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**NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN
TAIWAN**

by

Joseph R. Lousche

June 2022

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Tristan J. Mabry
Covell F. Meyskens

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NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN TAIWAN

Joseph R. Lousche
Major, United States Marine Corps
BS, United States Naval Academy, 2010
MA, Norwich University, 2017

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June 2022**

Approved by: Tristan J. Mabry
Advisor

Covell F. Meyskens
Second Reader

Afshon P. Ostovar
Associate Chair for Research
Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China are of critical importance to the national interests and security of the United States. Periods of increased tension have coincided with political transitions in Taiwan and are tied to relative levels of support for Taiwanese national self-determination and independence. This thesis examines the changing nature of national identity in Taiwan, from the Japanese occupation to the present. The thesis reviews historical events, policy initiatives, political rhetoric, and survey data to identify both ethnic and civic forms of nationalism present in Taiwan; ethnic nationalism is tied to a distinct common culture and heritage whereas civic nationalism is tied to shared political ideals that transcend ethnicity. The research finds that an ethnic Taiwanese identity emerged under Japanese colonial rule (1895–1945) and coalesced under the administration of the authoritarian Kuomintang (KMT) that fled the mainland in 1949. This rendered a divide between those who identified as Taiwanese and those who identified with the people of mainland China. However, following a period of rapid democratization, Taiwanese identity is becoming increasingly civic in nature, based on a shared respect for democratic ideals. This has significant implications for the prospect of reunification with the mainland where democracy is antithetical to the Chinese Communist Party.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARATS	Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CSSTA	Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
KMT	Kuomintang Party
NCCU	National Chengchi University
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SEF	Straits Exchange Foundation

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Since 1949, Taiwan has undergone a process of political, economic, and social evolution affecting its national character, all in the shadow of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The primary question posed by this thesis is: Do the concepts of "ethnic nationalism" and "civic nationalism" help explain the evolution of nationalism in Taiwan since 1949? As part of this research, the thesis answers the following underlying questions. What are the key differences between ethnic and civic nationalism? What role has ethnic nationalism played in the development of Taiwanese national identity? Has the rise of civic nationalism changed the way people in Taiwan view themselves? Finally, what is the significance of these changes vis-à-vis relations with the PRC?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Identity politics have played an important role in Taiwan since Taipei became the provisional capital of the Republic of China (ROC) in 1949. Tension between the PRC and ROC has waxed and waned since Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang (KMT) Party fled to Taiwan from mainland China in 1949. While the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and KMT regimes were diametrically opposed, they agreed that "Taiwan was and is a part of China."¹ Both parties viewed the problem through the same lens—a problem of control over a mutually agreed upon territory and population. That changed following the eventual democratization of the ROC and a corresponding shift in national identity. The KMT maintained an authoritarian regime in Taiwan from 1949 to July 15, 1987, when President Chiang Ching-kuo (Chiang Kai-shek's son) ended martial law and initiated a process of liberalization and democratization within the ROC.² The democratization process was overseen by Lee Teng-hui, the first Taiwan-born president, from 1988 until the first democratic transition of power in 2000. In the most recent ROC presidential election, Tsai

¹ Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 68.

² Wachman, 30.

Ing-wen, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, was reelected in 2020 by securing over 57 percent of votes.³

Consistent polling data shows a shift in identity in Taiwan during the democratization process. Just over half of respondents in a state-wide survey identified as “Chinese” in 1989 and, by 2014, over two thirds of survey respondents identified as ‘Taiwanese.’⁴ This identity shift has come with calls for de jure independence from within the ROC and increased concern within the CCP as stronger Taiwanese nationalism correlates with stronger pro-independence rhetoric from political elites and the public. The nature of nationalism, ethnic or civic, may influence how people in Taiwan view themselves in relation to the people of the PRC. The strength of the ethnic bond between the people of Taiwan and their mainland counterparts may be eroding as the construction of a uniquely Taiwanese identity replaces Chinese identity. This developing identity may be tied to shared ethnic bonds or a collective desire for a nation that embraces liberal democracy. A shift towards civic identity that underscores human rights, transparent government institutions, and individual liberty in Taiwan would further distance the island from the PRC and make the prospect of peaceful reunification an unlikely one.

Both the strength and nature of nationalism in Taiwan affect cross-Strait relations and are therefore relevant areas of research. The CCP has remained consistent in its commitment to the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland and President Xi Jinping has said that Taiwan “must and will be” reunited with the mainland and the PRC “reserves the option of taking all necessary measures.”⁵ While the CCP can continue to argue for the strength of ethnic ties between the island and the mainland, it cannot voice a shared commitment to the liberal ideals that are becoming increasingly important to Taiwan’s civic identity. Understanding the strength and nature of nationalism in Taiwan will shed light on the prospects for future peaceful discussion in cross-Strait relations. A strong and

³ Kathleen C. Bailey, “Maintaining Taiwan’s Democracy,” *Comparative Strategy* 39, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1740568>.

⁴ Yang Zhong, “Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 99 (May 3, 2016): 340, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1104866>.

⁵ “Xi Jinping Says Taiwan ‘Must and Will Be’ Reunited with China,” BBC News, January 2, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-46733174>.

civic form of nationalism in Taiwan could signal that the prospect of reuniting with an authoritarian PRC is off the table for the people of Taiwan, thus increasing the likelihood of military conflict over the issue.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

A clear definition of terms is critical before addressing the differences between ethnic and civic nationalism. As Walker Connor points out, “the most fundamental error in scholarly approaches to nationalism has been a tendency to equate nationalism with a feeling of loyalty to the state rather than with loyalty to the nation.”⁶ Moreover, the term “nation” is often conflated with the term “state.” Max Weber’s often-cited definition of a state describes it as the institution within a society that maintains a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within a society.⁷ Conversely, Liah Greenfield’s analysis of the usage of the term “nation” since the early sixteenth century notes that it consistently points to “an exclusive and limited community” that shares defining characteristics and a shared sense of connection.⁸ This connection is underscored by Benedict Anderson’s celebrated definition of a nation:

It is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.⁹

Yael Tamir notes that this imagined communion, or “national consciousness,” is the “common denominator . . . that lies at the heart of the definition of a nation.”¹⁰ Connor offers that “since the nation is a self-defined rather than an other-defined grouping, the

⁶ Walker Connor, “A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group Is a . . .,” *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 1, no. 4 (October 1978): 378, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1978.9993240>.

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3.

⁸ Yael (Yuli) Tamir, “Not So Civic: Is There a Difference Between Ethnic and Civic Nationalism?,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, no. 1 (May 11, 2019): 423, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-022018-024059>.

⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

¹⁰ Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 423.

broadly held conviction concerning the group's singular origin need not and seldom will accord with factual data."¹¹ The connection of national identity, however subjective, provides the opportunity to mobilize the group.

Nationalism, as defined by Ernest Gellner, "is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent."¹² Nationalism, as a sentiment, can be negative if that principle is violated or positive if it is fulfilled.¹³ Nationalism, as a movement, is one motivated by these sentiments.¹⁴ Raymond Breton notes that, as an ideology, nationalism generally contains four basic elements: "principles of inclusion or exclusion, ... a conception of 'national interest,' ... comparisons with other groups, ... [and] views as to the ways in which the social environment can threaten or support the group."¹⁵ Using Gellner's definition and Breton's characteristics, one can understand nationalism as the ideology surrounding a nation's pursuit of autonomy and self-determination—political power. Having established an understanding of the definitions of the terms, one can address the two major types of nationalism that are debated in the literature: ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism.

Ethnic nationalism is often "depicted as characteristic of the early developmental stages ... of moral and political development."¹⁶ It is a fundamental element of what is conventionally known in the literature as primordial nationalism. As Clifford Geertz notes, a primordial attachment is one of kinship and shared religion, language, and customs. He argues that "these congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves."¹⁷ Connor argues

¹¹ Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994), 94.

¹² Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

¹³ Gellner, 1.

¹⁴ Gellner, 1.

¹⁵ Raymond Breton, *Ethnic Relations in Canada: Institutional Dynamics*, ed. Jeffrey G. Reitz (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2005), 105.

¹⁶ Tamir, "Not So Civic," 425.

¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Politics in the New States," in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe & London, 1963), 108.

that nationalism is fundamentally an ethnic phenomenon. Introducing his book, *Ethnonationalism*, he recognizes the question of the difference between ethnonationalism, or ethnic nationalism, and nationalism.¹⁸ He argues that “there is no difference if nationalism is used in its pristine sense.”¹⁹ He points out that, while a group may actually be genetically diverse, the belief of ethnic homogeneity “is the intuitive conviction which can give to nations a psychological dimension approximating that of the extended family, that is, a feeling of common blood lineage.”²⁰ Hans Kohn, writing about nationalism at the end of World War II, describes ethnic nationalism as a primordial sentiment centered on tribal, religious, and ethnic connections that united people through language, blood relation, and folk culture.²¹ Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly offer that, for ethnic groups, “language is not just a marker, it is *the* marker: It determines who is and is not a member of the group, and what the boundaries of the group are.”²² Gellner reiterates the connection between ethnic nationalism and “local, popular, and conventional culture.”²³ Michael Ignatieff notes that the attachments motivating ethnic nationalism are inherited because “it is the national community that defines the individual; not the individual who defines the national community.”²⁴ Ethnic nationalism can be considered the base form of nationalism in that the sentiment is tied to a primordial national identity based on shared culture, language, religion, and shared ancestry that do not necessarily presuppose the existence of a corresponding state.

Civic nationalism, on the other hand, points to a different force bringing groups together into nations. In contrast to ethnic nationalism, “the cultural is dissociated from the

¹⁸ Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, x.

¹⁹ Connor, x.

²⁰ Connor, 94.

²¹ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), **cited in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425.

²² Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly, eds., *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 3.

²³ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 99–100, **cited in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425.

²⁴ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (London: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1993), 7–8, **quoted in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425–426.

political” in civic nationalism.²⁵ Raymond Breton argues that civic nationalism “emphasizes the instrumental dimension of societal institutions.”²⁶ Furthermore, “the basis of inclusion or exclusion [in the group] is civic: it is by birth or on the basis of legally-established criteria and procedures. Theoretically, anyone who meets the criteria can become a member.”²⁷ Kohn distinguishes civic nationalism as a rational and liberal movement that emphasizes personal liberty and human rights.²⁸ Gellner notes its emphasis on high culture²⁹ and Ignatieff claims that civic nationalism is constituted by “a community of equal, rights-bearing individuals who are united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values.”³⁰ Comparing ethnic and civic nationalism, Geneviève Zubrzycki notes that, in the civic model, “national identity is purely political: it is nothing but the individual’s choice to belong to a community based on the association of like-minded individuals.”³¹ Although ethnic nations are imagined and constructed, one has little control over their ethnicity. Civic nationalism is closely associated with liberal ideology and, unlike ethnic nationalism, is a sentiment and movement based on an identity that individuals can more freely choose to be a part of rather than being born into.

Much of the literature addressing the similarities and differences of ethnic and civic nationalism does so through a comparison of nationalism in Eastern Europe and Western Europe, respectively. Ignatieff, as paraphrased by Tamir, argues that a conventional understanding finds “Western nationalism ... is the nationalism of the well-cultured, emancipated bourgeoisie; Eastern nationalism is the nationalism of the subjugated,

²⁵ Breton, *Ethnic Relations in Canada: Institutional Dynamics*, 106.

²⁶ Breton, 106.

²⁷ Breton, 106.

²⁸ Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background*, **cited in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425.

²⁹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 99–100, **cited in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425.

³⁰ Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, 6, **quoted in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425.

³¹ Geneviève Zubrzycki, “The Classical Opposition Between Civic and Ethnic Models of Nationhood: Ideology, Empirical Reality and Social Scientific Analysis,” *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 139 (2002): 284, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41274824>.

uneducated masses.”³² Gellner echoes that sentiment, differentiating between Western civic nations’ emphasis on high culture and Eastern European ethnic nations that rely on colloquial manifestations of culture.³³ Ivan Krastev³⁴ and Branko Milanovic,³⁵ while acknowledging the ethnic nature of Eastern European nationalism, argue that the cultural homogeneity promoted in Eastern nationalism was not a representation of ethnic supremacy but an attempt to secure autonomy in the face of imperial pressures.³⁶ Yael Tamir argues that the delineation between ethnic and civic nationalism is a false one and that “states oscillate between the two forms of nationalism.”³⁷ Furthermore, she argues that even modern states, “in moments of national birth as well as in moments of crisis, individuals voice prohomogenization views more openly than in quiet, mundane times.”³⁸ Bernard Yack notes that the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism serves “both to classify the different forms of nationalism that exist in the modern world and to distinguish the more valuable or acceptable forms of nationalism from their more dangerous counterparts.”³⁹ He concludes, however, that “two things make a nation: present-day consent and a rich cultural inheritance of shared memories and practices.”⁴⁰ With this in mind, one can understand nationalism to exist on a spectrum between ethnic and civic drivers depending on the existing conditions facing the nation.

Addressing the case of Taiwan specifically, Shiau-chi Shen and Nai-teh Wu argue that national and ethnic identity have changed drastically since the process of

³² Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 426.

³³ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 99–100, **cited in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425.

³⁴ Ivan Krastev, *After Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). **cited in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 426.

³⁵ Branko Milanovic, “Democracy of Convenience, Not of Choice: Why Is Eastern Europe Different?,” *Global Inequality Blog* (blog), December 23, 2017, <http://glineq.blogspot.com/2017/12/democracy-of-convenience-not-of-choice.html>, **cited in** Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 426.

³⁶ Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 426.

³⁷ Tamir, 428.

³⁸ Tamir, 429.

³⁹ Bernard Yack, “The Myth of the Civic Nation,” *Critical Review* 10, no. 2 (1996): 194, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08913819608443417>.

⁴⁰ Yack, 208.

democratization began in the late 1980s.⁴¹ Timothy Wong agrees, noting that “the half-century of cross-Strait confrontation has indeed witnessed the waning of Chinese nationalism and the corresponding rise of Taiwanese nationalism in Taiwan.”⁴² He argues that “the function of liberal democracy has been to transform Taiwan’s ethnic particularism into an emergent inclusive civic nationalism.”⁴³ While there is consensus that the nationalist sentiment has played an important role in Taiwan since 1949, there is debate over its nature and implications.

Chiang I-hua, a political scientist at the National Taiwan University, presented a paper in 1998 that summarized the three major schools of thought that he described as “nationalist, liberal, and progressive.”⁴⁴ The “progressive” school dismissed national identity out of hand as a force that should not “occupy a privileged position in Taiwan’s politics.”⁴⁵ What he termed the “nationalist” school was, more specifically, those scholars that framed the discussion of Taiwanese national identity in ethnic terms. Specifically, these scholars focus their arguments on the existence of a uniquely Taiwanese ethnicity, the resulting ethnic nationalism, and the impact it has on the question of Taiwanese independence from the PRC. Juen Dreyer, echoing the importance of Taiwanese ethnic identity, argues that government and social support for Hokkien—the native language of most Taiwanese—and other native languages during the democratization process was “one of the keys to the creation of a unique Taiwanese identity separate from that of the mainland.”⁴⁶ Dreyer goes on to note the ethnic tension that has come as a result of this shift, pointing out that many “mainlanders worry that the diminution in the use of their

⁴¹ Shiao-Chi Shen and Nai-teh Wu, “Ethnic and Civic Nationalisms: Two Roads to the Formation of a Taiwanese Nation,” in *The “One China” Dilemma*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan U.S., 2008), 137, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230611931_7.

⁴² Timothy Ka-Ying Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” *Asian Perspective* 25, no. 3 (2001): 189, <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2001.0017>.

⁴³ Wong, 178.

⁴⁴ Shelley Rigger, “Social Science and National Identity: A Critique,” *Pacific Affairs* 72, no. 4 (1999): 539, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2672396>.

⁴⁵ Rigger, 539.

⁴⁶ June Teufel Dreyer, “The Evolution of Language Policies and National Identity in Taiwan,” in *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*, ed. Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 408.

language will result in a lessening of their status in Taiwan society.”⁴⁷ The emphasis on language and culture makes this a primarily ethnic identity debate rather than a civic one.

Members of I-hau’s “liberal” school can be relabeled as proponents of civic nationalism in Taiwan. Shelley Rigger notes that these theorists “argue that national identity lies in a country’s ability to provide rational government and protect human rights.”⁴⁸ Shen and Wu remark that “the orthodox Chinese [ethnic] identities have declined considerably, while the competing Taiwanese [ethnic] identities, thought to be on the rise, have yet to acquire mainstream status.”⁴⁹ They go on to note that, while “people in Taiwan may vary in their inclinations toward national and ethnic identities ... but most of them agree that they and only they ... should have any say in deciding the future of Taiwan.”⁵⁰ Timothy Wong concludes that “Taiwanese civic nationalism in the form of upholding the subjectivity of the Taiwan residents as a people and the political independence of the ROC on Taiwan has won wide acceptance in Taiwanese society.” Rwei-Ren Wu argues that “this pragmatic nationalism, which imagines a sovereign political community of Taiwan-ROC, was forged through a ... process of democratization: It is therefore civic, liberal, and, above all, pacifist.”⁵¹ The process of democratization in Taiwan and the emphasis on autonomy and liberal democratic ideals, in the eyes of these scholars, are more important to Taiwanese national identity. Civic nationalism, in their view, overpowers the complex ethnic connections that are being redefined, but not eliminated, between Taiwan and mainland China.

⁴⁷ Dreyer, 409.

⁴⁸ Rigger, “Social Science and National Identity,” 541.

⁴⁹ Shen and Wu, “Ethnic and Civic Nationalisms,” 137.

⁵⁰ Shen and Wu, 137.

⁵¹ Rwei-Ren Wu, “Toward a Pragmatic Nationalism,” in *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, ed. Stephane Corcuff, An East Gate Book (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 213.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

1. Hypothesis I: Ethnic Nationalism Best Explains the Evolution of National Identity in Taiwan Since 1949

Taiwanese nationalism was and remains ethnocentric. Over the past seventy years, many of the *waishengren* (those whose families arrived between the end of World War II in 1945 and the end of the civil war in China in 1949) have married *benshengren* (those whose families were established in Taiwan before 1945), started families, made a home in Taiwan, and died there. While there still might be divisions between the two groups surrounding the use of Hokkien and standard Mandarin, it is possible that the national identity shift that occurred in Taiwan was one of ethnic definition as the lines between *waishengren* and *benshengren* blurred over the years. The redefinition of ethnic identity in Taiwan might further erode the ethnic connection with mainland China, reducing the sense of shared past, present, and future with the people of the PRC.

Language, culture, and religion are critical components of ethnic identity. If this hypothesis were correct, one would expect a homogenization of these characteristics within the people of Taiwan over time. This could be demonstrated through the analysis of multiple survey data sets, government policy documents related to education and official language use, and speeches made by political elites appealing to the ethnic identities of their constituents. Ethnic nationalism, redefined to promote a uniquely Taiwanese identity, would erode the emotional and familial attachment to mainland China and could increase animosity. This might lead to a reduction in tourism from Taiwan to the mainland and an increasingly negative public opinion of the PRC and its citizens. If ethnic nationalism remains the dominant sentiment, the political discourse will predominantly be about “de-Sinicization” of Taiwan society in an attempt to appeal to people’s sense of Taiwanese ethnic identity.

2. Hypothesis II: Civic Nationalism Best Explains the Evolution of National Identity in Taiwan Since 1949

Despite initial differences between *benshengren* and *waishengren* in the 1940s, Taiwanese nationalism has evolved into a shared civic identity over the last seventy years. While multiple factors were likely involved, the democratization of the ROC could be seen

as largely responsible for this identity shift as *benshengren* were afforded greater opportunity for self-determination. The efforts of political elites to promote inclusionary policies and to shift the education system away from a Sinocentric curriculum to one that promotes Taiwan's unique political identity and the shared qualities of all ROC citizens might have reduced the ethnic emphasis. The policies, in turn, could have helped to shift the focus of Taiwanese identity away from ethnicity and towards a civic identity that emphasizes democratic values and strong, trusted government institutions as the key variables that distinguish it.

The prospect of civic nationalism dominating Taiwanese society also places the PRC in a negative light for the people of Taiwan. Civic nationalism emphasizes inclusionary, liberal democracy that respects human rights. If it is dominant in Taiwan, one would expect to see increasing distaste for the CCP. This might manifest itself through the perspective that Taiwanese people take on CCP actions in places like Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang as they contemplate what might happen to their democracy if Taiwan reunites with the mainland. Furthermore, one would expect the political elite to appeal to their constituents' appreciation for democratic values domestically and a desire for space to join the international community. An analysis of presidential campaign talking points and political speeches provides insight into how important civic nationalism was and is to Taiwan. The presence of civic nationalism as a strong force would manifest itself in political rhetoric advocating citizen rights, liberal values, and democratization as political goals during the authoritarian and democratization period. It would be seen in social movements and political rhetoric that reinforce democratic institutions as national norms in the post-democratization era, flaring up during moments of perceived democratic backsliding.

3. Hypothesis III: Neither Ethnic nor Civic Framing of Nationalism Explains the Evolution of National Identity in Taiwan Since 1949.

National identity in Taiwan can neither be understood as ethnic or civic. If so, national identity may have a negligible effect on society and politics in Taiwan and, as a result, cross-Strait relations. As survey data collected by National Chengchi University since 1994 show, over 80 percent of respondents want to maintain the status quo in cross-

Strait relations.⁵² While the way that the residents of Taiwan view themselves in relation to the people of the PRC may be changing, it is possible that this new identity is not being mobilized to pursue either de jure independence or reunification with mainland China. The people of Taiwan may be more concerned with pursuing economic development, safety, and the perpetuation of the status quo. This pragmatic outlook could mean that civic and ethnic nationalism in Taiwan were not and are not a driving force behind ROC government policies and public sentiment vis-à-vis cross-Strait relations.

E. THESIS ROADMAP

This thesis will include three body chapters. The second chapter will explore the origins of national identity in Taiwan, first with a review of Taiwan’s colonial experience under the Japanese Empire. It will then discuss the arrival of the *waishengren* with the KMT and the onset of conflict between *waishengren* and *benshengren*. It will conclude with a review of the development of nationalism in Taiwan under martial law from 1949 to 1987. The third chapter will address ethnic and civic nationalism during the democratization of 1988 to 2000, followed by ethnic and civic nationalism during each subsequent presidential administration in the fourth chapter. The review of ethnic and civic nationalism in each period will present and assess the evidence supporting each type as described in section four of this proposal. The concluding chapter will present research findings, possible policy implications and recommendations, and areas for future research.

⁵² “Taiwan Independence vs. Unification With the Mainland (1994/12~2021/06),” Database, Election Study Center, National Chengchi University (The Center for the National Interest, July 20, 2021), <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-chinas-disinformation-war-destabilize-taiwan-21708>.

II. A UNIQUELY TAIWANESE HISTORY

The island of Taiwan was controlled by outsiders from 1895 to 1987. First, the Japanese ruled Taiwan from 1895 following the end of the first Sino-Japanese War. Then, following the Japanese defeat in World War Two, the KMT assumed control of the island in 1945 and exercised martial law from 1949 to 1987. Both regimes and their policies had a formative impact on the development of national identity and nationalism in Taiwan. This chapter will provide a historical review of these factors beginning with Taiwan as a Japanese colony, followed by the transition to KMT rule and the arrival of the *waishengren*, and concluding with a discussion of ethnic and civic nationalism during the period of martial law.

A. COLONIAL TAIWAN

Taiwan was ceded to the Japanese Empire in 1895 after the defeat of the Qing Empire in the first Sino-Japanese War. At that time, the island had a population of roughly five million people that was divided into three ethnic groups.⁵³ These were the Minnans, Hakkas, and the aborigines that represented eighty, fifteen, and five percent of the population, respectively.⁵⁴ The Minnans and Hakkas migrated from provinces in southeast China beginning in the late 1500s and were “*Hanren*, descendants of the Han, who practiced Han ancestor worship and other folk (or ‘popular,’ *minjian*) religious practices.”⁵⁵ The small minority population of aboriginal peoples were of Malayo-Polynesian descent who arrived on Taiwan around 4000 B.C.⁵⁶ The island fell under the governance of the Fujian Province until it was made an independent province in 1885. Taiwan experienced persistent ethnic conflict and economic competition up until

⁵³ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 179.

⁵⁴ Wong, 179.

⁵⁵ Mau-kuei Chang, “On the Origins and Transformation of Taiwanese National Identity,” in *Religion and the Formation of Taiwanese Identities*, ed. Paul R. Katz and Murray A. Rubinstein (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 26–27.

⁵⁶ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 179.

modernization efforts consolidated the population just before the arrival of the Japanese in 1895.⁵⁷ The people of Taiwan had yet to attain a cohesive identity at that point and the majority of the population retained close ties to their Han ancestry and mainland connections.

As the Japanese government set about integrating the island and its population into the empire, it confronted a largely rural society. As Mau-Kuei Chang notes, the majority of the *Hanren* settlers lived a poor, agrarian lifestyle and “their identities were, therefore, very regional, bonded to the here-and-now, to their land and their villages in Taiwan.”⁵⁸ The wealthier families would invest heavily in preparing their children for official exams that involved the mastery of Han classical literature, reinforcing the connection with the traditional exam system of the mainland.⁵⁹ The Governor-general, Kabayama Sukenori, and the Japanese army arrived in Taipei in June 7, 1895, and inaugurated the new government by June 17.⁶⁰ It took the Japanese army over four months to cement its control over the remainder of the island, however, as people from all walks of life, including elements from “all divisions of ethnicity, class, and gender,” engaged in the armed struggle against the colonizers.⁶¹ Chang points out that this resistance was not fueled by demands for the self-determination of a national community, but by “traditional Han folk consciousness when defending their own hometowns.”⁶² Conversely, there were members of the Taiwanese elite who cooperated with the Japanese occupation and were compensated by beneficial programs and activities organized by the colonial government.⁶³ The dual response to the occupation and the compartmentalized drivers of resistance arguably demonstrated the absence of a strong cohesive identity among the people of Taiwan that, if present, may have enabled a more collaborative response to the Japanese colonization.

⁵⁷ Wong, 179.

⁵⁸ Chang, “On the Origins and Transformation of Taiwanese National Identity,” 27.

⁵⁹ Chang, 27.

⁶⁰ Wan-Yao Chou, “Taiwan Under Japanese Rule (1895–1945),” in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Taiwan* (London: Routledge, 2016), 26.

⁶¹ Chou, 26.

⁶² Chang, “On the Origins and Transformation of Taiwanese National Identity,” 28.

⁶³ Chou, “Taiwan Under Japanese Rule (1895–1945),” 26.

Nonetheless, in the face of sporadic armed resistance, the Japanese Empire implemented several policies in an attempt to assimilate Taiwan into the empire. As part of government restructuring, Taiwan was administered by an appointed governor and policies were enacted that discriminated against the Taiwanese in employment and educational opportunities.⁶⁴ The people of Taiwan were looked down upon by the Japanese for being defeated; moreover, they were not given equal citizenship within the Japanese Empire's political system due to the fact that they were considered of a different "race" than the Japanese.⁶⁵ Japanese in Taiwan, consisting of only a small percentage of the island's population, were able to monopolize management positions in government, the military, state-controlled industry, and the education system while preventing Taiwanese access to leadership roles in the same.⁶⁶ The emphasis on agrarian living and the lack of industrialization on the island stood in stark contrast when compared to the modernization underway in the Japanese home islands. Eka Tai argues that the legal distinction between Japanese and Taiwanese based on ethnic differences worked against Japanese attempts at assimilation and might have contributed to the consolidation of the Taiwanese identity among the disparate groups of *Hanren* with ties to various places in mainland China.⁶⁷ This cultural, racial, and economic separation provided an identifiable division between the colonizer and the colonized. Japan wanted to pull Taiwan into its empire by bridging those gaps.

Assimilation through education was a primary tool of the Japanese government in Taiwan. As Shih-jung Tzeng notes, "the basic approach of the education system was to serve the colonial state through instilling into the Taiwanese pupils a sense of national

⁶⁴ Christopher Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society* (London: Routledge, 1997), 22, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203444191>.

⁶⁵ Mau-kuei Chang, "Understanding Contending Nationalist Identities: Reading Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson from Taiwan," in *Democratization and Identity: Regimes and Ethnicity in East and Southeast Asia* (Lexington Books, 2004), 73.

⁶⁶ Wong, "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity," 180.

⁶⁷ Eka Tai, "Kokugo and Colonial Education in Taiwan," *Positions: East Asia Critique* 7, no. 2 (1999): 530.

loyalty to Japan, while also providing them with modern skills and knowledge.”⁶⁸ The primary educational tool used for assimilation was language, specifically the Japanese “national language.”⁶⁹ Within three years of Taiwan’s transfer to Japanese control, “sixteen Japanese language institutes and thirty-six branch institutes were in operation.”⁷⁰ The common school, which replaced the language institutions, spent seventy percent of the weekly study hours in the instruction of Japanese and would become the primary educational vehicle of assimilation.⁷¹ In school, Taiwanese children “learned the Japanese language and Japanese culture and history ... the national identity they were taught to adopt was a Japanese national identity.”⁷² According to an estimate from the colonial government, the emphasis on language instruction eventually led to over thirty-seven percent of the Taiwanese population being able to “comprehend” Japanese by 1937.⁷³ The emphasis on a Japanese-centric education system for Taiwanese people subordinated native languages, culture, and identity.

In higher education, Taiwanese were further restricted by the colonizers. They were prevented from studying law and politics and were instead pushed towards medicine and commerce with the best education opportunities only available in Japan.⁷⁴ The use of Taiwanese languages was also banned in key public spaces like banking institutions, places of business, and government facilities while employers were compelled to hire only those with command of the Japanese language by the late 1920s.⁷⁵ These efforts to eradicate local languages in public life likely led to a conflicted sense of identity. Those with the ambition and means to learn the language and acquire the appropriate education could

⁶⁸ Shih-jung Tzeng, *From Honto Jin to Bensheng Ren: The Origin and Development of Taiwanese National Consciousness* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), xvii.

⁶⁹ A-Chin Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 34, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203402641>.

⁷⁰ Hsiau, 34.

⁷¹ Hsiau, 34.

⁷² Chou, “Taiwan Under Japanese Rule (1895–1945),” 30.

⁷³ Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 35.

⁷⁴ Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, 93.

⁷⁵ Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 35.

advance in society while those that could not were excluded from participation in the modernization of Taiwan. As A-Chin Hsiau observes:

Japanese never replaced Taiwanese languages as the major vehicle of communication in daily life. For the colonized, Japanese primarily remained a language of public domain. At best, colonial language education before the *kominka* movement changed a proportion of Taiwanese into bilinguals.⁷⁶

The limited success of linguistic assimilation indicates the Taiwanese were unwilling to give up their connections to the past, their ancestral roots, and their connections to their communities. For many Taiwanese people under colonial rule, the daily routine would consist of a public sphere and a private sphere: in public, filling the role of a Japanese citizen by speaking and acting in accordance with Japanese cultural norms and returning to the culture, religion, and language of one's provincial roots upon returning home.⁷⁷ Although the colonial government made every effort to push the Japanese language on the people, they were not successful in replacing the native languages of Taiwan.

Colonial rule did contribute to the development and modernization of Taiwan. Following in the footsteps of the home islands, the Japanese colonial government had a considerable effect on Taiwan's institutions and infrastructure. As Timothy Wong notes, "Japanese occupation marked the first historical period in which the entire island of Taiwan shared an effective modern government."⁷⁸ The government "established a unified system of education, commerce, agriculture, and law," allowing for a considerable increase in the standard of living in Taiwan.⁷⁹ The Japanese investment in infrastructure and construction of an industrial base in Taiwan had lasting and visible effects on the island and is often considered a contributing factor in Taiwan's subsequent economic growth.⁸⁰ Although

⁷⁶ Hsiau, 35.

⁷⁷ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 24.

⁷⁸ Wong, "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity," 180.

⁷⁹ Wong, 180.

⁸⁰ Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, 7.

these developments were created by a colonial government, they allowed for a growing sense of stability on the island and the opportunity to move beyond the compartmentalized agrarian lifestyle that previously limited one's sense of identification to their immediate, local surroundings.

Japanese rule also influenced the rise of social and political movements within Taiwan that were important to the sense of shared identity developing on the island. After roughly twenty years of armed resistance, a younger and better educated element of Taiwanese society began leading new forms of resistance against Japanese occupation beginning in 1914.⁸¹ These groups of young people who spent their formative years under Japanese rule were intent on employing lawful tactics to pursue internationally respected objectives like racial equality, home rule, and elections.⁸² The movements included the cultural enlightenment movement, the democratic movement, the Taiwanese self-determination movement, and the Taiwanese cultural reconstruction movement.⁸³ Edward Chen argues that a “strong current of national consciousness” developed among the followers of these various movements that was strengthened by their abhorrence of colonial rule.⁸⁴ These movements acted as a catalyst for Taiwanese intelligentsia to explore the concepts of national identity and begin constructing the concept of a uniquely Taiwanese identity.

The development of a Taiwanese identity was also influenced by international events. The idea of national self-determination espoused by President Woodrow Wilson resonated with the people of Taiwan and other colonies in East Asia who resented their colonizers.⁸⁵ Wang also offers that “Japanese colonialism ... provided the islanders with

⁸¹ Edward I-te Chen, “Formosan Political Movements Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1914–1937,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1972): 477, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2052230>.

⁸² Chen, 477.

⁸³ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 181.

⁸⁴ Tzeng, *From Honto Jin to Bensheng Ren: The Origin and Development of Taiwanese National Consciousness*, xxi.

⁸⁵ Tzeng, xxi.

an international political identity of their own.”⁸⁶ Neither the KMT nor the CCP actively sought the return of Taiwan to China until the signing of the 1943 Cairo Declaration and, in fact, both Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek made public remarks in 1938 referencing Taiwan as a nation that should resist colonization and gain independence from Japan.⁸⁷ International recognition for national self-determination generally, and Taiwanese independence specifically, provided the people of Taiwan with the opportunity to think about their nation as unique and distinct. This distinction may not have occurred if Taiwan was not undergoing a period of colonial rule that was distinct from mainland China.

In no uncertain terms, the fifty-year period of Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan had a profound impact on the island and its peoples. Systematic discrimination, assimilation policies and modernization, coupled with the international influence Wilsonian principles and the views expressed by leaders on the mainland, instigated an increased sense of connection among the disparate ethnic, social, and cultural groups in Taiwan. Wong notes that, “while under Japanese colonial rule an indigenous Taiwanese identity did gradually emerge ... it did not contradict the larger Chinese identity.”⁸⁸ Although Taiwanese identity remained closely tied to the mainland, the experience of Japanese occupation developed a more modern infrastructure, a distinct international identity, and a sense of a shared fate and homeland among the people of Taiwan.⁸⁹ The reunification of Taiwan to mainland China under KMT rule in 1945 and the events that occurred thereafter would accelerate the awakening of this identity and give rise to further nationalist movements.

B. THE ARRIVAL OF THE KMT

An agreement made at the Cairo Conference in December 1943 and reaffirmed at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 ensured that Taiwan would return to the ROC under

⁸⁶ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 181.

⁸⁷ Wong, 181.

⁸⁸ Timothy Ka-Ying Wong and Milan Tung-Wen Sun, “Dissolution and Reconstruction of National Identity: The Experience of Subjectivity in Taiwan,” *Nations and Nationalism* 4, no. 2 (1998): 248, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.1998.00247.x>.

⁸⁹ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 182.

Chiang Kai-shek following the defeat of the Japanese Empire.⁹⁰ The transition from Japanese to KMT rule, in the eyes of many residents of Taiwan, replaced one occupying power with another. Upon arrival, the KMT military administration immediately redirected the island's resources to support the fight against the CCP on the mainland.⁹¹ The harsh treatment and discrimination of Taiwanese by the new arrivals from the mainland led to conflict and a greater sense that being Taiwanese was an identity in and of itself. The period between 1945 and the KMT's defeat on the mainland in 1949 reinforced the separation between *waishengren* and *benshengren* as a direct result of the KMT's misgovernance of Taiwan. Specifically, the KMT's practices on the island created political, cultural, and economic tensions in a way that closely resembled the colonial practices of the day.⁹² These tensions, erupting in the bloody February 28 Incident of 1947 in which the death of a civilian at the hands of government officials led to widespread violence, would set the foundation for the conflicts in national identity and nationalist movements that persist to this day.

Politically, the KMT approached its governance of Taiwan in much the same way as the Japanese. Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT determined that Taiwan was not capable of self-governance and viewed the province in a negative and collaborationist light due to the fifty years of Japanese rule.⁹³ The KMT retained many of the government institutions established by the Japanese and appointed General Chen Yi, previously governor of Fujian province, as the first governor of Taiwan.⁹⁴ General Chen imposed a strict system of governance that restricted the freedoms of the Taiwanese and "created the feeling that the Taiwanese were to be seen again as second-class citizens, quelling any initial patriotism felt towards the new regime."⁹⁵ The use of Japanese was banned and Mandarin,

⁹⁰ Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization*, 7.

⁹¹ Wachman, 7.

⁹² Wong, "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity," 183–84.

⁹³ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 24.

⁹⁴ Hughes, 24.

⁹⁵ Hughes, 25.

incomprehensible to many Taiwanese, replaced it as the national language. Political elites from mainland China were brought in to fill leadership positions in the Taiwanese government.⁹⁶ General Chen's government also arrested those considered to be Japanese collaborators and prevented the Taiwanese people stranded on the mainland during WWII from returning to the island.⁹⁷ Rather than establishing a form of government that would empower the people of Taiwan, the KMT continued the Japanese practice of distancing citizens from government institutions and sought instead to strengthen the regime's hold on the island.

Economically, the KMT brought with it a high level of corruption to Taiwan that had a marked impact on what had been a modernizing and productive economy, so productive that the Japanese Empire considered Taiwan its "model colony."⁹⁸ The economy of Taiwan, already affected by the American bombing campaign of WWII, was further damaged by a massive transfer of wealth to the mainland in support of the war effort.⁹⁹ It has been estimated that "around 17 percent of Taiwan's gross domestic product (GDP) was nationalized and disposed of and that as many as 36,000 Taiwanese were forced out of public sector jobs."¹⁰⁰ The hyper-inflation being experienced on the mainland was transferred to Taiwan and the KMT rushed to nationalize the assets and businesses previously owned by the Japanese.¹⁰¹ The systemic mismanagement and corruption that occurred under General Chen's governance erased what economic progress occurred under Japanese rule and further alienated the Taiwanese.

⁹⁶ Wong, "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity," 185.

⁹⁷ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 25.

⁹⁸ Robert Edmondson, "The February 28 Incident and National Identity," in *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, ed. Stephane Corcuff, An East Gate Book (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 26.

⁹⁹ Wong, "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity," 184.

¹⁰⁰ Edmondson, "The February 28 Incident and National Identity," 27.

¹⁰¹ Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity," *The China Quarterly* 165 (2001): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009443901000067>.

Culturally, General Chen's administration set out on its own attempt at assimilation; this time into the dominant Chinese culture. Not only did the KMT establish Mandarin as the national language, it also banned local Taiwanese languages in all forms of mass communication, including radio, the cinema, and newspapers.¹⁰² Portraits of the Japanese emperor were also replaced with those of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek and "urban spaces were reordered with place-names evoking a 'motherland' that few living Taiwanese had ever seen."¹⁰³ This failed to resonate with the generation of Taiwanese that grew up under Japanese rule because they had acquired a sense of identity and shared colonial experiences that were fundamentally different than those of mainland China.¹⁰⁴ Rather than respecting the identity of the Taiwanese, the KMT and mainland political elites sought to replace the enforced Japanese identity with an enforced mainland Chinese identity using the same playbook.

Inevitably, many Taiwanese viewed the KMT in the same light as the Japanese occupiers: Robert Edmondson notes that these sentiments were visceral as "For many Taiwanese, the 'pigs' (Mainlanders) had simply replaced the 'dogs' (Japanese)."¹⁰⁵ While the KMT officially considered the Taiwanese as racially Chinese, the administration publicly stated the concern that Taiwan had been tainted by the Japanese assimilation program in ways that needed to be undone before Taiwan could be truly Chinese.¹⁰⁶ This sense of discrimination was underscored following General Chen's announcement that the ROC constitution, promulgated on 1 January 1947, would not apply to Taiwan because the island's population "required several more years of political tutelage."¹⁰⁷ This announcement added to the growing tension caused by "inflation, grain shortages,

¹⁰² Allen Chun, "From Nationalism to Nationalizing: Cultural Imagination and State Formation in Postwar Taiwan," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 31 (1994): 56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2949900>.

¹⁰³ Edmondson, "The February 28 Incident and National Identity," 27.

¹⁰⁴ Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity," 112.

¹⁰⁵ Edmondson, "The February 28 Incident and National Identity," 27.

¹⁰⁶ Edmondson, 28.

¹⁰⁷ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 25.

corruption, lack of military discipline, unemployment, industrial collapse, and cultural conflict” that was occurring in Taiwan.¹⁰⁸ Taiwan was ripe for a violent conflict as these tensions continued to build in February 1947.

A single incident in the evening on 27 February led to violent bloodshed across the island. A female tobacco peddler selling cigarettes without a license was beaten and incarcerated by KMT officials enforcing a monopoly policy who inadvertently shot a bystander in the process.¹⁰⁹ The officials were agents of the Taipei Wine & Tobacco Monopoly Bureau who quickly fled the scene after a crowd began to form.¹¹⁰ The crowd first marched to the police station to demand that the shooter be handed over, but when met with a refusal they delivered a petition to the Monopoly Bureau which was never received.¹¹¹ The incident and the failure of officials to address the crowd’s demands caused an uprising across the island as crowds protested and General Chen resorted to military suppression.¹¹² The Taiwanese attempted to arm themselves and form a defense corps,¹¹³ fighting small battles across the island and eventually forcing General Chen to accept Taiwanese self-government.¹¹⁴ General Chen negotiated in bad faith, however, and secretly requested the support of additional forces from the mainland.¹¹⁵ Violent purges followed the arrival of reinforcements and “the potential leadership among the residents of Taiwan was either annihilated, or co-opted into collaboration, or fled overseas.”¹¹⁶ The ROC forces eventually regained total control over the island but the violent events were

¹⁰⁸ Edmondson, “The February 28 Incident and National Identity,” 28.

¹⁰⁹ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 25.

¹¹⁰ Edmondson, “The February 28 Incident and National Identity,” 28.

¹¹¹ Edmondson, 28.

¹¹² C.L. Chiou, “Taiwan’s Evolving Nationalism: Ideology for Independence,” in *Nationalism, Democracy and National Integration in China*, ed. Leong H. Liew and Shaoguang Wang, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 111.

¹¹³ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 25.

¹¹⁴ Chiou, “Taiwan’s Evolving Nationalism: Ideology for Independence,” 111.

¹¹⁵ Chiou, 111.

¹¹⁶ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 25.

ingrained into the collective memory of the Taiwanese as the “228 Incident.”¹¹⁷ The campaign to subdue the island was completed on 20 March and it is estimated that roughly 20,000 Taiwanese were killed in the violence.¹¹⁸ This bloody expression of the built up tension between the mainlanders and islanders provided a clear demarcation between the two and arguably influenced the identity crisis that Taiwan would experience for decades to come.

The 228 Incident was a formative experience in the eyes of the Taiwanese people. C. L. Chiou argues that the incident “created an ethnic nationalist divide that has troubled Taiwan’s socio-political landscape ever since.”¹¹⁹ Wong notes that, after the incident, the feeling of separation between the mainlanders and islanders “was no longer implicit but could now be linked with a real, tragic experience, which like an ethnic myth became part of the collective memory of the Taiwanese.”¹²⁰ The violent experience would become a core memory in the development of Taiwanese national identity that provided Taiwanese with a clear sense of “us” and “them” and underscored the grievance of systematic discrimination and assimilation by the KMT on the Taiwanese.

C. DEFEAT ON THE MAINLAND AND THE PERIOD OF MARTIAL LAW

In 1949 the KMT was driven from the mainland and the ROC’s capital was “temporarily” transferred to Taipei. The Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion and subsequent actions by the Legislative Yuan in late 1949 suspended most constitutional restraints on the president and declared Taiwan a combat zone.¹²¹ Chiang Kai-shek was able to declare martial law in Taiwan and consolidate control as roughly 2.5 million people retreated with the KMT, creating a dramatic and rapid demographic shift on the island.¹²² With the constitutional restraints removed, “a

¹¹⁷ Hughes, 25.

¹¹⁸ Chiou, “Taiwan’s Evolving Nationalism: Ideology for Independence,” 111.

¹¹⁹ Chiou, 112.

¹²⁰ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 185.

¹²¹ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 26.

¹²² Hughes, 26–27.

mainlander elite was able to monopolize the central offices of power for more than forty years.”¹²³ With a desire to retain the claim to sovereignty of all of China and to instill that desire into all Taiwanese, the KMT set out to consolidate a sense of Chinese identity and nationalism in the people of Taiwan.

The roughly 2.5 million mainlanders that followed the KMT to Taiwan looked to the party to provide them with both security and opportunity on the island and had difficulty identifying with anything other than their roots on the Chinese mainland.¹²⁴ Much like their Taiwanese counterparts, these mainlanders were themselves fragmented and identified with their own provinces.¹²⁵ The party attempted to foster a strong sense of Chinese nationalism in an effort to unite the disparate groups behind the KMT’s claim to all of China. The KMT brand of Chinese nationalism was one that promoted traditionalism as opposed to the CCP’s ongoing efforts on the mainland: “The KMT actively attempted to indoctrinate the Taiwanese in a ‘traditional’ Chinese culture through a program called the ‘Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement.’”¹²⁶ The movement, launched the same year as the CCP’s Cultural Revolution, was a clear attempt by the KMT to preserve a Chinese culture that was being dismantled by the CCP on the mainland.¹²⁷ Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT attempted to rewrite the collective history of Taiwan to fit within the Chinese nationalist construct that gave the party legitimacy to its claim to all of China.

The Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement was an active attempt at redefining what it meant to be Taiwanese. As Allen Chun notes, “the government in effect played an active role (as author) in writing culture (by constructing discourses on tradition, ethnicity, ethical philosophy and moral psychology).”¹²⁸ This traditional Chinese identity was implemented in all aspects of daily life in an attempt to “to foster belief in the ROC as

¹²³ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 187.

¹²⁴ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 27.

¹²⁵ Hughes, 28.

¹²⁶ Chun, “From Nationalism to Nationalizing,” 57.

¹²⁷ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 187.

¹²⁸ Chun, “From Nationalism to Nationalizing,” 54.

protector of a glorious Chinese culture.”¹²⁹ In addition to the designation of Mandarin as the primary language noted above, the calendar system was reset to begin with 1912 as year one, maps of national territory included all of mainland China and Outer Mongolia, and cultural institutions like museums were recognized as the successors of their mainland counterparts.¹³⁰ The KMT went so far as to make children memorize the names of mainland railway stations as they were before the party fled the mainland.¹³¹ The identity that the KMT intended to enshrine was ethnic and primordial in nature, relying on ties to the mainland and the traditional roots of the Han people. While this attempt provided a veneer for the legitimacy of the party, it failed to account for the fundamentally different experiences between the people of Taiwan and the people of the mainland.

The animosity that the Taiwanese felt towards the KMT and newly arrived mainlanders, coupled with their burgeoning sense of collective identity fostered through shared hardships, ensured that many Taiwanese would resist the KMT brand of Chinese nationalism. Wong argues that the KMT’s cultural program failed to strengthen its own legitimacy and “actually had the opposite effect of furthering the development of a distinct Taiwanese political identity.”¹³² This unique Taiwanese political identity was most clearly articulated by Professor Peng Ming-men, the head of the political science department at the National Taiwan University, who secretly published the “Declaration on Taiwan’s Self-salvation Movement’ in 1964.¹³³ The document advocated for the abolition of martial law and the abandonment of KMT’s claim of sovereignty over all of China while declaring that there “was one China and one Taiwan.”¹³⁴ Peng also argued that “the concept of political community in Taiwan ... must include all the diverse groups living in the island while

¹²⁹ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 187.

¹³⁰ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 29.

¹³¹ Hughes, 29.

¹³² Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 187.

¹³³ Chiou, “Taiwan’s Evolving Nationalism: Ideology for Independence,” 112.

¹³⁴ Chiou, 112.

maintaining their political separation from the Chinese nation.”¹³⁵ As noted by Chiou, “Peng’s declaration has since become the Bible—and Professor Peng the father—of the Taiwan independence movement.”¹³⁶ This argument provided Taiwan with a unique political identity separate from that of the mainland that highlighted the distinct experiences of the Taiwanese people and advocated for a state that excluded claims to the rest of China.

The KMT’s sovereign claims to all of China received at least tacit international approval up until the US-PRC rapprochement in the early 1970s. The ROC, with backing from the United States, represented all of China at the United Nations from the end of the Korean War to 1971.¹³⁷ The situation changed abruptly, however, and the ROC faced an international legitimacy crisis following the Nixon administration’s change of course. The ROC lost its seat representing China at the United Nations in 1971 and diplomatic ties with other nations were quickly severed.¹³⁸ This *de facto* rejection of the ROC’s claims by the international community hampered the KMT’s domestic platform and coincided with a growing desire for reform from opposition movements. The international legitimacy crisis, coupled with the aging of the mainlander political elite, induced the KMT to “be more tolerant of the embryonic development of Taiwanese nationalism. In fact, the KMT acquiesced to the growing national consciousness and eventually adopted an experimental form of controlled indigenization.”¹³⁹ Chiang Ching-kuo, first succeeding his father as premier in 1972 and then taking on the office of president in 1978, began this process of political reform by including more native Taiwanese in the party, cracking down on corruption, and increasing the number of seats in the Legislative Yuan elected from

¹³⁵ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 37.

¹³⁶ Chiou, “Taiwan’s Evolving Nationalism: Ideology for Independence,” 113.

¹³⁷ J. Bruce Jacobs, ““Taiwanization in Taiwan’s Politics,” in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19.

¹³⁸ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 189.

¹³⁹ Wong, 189.

Taiwan.¹⁴⁰ The one-party system remained, however, and the process of democratization did not occur overnight.

As changes were being made within the KMT, the opposition began to coalesce around the issue of democracy rather than affirming a unique Taiwanese identity. As J. Bruce Jacobs notes, “of course, everyone knew that the territory controlled by the Republic of China was limited to Taiwan ... but such discussion had not yet entered the public debate within Taiwan.”¹⁴¹ The opposition movement known as the *dangwai* (literally “outside the party,” meaning outside the KMT) grew in power and influence throughout the 1970s with an emphasis on democratization. By the late 1970s, the *dangwai*-supported nonpartisans began winning elections for County Executive posts and the Provincial Assembly and, to bypass the mainstream media, created the *Meilidao* (Formosa) Magazine which actively sponsored *dangwai* rallies.¹⁴² One such rally in support of International Human Rights Day led to the Kaohsiung Incident of December 10, 1979, in which both security forces and demonstrators were injured.¹⁴³ A-Chin Hsiau argues that “it was the 1979 Kaohsiung Incident and the following political persecution of opposition activists that acted as a catalyst to the radical, nationalist challenge to KMT rule and its major ideological justification, Chinese nationalism.”¹⁴⁴ The crackdown on political opposition highlighted the fact that, despite the indigenization of the KMT, full democratization was a long way off within the ROC.

The Kaohsiung Incident and resulting crackdown accelerated the push for democratization and highlighted the identity question facing Taiwan. By mid-1983, an emphasis on self-determination permeated *dangwai* publications as legislative elections loomed.¹⁴⁵ A group of seventeen *dangwai* candidates, articulating the viewpoint of the movement’s political and intellectual elites, agreed on a set of objectives for the movement,

¹⁴⁰ Jacobs, ““Taiwanization in Taiwan’s Politics,” 20.

¹⁴¹ Jacobs, 22.

¹⁴² Jacobs, 20–21.

¹⁴³ Jacobs, 21.

¹⁴⁴ Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 179.

¹⁴⁵ Jacobs, ““Taiwanization in Taiwan’s Politics,” 26–27.

the first of which was that “Taiwan’s future must be jointly decided by all of Taiwan’s inhabitants.”¹⁴⁶ Xu Rongshu, in a speech given while running for reelection to the legislature, argued that “the historical mission of we Taiwanese over the last four hundred years ... [is] to complete the goals and vitality of freedom and human rights in this beautiful island.”¹⁴⁷ By the mid-1980s, key members of the *dangwai* movement began drawing a clear connection between democratization, self-determination, and the uniqueness of the Taiwanese identity, underscoring the importance of Taiwan’s national identity in an effort to mobilize the people and nationalist sentiment to oppose the KMT party and its insistence on Taiwan’s connection to the mainland and the Chinese nation.

President Chiang Ching-kuo recognized the movement’s growing support and took steps towards eventual democratization in the latter stages of his life. He publicly stated that he would not allow another member of his family to run for president and, in remarks made in July 1987, stated that he was “also a Taiwanese.”¹⁴⁸ These remarks affirmed that he would not resort to nepotism in the transition of power and that he recognized the unique nature of Taiwanese identity. More importantly, he allowed the existence of an opposition party, ended martial law effective in July 1987, and allowed Taiwan residents to visit the mainland beginning in October 1987.¹⁴⁹ As J. Bruce Jacobs notes, these reforms “helped set in train the democratization that enabled Taiwan to begin to deal with the national question openly.”¹⁵⁰ Following the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in January 1988, the office of president passed to Lee Teng-hui, the first Taiwanese to hold the office. Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin argue that the subsequent intraparty power struggle that followed Lee Teng-hui’s elevation to the presidency hastened “the trend of Taiwanization, provided the impetus for abandoning the KMT’s core commitment to Chinese nationalism ... and facilitated ideological accommodation with the opposition on the issue of democratic

¹⁴⁶ Jacobs, 27.

¹⁴⁷ Jacobs, 31.

¹⁴⁸ Jacobs, 33.

¹⁴⁹ Jacobs, 33.

¹⁵⁰ Jacobs, 33.

reform and national identity.”¹⁵¹ The end of martial law and the beginning of democratization under Lee Teng-hui brought the issues of Taiwanese identity and Taiwanese nationalism out into the open as the island moved away from authoritarian rule towards full democratization.

¹⁵¹ Chu and Lin, “Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity,” 121.

III. DEMOCRATIZATION IN TAIWAN

The ascendancy of Lee Teng-hui to the role of President of the ROC created an opportunity for native Taiwanese to address the systematic discrimination that they experienced under KMT rule since the arrival of the *waishengren* in 1945. For the first time, the ROC was led by a person born and raised in Taiwan. The Taiwanization of the ROC was not, however, a forgone conclusion in 1988. While he was a native Taiwanese, Lee Teng-hui was a member of the KMT and he “inherited a political, administrative, and military apparatus that was still tightly controlled by Taiwan’s Mainlanders ... and which was operating within the framework of a legal system and a set of political symbols established during the authoritarian era of the KMT regime.”¹⁵² The process of democratization undertaken by Lee Teng-hui and the opportunity for increased political participation among native Taiwanese instigated new and more overt expressions of Taiwanese ethnic nationalism and, in response, an increase in the countermovement emphasizing Han Chinese identity. The shift towards liberal democratic ideals also provided an opportunity for Taiwan’s identity to shift towards a more civic expression that emphasized self-determination, independence, and rule of law that transcended ethnic identity.

Lee Teng-hui’s presidency marked a fundamental regime shift within the ROC that had significant impact on Taiwan’s national identity. Chia-lung Lin argues that “national identity is not inborn, but a socially and politically constructed sentiment that is subject to change, especially under the intensive mobilization of political elites.”¹⁵³ Increased political participation and democratization in Taiwan opened the door for the concept of national identity to be discussed by the masses and to be leveraged by elites in order to garner support in the political competition that would occur as authoritarian practices were dismantled in the ROC. Ethnic nationalism was expressed through party platforms,

¹⁵² Stephane Corcuff, *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, ed. Stephane Corcuff, An East Gate Book (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 93.

¹⁵³ Chia-lung Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism,” in *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, ed. Stephane Corcuff, An East Gate Book (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 219.

government policies, and the responses that both garnered from the masses. In addition to those domestic factors, the looming threat of the PRC and the CCP's commitment to reunification played an undeniable role in how Taiwanese people perceived their identity and their future.

A. THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELITES

The conditions necessary for this identity crisis were present in Taiwan during the 1990s as the KMT shifted its strategy in the face of greater political participation by the *benshengren* and the creation of an opposition party (the Democratic Progressive Party or DPP). In response, the KMT “was driven to indigenize its ideology and power structure to abate the impact of the opposition’s ethnic and nationalist mobilization.”¹⁵⁴ Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin argue that “with the indigenization of the KMT power structure, the state was eventually converted from a cultural agent of Chinese nationalism into an incubator of a ‘re-imaged community’ based on a new Taiwanese identity.”¹⁵⁵ For the first time, the KMT was forced to compete with an opposition for support and for votes. As Yu-Shan Wu notes, “electoral competition provided incentives for candidates to amplify and capitalize on social schisms, elevating provincial differences to ethnic or even national differences.”¹⁵⁶ Rou-Ian Chen adds that “Structurally, under the majoritarian voting system, a ‘winner take all’ competition provided incentives for candidates to stir identity cleavages as a tactic to gain political support.”¹⁵⁷ The incentives for political elites to appeal to the differences in identity led to an electoral system that favored the platforms of two parties: the KMT in support of the Chinese identity and the DPP in support of the Taiwanese identity.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Lin, 219.

¹⁵⁵ Chu and Lin, “Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity,” 103.

¹⁵⁶ Yu-Shan Wu, “Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Implications: Testing the Worst-Case Scenario,” *Asian Survey* 44, no. 4 (2004): 618, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2005.44.4.614>.

¹⁵⁷ Rou-Ian Chen, “Reconstructed Nationalism in Taiwan: A Politicised and Economically Driven Identity,” *Nations & Nationalism* 20, no. 3 (July 2014): 524, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12051>.

¹⁵⁸ Chen, 524.

The DPP, established in 1986, took up the mantle of the *dangwai* movement and consistently advocated for the right of the Taiwanese people to decide their future. In October 1991, the DPP formalized this by including “in its manifesto the use of a referendum to decide the national status of Taiwan.”¹⁵⁹ Behind this support of self-determination was the insistence that “Taiwan is an independent nation with its own national myth and history.”¹⁶⁰ The DPP consistently focused political debate on constitutional reform and the question of Taiwan’s identity in the early 1990s and DPP candidates publicly advocated for independence in defiance of the Central Election Commission.¹⁶¹ Tsong-jyi Lin notes that the DPP also advocated for greater action by the government in international relations, mobilizing public marches demanding that the government apply for membership in the United Nations in 1991.¹⁶² This advocacy increased DPP support as an alternative to the KMT. The DPP and its candidates offered the *benshengren* a political party to coalesce around that represented an ethnic Taiwanese identity and mobilized that sentiment into political action through nationalism.

The DPP’s efforts to establish a pro-independence stance as an alternative to the KMT allowed it to gain popularity early in the process of democratization, but also concerned many moderate voters. Tsong-jyi Lin notes that the DPP’s loss in the 1991 election cycle was seen by many political elites as the result of the party’s incorporation of the Taiwanese Independence Clause.¹⁶³ It was believed that the emphasis on independence “frightened most voters because such a campaign platform would definitely anger the Chinese government and evoke China’s military threat.”¹⁶⁴ Failure at the polls and increasing aggression from the CCP, discussed below, led the DPP to soften their stance

¹⁵⁹ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 192.

¹⁶⁰ Wong, 192.

¹⁶¹ Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, 71.

¹⁶² Tsong-jyi Lin, “The Evolution of National Identity Issues in Democratizing Taiwan,” in *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, ed. Stephane Corcuff, An East Gate Book (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 128.

¹⁶³ Lin, 131.

¹⁶⁴ Lin, 131.

on independence. Instead of advocating for independence, the DPP began emphasizing the right of the Taiwanese people to determine their own fate.¹⁶⁵ Not wanting to lose the support of those members of its base that supported the independence movement, the DPP moderated instead of abandoned its stance on the issue. In an effort to gain more support, both the KMT and the DPP moderated their positions towards the continuance of the status quo as it became increasingly clear that a majority of Taiwanese were inclined to support the status quo over immediate independence or unification.¹⁶⁶ Whereas the political parties and the elites in charge initially pushed the narrative surrounding national identity, they quickly found that their platforms needed to be palatable to the voters that would decide their fate.

This moderation on the part of the KMT eventually led to a split in the party. In August 1993, the New Party (NP) was founded on a platform that emphasized “its strong support for a Chinese identity for Taiwan” while also advocating for reduced political corruption and increased social welfare.¹⁶⁷ The NP received support from urban, educated, white-collar professionals and, while being popularly considered a mainlander party, received roughly half of its votes from urban *benshengren*.¹⁶⁸ The NP itself suffered from factions in its ranks, with older mainlanders emphasizing the importance of Chinese nationalism while the younger supporters emphasized social welfare and “clean politics.”¹⁶⁹ Although a splinter group of the KMT, the NP generally supported the government policy of “pragmatic diplomacy” vis-à-vis China but emphasizes that the ROC should demonstrate a willingness to negotiate with the PRC and avoid negative confrontations.¹⁷⁰ President Lee Teng-hui, at the head of the ROC and the KMT, would walk a fine line in an effort to balance the process of democratization with the pressure of cross-Strait relations.

¹⁶⁵ Lin, 132.

¹⁶⁶ Lin, 132.

¹⁶⁷ Jacobs, ““Taiwanization in Taiwan’s Politics,” 39.

¹⁶⁸ Jacobs, 39.

¹⁶⁹ Jacobs, 39.

¹⁷⁰ Lin, “The Evolution of National Identity Issues in Democratizing Taiwan,” 134.

B. THE ROLE OF PRESIDENT LEE TENG-HUI

President Lee Teng-hui, after securing his position as the formal chairman of the KMT in July 1988, initially took a pro-unification stance that seemingly satisfied his fellow party members. He indicated this position in his first inaugural speech on 20 May 1990, where he stated that “Taiwan and the mainland are indivisible parts of China’s territory, and all Chinese are compatriots of the same flesh and blood.”¹⁷¹ Later, in the same speech, he expressed his hope of discussing the matter of “national reunification” once the mainland implemented political democracy and affirmed that it would not seek reunification through military means.¹⁷² While this stance was clearly a non-starter for the CCP, it clearly and publicly defined Lee Teng-hui’s stance on the question of national identity. His reaffirmation that Taiwan fell within the scope of a Chinese national identity also fell in line with his party’s greater stance on the issue, ensuring that he would not isolate himself in the beginning of his term in office.

President Lee Teng-hui’s administration moved quickly to formalize the positions outlined in his inaugural speech. The National Unification Council, established in October of 1990, passed the National Unification Guidelines in February 1991 that confirmed that Taiwan was a territory of China and that “unification must be gradually reached in phases under the principles of rationality, peace, equality and mutuality.”¹⁷³ In addition to these guidelines, article 10 of the constitutional amendments of 1991 and the termination of the “Period of national mobilization for suppression of the communist rebellion” allowed for the recognition by the ROC that two “equal political entities exist in two independent areas of one country.”¹⁷⁴ Timothy Wong notes that, because the amendments limit ROC sovereignty to Taiwan and its possessions, the amendments “recognize the legitimacy of the PRC’s rule on the Chinese mainland, and stipulate that members of the Legislative Yuan and the National Assembly and the president and vice president shall be elected by

¹⁷¹ J. Bruce Jacobs and I.-Hao Ben Liu, “Lee Teng-Hui and the Idea of ‘Taiwan’*,” *The China Quarterly* 190 (June 2007): 381, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741007001245>.

¹⁷² Jacobs and Liu, 381.

¹⁷³ Jacobs and Liu, 381.

¹⁷⁴ Jacobs and Liu, 382.

the people from the Taiwan area only.”¹⁷⁵ Cross-Strait relations fundamentally changed to what President Lee called “a special state-to-state relationship.”¹⁷⁶ These important policy changes within the ROC signaled a significant change in policy towards the mainland. On the one hand, they allowed for the recognition of the separation between Taiwan and the mainland while simultaneously underscoring the historic and ethnic connections across the Strait.

Later in his presidency, Lee Teng-hui’s stance on the issue of identity began to shift as he balanced cross-Strait relations with the domestic process of democratization. In 1994, during an interview with Japanese writer Shina Ryotaro, Lee stressed the uniqueness of Taiwanese identity and advocated the use of Taiwanese language and learning the history of Taiwan, rather than China, in the education system.¹⁷⁷ In accepting the KMT nomination to run for president in 1996, Lee Teng-hui took these ideas a step further and stated that he “felt the Taiwan people must truly possess sovereignty before they can develop their will for freedom and create their own future.”¹⁷⁸ Throughout his presidency, Lee Teng-hui cautiously advocated for the development of a “Taiwan consciousness” while continuously reiterating the need to work towards “national unification.”¹⁷⁹ After winning the first direct presidential election in 1996, Lee Teng-hui gave a speech that again drew on this idea of “Taiwan consciousness,” when he referred to a “common homeland” of the Taiwanese people made up of “a closely bound and interdependent community” wherein Taiwanese people “have to work together as one man.”¹⁸⁰ Timothy Wong notes that “it is clear that Lee was adopting the rhetoric of nationalism and was projecting an image of the Taiwanese nation independent of China and the nationalism of the PRC.”¹⁸¹ Wong goes

¹⁷⁵ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 197.

¹⁷⁶ Wong, 197.

¹⁷⁷ Jacobs and Liu, “Lee Teng-Hui and the Idea of ‘Taiwan’*,” 383.

¹⁷⁸ Jacobs and Liu, 385.

¹⁷⁹ Jacobs and Liu, 385–87.

¹⁸⁰ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 195.

¹⁸¹ Wong, 195.

on to argue that “by realigning the state’s interest with a new Taiwanese culture, the democratization of the ROC state has challenged the primacy of the Chinese national cultural discourse.”¹⁸² President Lee Teng-hui’s cautious attempt at harnessing Taiwan’s nascent nationalism, even while balancing the delicate issue of cross-Strait relations, introduced a new dynamic into the public conversation about identity.

C. THE INFLUENCE OF THE CCP

Externally, pressure from the CCP in response to the democratization of the ROC had a considerable impact on the development of the Taiwanese identity. Chia-lung Lin argues that the aggression that the CCP has shown towards Taiwan’s democratization “has given rise to a sense of common suffering among the people of Taiwan.”¹⁸³ Referencing Charles Tilly’s claim that war makes states, Lin further argues that “the constant threat from the People’s Republic of China has been a very important element in Taiwan’s recent state building and nation building.”¹⁸⁴ As noted above, the threat of the CCP was influential in the evolution of both the KMT and DPP party platforms due to the need to attract more moderate voters that were primarily concerned about the threat posed by China. Lin points to three indicators that he believes “reveal a positive correlation between the rise in cross-Strait tension and people’s self-identification as Taiwanese and support for Taiwanese independence.”¹⁸⁵ The indicators highlighted by Lin were the change in public opinion from in the early stages of democratization, the Taiwanese reaction to the Thousand Island Lake incident (see below), and the confrontations around the 1996 presidential election. The Taiwanese people responded to the PRC’s efforts to isolate and intimidate the ROC in ways that were unintended and unexpected by the CCP.

As noted above, President Lee Teng-hui’s National Unification Guidelines were intended to bring structure to cross-Strait relations and negotiations. Beginning in 1993, the ROC and the PRC began dialogues through two “nongovernmental” bodies, the Straits

¹⁸² Wong, 195.

¹⁸³ Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism,” 219.

¹⁸⁴ Lin, 231.

¹⁸⁵ Lin, 232.

Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), respectively.¹⁸⁶ The language characterizing the contact is important to note. The ROC insisted that the talks were “practical consultations” and not “political negotiations” and the resultant increase in economic exchange did not produce progress on the topic of reunification.¹⁸⁷ While these two entities engaged in dialogue, steps were taken on both sides of the Strait that signaled noncooperation. As noted above, the voice of the independence movement was growing as the public became more involved in politics and, as will be discussed below, an increasing number of ROC citizens were identifying as Taiwanese. The CCP issued a white paper entitled “The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China” in August 1993 which reaffirmed its commitment to reunification and called for the cessation of all arms sales to Taiwan.¹⁸⁸ The PRC also blocked the ROC’s bids for membership at the United Nations, effectively limiting the international maneuver space of the ROC.¹⁸⁹ Despite the opportunity for open dialogue provided by the SEF and ARATS, tensions remained in cross-Strait relations which had a marked impact on the perceptions of Taiwanese.

During this period of enhanced cross-Strait economic and tourist interaction, another incident occurred that shocked the Taiwanese public. On March 31, 1994, a group of twenty-four Taiwanese tourists were robbed and killed on a trip to Thousand Island Lake in Zhejiang Province.¹⁹⁰ Evidence surfaced that members of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) were involved in the incident and the Taiwanese public were shocked at the brutality of the incident.¹⁹¹ Chia-lung Lin argues that this incident played

¹⁸⁶ Weixing Hu, “China’s Taiwan Policy and East Asian Security,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 27, no. 3 (January 1997): 379, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472339780000221>.

¹⁸⁷ Suisheng Zhao, “Deadlock: Beijing’s National Reunification Strategy after Lee Teng-Hui,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 48, no. 2 (March 2001): 44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2001.11655924>.

¹⁸⁸ “The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China,” Taiwan Affairs Office & Information Office State Council The People’s Republic of China, August 1993, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cegv/eng/zywjyjh/t176936.htm>.

¹⁸⁹ Sigrid Winkler, “Taiwan’s UN Dilemma: To Be or Not To Be,” *Brookings* (blog), June 20, 2012, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/taiwans-un-dilemma-to-be-or-not-to-be/>.

¹⁹⁰ Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism,” 233.

¹⁹¹ Lin, 233.

an important role in strengthening the sense of collective identity amongst Taiwanese, providing them with a strong sense of unity and a clear opponent in the PRC.¹⁹² President Lee Teng-hui noted that the incident impacted Taiwanese across the political spectrum and that “the PRC government has probably not realized its significance. It has also cast a deep shadow over our cross-Strait exchanges.”¹⁹³ While seemingly an isolated incidence of brutality, the Thousand Island Lake incident of 1994 resonated with the people of Taiwan.

The PRC also engaged in more overt pressure campaigns against the ROC during this period. Following a trip to the United States by Lee Teng-hui, the CCP decided to shift tactics to coercion. In 1995 and 1996, the PLA conducted a series of military exercises designed to intimidate the ROC and influence the elections in Taiwan.¹⁹⁴ These exercises included missile tests in proximity to Taiwan, amphibious landing exercises, and joint ground, naval, and air military exercises.¹⁹⁵ The PRC shifted its approach, according to Suisheng Zhao, due to a “sense of having been betrayed by Lee Teng-hui’s ‘obstinacy and deceit.’”¹⁹⁶ Lee’s trip to the United States and his public statements about the nature of cross-Strait relations and Taiwanese identity were seen in Beijing as the beginning of a serious push towards Taiwanese independence.¹⁹⁷ However, the result of the saber-rattling backfired on the PRC: Lee was reelected in 1996, polling data showed an increase in support for independence, and the DPP won landslide victories in the 1997 county magistrate and mayoral elections.¹⁹⁸ The PRC’s aggression towards the ROC had an equal but opposite effect that what was intended. It likely acted as a force to unite the Taiwanese people who, through the process of democratization, were beginning to create a stronger sense of self, against a clear and present “other” in the form of the PRC.

¹⁹² Lin, 233.

¹⁹³ Lin, 233.

¹⁹⁴ Zhao, “Deadlock,” 46–47.

¹⁹⁵ Zhao, 47.

¹⁹⁶ Zhao, 47.

¹⁹⁷ Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism,” 233–34.

¹⁹⁸ Zhao, “Deadlock,” 48.

D. IMPACT ON THE MASSES

The changes at the political elite level and the external pressure from the CCP were accompanied by new opportunities of expression and action at the mass level. Lin notes that democratization and electoral participation created a “swirl” effect wherein the process of campaigning, voting, participation in political parties, and discussing politics and foreign affairs in social circles normalized the discussion of fundamental issues surrounding the national identity question.¹⁹⁹ Chia-hung Tsai argues that “ethnicity plays the most crucial role in shaping the voting and partisan identities of Taiwan citizens.”²⁰⁰ Given its impact on the political landscape, consistent polling data has been captured in Taiwan since 1994 on the interrelated issues of identity, party preference, and the question of reunification with the mainland. The Election Study Center of National Chengchi University (NCCU) conducts regular telephone-based interviews to capture trends on these three issues.²⁰¹ This chapter will discuss the polling data corresponding with the period of ROC democratization while the subsequent chapter will review the polling data from 2001 to 2021.

Figure 1 tracks the change of identity responses over the years, beginning with data from 1992. The percentage of respondents identifying as Taiwanese increased from 17.6 percent in 1992 to 36.9 percent in 2000 while those identifying as Chinese decreased from 25.5 percent to 12.5 percent over the same period. This response likely correlates with the increase in public discourse around the question of identity as Taiwan underwent the process of democratization. This trend has continued all the way up to the latest polling data from 2021. The sharp increase (almost 10 percent) in Taiwanese identification between 1996 and 1997 occurs in the wake of the PRC’s intimidation campaign involving military exercises near Taiwan.

¹⁹⁹ Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism,” 227.

²⁰⁰ Chia-hung Tsai, “Who Is the Taiwan Voter?,” in *The Taiwan Voter*, ed. Christopher Achen and T.Y. Wang (University of Michigan Press, 2017), 26, <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9375036>.

²⁰¹ For data collection methodology, see the following NCCU link: [https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/upload/44/6965/%E9%87%8D%E8%A6%81%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E6%85%8B%E5%BA%A6%E5%88%86%E4%BD%88%E8%B6%A8%E5%8B%A2%E5%9C%96%E8%B3%87%E6%96%99%E7%A0%94%E7%A9%B6%E6%96%B9%E6%B3%95%E8%AA%AA%E6%98%8E\(methodology\)202112.pdf](https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/upload/44/6965/%E9%87%8D%E8%A6%81%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E6%85%8B%E5%BA%A6%E5%88%86%E4%BD%88%E8%B6%A8%E5%8B%A2%E5%9C%96%E8%B3%87%E6%96%99%E7%A0%94%E7%A9%B6%E6%96%B9%E6%B3%95%E8%AA%AA%E6%98%8E(methodology)202112.pdf)

Figure 2 tracks respondents' outlook on the question of independence dating back to 1994. Respondents are asked to choose their preference among the choices listed in the legend of the above graph. The respondents opting for "unification as soon as possible" dropped from 4.4 percent of the queried population down to 2.3 percent and remained a generally consistent minority of the population through 2000 and beyond. Conversely, the respondents choosing "independence as soon as possible" went from 3.3 percent to 5.7 percent by 1997 before dropping back down to 3.1 percent by 2000. These two views, both opting for the most extreme, but opposite, outcome of the unification question, remained below 10 percent, combined, of those polled. The percentage of respondents advocating for the maintenance of the status quo vis-à-vis the mainland while moving towards independence noticeably increased from 1994 to 2000, correlating with the respondents' increase in DPP support and the overall identification as being Taiwanese. The percentage of respondents advocating for some form of the status quo constitutes the overwhelming majority, highlighting the importance of pragmatism and the concern over the threat of the use of force from the PRC.

Figure 3 shows that, while the percentage of respondents who identified as independent or did not respond remained high from 1992 to 2000, identification with the DPP rose steadily from 3.3 percent in 1992 to 26 percent in 2000. As the ROC opened itself to democratic discourse and electoral access increased, so too did support for the DPP as the main party in opposition to the KMT. Popular elections provided both the opportunity to develop a party base and the necessity to adapt party platforms that appealed to the voter. Arguably, this dynamic forced political elites to modify their traditional positions on the issue of identity to attract and mobilize support.

This survey data reflects the changes occurring in the minds of ROC citizens during the process of democratization. Rou-Lan Chen notes that "psychologically, the uncertainty about national identity among the inhabitants of the island was tied in with deep anxieties about the power shift from the minority mainlanders to the majority Taiwanese."²⁰² Yunhan Chu and Jih-wen Lin argue that "recurring political participation under a democratic

²⁰² Chen, "Reconstructed Nationalism in Taiwan," 524.

regime helped develop a sense of collective consciousness among the people, transforming the term ‘Taiwan’ from a geographic unit to a political community.”²⁰³ The process of democratization, coupled with the threat posed by an outside group (mainland China), enabled a Taiwanese national identity to develop during President Lee Teng-hui’s presidency by allowing the Taiwanese people to coalesce around an imagined community with a shared history, shared adversary, and the ability to work towards a shared objective.

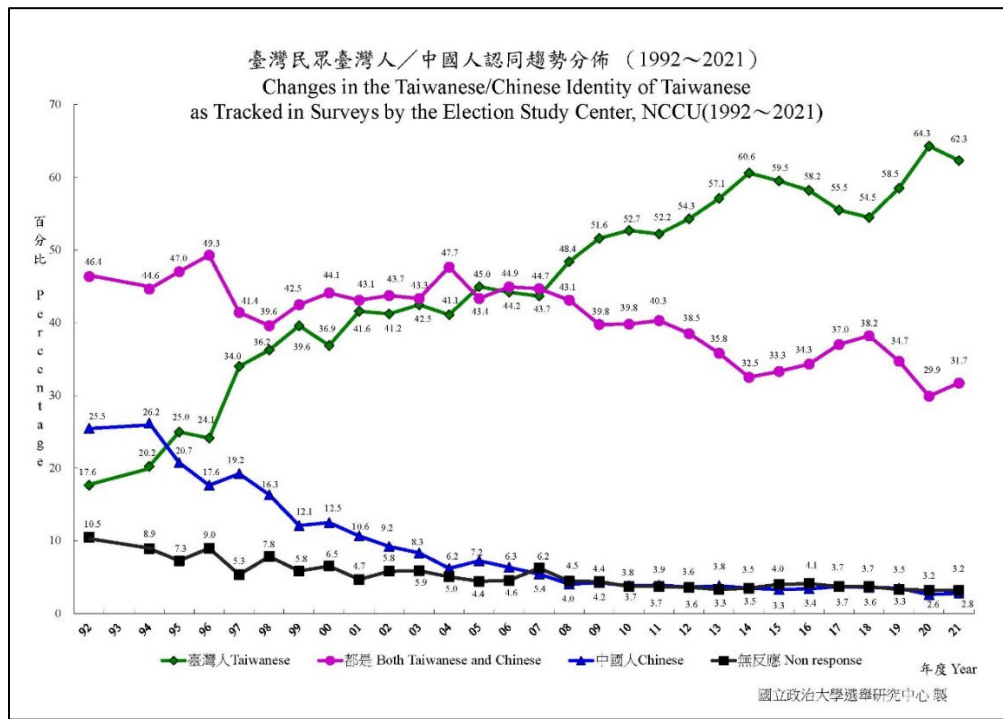


Figure 1. Taiwanese Identity Trends (1992-2021).²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Chu and Lin, “Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity,” 123.

²⁰⁴ Source: “Election Study Center, NCCU-Trends of Core Political Attitudes,” Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/eng/PageDoc?fid=7424>.

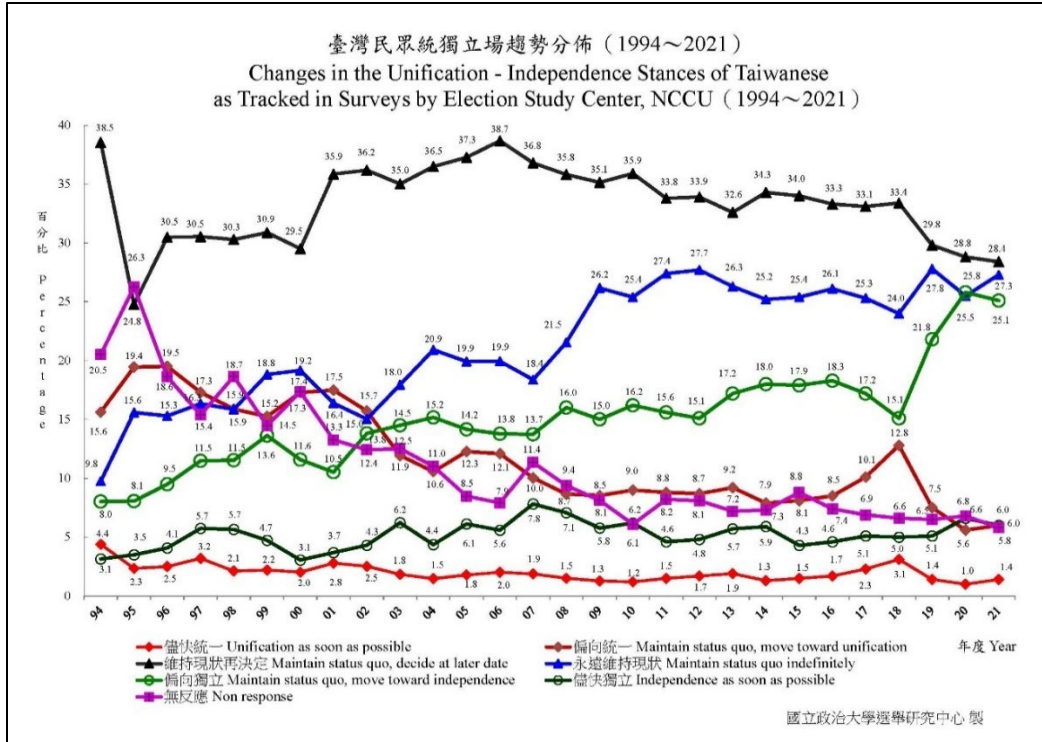


Figure 2. Stances on the Question of Taiwan Independence (1994-2021).²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/eng/PageDoc?fid=7424>.

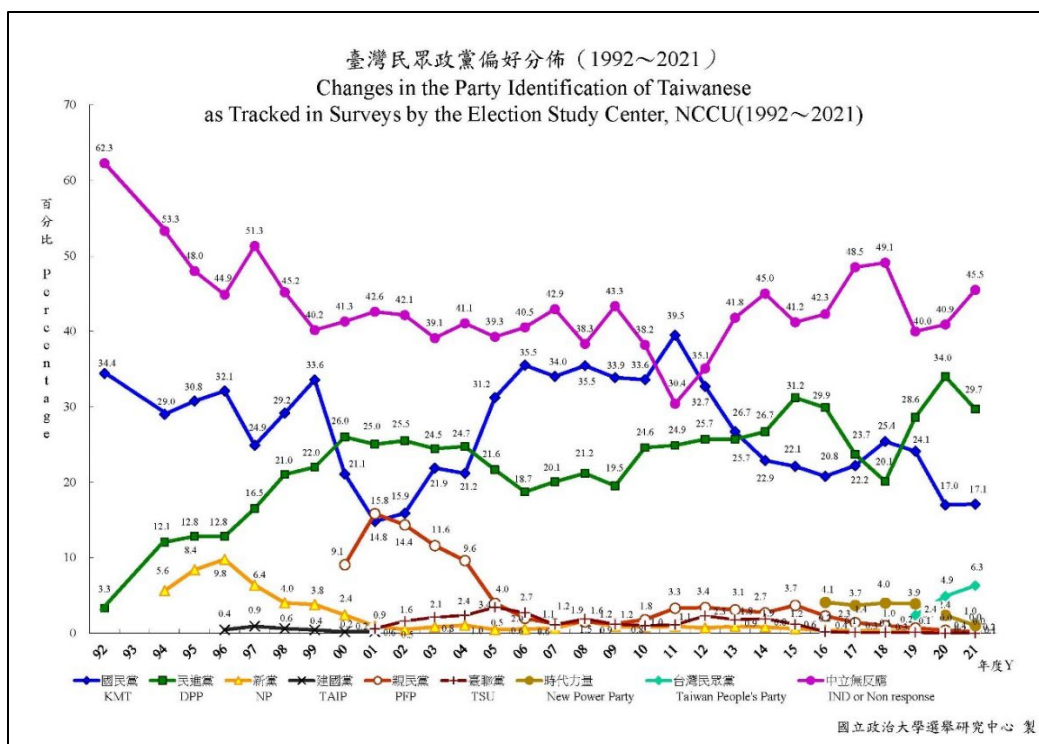


Figure 3. Taiwanese Political Party Identification Trends (1992-2021).²⁰⁶

E. CIVIC NATIONALISM

The presidential election in 2000, in which DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian was elected, marked the first peaceful transition of power from one party to another in the ROC. After two free presidential elections and one peaceful transition of power, the ROC could be a consolidated democracy. Chu and Lin would argue that this process of democratization also caused a change in Taiwanese nationalism, changing the “term ‘Taiwanese’ from an ethnic term for native Taiwanese to a civic term for citizens of Taiwan.”²⁰⁷ Writing in 2003, C.L. Chiou posited that “Taiwanese nationalism is today a modern functional civic nationalism with a political agenda.”²⁰⁸ Considering the threat of the PRC, the desire for independence, and the commitment to democratic ideals, he further argues that “Taiwan’s

²⁰⁶ Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/eng/PageDoc?fid=7424>.

²⁰⁷ Chu and Lin, “Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity,” 123.

²⁰⁸ Chiou, “Taiwan’s Evolving Nationalism: Ideology for Independence,” 119.

incipient nationalism helps to serve as social and political glue for a people who are not unified by shared history, ethnicity, language or indeed nationhood—the usual foundations of nationalism and national identity.”²⁰⁹ From this perspective, it was the emphasis on liberal democratic ideals and independence that drove Taiwanese nationalism rather than the ethnic connection shared by Taiwanese.

President Lee himself described the “New Taiwanese” as an “identity that transcended the traditional divide between local Taiwanese and ethnic mainlanders. It identified Taiwan as its homeland and the ROC on Taiwan as an independent sovereign state that should be the identity for all Taiwanese people.”²¹⁰ Writing in 2001, Timothy Wong concluded that Taiwanese nationalism had “moved from an ethnic nationalism emphasizing the distinct historical-cultural experience of local Taiwanese, to a civic one with liberal values and equal citizenship as the basis of Taiwan’s national construction.”²¹¹ This assessments and conclusions were written during or immediately after the rapid democratization of the ROC after years of authoritarian rule. The following chapter will assess the nature and extent of nationalism during the Chen, Ma, and Tsai administrations.

²⁰⁹ Chiou, 120.

²¹⁰ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 196.

²¹¹ Wong, 200.

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IV. NATIONALISM IN POST-DEMOCRATIZED TAIWAN

Following the rapid democratization of the ROC under President Lee Teng-hui, nationalism - rather than fading into the background - remained an important factor in Taiwanese politics and society in the decades that followed. This chapter will review the changing nature of national identity and nationalism throughout the presidential administrations of Chen Shui-bian, Ma Ying-jeou, and Tsai Ing-wen, as well as the role each played in both domestic politics and cross-Strait relations. Each section will explore the ways in which both ethnic and civic nationalism presented themselves during each administration and how the respective presidents, their political parties, and their opponents cultivated or reacted to these forms of popular mobilization.

A. THE CHEN SHUI-BIAN ADMINISTRATION

1. Mobilization of Ethnic Nationalism

While the transition of power after the 2000 presidential election was a peaceful one that marked the first change in ruling party, it was by no means a decisive victory for the DPP. Chen Shui-bian won the 2000 presidential election with less than 40 percent of the popular vote.²¹² His opponents, Lien Chan and James Soong, split the conservative vote after an inter-party disagreement within the KMT caused James Soong to run as an independent and later form the People First Party (PFP).²¹³ John F. Copper notes that “a good campaign, ethnic voting, a late surge, and China threatening Taiwan’s voters ... succored Chen.”²¹⁴ President Chen Shui-bian was able to ride the wave of Taiwanese nationalism to secure the DPP’s first presidential election, but the failure to secure a majority of the popular votes suggests that ethnic nationalism was not the sole motivator of the Taiwanese citizenry. Despite the election results, President Chen Shui-bian and his

²¹² John F. Copper, “The Devolution of Taiwan’s Democracy during the Chen Shui-Bian Era,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 60 (June 1, 2009): 465, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560902770651>.

²¹³ Copper, 466.

²¹⁴ Copper, 465.

administration attempted to leverage ethnic nationalism and cultivate a uniquely Taiwanese national identity while in power. Furthermore, he doubled down on this sentiment in his bid for reelection in 2004.

Once in power, President Chen's administration sought to continue the process of Taiwanization initiated by President Lee Teng-hui. This process was implemented through 'de-Sinification' policies that were intended to promote Taiwanese culture and a Taiwanese identity through the education system.²¹⁵ One example of this effort was the presentation of a revised guideline for school textbooks, proposed by the administration in 2006, that aimed to establish a historical view that "Taiwan has always been an independent state but was invaded and controlled successively by China, the Netherlands and Japan."²¹⁶ This modification to textbooks presents an attempt to underscore Taiwan's unique history, establishing the island as separate from the mainland, especially in its experience with colonialism. The Chen administration went further than educational policy proposals to promote de-Sinification. John F. Copper notes that President Chen "*de facto* institutionalized ethnic discrimination."²¹⁷ Citing a 2004 report from the Taiwan Civil Rights Watch Group, he notes reports of official bias—in hiring, firing, and promotions—prejudiced against mainlanders increased and that "discrimination became so serious in the military and the intelligence agencies that pilots resigned in large numbers and intelligence officers defected to China taking with them top-secret documents."²¹⁸ In turn, "DPP leaders referred to Mainland Chinese as 'traitors'."²¹⁹ Reports of discrimination in the workplace and in public during the Chen administration were strikingly similar to the discrimination against the *benshengren* during the period of authoritarian rule under the KMT.

²¹⁵ Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan," 348.

²¹⁶ Qiang Xin, "Having Much in Common? Changes and Continuity in Beijing's Taiwan Policy," *The Pacific Review*, 2020, 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2020.1773908>.

²¹⁷ Copper, "The Devolution of Taiwan's Democracy during the Chen Shui-Bian Era," 471.

²¹⁸ Copper, 472.

²¹⁹ Copper, 472.

Leading up to the 2004 presidential election, the KMT attempted to emphasize the discriminatory practices of the Chen administration. According to Christian Schafferer, “the KMT-led coalition initiated a media barrage against President Chen” comparing him to Mussolini, Hitler, and Saddam Hussein.²²⁰ Despite the ethnically charged counter-campaign, President Chen increased his nationalist rhetoric. Yu-Shan Wu argues that, “Through radicalization, Chen was able to bolster a campaign that was initially dampened by the much-less-than-desirable performance of the government during his first term.”²²¹ Joanna Zylinska notes that, for Chen and the DPP, “national identity and the cross-Strait relations became the sources of democratic legitimacy and, as such, an issue of the party’s survival.”²²² Chen Shui-bian was able to weather the KMT’s defamatory campaign and the sluggish economy, however, and gained one million more votes in 2004 than in the 2000 popular election.²²³ After reelection, President Chen’s stance on national identity became increasingly overt.

This increased emphasis on the question of identity was displayed through the various speeches given by Chen after reelection. In his inaugural address in 2004, he referenced the Taiwanese “shared destiny” and “common memory.”²²⁴ In following speeches, he frequently referenced the 228 Incident that invited recollection of regime brutality during the period of KMT authoritarian rule.²²⁵ In a 2006 New Year address, the president opined that “with no clear national identity, our national security cannot be safeguarded, for there will be no basis upon which national interests can be defended.”²²⁶

²²⁰ Christian Schafferer, “The Dialectic of Nationalism and Democratic Governance in Taiwan,” *Asian International Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (October 19, 2016): 164–65, <https://doi.org/10.1163/2667078X-01702008>.

²²¹ Wu, “Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Implications: Testing the Worst-Case Scenario,” 623.

²²² Joanna Zylinska, “Chen Shui-Bian and the Battle for National Identity – An Analysis of Key Speeches from His Second Term,” *Taiwan Insight* (blog), May 20, 2019, <https://taiwaninsight.org/2019/05/20/chen-shui-bian-and-the-battle-for-national-identity-an-analysis-of-key-speeches-from-his-second-term/>.

²²³ Wu, “Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Implications: Testing the Worst-Case Scenario,” 623.

²²⁴ Zylinska, “Chen Shui-Bian and the Battle for National Identity – An Analysis of Key Speeches from His Second Term.”

²²⁵ Zylinska.

²²⁶ Zylinska.

These public speeches referencing Taiwan's identity and the shared experiences of the Taiwanese people were a clear attempt at galvanizing Taiwanese nationalism. Tying national identity to national defense underscored the connection between the question of identity and cross-Strait relations.

In his first term, President Chen made "The Four Noes and One Without" pledge during his inaugural address, seemingly reaffirming that Taiwan would not move towards independence under his watch.²²⁷ However, the position articulated in that speech was not continued into President Chen's second term in office. According to Rou-Lan Chen, the DPP put greater emphasis on Taiwan's future national status as a political issue and "several attempts were made to promote de jure independence."²²⁸ The rise in Taiwanese nationalism experienced under President Chen, according to Yu-Shan Wu, was largely "the result of government engineering orchestrated by top leaders."²²⁹ Dongtao Qi argues that the Chen administration transformed the Taiwanese Independence Movement (TIM) into a state-sponsored nationalism movement (starting in 2000) as large numbers pro-unification *waishengren* were replaced by pro-independence activists in key "military, governmental, educational, and state enterprise systems."²³⁰ The administration was unable to leverage enough popular support for the TIM to overcome its shortcomings in dealing with a struggling economy and corruption concerns, and the president's family was itself embroiled in a corruption scandal in 2006 that led to protests throughout Taiwan.²³¹ The DPP administration "pushed the confrontational nationalism strategy to be more radical in its fight against the KMT and consolidate its core base," but was unable to

²²⁷ The "Four Noes" declared by President Chen referred to: (1) Taiwan would not declare independence, (2) No change of the national title from 'the Republic of China', (3) No change of the ROC constitution regarding special state-to-state relations, (4) No referendum on unification or independence. The 'One Without' referred to President Chen pledging to not abolish the National Unification Council or the National Unification Guidelines. Chan, "Beyond National Identity in Taiwan: A Multidimensional and Evolutionary Conceptualization," 870.

²²⁸ Rou-Lan Chen, "Beyond National Identity in Taiwan: A Multidimensional and Evolutionary Conceptualization," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 5 (2012): 870, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2012.52.5.845>.

²²⁹ Wu, "Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Implications: Testing the Worst-Case Scenario," 620.

²³⁰ Dongtao Qi, "Divergent Popular Support for the DPP and the Taiwan Independence Movement, 2000–2012," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 78 (November 1, 2012): 979, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.701035>.

²³¹ Qi, 980.

overcome the unpopularity it cultivated over its poor economic performance and the failure of its anti-corruption initiatives.²³² Leveraging Taiwanese nationalism alone was no longer enough to garner support from voters.

2. Assessing the Public Response

Drawing on the polling data presented in the previous chapter, one can see multiple trends continuing under the Chen administration. From 2000 to 2008, NCCU polling data shows an 11.5 percent increase in identification with a Taiwanese identity for 48.4 percent of respondents.²³³ Over the same period, respondents identifying with a Chinese identity decreased by eight percent and those identifying with both a Taiwanese and Chinese identity stayed relatively constant. Of note, the percentage of respondents electing a solely Taiwanese identity surpassed those identifying with as both Chinese and Taiwanese in 2008 by 5.3 percent and never dropped again. Referencing data from their own social survey conducted between 1992 and 2005, Shiau-Chi Shen and Nai-the Wu conclude that “native Taiwanese are seemingly developing a new concept of Taiwanese-ness to demand a new and separate state. Their nationalistic ideas put them close to the typology of ethnic nationalism.”²³⁴ The polling data indicates that the de-Sinification efforts of the DPP and the party leaders’ appeal to a unique Taiwanese was positively received by many Taiwanese people, particularly the *benshengren*.

Polling data shows a consistent desire to maintain the status quo regarding the question of Taiwanese independence among respondents.²³⁵ Beginning in 2001 and continuing to 2021, the majority of respondents were in support of maintaining the status quo indefinitely or with a decision made at a later date. The percentage of respondents favoring the status quo with a move toward unification dropped from 17.4 percent in 2000 to 8.7 percent in 2008. Those in favor of independence as soon as possible rose from 3.1

²³² Qi, 980.

²³³ Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, “Election Study Center, NCCU-Trends of Core Political Attitudes.”

²³⁴ Shen and Wu, “Ethnic and Civic Nationalisms,” 137.

²³⁵ Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, “Election Study Center, NCCU-Trends of Core Political Attitudes.”

percent in 2000 to 7.1 percent in 2008 while those in favor of unification as soon as possible dropped from 2 percent in 2000 to 1.5 percent in 2008. The survey data shows that, while the number of respondents interested in unification dropped, those interested in independence as soon as possible also remained a small minority. This indicates that the development of Taiwanese identity and the strength of Taiwanese nationalism during the period of the Chen Shui-bian presidency was not enough to instill an urgency for de jure independence amongst the citizens of Taiwan.

3. Evidence of Civic Nationalism Under the Chen Shui-bian Administration

As ethnic nationalism was cultivated under President Chen Shui-bian, evidence of strengthening civic nationalism could also be found. Christian Schafferer notes that “civic nationalism ... neither pursues nor requires cultural homogeneity. Membership is open to any individual committed to the values of the political space.”²³⁶ Polling data shows the drop in support of the DPP in respondents during Chen’s second term in office²³⁷ but, during the same time period, “support for de-jure independence increased and Taiwanese identity experienced a constant rise as well.”²³⁸ The drop in support for the traditional party of ethnic Taiwanese, the DPP, suggests that the Taiwanese people were beginning to coalesce around a new, political Taiwanese identity. Gunter Schubert, writing in 2004, argues that “Taiwanese nationalism is liberal and civic”²³⁹ and that “Taiwan’s national identity is mainly based on the sovereign state as a symbol of the island republic’s specific history and political development.”²⁴⁰ While ethnic identity issues remained a driving force in politics during the Chen administration, Timothy Ka-Ying Wong, writing in 2001, argues that “the new citizens of Taiwan are beginning to identify their political future with

²³⁶ Schafferer, “The Dialectic of Nationalism and Democratic Governance in Taiwan,” 161.

²³⁷ Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, “Election Study Center, NCCU-Trends of Core Political Attitudes.”

²³⁸ Schafferer, “The Dialectic of Nationalism and Democratic Governance in Taiwan,” 163.

²³⁹ Gunter Schubert, “Taiwan’s Political Parties and National Identity: The Rise of an Overarching Consensus,” *Asian Survey* 44, no. 4 (2004): 537, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.534>.

²⁴⁰ Schubert, 553.

the concerns of Taiwan's own civic state.”²⁴¹ Joseph Wong adds that “the inculcation of political, social and economic citizenship is inextricably tied to ethnic politics on the island.”²⁴² The concerns of identity, ethnic and civic nationalism, and a pragmatic approach to cross-Strait relations would continue to play a role in Taiwan in the Ma Ying-jeou administration from 2008 to 2016.

B. THE MA YING-JEOU ADMINISTRATION

1. A Return to Sinocentric Policies

The KMT returned to power in 2008 after eight years of DPP control, winning landslide victories in the presidential election in and the election for the Legislative Yuan.²⁴³ The eight years that followed “saw the warming of cross-Strait relations and close economic and political ties between China and Taiwan under [Ma Ying-jeou's] administration.”²⁴⁴ This led to increased economic dependence on the mainland as Taiwanese industry sought greater opportunities from Chinese markets and labor. The cooperation also increased the leverage that the CCP could place on Taiwanese business and political elites. The KMT administration's perceived openness to the mainland led to significant backlash from Taiwanese nationalists over concern that increased dependence would endanger the continuation of de facto independence for the island.

Taiwanese investment in the mainland had been increasing since the initial stages of democratization in the 1990s. Under Ma Ying-jeou, it peaked at 69.2 percent of Taiwan's total global investment.²⁴⁵ This increase was driven by Taiwanese business

²⁴¹ Wong, “From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity,” 193.

²⁴² Joseph Wong, “Deepening Democracy in Taiwan,” *Pacific Affairs* 76, no. 2 (2003): 254, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40024392>.

²⁴³ Thomas B. Gold, “Taiwan in 2008: My Kingdom for a Horse,” *Asian Survey* 49, no. 1 (2009): 88, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2009.49.1.88>.

²⁴⁴ Justin P. Kwan, “The Rise of Civic Nationalism: Shifting Identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations* 2, no. 2 (September 2016): 952, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/1815408708/abstract/B5282E05D3ED43FFPQ/1>.

²⁴⁵ Wu Jieh-min, “More Than Sharp Power: Chinese Influence Operations in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Beyond,” in *China's Influence and the Center-Periphery Tug of War in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Indo-Pacific*, ed. Brian C.H. Fong, Wu Jieh-min, and Andrew J. Nathan (New York: Routledge, 2021), 25.

enterprises and businesspeople known as *Taishang*, who were increasingly “drawn into Chinese domestic markets and became involved in a deeper interplay of connections with local government.”²⁴⁶ The KMT, having run on a pledge to boost economic growth on the island, “swiftly enacted its pro-China policies by signing free-trade agreements with Beijing and opening the door to Chinese officials.”²⁴⁷ Increased cooperation also meant an influx of tourists from the mainland. The Ma Ying-jeou administration’s “limitless commercial opportunities” initiative saw an annual increase of roughly 600,000 Chinese tourists per year, rising from 329,200 in 2008 to roughly four million from 2014 to 2015.²⁴⁸ According to Tsai Hung-Jeng, the CCP’s intention behind the tourism boom was “to create Taiwanese economic dependence, such that in the short term it could serve as economic leverage to exert political influence, and in the long term could achieve actual economic unification between China and Taiwan.”²⁴⁹ Ma Ying-jeou and the KMT were focused on jumpstarting the Taiwanese economy and saw cooperation with the mainland as the ideal avenue to achieving that end.

The warming of cross-Strait relations was also heavily supported by media on the mainland and in Taiwan. The local Taiwanese media helped to portray “an atmosphere of ‘peace and prosperity’ in which Chinese officials went straight to the grassroots and built-up island-wide patron-client relations.”²⁵⁰ Much of the mass media went beyond supporting the increased cooperation and actively targeted those opposed to Beijing’s growing influence, labeling them as “Sinophobic” and having a “closed-door mentality”.²⁵¹ This media support was, in many ways, constructed by the CCP. Beginning in 2009, many Chinese media groups organized events known as “Cross-Strait Media

²⁴⁶ Jieh-min, 25.

²⁴⁷ Jieh-min, 27.

²⁴⁸ Hung-Jeng Tsai, “China’s Influence on Taiwan’s Economy: The Economic Statecraft of Mainlander Tourism,” in *China’s Influence and the Center-Periphery Tug of War in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Indo-Pacific*, ed. Brian C.H. Fong, Wu Jieh-min, and Andrew J. Nathan (New York: Routledge, 2021), 194.

²⁴⁹ Tsai, 194.

²⁵⁰ Jieh-min, “More Than Sharp Power: Chinese Influence Operations in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Beyond,” 27.

²⁵¹ Jieh-min, 28.

Summits” that involved participation from many Taiwanese media outlets, including government-owned media firms.²⁵² In addition to discussing Chinese culture and nationalism, the summits involved the signing of joint statements and initiatives that promoted the media’s role in supporting peaceful cross-Strait relations, “the ‘soft power of Chinese culture’, the ‘discourse power of Chinese-language media’ and the ‘fundamental interests of the Chinese nation.’”²⁵³ The CCP also developed and implemented large-scale disinformation campaigns. As Huang Jaw-Nian notes, “false information produced by official media or content farms in China was disseminated from China to Taiwan by journalists, cyber armies or common people ... which weakened ... Taiwanese people’s capacity for forming authentic public opinion.”²⁵⁴ The CCP, supported by an aggressive media campaign and a cooperative KMT, attempted to exert political and economic leverage on the ROC and the Taiwanese people.

The KMT also implemented educational reform in an attempt to roll back the curriculum changes made by the Chen Shui-bian administration. Early in Ma’s first term, members of the conservative wing of the KMT voiced criticism over what they viewed as a “de-sinicisation” of the temporary curriculum changes made in the 1990s and during the Chen administration.²⁵⁵ A commission was formed to revise the state-approved history curriculum consisting of nine university professors and five high school teachers.²⁵⁶ The commission put forth a revised “101 Curriculum” which re-emphasized the Chinese heritage of Taiwan’s identity and the repressive colonial aspect of Japanese rule while softening the language used in describing the post-war period of authoritarian rule under

²⁵² Jaw-Nian Huang, “China’s Influence on Taiwan’s Media: A Model of Transnational Diffusion of Chinese Censorship,” in *China’s Influence and the Center-Periphery Tug of War in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Indo-Pacific*, ed. Brian C.H. Fong, Wu Jieh-min, and Andrew J. Nathan (New York: Routledge, 2021), 210.

²⁵³ Huang, 210.

²⁵⁴ Huang, 210.

²⁵⁵ Vladimir Stolojan, “Curriculum Reform and the Teaching of History in High Schools during the Ma Ying-Jeou Presidency,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 46, no. 1 (April 1, 2017): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261704600105>.

²⁵⁶ Stolojan, 111.

the KMT.²⁵⁷ The modifications made to the 101 Curriculum were not ones that strongly advocated for reunification, but did take on a China-centric identity perspective whereas its predecessor was more Taiwan-centered.²⁵⁸ Vladimir Stolojan notes that the reform “ended up as one of the most contested and unpopular policies led by the Ma administration.”²⁵⁹ Throughout Ma Ying-jeou’s two terms in office, the warming in cross-Strait relations and the changes that accompanied it ultimately resulted in a backlash from Taiwanese nationalists and the broader citizenry.

2. The Social Backlash

Resistance to President Ma Ying-jeou’s pro-Chinese agenda was both immediate and lasting. The first instance of this resistance occurred in response to the visit of the PRC’s chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), Chen Yun-lin, to Taiwan in November, 2008.²⁶⁰ Leading up to the visit, “symbols not only of Taiwanese national identity, but even of the Republic of China ... were forcibly removed so as not to offend Chen.”²⁶¹ The student-led protest became known as the Wild Strawberry Movement²⁶² and was initially intended to oppose the “Ma administration’s rapprochement with China” and was also supported by scholars and intellectuals.²⁶³ While the objectives of the protest were eventually widened to include police and executive reforms regarding misuse of power, the original impetus for the social backlash was the concern over the administration’s growing cooperation with the mainland and a sense that

²⁵⁷ Stolojan, 112, 121–24.

²⁵⁸ Stolojan, 124.

²⁵⁹ Stolojan, 126.

²⁶⁰ Kwan, “The Rise of Civic Nationalism,” 952.

²⁶¹ Ian Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement: Twenty-Four Days in a Student-Occupied Parliament, and the Future of the Region,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 1 (February 2015): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911814002174>.

²⁶² The Wild Strawberry Movement’s name was both a call-back to the Wild Lily Movement of 1990, a student-led pro-democracy protest, and a reference to the “strawberry generation,” a pejorative nickname assigned to youth that denoted a soft nature.

²⁶³ Wendy Lee, “This Week in Taiwan History: The Wild Strawberry Movement | Taiwan News | 2016–11–10 15:47:00,” *Taiwan News*, November 10, 2016, sec. Politics, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3026618>.

free speech was being restricted.²⁶⁴ The movement would mark “the beginning of a string of further conflicts between the government and protestors who disagreed with Taiwan’s closer relationship with China.”²⁶⁵ Participants in the Wild Strawberry Movement would remain active in resistance to warming cross-Strait relations.

In mid-2012, concern over mass media ownership and pro-Chinese messaging gave rise to the Anti-Media Monopoly Campaign. This movement, like the Wild Strawberry Movement, was student-led but garnered a far wider base of support among Taiwanese people.²⁶⁶ As noted by Ming-Yeh Rawnsley and Chien-san Feng, “the core issue of the movement was media ownership.”²⁶⁷ Acquisition of Taiwanese media platforms by mainland entities was growing rapidly and there was an indication that the Chinese government and platform owners were manipulating Taiwanese media platforms to deliver pro-Chinese messaging.²⁶⁸ The campaign was successful in blocking the Want Want China Times group, “a food and media conglomerate with extensive interests in China and a clear pro-China editorial slant” from gaining a controlling share in two major media outlets in Taiwan that were considered to be critical of the mainland.²⁶⁹ It also demonstrated a clear concern among Taiwanese people generally, and Taiwanese nationalists specifically, over the growing influence of the PRC on the island.

Perhaps the most significant resistance against the Ma administration’s policies vis-à-vis the mainland developed in 2014 and was in response to the controversial Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA). The CSSTA was negotiated behind closed doors by representatives from SEF and ARATS in July 2013.²⁷⁰ The agreement would open certain economic sectors on both sides of the Strait for investment from the other. The Ma

²⁶⁴ Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement,” 10.

²⁶⁵ Kwan, “The Rise of Civic Nationalism,” 954.

²⁶⁶ Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement,” 10.

²⁶⁷ Ming-Yeh T. Rawnsley and Chien-san Feng, “Anti-Media-Monopoly Policies and Further Democratisation in Taiwan,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 43, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261404300305>.

²⁶⁸ Rawnsley and Feng, 108.

²⁶⁹ Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement,” 10.

²⁷⁰ Rowen, 6.

administration presented the agreement as a major boost to the Taiwanese economy, but the Chung Hua Institute for Economic Research estimated it would bring only “a 0.025-0.034 percent increase in Taiwan’s annual gross domestic product.”²⁷¹ The concealed nature of the negotiations and concerns over deeper Chinese influence on the island led many people across society to oppose the CSSTA. Highlighting this concern, John Mearsheimer argued that China’s growing material power and nationalist objectives make it “deeply committed to making Taiwan part of China” and will, in time, be capable of achieving that end through military or economic means.²⁷²

Outrage over the CSSTA developed into what would be known as the Sunflower Movement.²⁷³ The Sunflower Movement occurred between March 18 and April 10, 2014. It included an occupation of the Legislative Yuan by protestors who were concerned not only about the closed nature of the negotiations, but also the “passing of ... [it] by the ruling party Kuomintang (KMT) at the legislature without a clause-by-clause review.”²⁷⁴ The protestors were mostly students from five major universities,²⁷⁵ but they also included DPP legislators, members of key civic groups, and others from across Taiwanese society.²⁷⁶ While the resistance to the CSSTA was concerned with the increasing dependence on the mainland, there was also significant concern over the KMT’s disregard for democratic processes when, “instead of conducting the promised review, KMT legislator Chang Ching-Chung, ... unilaterally declared that the review period had already ended and that the bill would be submitted to a plenary session on March 21.”²⁷⁷ Justin

²⁷¹ Rowen, 6.

²⁷² John J. Mearsheimer, “Say Goodbye to Taiwan,” Text, *The National Interest* (The Center for the National Interest, February 25, 2014), <https://nationalinterest.org/article/say-goodbye-taiwan-9931>.

²⁷³ The name of the movement was a call-back to the Wild Lily Movement and was coined after a florist distributed sunflowers to students gathered outside the Legislative Yuan building.

²⁷⁴ Kwan, “The Rise of Civic Nationalism,” 954.

²⁷⁵ Shiyin Rung Pan, “Changing Civil Society and National Identity After the Sunflower Movement,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ASLI QoL2014 (Annual Serial Landmark International Conference on Quality of Life) / AQoL 2014 Istanbul (ABRA International Conference on Quality of Life), Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey, 26 - 28 December 2014, 202 (August 22, 2015): 456–61, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.08.200>.

²⁷⁶ Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement,” 7.

²⁷⁷ Rowen, 5.

Kwan notes that “the issue of procedural democracy became a main concern and the relationship with China took an important secondary focus.”²⁷⁸ The Sunflower Movement succeeded in preventing the bill from being passed and the movement generated support for a number of democratic initiatives.²⁷⁹

3. Assessing the Nature of Nationalism

While there was an ethnic component to the Taiwanese nationalist response to the Ma Ying-jeou administration’s policies, particularly the controversies surrounding the proposed curriculum reforms, the Sunflower Movement demonstrated a more deliberate emphasis on the civic identity of Taiwan than previous movements. Rwei-Ren Wu goes so far as to argue that “the Sunflower movement in the spring of 2014 was none other than an outbreak of Taiwan’s civic nationalism”²⁸⁰ When assessing the NCCU polling data from 2008 to 2016, one can identify a continued trend in identity shift from the years prior. NCCU polling data shows a 9.8 percent increase in respondents identifying as Taiwanese and an 8.8 percent decrease in those identifying as both Taiwanese and Chinese from 2008 to 2016.²⁸¹ Those identifying as solely Chinese remained roughly constant during that same period. Of note, respondents claiming a solely Taiwanese identity became the majority by 2009 and have remained as such. Conversely, Figure 2 shows a relatively constant interest in maintaining some form of the status quo during the Ma administration years. Increasing Taiwanese identity did not necessarily translate into an increased desire for de jure independence for the ROC.

Jean-Pierre Cabestan argues that “political rapprochement and growing economic integration between Taiwan and China under Ma have paradoxically strengthened the

²⁷⁸ Kwan, “The Rise of Civic Nationalism,” 954.

²⁷⁹ Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement,” 16–18.

²⁸⁰ Rwei-Ren Wu, “Peripheral Nationalisms of Taiwan and Hong Kong Under China’s Influence: A Comparative-Nationalism Perspective,” in *China’s Influence and the Center-Periphery Tug of War in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Indo-Pacific*, ed. Brian C.H. Fong, Wu Jieh-min, and Andrew J. Nathan (New York: Routledge, 2021), 64.

²⁸¹ Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, “Election Study Center, NCCU-Trends of Core Political Attitudes.”

predominance of the Taiwanese identity.”²⁸² The social reaction to Ma’s policies, outlined above, demonstrated a shift in focus away from a primordial, ethnic-centered movement to a modern, civic form of nationalism. Christopher Hughes argues that the nature of Taiwanese nationalism was shaped by “the practices of sovereignty through the ballot box and the evolution of multi-party politics in the context of a thriving, pluralistic civil society in which identities shift, interact, and compete.”²⁸³ Throughout the Ma Ying-jeou administration, ethnic identity issues in Taiwan continued to play a role in politics and society. However, the consolidation of democracy in the ROC underscored the differences between Taiwan and the mainland in a different way. The stark differences in political systems provided the people of Taiwan with a readily identifiable separation between “us” and “them,” largely replacing the need to create separation through ethnic distinction. The increasing emphasis on safeguarding liberal democratic ideals like sovereignty, suffrage, and institutional transparency by Taiwanese nationalists demonstrated a more overtly civic element. The Wild Strawberry Movement, Sunflower Movement, and other protests demonstrated a form of nationalism that prioritized the civic rather than ethnic uniqueness of the ROC as a nation.

C. THE TSAI ING-WEN ADMINISTRATION: THE PENDULUM SWINGS (AGAIN?)

The KMT lost power in 2016 with election results that were even more profound than those in 2008. Cabestan notes that the DPP’s landslide victories in 2014 local elections and Tsai Ing-wen’s presidential election in 2016 “confirmed, among other things, the unpopularity of Ma’s Chinese nationalism.”²⁸⁴ Beijing, Washington, and the people of Taiwan were very interested in how the new DPP government would approach cross-Strait relations and all that it encompassed. Tsai Ing-wen campaigned with a promise to “preserve the ‘status quo,’ preserve the ‘ROC constitutional order,’ and, contrary to Chen Shui-bian,

²⁸² Jean-Pierre Cabestan, “Changing Identities in Taiwan under Ma Ying-Jeou,” in *Taiwan and China*, ed. Lowell Dittmer, 1st ed., Fitful Embrace (University of California Press, 2017), 49, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1w76wpm.6>.

²⁸³ Christopher R. Hughes, “Revisiting Identity Politics under Ma Ying- Jeou,” in *Political Changes in Taiwan Under Ma Ying-Jeou* (Routledge, 2014), 130.

²⁸⁴ Cabestan, “Changing Identities in Taiwan under Ma Ying-Jeou,” 50.

not give any bad ‘surprises’ to Washington or Beijing.”²⁸⁵ These promises represent a moderation in the DPP’s traditional stance as the pro-independence party and the lead party in the “Green Camp” of parties that generally garner support from *benshengren* and independence-leaning voters. Elected to her second term in office in 2020, her administration managed to walk a tight rope in relations with the mainland and with Washington as the Taiwanese identity continues to consolidate and prioritize civic notions of democracy and sovereignty, and identification with the island.

From the beginning of her first term, Tsai Ing-wen has taken efforts to reinforce the civic characteristics of Taiwanese nationalism in an effort to appeal broadly to the public, regardless of their ethnic identification. Although she reiterated her campaign promises in her 2016 victory speech, she included an important caveat that speaks to the importance of democratic ideals to the people of Taiwan. She stated that “Following the will and consensus of the Taiwanese people, we will work to maintain the status quo for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, in order to bring the greatest benefit and well-being to the Taiwanese people.”²⁸⁶ This statement reinforced her intent to maintain the status quo while underscoring the importance of the will of the Taiwanese people. The Tsai administration also took efforts to “open official Taiwanese nationalism to questions of gender equality and ethnic diversity,” officially apologizing for the ROC’s neglect of the aboriginal cultures and languages in 2016 and facilitating broad DPP support for the legalization of gay marriage in 2019.²⁸⁷ President Tsai also introduced a new term for the polity itself: beginning with the 2020 presidential campaign and continuing thereafter, President Tsai referred to the country as “Republic of China, Taiwan.”²⁸⁸ Mark McConaghy notes that this new term “represents an attempt at coalition building ... working between these two affective structures to assert ... that one can be Taiwanese

²⁸⁵ Cabestan, 52.

²⁸⁶ J. Michael Cole, *Cross-Strait Relations Since 2016: The End of the Illusion* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 5.

²⁸⁷ Mark McConaghy, “The Potentials and Occlusions of Qongua Minguo/Taiwan: In Search of a Left Nationalism in the Tsai Ing-Wen Era,” *Open Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 44–45, <https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2020-0131>.

²⁸⁸ McConaghy, 38.

(possessing an island-centered political and cultural vision), ROC Chinese, ... or both.”²⁸⁹ Although President Tsai has not expounded on her use of the term, it represents a move by her administration and the DPP towards an emphasis on civic society rather than identity politics.

This effort by the administration corresponds to the sentiment of the Taiwanese people, as demonstrated by a poll conducted on behalf of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD). The results, first published in April 2018, noted that “94 percent of respondents said living in a democratic society is ‘important,’ and 65.8 percent said it is ‘very important.’”²⁹⁰ Furthermore, “nearly 70 percent of Taiwanese respondents ... said they would be willing to fight to defend their nation’s democratic way of life if China attempted to annex it by force.”²⁹¹ This response resembles the annual polling data from the NCCU. Polling data from the NCCU on the issue of independence show that respondents supporting the status quo with a move towards independence rose from 15.1 percent in 2018 to 25.1 percent in 2021.²⁹² By 2021, those in favor of the status quo (excepting those that desired a move towards independence) consisted of over 80 percent of respondents. NCCU polling data on identity preference shows that, by 2021, 62.3 percent of respondents identified as Taiwanese while 31.7 percent identified as both Chinese and Taiwanese.²⁹³ J. Michael Cole argues that, “despite the unresolved issues of ethnicity in Taiwan, ... it is clear that democracy is now intrinsic to the way of life of its people, no matter which party they identify with.”²⁹⁴ The emphasis on democracy and safeguarding it in Taiwan, as demonstrated in various polling data, is superseding the old drivers of ethnicity and its connection to party politics in a fundamental way. Citizens of the ROC are increasingly taking a pragmatic view when addressing cross-Strait relations

²⁸⁹ McConaghy, 39.

²⁹⁰ Cole, *Cross-Strait Relations Since 2016: The End of the Illusion*, 14.

²⁹¹ Cole, 14.

²⁹² Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, “Election Study Center, NCCU-Trends of Core Political Attitudes.”

²⁹³ Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

²⁹⁴ Cole, *Cross-Strait Relations Since 2016: The End of the Illusion*, 13.

with an emphasis on preventing, or at least postponing, the possibility of reunification with the mainland. Reunification with the mainland is viewed by main Taiwanese as a serious threat to the civic society and democratic institutions that have formed in the “ROC, Taiwan.”

This increasingly apparent shift did not eliminate ethnic tension, however, and ethnic issues resurfaced in politics and the media. The curriculum reforms initiated by the Ma administration were subsequently blocked by the Tsai administration in another example of the back-and-forth policy initiatives between the KMT and DPP.²⁹⁵ The Tsai administration’s changes required that Chinese history be changed from an independent course to one that was incorporated into East Asian history and, as Qiang Xin notes, “The ultimate purpose of Taipei’s ‘de-Sinicization’ efforts is to cut off the historical and cultural connection with China and establish an exclusive ‘Taiwanese identity.’”²⁹⁶ In mass media, the use of ethnic issues to foment polarization “has been a key element in Taiwan’s blue-versus-green divide.”²⁹⁷ J. Michael Cole notes that, even under President Tsai, “The green-blue division, or that pitting Taiwanese against *waishengren*, remains highly problematic ... [and] the division remains very much a problem at the institutional level—in government, and between political parties.”²⁹⁸ As Tsai Ing-wen moves into the second half of her last term as president, there is both a sense of consolidating civic nationalism and reminders of the ethnic issues that were so prevalent in previous administrations.

²⁹⁵ Xin, “Having Much in Common? Changes and Continuity in Beijing’s Taiwan Policy,” 5.

²⁹⁶ Xin, 6.

²⁹⁷ Cole, *Cross-Strait Relations Since 2016: The End of the Illusion*, 43.

²⁹⁸ Cole, 168.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This thesis has analyzed the development of nationalism in Taiwan—from the Japanese occupation to the current administration of Tsai Ing-wen—to understand its nature and the extent to which it plays a role in Taiwanese society and politics. The Japanese occupation from 1895 to 1945 fostered a shared experience among the people of Taiwan that rendered the island distinct from mainland China. The experience of discrimination and forced assimilation into the Japanese Empire helped to induce the emergence of a uniquely Taiwanese identity that was distinct, but not yet conflicting with, the larger Chinese identity found on the mainland.²⁹⁹ That emerging identity was one that was closely tied to the mainland province of their ancestors and united people through language, blood relation, and folk culture, resembling Hans Kohn’s description of the sentiments driving ethnic nationalism.³⁰⁰ While the government of the Japanese Empire facilitated modernization on the island, there was a palpable sense that the Japanese represented a clear and identifiable “them” against which the people of Taiwan could begin imagining an “us”.

This nascent identity, still with close ties to the overarching Chinese identity, was confronted with another outside force upon the arrival of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the mainlanders (*waishengren*) between 1945 and 1949. The initial optimism that accompanied the return of the island to Chinese control was dashed by further conflict as the KMT sought to cement its control over the island and its people. The 228 Incident—the violent suppression by the KMT of an anti-government uprising on 28 February 1947—is perhaps the most salient example of the conflict between the KMT and the Taiwan-born *benshengren* that, as Timothy Wong notes, brought the implicit separation between the

²⁹⁹ Wong and Sun, “Dissolution and Reconstruction of National Identity,” 248.

³⁰⁰ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), cited in Tamir, “Not So Civic,” 425.

mainlanders and islanders into an explicit, violent divide.³⁰¹ The KMT and the *waishengren* became a clear, present, and hostile opposition against which Taiwanese nationalist movements could coalesce, motivated by a desire for the self-determination of a group of people increasingly identifying as ethnically distinct from their mainland neighbors.

This conflict, fueled by the KMT's desire to "Sinicize" Taiwan on the one hand and the *benshengren*'s desire for self-determination on the other, persisted throughout the era of the KMT's authoritarian rule of Taiwan and into the period of democratization under Lee Teng-hui (1988-2000). During the process of democratization, the political objective of Taiwanese nationalism was to secure the right of self-determination for *benshengren* who were excluded from the existing KMT power structure. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) championed this cause and leveraged ethnic Taiwanese identity to gain support as the Republic of China (ROC) democratized. It placed a large emphasis on the right of the Taiwanese people to determine their own future vis-à-vis the question of reunification or independence.³⁰² Identity politics, with the KMT representing Chinese identity and the DPP championing Taiwanese identity, permeated every political issue, from debates over curriculum development to economic cooperation with the PRC.

The three presidential administrations that followed the peaceful departure of Lee Teng-hui from the office also leveraged identity politics to further their respective agendas. Chen Shui-bian's administration (2000-2008) doubled down on Lee Teng-hui's efforts to promote Taiwanese identity in education by enacting "de-Sinification" policies³⁰³ and was accused of instigating systematic discrimination against mainlanders in government positions.³⁰⁴ The return of the KMT to power under Ma Ying-jeou in 2008 brought about a return to pro-Chinese policies, most notably in the realm of economics. The administration's desire to strengthen economic ties with the mainland, demonstrated

³⁰¹ Wong, "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Formation and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Identity," 185.

³⁰² Lin, "The Evolution of National Identity Issues in Democratizing Taiwan," 132.

³⁰³ Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan," 348.

³⁰⁴ Copper, "The Devolution of Taiwan's Democracy during the Chen Shui-Bian Era," 472.

through the Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA), instigated a social protest led by students who were wary of what increased dependence on the People's Republic of China would mean for the future of democracy in the ROC. The 2014 Sunflower Movement, as Rwei-Ren Wu notes, signified a transition of Taiwanese nationalism from ethnic to civic in nature.³⁰⁵ In 2016, when Tsai Ing-wen came into office, voters demonstrated their distaste for Ma Ying-jeou's pro-Chinese policies and Chinese nationalism.³⁰⁶ Her administration represented a second reversal and, through public remarks and policy tendencies, emphasized the importance of a uniquely Taiwanese identity. Her reelection in 2020 demonstrated the popular support behind her administration's agenda and emphasis on the civic nature of Taiwanese identity. Election results, winning political agendas, and survey data demonstrate that the majority of people in Taiwan believe in a unique Taiwanese identity that distinguishes them from the mainland.

This thesis finds that ever since the Japanese occupation, Taiwanese identity and Taiwanese nationalism have played and continue to play an important role in Taiwanese society and politics. The nature of Taiwanese identity and nationalism is, however, a more complex question. The research suggests that Taiwanese nationalism initially coalesced around an identity that was ethnic in nature, i.e., defined by status as Taiwan-born *benshengren*, and in opposition first to Japanese rule and then to KMT rule. The nature changed over time, however, as democratization diminished the power that the *waishengren* could wield over the ROC. As the Taiwanese people became more confident in the democratic institutions of the ROC, a greater emphasis was put on the civic nature of Taiwanese nationalism, i.e., a national identity shared by all, including both *benshengren* and *waishengren*, in order to protect the liberal democratic values that distinguished Taiwan from the PRC. However, the pendulum of national identity in Taiwan has swung between ethnic and civic and, while a civic national identity is ascendant today, it would be premature to dismiss the possible return of ethnonationalism.

³⁰⁵ Wu, "Peripheral Nationalisms of Taiwan and Hong Kong Under China's Influence: A Comparative-Nationalism Perspective," 64.

³⁰⁶ Cabestan, "Changing Identities in Taiwan under Ma Ying-Jeou," 50.

B. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Taiwanese identity politics and Taiwanese nationalism are important not only for the domestic politics of the ROC, but also for their impact on international security, including that of Taiwan and the United States. For the ROC, an emphasis on a shared civic identity grounded in Taiwanese national self-determination, democratic institutions, civil liberties and human rights indicates that it will remain in political opposition to the autocratic PRC. While political elites may find that advocating for these values is useful in securing votes, aggressively presenting them as the bedrock of Taiwanese identity signals to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that peaceful reunification is ultimately highly unlikely. The perception of the CCP and of Xi Jinping that the people of Taiwan will not accept reunification at the cost of their democratic rights may strengthen support for reunification by force. It is argued that the stronger the civic identity of Taiwan becomes, the higher the probability that Xi Jinping will lose patience with diplomacy. However, as the National Chengchi University (NCCU) survey data highlights, the vast majority of respondents in Taiwan desire the status quo to continue.³⁰⁷ If elected officials maintain this pragmatic outlook and refrain from antagonizing the CCP with pro-democracy rhetoric, it might be possible to prevent a civic Taiwanese nationalism from instigating an attempt at forceful reunification.

The national security of the United States could also be affected by a strong and vocal civic nationalism in Taiwan. On the one hand, the United States stands as a strong advocate for democracy and has a close security relationship with Taiwan. On the other, the United States must maintain a difficult balance between supporting Taiwanese democracy and opposing a declaration of *de jure* independence. A declaration of independence by the ROC would almost certainly lead to a military confrontation involving China, Taiwan, and the United States. Hence, policymakers, military professionals, and academics in the United States must understand and monitor the nature and extent of nationalism in Taiwan in order to anticipate and prepare for potential crises in cross-Strait relations.

³⁰⁷ Election Study Center, NCCU-Trends of Core Political Attitudes,” Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/eng/PageDoc?fid=7424>.

C. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The emphasis on the civic rather than ethnic qualities of Taiwanese identity and nationalism in Taiwan is not necessarily new but has increased during the presidency of Tsai Ing-wen. Future research on this subject might be focused on the upcoming presidential election cycle to explore if and how candidates from the KMT and DPP attempt to employ identity politics in their campaigns. The outcome of the 2024 presidential election and the corresponding NCCU polling data can help answer the question of whether or not Taiwanese identity politics consistently display a tendency to oscillate between ethnic and civic issues. Since the consolidation of democracy in the ROC and the first transition of power between Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, the presidency has thus far changed hands between the DPP and the KMT every eight years. Each transition was accompanied by a shift in identity politics and the government's perception of cross-Strait relations. If this oscillation continues, it could be argued that Taiwanese nationalism and identity politics—civic or ethnic—remain fungible. If the trend does not continue and civic identity remains an important public issue, it could be argued that the people of Taiwan have passed a point of no return vis-à-vis the question of reunification or independence.

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