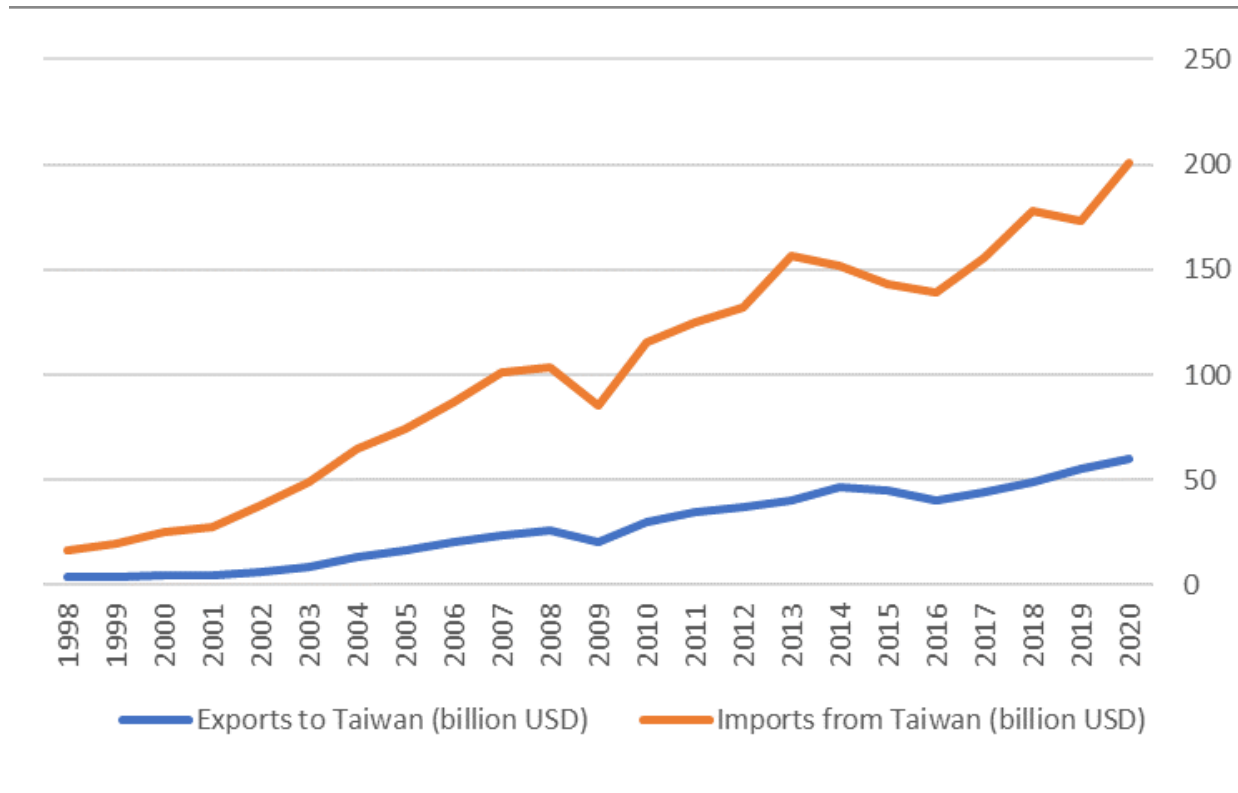
As a supporter of the 1992 consensus, Ma was partially elected based on his new "three nos" policy(三不政策), the so-called "three nos" representing "no independence, no unification, no use of force." Under this policy Ma promised that during his tenure the Taiwanese government would neither declare independence, nor agree to unify with Mainland China, while also keeping cross-strait interaction non-violent. Especially with respect to Hu Jintao's lenient Taiwan stance, Ma's policy created increased dialogue between both governments, setting Taiwan up for a period of increased economic exchange and peaceful development (Yuan: 2016). In addition to increased economic activity and interaction between the Taiwanese and Chinese markets, the "three nos" promoted an increase of cross-strait social interaction.

Stemming from increased dialogue between Taipei and Beijing, both sides established the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in 2010. Serving as a free trade agreement for cross-strait commodity transactions, the ECFA triggered the growth of export-import rates between both sides. Furthermore, it has created "enhanced flows of people and businesses, and [has] contributed to better mutual understanding" (Yuan: 2016). Figure 4 clearly illustrates the impact that the ECFA had on the cross-straits import-export economy.



There is a clear jump between 2009 and 2010 for both Mainland China’s exports and imports regarding Taiwan.

Figure 4: Mainland China’s Import-Export with Taiwan



Source: *National Bureau of Statistics of China*

Although the opening up policy between Taiwan and Mainland China ran smoothly during Ma’s first term, his presidency cannot be fully characterized as a period of relaxed tensions. With Xi Jinping’s rise to power at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, the CCP set out on a new goal to realize the “China Dream” or the “Great Rejuvenation.” In addition to reviving Chinese-socialist thought and restoring the PRC’s status as a global leader of trade and technology, the “Great Rejuvenation” also encapsulates Xi’s assertive approach to the Taiwan issue compared with his post-reform predecessors. Hence, Taiwan had to be more cautious to avoid aggravating the PRC. The second influential factor during this period is the 2014 Sunflower Student Movement (太陽花學運). Resulting from

worries over economic dependence and security that would be brought forth by the ratification of the Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA), university students stormed and occupied Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (立法院) triggering a 24-day social movement. The movement resulted in the government's decision to not ratify the CSSTA, raising tensions and drawing a line in cross-strait relations.

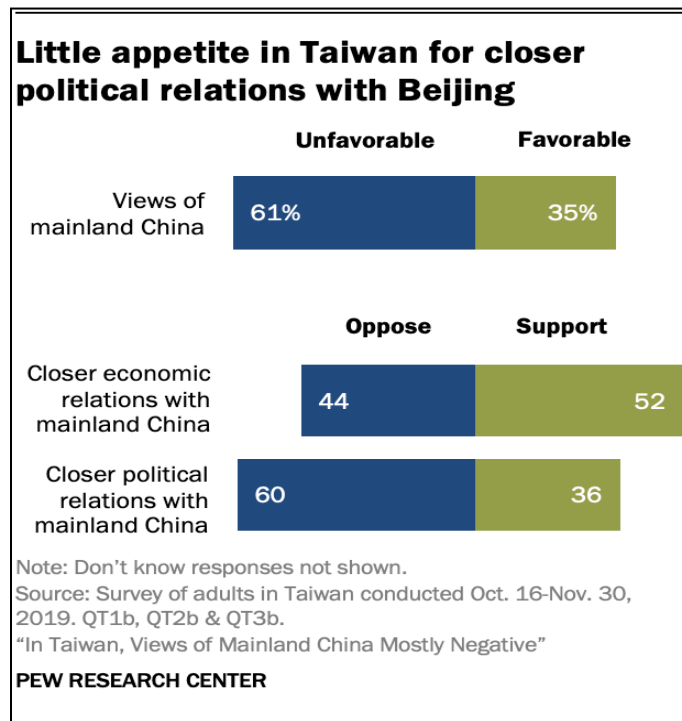
Despite the peaceful period of cross-strait relations under the Ma administration, public opinion in favor of unification with Mainland China was sparse. From the Sunflower Movement, university students and young people appeared to be upset with the possibility of increased reliance on Mainland China's economy. However, public opinion in favor of independence was sparse as well. Public opinion polls reveal that 68.2% of people "agree[d] with Ma's position that there was no need to declare independence" (Hickey and Niou: 2015). Therefore, maintaining the status quo appears to be the prevailing attitude of the Taiwanese majority during this time. This does not necessarily mean Taiwanese people wanted to be more intertwined with Mainland China either, as evident from the Sunflower Movement.

### ***Tsai Ying-wen 2016-Present***

Following the stable period of cross-strait relations under Ma's administration, there were hopes that Beijing would maintain continuity in their Taiwan policy. However, with the election of the anti-unification DPP chair, Tsai Ying-wen, and her refusal to recognize the PRC's preferred understanding of the 1992 consensus, Beijing decided to ramp up aggression of their Taiwan policy (Yuan: 2016, Cole: 2020). Despite Tsai agreeing to maintain the status quo and not roll back any cross-strait policies from the Ma administration, Beijing still found her unsatisfactory in part because of her determined contention toward Taiwan's status as a democratic society.

Following Tsai’s election, Cole argues Taipei and Beijing have entered a “deep freeze” in cross-strait political and diplomatic interaction with Xi imposing a “punitive strategy” toward Taiwan. Xi implemented policies attacking Taiwan’s tourism sector, propagandizing Taiwan’s social media sphere, isolating Taiwan internationally, invoking a united front strategy to appeal to Taiwanese youth, and more (Cole: 2020). Although Beijing’s actions were implemented with the goal of weakening Taiwan’s democratic system and pushing them closer to unification, Taiwan has remained rather resilient in the face of Beijing’s strategy.

Figure 5: Taiwanese Public Opinion Toward Cross-Strait Political-Economic Relations



Source: *Pew Research Center*

Beijing’s approach has backfired, especially in terms of winning the hearts of Taiwanese people. Figure 5 illustrates survey data from Pew Research Center collected in 2019 that demonstrates the majority Taiwanese people’s views of Mainland China were unfavorable near

the end of Tsai's first term. Furthermore, it shows the majority opposes closer political relations with Mainland China, yet still maintains support for closer economic ties.

In the following chapter, existing Taiwanese public opinion literature will be examined with respect to Taiwan's historical context. By combining these two pieces of evidence, several hypotheses will be fleshed out that could explain Taiwanese attitudes towards Mainland China.

## Chapter 3: Theory and Hypotheses

Based on the historical context reviewed above and existing literature concerning Taiwanese public opinion, there is evidence to suggest that Taiwanese people with negative attitudes towards Mainland China will also have:

- Pan-green party affiliation
- Favorable views of democracy
- Favorable views of the United States
- Been born before 1968 or after 1977
- Lower socioeconomic status

### Party Identification

Partisanship in Taiwan can be simplified down to two camps, “pan-blue” and “pan-green” parties. Pan-green parties like the DPP usually attach importance to Taiwan’s independence from Mainland China. Pan-blue parties such as the KMT usually are more positive towards the idea of unification with Mainland China. Multiple previous studies have noted that there is a close relationship between party identification and Taiwanese public opinion towards unification and independence (Chen: 2000; Wu and Hsu: 2003). Previous studies have also suggested that there is an association between one’s partisanship and the strictness of Taiwan’s Mainland policy (Gries and Su: 2013). To supplement this research, Wang argues in their 2012 article that there is a mutual causal relationship between party identification in Taiwan and their attitudes towards unification (Wang: 2012). Assuming that one’s attitudes towards unification or independence are affected by how they feel towards Mainland China, the connection equates that people’s party affiliation is likely a strong indicator of their sentiments towards Mainland China.

Furthermore, Chen and Zheng conducted a study addressing the changing attitudes of Taiwanese people and Hongkongers toward Mainland China under Xi Jinping’s leadership. They

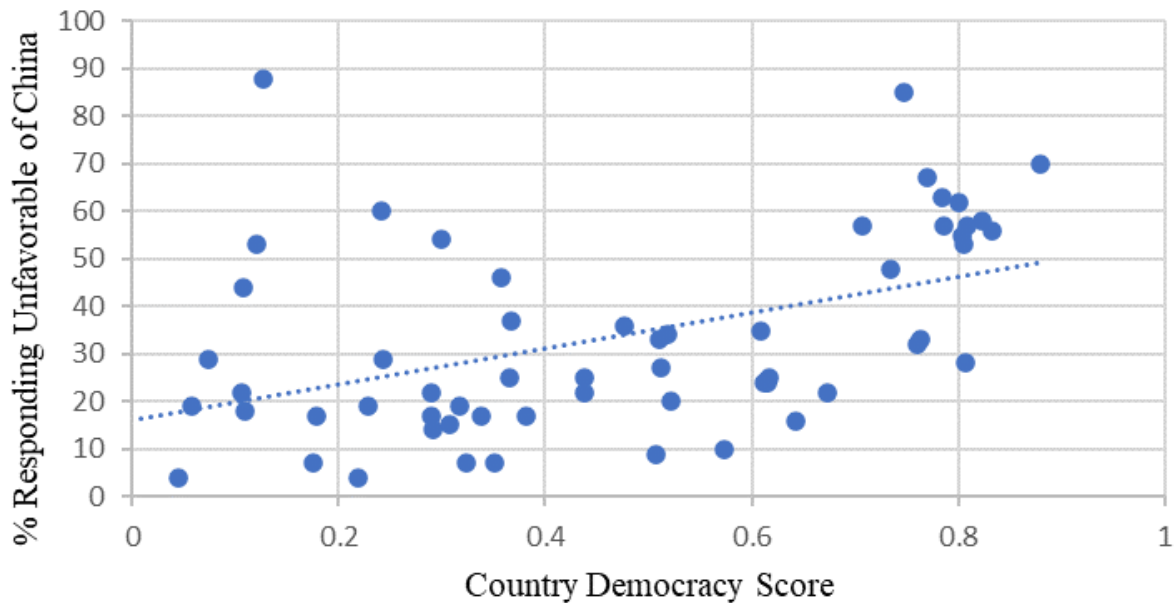
used two questions to measure public attitudes toward Mainland China: 1) Do you have confidence in the future development of Mainland China? (請問您對中國大陸未來的發展有沒有信心?) 2) If you had the opportunity, would you be willing to encourage your family to go to Mainland China for development, including investment and work? (請問, 如果有機會, 您願不願意鼓勵您的家人去中國大陸發展, 包括投資和工作?). They found a significant association between party identification and their dependent variables, with pan-green and pan-blue identifiers exhibiting negative and positive associations respectively (Chen and Zheng: 2021). Although their dependent variables are based on economic benefit instead of relating to Mainland China's international impact, they still provide a useful, generalized representation of how partisanship can impact Taiwanese public opinion toward Mainland China.

### **Belief in Democracy**

For this hypothesis, the rationale is partially based on other democratic countries' opinions of Mainland China. Referencing data from the Pew Research Center Global Indicators Database and the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Research Project, substantial evidence can be found to support the hypothesis that countries which employ a democratic system of government are more likely to have negative views of Mainland China. The Pew Research Center conducts research using public online surveys to evaluate people from around the world on their views toward the current state of global society, politics, economics, and a variety of other important issues. Relevant to this paper, they conduct a survey evaluating countries' favorability of Mainland China. The V-Dem Research Project takes a comprehensive approach to evaluating democratization by examining a list of core democratic principles such as participatory, electoral, and egalitarian values. Using expert judgements, they then produce a democracy score for all countries of the world and compile it in one database.

Figure 6 compares countries based on their democracy score in 2019 and their most recent value for unfavorability of Mainland China. As shown by the dotted blue line, there is a positive correlation between the two variables. In other words, in countries with higher democracy scores, people express more unfavorable opinions of Mainland China. Since Taiwan operates under a robust democratic system, this trend suggests that Taiwanese may also have unfavorable views of Mainland China.

Figure 6: Democracy Score and Unfavorable View of China



Source: *V-Dem Database and Global Indicators Database, Pew Research Center*

Taiwan also underwent a long authoritarian period under Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorial rule. Therefore, a substantial portion of the Taiwan adult population have witnessed the transition from authoritarian governance to democracy. Hence, this group is likely to have favorable opinions toward the system they preferred more. Being that the PRC currently operates under an

authoritarian system, many Taiwanese may have opinions toward Mainland China based on their sentiments toward each respective system of governance.

Further evidence can be derived from Taiwan's history with the PRC. As stated previously, the 1995-1996 Third Taiwan Strait Crisis occurred as a result of the PRC's concerns over Taiwan's first democratic election. This resulted in sharp declines in people that identified as only Chinese and significant increases in people who identified as strictly Taiwanese. Considering the PRC's attack as reactionary to Taiwan's democratization and the increase in Taiwanese identifiers, there is likely a connection between Taiwanese opinions toward the PRC and democracy. As Mainland China continues to cast its shadow over Hong Kong and across the Taiwan Strait in recent years, Taiwanese attitudes of Mainland China are consequently even more likely to be influenced by their opinions of democracy.

Moreover, Chen and Zheng also examined the relationship between Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China and their belief in democracy. Their findings indicated a significant negative association between the two variables (Chen and Zheng: 2021). Once again, despite the dependent variables being economic in nature, they can still be useful as evidence in favor of this hypothesis.

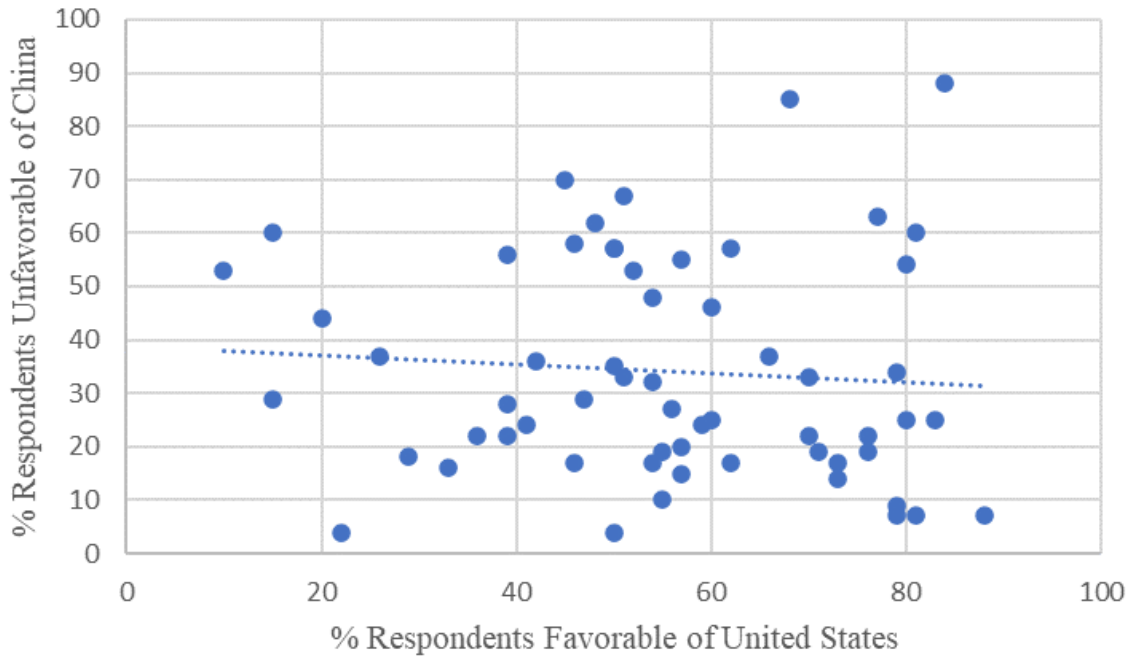
### **Attitudes toward the U.S.**

As evident from the recent visit of Nancy Pelosi's U.S. delegation to Taiwan and the PRC's fierce reaction, Taiwan is clearly a point of contention for both sides. While the PRC has expressed concerns over Taiwan's independently run government, the U.S. sees Taiwan as a crucial strategic piece to limit the PRC's rise. Therefore, under the current conditions, the livelihoods of Taiwanese people are highly dependent on the state of U.S.-China relations. Since Taiwan heavily relies on the import of weapons from the U.S. to defend itself, a Taiwanese



person hoping to protect their home from the PRC's use of force is likely to think favorably of U.S. influence while being unfavorable of Mainland China.

Figure 7: Favorable Views of United States and Unfavorable Views of China



Source: *Global Indicators Database, Pew Research Center*

Despite there being virtually no existing literature examining the relationship between Taiwanese attitudes towards Mainland China and attitudes towards the U.S., existing survey data can be used to examine the topic from a different angle. Figure 7 uses data from Pew Research Center to demonstrate the relationship between individual countries' favorable views of the U.S. and unfavorable views of Mainland China. The blue-dotted line indicates that there is a slight negative correlation between countries' favorability towards the U.S. and Mainland China. Although this data represents that there is generally little to no correlation existing between the variables, the case of Taiwan is particularly situational. As indicated previously, Taiwan sits at the intersection of the world's preeminent global power competition. Thus, Taiwanese people

have a unique perspective of the current U.S.-China relationship. Therefore, Taiwan is likely an outlier in terms of the association between their attitudes towards the U.S. and Mainland China.

### **Generational Differences**

Previous studies suggest that generational differences are correlated with a difference in attitudes toward unification with Mainland China. Using significant historical political events in Taiwan's recent history, Chang and Wang define four generations that exist within the Taiwanese population. The first two generations consist of generation one, being born before 1931, and generation two, being between 1932 and 1953. These generations each consist of people that lived during the ROC's retreat to Taiwan, First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises and the ROC's expulsion from the United Nations in 1971. Ranging from 1954 to 1968 and 1969 to 1978, the third and fourth generations witnessed numerous domestic changes in Taiwan such as the fall of Chiang Kai-shek's authoritarian regime, the establishment of the DPP, and Taiwan's first peaceful transition of political power.

In their 2016 study, Liu and Li provide an update to Taiwan's generational politics discussion by defining two more generations. The fifth and sixth generations include those born between 1979 and 1988 and those born after 1989, respectively. People born during the fifth generation experienced Taiwan's first peaceful transfer of power, but also Taiwan's practically synchronous accession to the WTO alongside the PRC. However, they encountered a change from Mainland China's originally relaxed approach toward a more forceful Taiwan policy, first exemplified through the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1996. As for the sixth generation, people have witnessed two more transfers of political power, first from the DPP to the KMT in 2008, then back to the DPP in 2016. After KMT president Ma Ying-jeou's election, Taiwan signed the ECFA with Mainland China. Moreover, Ma Ying-jeou's administration strongly promoted the

possibility of unification. Following the current president Tsai Ying-wen's election in 2016, Taiwan's policy reverted to opposing unification. Watching the Hong Kong protests unfold from across the Taiwan Strait has also profoundly influenced the attitudes of young Taiwanese toward Mainland China. Less research exists regarding these two new generations relative to the previous four generations, especially when examining their attitudes towards Mainland China.

Based on the events that characterize these generations, it is suspected that people born during the first three generations (pre-1968) and last two generations (post-1977) will have more negative views towards Mainland China, while respondents from the fourth generation will exemplify more positive perceptions. I argue that the attitudes of those born before 1968 are characterized by Taiwan's constant military struggle with the PRC. A similar struggle recurred during the formative years of those born after 1977 with the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis. Thus, I hypothesize people born during these two periods are likely to have relatively negative views of Mainland China. However, those born between 1968 and 1977 grew up during a time where the cross-strait environment experienced unprecedented de-escalation and improved economic relations.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

Taiwan and Mainland China have undeniably developed a deep economic relationship over the past nearly forty years. As their respective economies have become increasingly interdependent, scholars of Taiwanese public opinion have begun considering the possible impacts that it has on their attitudes toward Mainland China.

In their 2005 article, Wu researches how the factors of ethnic cultural identity(族群文化認同) and material benefit considerations(物質利益考量) influence Taiwanese national identity. They set out with the goal of answering the question: "How does the allurements of economic

benefits from China affect the emerging Taiwanese national identity?”(來自中國的經濟利益之引誘, 對新興的台灣民族認同造成何種影響?) Using rational choice theory, they find that there is a significant association between the rational choice of gaining economic benefits from a unified China and one’s national identity. In other words, it would be less likely for someone to identify as Taiwanese if they materially benefited from improved economic ties between Taiwan and Mainland China (Wu: 2005).

Chen and Zheng expand on this idea further. Using the theory of rational choice, they argue that economic interests will impact Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China. However, they build on Wu’s argument by arguing that one’s economic interests are dependent on one’s socioeconomic status. For example, someone with higher socioeconomic status will be more likely to benefit from a stronger Chinese economy, while those with lower socioeconomic status will not. After choosing education and personal income to represent socioeconomic status, their findings indicate a significant positive association between the dependent variable. Despite the economic nature of their dependent variables and their implications with respect to socioeconomic factors, it is still worthy to hypothesize that they have an association with Taiwanese attitudes towards Mainland China in a political sense. As evident from Wu’s research, economic interests impact Taiwanese opinions toward national identity and toward the issue of unification. Hence, it is reasonable to presume an association may exist here as well.

## Chapter 4: Data and Methodology

### Introduction to the Asian Barometer Survey

The Asian Barometer Survey is a regional survey that conducts research with the goal of gauging public opinion regarding political values, governance, and democracy. The survey was conducted in Taiwan from July 2018 to January 2019. Sampling was conducted according to the “probability proportion to size (PPS)” method in three selection stages: electoral constituencies, neighborhoods/villages, and respondents. Survey data was collected through face-to-face interviews with voting-age adults (20 years of age and above). Asian Barometer Survey is a trusted, representative source of data frequently used in research involving the political climate of the entire Asian region.

Table 1: Does China do more harm or good to Asia?

	Frequency	Percentage
Much more harm than good	64	5.1
Somewhat more harm than good	430	34.2
Somewhat more good than harm	556	44.1
Much more good than harm	48	3.9
Don't Understand	21	1.7
Can't Choose	122	9.7
Decline to Answer	17	1.4
Total	1259	100

I will use two questions from the survey to serve as the dependent variables for regression analysis. The survey questions used to measure Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland

China are: 1) Does China do more harm or good to Asia? (Q177) and 2) Is the influence of China on world affairs today positive or negative? (Q178)

Table 2: The Influence of China on World Affairs Today is Negative or Positive?

	Frequency	Percentage
1 (Highly Negative)	69	5.5
2	46	3.6
3	132	10.5
4	136	10.8
5	310	24.6
6	165	13.1
7	162	12.8
8	92	7.3
9	23	1.8
10 (Highly Positive)	29	2.3
Don't understand	19	1.5
Can't Choose	67	5.3
Decline to answer	10	0.8
Total	1259	100

It should be noted that the scale for some variables were reversed or adjusted by the writer. This reorganization was conducted with the goal of improving conformity and ease of understanding when analyzing the regressions later. The data shown in Table 1 reflects a reversal of the scale originally used in the survey. Hence, higher values now correspond with more favorable views of Mainland China for both dependent variables.

## Party Identification

To evaluate this hypothesis, one variable was analyzed: party preference(Q56). The original survey had responses categorized for each individual party with a category for other parties and non-partisan respondents. To treat the variable, each listed party received a characterization as either pan-blue, pan-green, or neither. Responses corresponding to pan-blue parties were then consolidated using a dummy variable where pan-blue responses were coded as “1” and the rest coded as “0”. The same process was repeated for pan-green responses. Illustrated in Table 3, the results indicate 28.5% of responses being pan-blue, 28.1% being pan-green, 34.5% being non-partisan, and 3.7% corresponding with other parties.

Table 3: Which Party do you feel closest to?

	Frequency	Percentage
Pan-Blue (KMT, New Party, People First Party)	358	28.5
Pan-Green (DPP, Taiwan Solidarity Union, New Power Party)	354	28.1
Other Parties	47	3.7
Non-Partisan	434	34.5
Can't Choose	29	2.3
Decline to Answer	38	3.0
Total	1259	100

## Belief in Democracy

To evaluate this hypothesis, two variables were analyzed: the respondents' preference for democracy over authoritarian governance(Q132) and their opinion of democracy's capability to solve society's problems(Q133).

The first variable, shown in Table 4, suits the dependent variables well in the sense that governance in Mainland China is considered authoritarian, which this question poses as the opposite of democracy. Therefore, the relationship between one’s political bias toward authoritarianism or democracy and their attitudes toward Mainland China could likely be manifested through this variable. Additionally, this variable was also reordered from the original survey to convey the spectrum from authoritarianism, to neutrality, then to democracy.

Table 4: Which of the following statements comes closest to your own opinion?

	Frequency	Percentage
Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one	372	29.6
For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or nondemocratic regime	273	21.7
Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government	566	44.9
Don’t Understand	18	1.4
Can’t Choose	26	2.0
Decline to Answer	4	0.3
Total	1259	100

The second variable essentially demonstrates respondents’ opinions regarding the efficiency of democracy in terms of problem solving. Democracy can be notorious for solving problems very slowly with policies often suffering through many bureaucratic processes before reaching implementation. The case being that the PRC operates under an authoritarian system, problems can be solved far quicker compared to democracies. Therefore, respondents’ perspectives on this question may be relevant to how they regard Mainland China.



Table 5: Which of the following Statements comes closest to your own view?

	Frequency	Percentage
Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society	644	51.2
Democracy cannot solve our society's problems	534	42.4
Don't Understand	14	1.1
Can't choose	61	4.8
Decline to answer	6	0.5
Total	1259	100

**Attitudes toward the U.S.**

To evaluate this hypothesis, three variables were analyzed: U.S. impact on Taiwan (Q184), U.S. impact on world affairs (Q176), and U.S. impact on Asia (Q175). These three variables were chosen to gain a more comprehensive view of how respondents' attitudes might differ when framed in different contexts. For example, one could have positive views of a

Table 6: The Influence the United States has on Taiwan is?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Negative	8	0.7
Negative	82	6.5
Somewhat Negative	223	17.7
Somewhat Positive	464	36.8
Positive	326	25.9
Very Positive	36	2.8
Don't Understand	16	1.2
Can't Choose	93	7.4
Decline to Answer	12	1.0
Total	1259	100

Table 7: The Influence of the U.S. on World Affairs Today is Negative or Positive?

	Frequency	Percentage
1 (Highly Negative)	34	2.7
2	18	1.4
3	85	6.8
4	89	7.1
5	247	19.6
6	191	15.1
7	238	18.9
8	170	13.5
9	32	2.5
10 (Highly Positive)	49	3.9
Don't understand	22	1.7
Can't Choose	71	5.6
Decline to answer	13	1.0
Total	1259	100

Table 8: Does the U.S. do more harm or good to Asia?

	Frequency	Percentage
Much more harm than good	34	2.7
Somewhat more harm than good	350	27.8
Somewhat more good than harm	633	50.3
Much more good than harm	59	4.7
Don't Understand	25	2.0
Can't Choose	143	11.4
Decline to Answer	15	1.2
Total	1259	100

country’s influence on world affairs while still thinking that they have a neutral or even negative impact on Taiwan.

The scales for the data shown in Tables 6 and 8 regarding the U.S. impact on Taiwan and Asia, respectively, have been reversed relative to the original formatting of the survey.

**Generational Differences**

To evaluate this hypothesis, one variable was analyzed: Birth year(Se3). By using dummy variables, responses were categorized to represent the three theoretical generational groups identified previously. The first dummy variable was created to represent respondents born before 1968. Responses falling in this age range were coded as “1” and the rest coded as “0”. The second dummy represents respondents born after 1977. Matching responses were once again coded as “1” and the rest “0”. As a result, responses from respondents born between 1968 and 1977 serves as the base for this variable.

Table 9: Generation defined by respondent birth year

	Frequency	Percentage
Born before 1968	569	45.2
Born 1968-1977	225	17.9
Born after 1977	465	36.9
Total	1259	100

**Socioeconomic Status**

To evaluate this hypothesis, two variables were analyzed: total years of formal education received(Se5a) and household income level(Se14).

Table 10: Years of Formal Education

	Frequency	Percent
No Formal Education	44	3.5
1-6 Years	130	10.4
7-9 Years	153	12.2
10-12 Years	343	27.2
13-16 Years	450	35.7
17-25 Years	135	10.7
Can't Choose	3	0.2
Decline to Answer	1	0.1
Total	1259	100

Table 11: What group your household income on average is?

	Frequency	Percentage
Lowest quintile	299	23.7
2nd	256	20.3
3rd	216	17.2
4th	189	15.0
Highest quintile	142	11.3
Decline to answer	157	12.5
Total	1259	100

For the first variable, responses were categorized into groups based on the education levels structured in Taiwan's education system. For example, 7-9 years of education correlates to the junior-high level of education while 13-16 years of education corresponds to a university level education. The reasoning behind this variable is that with increasing years of education, a person not only would need the financial resources to pay for schooling, but also people with higher levels of education are likely to find jobs with higher paying salaries. Thus, making it a

socioeconomic variable. The second variable frankly illustrates the economic situation of one's household and does not require any further adjustment.

### **Regression Analysis**

Two series of regressions were conducted to examine each dependent variable. Within each set, five regressions were calculated with new variables added subsequently to each model. Model 5 in Table 12 and Table 13 represent the full models for each series of regressions.

Table 12 presents the first series of regressions representing the factors' relationships with how Taiwanese people perceive Mainland China's effect on Asia. As expected, the full model validated the findings of prior studies regarding party identification. The model demonstrates that pan-blue identification has a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable, while the pan-green identification has a significant negative relationship. Thus, people that identify with pan-blue parties are more likely to think Mainland China has a favorable effect on Asia. Moreover, people who identify with pan-green parties are more likely to think Mainland China has a negative effect on Asia.

Regression analyses also divulged significant relationships with preferences toward democracy and attitudes toward the United States. In terms of belief in democracy, the model reveals a significant negative relationship between the dependent variable and people's preference for democracy as a favorable form of governance. People who prefer democratic governance instead of authoritarianism are more likely to believe Mainland China has a negative impact on Asia. Likewise, those who prefer authoritarian governance over democracy are likely to view Mainland China's impact on Asia as positive. However, the relationship regarding people's attitudes regarding democracy's problem-solving capabilities lacked significance. As for

Taiwanese attitudes towards the impact of the United States, the model confirms there is a significant negative association between the dependent variable and people's attitudes towards

Table 12: Regression Analyses of Attitudes toward Mainland China's impact in Asia

Model #	1	2	3	4	5
(Constant)	2.557***	2.755***	2.903***	2.891***	2.965***
Pan-Blue	0.239***	0.229***	0.238***	0.268***	0.249***
Pan-Green	-0.310***	-0.277***	-0.259***	-0.243***	-0.266***
Prefer Democracy		-0.093***	-0.097***	-0.088***	-0.090***
Democracy unable to solve problems		0.062	0.035	0.048	0.058
U.S. impact on Taiwan Positive			-0.060**	-0.059**	-0.054**
U.S. impact on World			-0.023*	-0.025*	-0.031**
U.S. impact on Asia			0.100**	0.095**	0.099**
Born before 1968				-0.113**	-0.096
Born 1968 through 1977				base	base
Born after 1977				0.029	0.030
Level of Education					-0.001
Household Income Level					-0.014
R Squared	0.100	0.123	0.141	0.150	0.154
Adjusted R Squared	0.099	0.120	0.135	0.143	0.143
Number of Observations	1096	1060	979	977	884

Note: \*  $p \leq 0.1$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

the United States' impact on Taiwan and the world. Hence, people who think the U.S. positively impacts both Taiwan and world affairs are more likely to think Mainland China has a negative impact on Asia. Surprisingly, there is a positive association regarding the United States' impact on Asia. In other words, those who think Mainland China's impact is negative are also likely to

think the United States' impact is negative. Unexpectedly, the full model indicates that generational differences and socioeconomic factors both lack significant relationships with the dependent variable.

Table 13: Regression Analyses of Attitudes towards Mainland China's impact on World Affairs

Model #	1	2	3	4	5
(Constant)	5.221***	5.552***	6.108***	6.296***	6.737***
Pan-Blue	0.664***	0.594***	0.626***	0.674***	0.660***
Pan-Green	-0.878***	-0.814***	-0.807***	-0.765***	-0.752***
Prefer Democracy		-0.215***	-0.219***	-0.205***	-0.214***
Democracy unable to solve problems		0.247**	0.248*	0.272**	0.235*
U.S. impact on Taiwan Positive			-0.228***	-0.223***	-0.219***
U.S. impact on World			0.252***	0.250***	0.248***
U.S. impact on Asia			-0.436***	-0.438***	-0.428***
Born before 1968				-0.483***	-0.569***
Born 1968 through 1977				base	base
Born after 1977				-0.238	-0.301*
Level of Education					-0.013
Household Income Level					-0.049
R Squared	0.085	0.099	0.145	0.152	0.153
Adjusted R Squared	0.083	0.096	0.139	0.145	0.143
Number of Observations	1159	1116	999	997	899

Note: \*  $p \leq 0.1$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

Table 13 presents the second series of regressions, examining the factors' relationships with respect to Taiwanese perception of Mainland China's influence on global affairs. Like the previous set of regressions, party identification maintained a significant association in the full

model. The implications of the model are the same as the prior regression series, that is, pan-blue identifiers are more likely to have positive perceptions of Mainland China's impact on world affairs, while pan-green identifiers are more likely to have negative views. Furthermore, the model also demonstrates a statistically significant negative relationship between the dependent variable and people's preference for democracy, while also exhibiting a significant positive relationship with people's belief in democracy's inability to solve problems. Like the previous model, preferring democracy over authoritarianism increases the likelihood of viewing Mainland China's impact as negative. However, this model diverges from the prior by revealing that if someone thinks democracy is incapable of successfully solving the world's problems, they are likely to look positively on Mainland China's impact on world affairs.

The model further indicates that there are significant relationships between attitudes toward the United States' impact on Taiwan, the world, and Asia with respect to the dependent variable. U.S. impact on Taiwan and Asia both have negative associations, indicating that people who think that the United States' impact on Taiwan and Asia is good were more likely to negatively view Mainland China's impact on world affairs. Furthermore, the U.S. impact on world affairs had a significant positive association with the dependent variable. Hence, people that negatively view the United States' impact on world affairs were also likely to negatively perceive Mainland China's impact, and vice versa.

Deviating from the prior model, the older and younger generations demonstrated significant negative associations with the dependent variable. In other words, those born during these generations are more likely than people born between 1968 and 1977 to have negative views toward Mainland China's impact on world affairs. However, socioeconomic status once again had no significant association with the dependent variable.



In these two series of regression analyses, the R Squared indicates the strength of the relationship between the model and respective dependent variables. By including more variables in the model, the R Squared coefficient consequently increases. The adjusted R Squared represents the precision and reliability of the created model. As anticipated, Model 5 in Table 12 provided the highest adjusted R Squared. However, in Table 13, Model 4 yielded the highest adjusted R Squared value of 0.145, while the value of Model 5 decreased to 0.143. Hence, the reliability of the model produced in the second set of regressions decreased when accounting for socioeconomic factors.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Calculated using data collected with the Asian Barometer Wave 5 Survey, regression analyses give insight to the hypotheses provided earlier. As alluded to by prior research exploring Taiwanese attitudes toward unification and independence, an individual's party identification is the strongest indicator of one's attitudes toward the PRC's impact on Asia and world affairs. Likewise, regression analyses also confirmed belief in democracy is an impactful factor on one's views of Mainland China. However, future researchers need to further examine the specific aspects of democracy that drive Taiwanese attitudes towards Mainland China. For example, attitudes toward democracy as an alternative to authoritarianism seems to be a strong indicator, but attitudes toward Mainland China are not always contingent on one's trust in the effectiveness or efficiency of democracy. More research should be conducted exploring which specific aspects of democracy impact Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China such as voting, freedom of speech, and other civil liberties.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the Taiwanese public opinion research discipline by confirming a significant relationship between one's respective attitudes toward the U.S. and Mainland China. With respect to Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China's impact on Asia and world affairs, U.S. impact on Taiwan had a negative association as previously hypothesized. However, an interesting phenomenon appears in terms of one's attitudes toward the U.S. impact on the world and Asia. Between each set of regressions, the sign of the dependent variables' coefficient changes based on its regionality. For instance, in the first set of regressions the relationship between one's attitudes toward both the impact of Mainland China and the U.S. on Asia is positive, while the association concerning attitudes about the impact of the U.S. on world affairs is negative. Likewise, in the second set of regressions the results flip so that there is a

positive association between attitudes toward the impact of Mainland China and the U.S. on world affairs, instead of attitudes toward the U.S. impact on Asia which changes to negative. However, it is unclear what might be responsible for a regionality based change of signs, especially considering the demonstrated negative relationships exhibited by the other variables concerning U.S. impact. More research could be done investigating the causes of this phenomenon.

Although generational differences in the Taiwan population did not exhibit a significant relationship with their views of Mainland China's impact in Asia, it did demonstrate a significant association with Mainland China's impact on world affairs for both the older and younger generations. These results support the argument that Taiwanese attitudes can be influenced by intensified cross-strait relations, as evident from the heated military exchanges people from each generation respectively experienced. However, it also raises the question of what makes the relationship insignificant when the scope is narrowed to only cover attitudes toward Mainland China in Asia specifically.

Surprisingly, socioeconomic factors did not exhibit significance like previously hypothesized. One reason for these results may be related to the nature of the survey questions derived from prior researchers that helped form this hypothesis. In Chen and Zheng's article their dependent variables focus on the possible domestic economic benefits found in Mainland China, while this thesis more broadly focuses on opinions of Mainland China's power and influence abroad. Hence, it is certainly plausible that no significant relationship exists between socioeconomic factors and these dependent variables in this thesis. Therefore, this new research suggests that Taiwanese people can have different attitudes based on the specific aspects of

Mainland China that are being examined whether they be political, economical, cultural, or some other factor.

The findings of this paper generally suggest that party identification, belief in democracy, attitudes toward the U.S., and generational differences significantly affect Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China on the international stage in some capacity. Additionally, socioeconomic status unexpectedly did not have any significant impact on Taiwanese attitudes. In the long run it will be fascinating to see how Taiwanese attitudes are impacted by the recent developments in the Taiwan Strait.

Considering the recent eruption of the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis, negative attitudes toward Mainland China are likely to be reinforced in the coming years. Based on changes of Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China historically, when cross-strait relations take a turn for the worse, especially resulting from military conflict, public opinion is also likely to turn negative. As Taiwanese youth mature in the coming years, the new young generation will probably look on Mainland China more negatively than earlier generations. They will also likely be more welcoming toward U.S. involvement in the region moving forward, while also deepening the roots of democracy in Taiwanese society. Furthermore, with the confirmation of Xi Jinping's unprecedented third term as Chairman of the CCP and President of the PRC, it is unlikely that the PRC will relax their Taiwan policy anytime soon. By removing the term limit on CCP chairmanship and the PRC presidency, Xi has arguably become the PRC's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong. As a result, cross-strait relations and U.S.-China relations are only likely to intensify in the foreseeable future. However, only time will tell what is in store for the prospects of cross-strait unification or Taiwan's independence, and by extension its implications on the future of U.S.-China relations and the international order.

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