

Policy Studies 26

Taiwan's Rising Rationalism: Generations, Politics, and “Taiwanese Nationalism”

Shelley Rigger



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List of Acronyms

DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
FAPA	Formosan Association for Public Affairs
KMT	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
NP	New Party
PF	People First Party
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
TNSS	Taiwan National Security Survey
TSU	Taiwan Solidarity Union
U.S.	United States

Executive Summary

A peaceful, amicable relationship between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) is essential to prosperity and security in and beyond the Taiwan Strait. Anticipating the future direction of cross-strait relations is thus very important. But it is also very difficult, not least because key trends in the Strait seem to be headed in opposite directions. On the one hand, the scope and intensity of cross-strait interactions are expanding rapidly, creating shared interests on the two sides and eroding resistance to closer cross-strait ties. On the other hand, popular support for political unification within Taiwan is declining, and the percentage of Taiwan residents who think of themselves as Taiwanese, not Chinese, is rising.

Islanders' growing tendency to identify Taiwan as their homeland has attracted considerable attention from the U.S. media and policy communities. There is a widespread perception that a rising proportion of islanders identifying as Taiwanese will result in increased enthusiasm for an independent Taiwan and flagging interest in political rapprochement or accommodation with the PRC; this complex of attitudes is often referred to in the media as "Taiwanese nationalism." The steady increase of "Taiwanese nationalism"—which is assumed to be particularly common among young Taiwanese—is cited as a serious obstacle to stabilizing cross-strait relations in the future.

This study challenges these assumptions. Using data from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and published studies, it deconstructs the concept of "Taiwanese nationalism" to show that holding a Taiwanese identity does not equate to supporting independence or opposing better

cross-strait relations. In addition, it demonstrates that attitudes toward Taiwanese identity and cross-strait relations vary in important ways from one generation to the next. “Taiwanese nationalism” is a strong force mainly among Taiwanese born between the early 1930s and the early 1950s, while younger Taiwanese generally hold positive or pragmatic views about cross-strait economic and political interactions.

Social scientists identify political generations as age cohorts whose collective experiences have produced distinctive attitudinal patterns. Using this analytical framework, this study identifies four political generations in Taiwan today. The first generation (born by 1931) spent its formative years under Japanese colonial rule. The second generation (born between 1931 and 1953) came of age during the height of the KMT’s authoritarianism, when political activism and Taiwanese identity were harshly suppressed. The formative period for the third generation (born 1954 to 1968) occurred during Taiwan’s transition to democracy. The fourth generation (born after 1968) reached adulthood after Taiwan’s democratization was essentially complete.

In addition to disaggregating the components of “Taiwanese nationalism,” the study explores their respective contributions to the attitudinal patterns that distinguish the four generations. The complex of values popularly known as “Taiwanese nationalism” (Taiwanese identity, support for independence, antipathy toward the PRC) is most common among the second generation of Taiwanese—the generation that includes most of Taiwan’s current political leadership. Among Taiwanese in the third and the fourth generations, Taiwanese identity often coexists with neutral or positive views of China. For the fourth generation in particular, there is no contradiction between loving Taiwan and seeking one’s fortune in the mainland.

Overall, this generational analysis of attitudes toward identity and cross-strait relations supports an optimistic assessment of the future of these relations. The attitudes that are most destructive to cross-strait ties are held by older Taiwanese, whose political influence will wane in the coming years. Younger Taiwanese tend to be pragmatic and flexible in their views; they lack the passionate emotion that drives many in the second generation. This is not to say that young Taiwanese do not feel a strong connection to Taiwan as their homeland; they do. But for them, loving Taiwan does not mean hating China. So long as the PRC government refrains from acting in ways that provoke hateful emotions among

Taiwanese—and this is an important caveat, since Beijing has taken such actions in the past—there is little reason to expect sinophobia to intensify in the future. If anything, current trends suggest that Taiwan's public will demand policies that ease relations between the two sides in the future.

Taiwan's Rising Rationalism: Generations, Politics, and "Taiwanese Nationalism"

The notion that the Taiwan Strait is one of the world's most dangerous places has great currency in the United States today, and for good reason. Military tensions between Taiwan and mainland China have reached alarming levels. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has hundreds of missiles targeting Taiwan, and Beijing's rhetoric is often hostile and threatening. In early 2005, the PRC passed an "antiseccession" law that authorized the use of force to stop moves toward the permanent separation of Taiwan from the mainland. A year later Taiwan's president announced his intention to scrap the National Unification Guidelines adopted in the early 1990s; he also promised to strengthen restrictions on cross-strait economic exchanges. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that official dialogue between the two sides has stalled.

Despite these ominous trends, the situation in the Taiwan Strait has neither erupted nor deteriorated sharply. Two factors contribute most to this stability. At present, the PRC is not pushing for unification. For a variety of reasons, including domestic political and economic factors as well as the high cost of military action, Beijing has decided to focus instead on deterring Taiwan from making moves toward independence. On the Taiwan side, Taipei has been careful to avoid actions Beijing would interpret as gestures toward formal independence. Thus there has

been no declaration of independence or any serious effort to abandon the symbolic connections to China embodied in Taiwan's constitution.

Despite these ominous trends, the situation in the Taiwan Strait has...[not] deteriorated sharply

Nevertheless, the stability that prevails in the strait feels tenuous to many observers. Especially in the United States, there is concern that as mainland China's economic, political, and military power grows, Beijing will once again make unification a priority. Given the difficult challenges facing the PRC, a policy shift in this direction appears unlikely in the short run.

In the near term, U.S. analysts and policymakers are more worried about the possibility that Taiwan—perhaps misunderstanding U.S. and Chinese intentions—will cross Beijing's "red line" and provoke a military response. Some believe it is already too late to prevent such an event; Ted Galen Carpenter, the author of *America's Coming War with China: A Collision Course over Taiwan*, believes Taiwan's provocations will continue to increase as support for independence grows "inexorably" (Carpenter 1998).

Given the catastrophic consequences such actions could have for Taiwan (and for the world), how could such a thing occur? What could possibly motivate Taiwan's leaders to do something so suicidal? The most popular answer is: domestic politics. Because Taiwan is a democracy, its

understanding...public opinion in Taiwan...is critical...to correctly anticipate its leaders' actions

leaders could not easily resist pressure for a more assertive posture—even a declaration of independence—if that is what the voters demanded. Already Taiwan has taken actions that many international observers interpret as "salami slicing" moves in the direction of de jure independence. If public opinion hardens in favor of this policy direction, elected officials may feel compelled to follow. Clearly, understanding

the structure of public opinion in Taiwan on these issues is critical if we are to correctly anticipate its leaders' actions. This study therefore assesses various types of public opinion data to see whether the demand for more assertive policies toward the mainland is likely to intensify in the future.

Rather than looking at public opinion trends in the aggregate, this study breaks down the data to see how views are patterned across age groups. At the moment, policymakers are most sensitive to the preferences of older Taiwanese, who form the bulk of the political elite and the active electorate. In the future, however, the political center of gravity will shift toward today's young leaders and voters. If these two groups' preferences diverge, we may see a shift in Taiwan's policy direction. Alternatively, the views of the young might come to resemble those of the older generation once they reach a similar age.

This study argues that the preference patterns of different age groups in Taiwan differ in important ways, and maintains, moreover, that these age-related attitudinal disparities are not merely a function of age (are not life-cycle effects) but are manifestations of enduring generational differences. Taiwan's recent history has given rise to four distinct generations. The first generation acquired its political identity during the period of Japanese colonization. The second generation was socialized during the height of KMT (Kuomintang, or Chinese Nationalist Party) single-party authoritarianism. The third generation reached maturity during the transition to democracy as the KMT's authoritarian control was fading. And the fourth generation came of age after democratization was well under way, so that democracy is the only political system this generation has ever known.

This monograph contends that the differences in life experience and political socialization among these four generations have produced significant discrepancies in their attitudes toward Taiwan's domestic politics, cross-strait relations, and mainland China. Specifically, the older generations—especially the second generation—tend to hold strong, emotionally charged views about China and cross-strait relations whereas younger people tend to be more moderate and pragmatic. And while older Taiwanese tend to view the relationship between Taiwan and China in zero-sum terms (to be pro-Taiwan is to be anti-China and vice versa), many young Taiwanese resist the idea that they must choose between Taiwan and China.

Because few young Taiwanese embrace the either/or logic of today's politically dominant generation, when they move into leadership posi-

*Taiwan's recent history
has given rise to four
distinct generations*

tions we can expect them to adjust the island's mainland policy to promote engagement without surrendering Taiwan's political autonomy. I do not doubt that their outlook would change if the People's Republic of China were to sharply escalate its threats or take military action against the island; nonetheless, my assessment is much more optimistic than that of Carpenter and other observers who see rising "Taiwanese nationalism" leading inexorably to war.

The Myth of "Taiwanese Nationalism"

Those who believe the Taiwan Strait is ripe for conflict point to forces within Taiwan that could create enormous pressure on Taiwanese politicians to do something to resolve the uncertainties plaguing the island. Eventually these pressures could incite the island's leaders to test Beijing's resolve (and Washington's commitment). One trend the pessimists often cite as an indication that such a day is drawing near is the rising proportion of Taiwan residents who call themselves "Taiwanese" as opposed to "Chinese." Currently most surveys that include this question find about equal numbers of islanders identifying as "Taiwanese" and "both Taiwanese and Chinese," while fewer than one in ten describes himself or herself as "Chinese" only.

Two decades ago, when this question was first asked, an overwhelming majority of Taiwan residents called themselves "Chinese," but this percentage fell sharply during the 1990s. To many analysts, this pattern suggests that islanders are losing their sense of connection to mainland China—a trend they fear will make unification difficult if not impossible. But the trend toward "Taiwanese" identity may be even more dangerous if it means that a rising share of Taiwanese want to have nothing to do with China. If that is the case, we should expect a growing number of islanders to demand that their identity be reflected in the political relationship between the two sides; that is, we should anticipate a growing demand for Taiwan independence.

A report on Taiwan youth attitudes published in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, titled "Independent-Minded Youth Hold the Future of Taiwan in Their Hands," summed up this view: "The future of Taiwan belongs to those who want independence from China, a move that China has said would spark war" (Johnson 2005). Or, as Ted Galen Carpenter put it: "Public sentiment for an independent Taiwan is growing slowly but inexorably—especially among younger Taiwanese for whom the mainland is an alien and threatening place" (Carpenter 1998).

The logic of this argument is captured succinctly in a *Washington Post* article published in early 2004:

The changes [in identity] . . . reflect a profound shift in public opinion on this island of 23 million, one that poses a challenge for both China and the United States. After more than half a century of self-rule and democratic evolution, most people here have abandoned Chiang's dream of unification with China and see themselves as citizens of a new, independent nation with its own culture and history. . . . This rise in *Taiwanese nationalism* could frustrate China's hopes of bringing Taiwan back into the fold by binding it to the mainland's booming economy, while strengthening the position of those in Beijing who want the military to seize the island. It is also a problem for the administration of President Bush, which has promised to defend Taiwan but is worried about getting dragged into a war provoked by Taiwanese actions. [Pan 2004: A-13]; emphasis added]

The *Post* article typifies the discourse on Taiwanese identity in the United States. Most importantly, it conflates Taiwanese *identity* (which scholars in Taiwan prefer to call Taiwanese consciousness) with Taiwanese *nationalism*. And in blaming Taiwanese identity/nationalism for a litany of ills—a broken dream of unification, an increased desire for independence, resistance to economic cooperation with the mainland, and an increased risk of war—the article suggests that Taiwanese nationalism is the primary source of instability in the Taiwan Strait. Finally, the article focuses on educational reforms and other facets of the identity debate that disproportionately affect young Taiwanese—thus implying that identity change, along with its attendant evils, will intensify in the future as the younger generations become politically dominant.

There is powerful logic here. It seems obvious that as Taiwanese lose their emotional attachment to Chinese identity, they will be less interested in interacting—much less unifying—with China. It also seems obvious that young Taiwanese who have never lived in a society with a strong Chinese identity will be even less likely than their elders to think of themselves as Chinese. And it seems reasonable to expect people to demand some coherence between their identity and their citizenship: people who think of themselves as Taiwanese should logically want to be citizens of a country called Taiwan. A report to the Australian parliament by Gary

Klintworth typifies this logic: “The [2000] elections boiled down to a race between the Kuomintang or affiliated political movements representing the status quo in Taiwanese politics and, on the other hand, the pro-independence DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) which represented the aspirations of a growing number of young people who identified themselves as Taiwanese, not Chinese” (Klintworth 2000).

Statistics, as well as logic, connect these factors. More than a decade of research has yielded strong evidence that various categories of identity are related. The most objective identity category is provincial origin: mainlander (*waishengren*) versus Taiwanese (*benshengren*). In the West this status, which originally was assigned by the state based on the birthplace of one’s father or paternal grandfather, is typically referred to as “ethnicity.”¹ Provincial origin/ethnicity, in turn, is correlated with the concept measured by the question “Do you consider yourself Chinese, Taiwanese, or both?” which social scientists in Taiwan call ethnic consciousness. (Many Western observers call it “identity.”) Ethnic consciousness/identity, in turn, is correlated with preferences on the unification versus independence issue. And preferences on unification/independence are correlated with partisanship. It is not surprising, then, that many observers tend to think of these different measures as a complex of interconnected attitudes and viewpoints. This “complex” forms the basis of a poorly defined but widely used concept, “Taiwanese nationalism.” This is the logic that allows the *Washington Post* to make the leap from Taiwanese “identity” to Taiwanese “nationalism.”²

The idea that certain attitudes “go together” is reinforced by voices emanating from Taiwan itself. Presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian both have used Taiwanese identity as a justification for setting aside unification and avoiding substantive political interactions with Beijing. While neither one has suggested that cross-strait economic links should be cut entirely, both have used Beijing’s aggressive military posture to rationalize policies that limit economic cooperation. Lee and Chen are hardly alone in their sinophobic attitudes. Chen’s Democratic Progressive Party has long argued that Taiwan, having “grown apart” from China over the past 100 years, should offer its people the option of independence. Even the pro-unification Kuomintang (KMT) has muted its enthusiasm for that cause and now regards independence as one of the possible futures for Taiwan (although it is not the KMT’s preferred future). In the United States, calls for a Taiwanese state reflecting Taiwanese identity are

especially strong. The largest nongovernmental organizations representing Taiwanese-Americans—including the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) and the Formosa Foundation—lean toward the independence cause.

Given this logic, in which Taiwanese ethnic consciousness is conflated with “nationalism” and assumed to lead to a desire for independence and resistance to economic integration with mainland China, it is easy to understand why so many foreigners find the rise of Taiwanese ethnic consciousness worrisome. To make matters worse, historical experience suggests that economic interdependence promotes amicable political relations, but Taiwan leaders’ reluctance to engage the mainland economically seems to undermine this lone favorable trend in the strait.

Given the degree of hostility between Taipei and Beijing—and the global interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait—correctly forecasting the future direction of cross-strait relations is of the utmost importance. If we assume the Taiwan Strait is headed for a crisis, we could miss opportunities to encourage peaceful trends. Likewise, world leaders could be caught off guard if a new generation of Taiwanese leaders proves more willing than their predecessors to compromise with Beijing. Understanding Taiwan and anticipating the future direction of cross-strait relations requires us to investigate carefully the relationships among the variables presumed to comprise “Taiwanese nationalism.” This is the task of the next section.

A Demographic Challenge to “Taiwanese Nationalism”

Given the media portrayal outlined in the previous section, it is not hard to see why so many observers worry that Taiwan is headed in a dangerous direction. But there is substantial evidence that these fears may be overblown. To begin with, survey research shows that Taiwanese clearly differentiate among ethnic consciousness (measured as “Taiwanese, Chinese, or both”), national identity (measured by questions asking about what is meant by “our country”), and concrete policy issues such as independence versus unification and cross-strait economic ties. As Wu Yu-shan observes, public opinion trends over the course of the 1990s show that “the rapid nativization of ethnic consciousness is only partially reflected in positions on national identity and the independence/unification question, and its influence on concrete policy positions [related to cross-strait economic relations] is even more limited. . . . Put simply, the trend toward

Taiwanization in basic ethnic consciousness has not evolved into a political demand for Taiwan independence” (Wu 2001: 84).

Wu’s findings contradict the idea that there is a complex of attitudes that track one another neatly. Some scholars have suggested that the gap between Taiwanese ethnic consciousness and support for independence is artificial, because Taiwanese who prefer independence are constrained from advocating it by the threat of Chinese aggression. The work on conditional preferences conducted by Emerson M. S. Niou and others provides considerable evidence to suggest that many Taiwanese would, in fact, choose independence if it could be achieved at little or no cost to Taiwan. But these studies also show that many Taiwanese—including many who could accept independence if it could be achieved peacefully—also could accept unification under certain conditions (Niou 2004). In short, these studies show that pragmatism and rationality are more important than idealism or ideology in determining popular preferences about Taiwan’s future.

Pragmatic considerations may make preference for unification versus independence a poor measure of the true feelings of Taiwanese. Yet even those who are constrained from supporting independence can still express negative views toward the PRC and advocate restrictions on cross-strait relations. If the logic of a “complex” of values is correct, we should expect to see a strong correlation between Taiwanese ethnic consciousness and negative attitudes toward closer cross-strait interactions. According to data from the

Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS), however, ethnic consciousness is more closely correlated with political variables, such as independence/unification and partisanship, than with questions about economic relations across the strait. For example, while the 2005 survey shows statistically significant (although not strong) correlations between ethnic consciousness and inde-

Taken as a whole, these data pose a conundrum

pendence/unification preference (.187) and partisanship (.147), the correlation between ethnic consciousness and preferences on economic interactions with the mainland is not statistically significant.³ This finding supports Wu’s conclusions. Taken as a whole, these data pose a conundrum. On the one hand, the variables believed to comprise “Taiwanese nationalism” are correlated. On the other hand, these correlations are loose; their relationship to one another is hard to characterize. To deepen our understanding we must examine the data for patterns that can resolve this apparent contradiction.

In the *Washington Post* article cited earlier, reporter Philip Pan offers two quotations to illustrate Taiwanese “nationalism.” A 50-year-old taxi driver from Taipei City explained his identity this way: “As a child, I knew neighbors who just disappeared, but my parents didn’t dare talk about the White Terror then. . . . Over the past ten years, listening to campaign speeches, I realized the Nationalists had lied to all of us, and that I’m Taiwanese, not Chinese.” The second source is a 20-year-old student from southern Taiwan who said: “I was born in Taiwan, I live in Taiwan, and I speak a Taiwanese language, so of course I’m Taiwanese, not Chinese. . . . We have Chinese roots, but it would be weird if any of my friends said he was Chinese.”

These two quotations are offered as examples of a single phenomenon, but in fact they reveal very different patterns of thought. For the older man, Taiwanese identity is a reaction against the KMT, its oppressive rule, its lies, and its enforced Chinese identity. For the young student, Taiwanese identity is natural and self-evident. He is Taiwanese because he was born and raised in Taiwan, not because he has been abused or deceived. Equally important is his easy acknowledgment that “we” (Taiwanese) have Chinese roots. For the older man, being Taiwanese means rejecting an artificial and imposed Chinese identity. For the youth, being Taiwanese is a matter of fact, one that need not entail the wholesale denunciation of his Chinese heritage.

Reading these quotations this way opens an intriguing possibility: What if the trend toward rising Taiwanese ethnic consciousness conceals as much as it reveals? What if Chen Shui-bian’s and Lee Teng-hui’s interpretations of identity are only two of many competing interpretations? What if “feeling Taiwanese” does not mean fearing and rejecting China? In sum, what if “Taiwanese identity” does not mean the same thing to everyone? And in particular, what if identity (including ethnic consciousness) means different things to different generations? What would this imply about “rising Taiwanese nationalism”?

Recent public opinion data suggest this is a promising line of inquiry. In brief, while older Taiwanese tend to have preference patterns that are consistent with the Taiwan nationalism complex, younger Taiwanese are less likely to express “consistent” preferences across these issues. While Taiwanese in their twenties and fifties are similar in their views on ethnic consciousness, partisanship, and independence, the younger group is much less antagonistic toward the mainland. (Taiwanese in their thirties and for-

ties are the most pragmatic of all age groups on most issues, but they fall between the youngest and oldest groups in their views of mainland China.)

***ethnic consciousness
may not mean the same
thing to all age groups***

This finding has important implications. First, it suggests that generational change may be occurring in Taiwan. If so, we should pay attention to the direction of this change, because it contains clues to long-term trends in public opinion. Second, the finding suggests that Taiwanese ethnic consciousness as it is experienced by young Taiwanese is not necessarily hostile toward China. In other words,

ethnic consciousness may not mean the same thing to all age groups, and the differences among groups may have significant policy implications.

The fact that attitudes differ across age groups is intriguing, but we should not be too quick to conclude that we can predict the future based on these findings. Age is a popular demographic variable for explaining political preferences, but not all differences among age groups mean the same thing. Some age differences reflect the human tendency to hold different attitudes at different stages of life; these are called life-cycle effects. Other age differences represent generational change; they are due to persistent differences in the attitudes held by different age cohorts. This distinction is important for interpreting age cohort differences: while life-cycle effects do not undermine the overall stability of attitudes in a society, generational changes—in which new attitudes persist over time—do produce lasting changes. Thus if the divergent patterns of opinion we observe among age cohorts in Taiwan reveal generational differences, these patterns can be useful in anticipating the future direction of Taiwan politics.⁴

A number of factors justify exploring the possibility that Taiwan is undergoing generational change. To begin with, the data summarized earlier suggest that attitudes on different types of issues are patterned differently across age groups. There also is a widespread popular intuition on the island that important generational differences exist. A strong discourse of generational politics has appeared in Taiwan's mass media, and many Taiwanese politicians identify explicitly with generational labels. In the DPP, it is common to talk of the "Formosa Generation," "Lawyers Generation," and "Student Movement Generation," while many KMT politicians born in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s identify with the "567" group. The fact that so many Taiwanese perceive generational politics to be

important suggests that generational change is worthy of detailed study, and indeed a number of scholars have undertaken this work (Wu 1999; Liu 1993, 1994, 1996; Chen 1996; Chu 2004; Chang and Wang 2005a). Finally, from a theoretical perspective, the sweeping transformation of Taiwan politics over the past five decades provides precisely the type of sociocultural environment that social science theory associates with generational change.

Generations in Politics: A Review of the Literature

Karl Mannheim's 1928 essay, "The Problem of Generations," is the starting point for most social scientific investigations of generational politics. In his essay Mannheim synthesized ideas from a variety of disciplines into a series of fundamental insights. Those insights have provided hypotheses for decades of research, so it is worth considering them here in some detail.

According to Mannheim, generations have two defining features. First, members of a generation are born at the same time and in the same cultural context. But sharing a temporal and spatial location makes a group an age cohort, not a generation. To become a generation, as Mannheim defines it, an age cohort must, during its formative years, collectively pass through events and experiences that destabilize prevailing social and cultural norms: "Generation . . . involves even more than mere co-presence in such a historical and social region. A further concrete nexus is needed to constitute generation as an actuality. This additional nexus may be described as *participation in the common destiny* of this historical and social unity" (Mannheim 1952: 303). In defining generation in terms of the distinct and formative historical experiences shaping people born in a particular time and place, Mannheim stamps the concept with his own interpretation, but he also rescues it from being a merely technical designation with little substantive interest or explanatory power. In the process, he also sets the parameters for future studies. A recent study of generations and voting patterns in U.S. elections (Lyons and Alexander 2000) illustrates Mannheim's seminal influence: "Our definition of generation encompasses a full set of experiences common to a large segment of the electorate. A cohort, on the other hand, is a measurement device not necessarily tied to generation" (p. 1,020).

One obvious problem for any discussion of generations is that they overlap; members of different generations experience the events of each moment in history at the same time. Mannheim tackled the problem of

the simultaneity of generations and used it to enrich his analysis. He argued that each age cohort experiences a moment of time “in its own way” because it encounters that moment at a different age. Knowledge and experience acquired in youth shape one’s worldview, while knowledge and experience acquired later are incorporated into one’s existing worldview (Mannheim 1952: 283). For this reason, people who are between 18 and 25 years of age when destabilizing events occur can coalesce to form a generation—an age cohort whose worldview has been so decisively colored by their collective historical experience that it is distinct from any other.

Encountering social and cultural change, young people are “dramatically aware of a process of de-stabilization and take sides in it” (Mannheim 1952: 301). This taking sides is very important. Mannheim does not suggest that all members of an age cohort will interpret their experiences in the same way or will all emerge with the same worldview. On the contrary, he says, the more typical pattern is for attitudes within a generation to be polarized: “*Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways constitute separate generation units*” (Mannheim 1952: 304; emphasis in the original). The concept of “generation units”—groups within a generation with widely divergent responses to the formative events of their era—allows us to understand polarized subgroups within generations, not as challenges to generational theory, but as a normal feature of generational formation.

Generations manifest themselves in various arenas related to politics, including attitudes, preferences, behavior, and identity. Studies of the relationship between generations and political behavior tend to focus either on mobilization and activism (as in Schiller 2003) or on participation, especially voter turnout (as in Lyons and Alexander 2000). Chang and Wang (2005a) exemplify the work on generation and identity. Looking at surveys conducted over the course of the 1990s, they find that the two older generations of Taiwanese, those who reached maturity before 1949 and 1971, are more polarized in their views of identity; they tend to choose either a Taiwanese or a Chinese identity. The two younger generations—those who grew up during and after the democratic transition—are more likely to hold inclusive identities, calling themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese. In this study, we will consider the effects of generational politics in Taiwan on all of these arenas: attitudes, preferences, behavior, and identity.

Mannheim observed that generations form in response to destabilizing forces:

When as a result of an acceleration in the tempo of social and cultural transformation basic attitudes must change so quickly that the latent, continuous adaptation and modification of traditional patterns of experience, thought, and expression is no longer possible, then the various new phases of experience are consolidated somewhere, forming a clearly distinguishable new impulse, and a new centre of configuration. We speak in such cases of the formation of a new generation style. . . . Whether a new *generation style* emerges every year, every thirty, every hundred years, or whether it emerges rhythmically at all, depends entirely on the trigger action of the social and cultural process. [Mannheim 1952: 309–10; emphasis in the original]

Others have taken up this thread, hoping to specify more fully the conditions that lead to a new generation. Some researchers emphasize events that pose wrenching challenges to established social and political norms. But such developments are rare, prompting other scholars to argue that generation-creating events need not be catastrophic. Any event that engages the emotions of large numbers of youth can affect their attitudes profoundly. Sears and Valentino (1997) found that an event as routine as the 1980 presidential campaign helped crystallize young Americans' attitudes toward politics. Deliberate mobilization, too, can alter young people's attitudes and behavior. (See Adsett 2003.)

Environmental changes, as well, can forge new generations. Ronald Inglehart's studies of postmaterialist values begin with the idea that people born into societies that have become affluent hold different political values than those born earlier. (See, for example, Inglehart 1977.) Jennings and Stoker's (2004) studies of three generations of Americans (using panel data collected in 1965, 1972, 1982, and 1997) conclude that even though the children of the Vietnam War generation did not share as wrenching an experience as their parents did, they nonetheless constitute a generation. Jennings and Stoker attribute this to environmental factors.

In short, shared memories acquired in youth can produce a generation. But the *content* of each generation's collective identity depends on the nature of the catalytic events or environmental changes that spawned it. As Tessler et al. put it: "Because major political events occur episodi-

***shared memories
acquired in youth can
produce a generation***

cally and discontinuously, one generation may be characterized by similar and stable attitudes pertaining to one set of concerns, while a very different set of concerns may characterize another generation” (Tessler et al. 2004: 188). This reminds us that each political generation is preoccupied with the issues of its time; the fact that young Americans in the early twenty-first century may care more about environmental issues than abortion rights may irritate feminists of the Vietnam-era generation, but it should not surprise them.

Moreover, despite our tendency to imagine a “generation” as a homogeneous whole (the Flower Children, the Greatest Generation), Mannheim reminds us to expect not unanimity, but polarization, within generations. As Sears and Valentino put it: “Sometimes a full cohort will move en masse in one direction, but more often it will polarize internally around the symbolic events of its day” (1997: 47). Studying the generation units in his Vietnam-era cohort led Jennings to conclude: “The partisan division between these two generation units seems set in stone” (2002: 313). Mannheim also explains *why* individuals choose the sides they do: “That just these particular trends and not others should have taken root and maintained themselves in his world is ultimately due to the fact that they afford the typical ‘chances’ of his life situation their most adequate expression” (Mannheim 1952: 317).

There are a number of continuing debates in the generational politics literature. First, the “formative years” notion seems arbitrary. Why set the age of political awareness at 17 or 18? Why close the door on political development at age 25? For Mannheim, the answer is that memories created in youth are more powerful than memories created later in life when one’s worldview is well established. Young people who endure periods of social and cultural stress and upheaval can form memories and habits of mind strong enough to bind them together into a generation. A number of studies have tested Mannheim’s “formative years” concept and found that it stands up well (Schuman and Scott 1989; Tessler et al. 2004; Jennings 2002). Others have questioned whether the effects of experiences during the formative years are durable (Tessler et al. 2004), but a number of studies conclude that attitudes gained during the formative years are in fact very persistent (Plutzer and Berkman 2005; Jennings 2002).

Another important debate tackles the problem of differentiating between life-cycle effects and generational effects. As Phelps (2004) explains: “*Life-cycle* differences are those that may distinguish age groups at different points in their lives. . . . A *generational* or *cohort* effect, however, refers to a set of more profound changes that may affect young people in a way that does not affect other age groups. Critically, it is an effect that, at least to some extent, adheres to this group as they age” (p. 239). Separating these two effects is difficult without panel data over an extended period of time. It is his use of just such data that allows Jennings to make such a persuasive case for the role of generations in determining political outlook.

The long-term panel data that would allow scholars to identify generational change conclusively are not available for Taiwan. Public opinion surveys on sensitive political topics were not conducted before the late 1980s, and into the mid-1990s scholars worried that respondents were more concerned about giving politically correct responses than stating their true opinions. It would be inappropriate to use data from this short time span to draw inferences about the “life cycle” of Taiwanese. Thus this study relies on qualitative evidence, including historical analysis, focus groups, and interviews, to construct a generational analysis of Taiwan politics.

Finally, defining the boundaries of a generation is more a matter of art than science. Even if we accept that generations form in response to destabilizing events collectively encountered by individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, deciding what qualifies as a “destabilizing event” is ultimately subjective. The Great Depression and World War II would pass muster with almost any analyst. But what about 9/11? The Kennedy assassination? Anyone who uses generational analysis to explain political behavior or attitudes must justify the decision to categorize generations in a particular way.

Methodology

Following Mannheim and Neuman, Chang and Wang (2005a) offer this definition as a starting point for their generational analysis of Taiwan politics: “What defines people as belonging to one generation or another are ‘their common experiences, the same decisive influences, [and] similar historic problems.’ In other words, a political generation is a group of people who share common experiences and historical memories, due to the fact that they were born in the same time period and lived through the same social and economic environment” (p. 35). How we operationalize this

definition is ultimately subjective, but it need not be arbitrary. This study follows the periodization used by Chang and Wang, with minor adjustments, and identifies four generations that have contributed to Taiwan's contemporary politics:

- The first generation: born by 1931; entered the formative years before 1949
- The second generation: born between 1931 and 1953; entered the formative years between 1949 and 1971
- The third generation: born between 1954 and 1968; entered the formative years between 1972 and 1986
- The fourth generation: born after 1968; entered the formative years after 1986

Within Taiwan society, there are measurable differences across age groups in attitudes toward identity, political preferences, and political behavior. The next section shows how these differences are manifested in public opinion data. To explain these differences in generational terms, we need to step out of the quantitative realm and analyze the events and environments that shaped each generation of Taiwanese. Later in this study I use the theory of generational politics to construct a model of Taiwan's political generations, including an explanation as to why Taiwanese of different generations hold divergent political views. I also analyze the main units within each generation and discuss how generational shifts have shaped, and are shaping, an important subgroup of Taiwan's population: the mainlanders.

This study offers a generational model of identity formation in Taiwan supported by evidence drawn from a variety of data types. It uses historical data to argue that events of the twentieth century justify the division of Taiwanese adults into four generations. For each of these generations, it employs qualitative and quantitative data to show how events during that generation's formative years shaped its political development. It looks at patterns of participation, survey results, and the actions and rhetoric of politicians from each generation. For the fourth and youngest generation, I rely on an additional data source: focus groups. Because this generation is just reaching political maturity, it has not yet established a clear image; there are few politicians and pundits from this generation whose ideas we can examine for clues about the attitudes of their peers.

In order to flesh out my understanding of the youngest Taiwanese adults, I conducted sixteen focus groups between August and December 2005. The focus groups averaged about eight participants and lasted from 1 to 2½ hours. Most participants were university students (undergraduate and graduate), but the focus groups also included some working adults. All the participants were between 18 and 30 years of age. Focus groups were conducted in Taipei City, Hsinchu City, Taichung City, Kaohsiung City, Kaohsiung County, and Hualien County. Each focus group responded to a standard set of questions about mainland China, identity, generational differences, their political attitudes, and their attitudes toward identity discourses in Taiwan. Participants were drawn from all parts of Taiwan, but nearly all were either university students or university graduates. Thus there is a bias in the study in favor of educated youth. Nevertheless, the proportion of Taiwanese youth who attend universities is very high and political participation is closely correlated with educational attainment. For this reason, I believe the policy implications of the research are not affected significantly by this bias.

Taiwan's Generational Politics by the Numbers

Social scientists have been interested in generational politics in Taiwan for more than a decade, and they have found evidence of generational effects in each of the arenas addressed by the literature: identity, attitudes and preferences, and behavior. Moreover, the generational differences that we observe in Taiwan are historically coherent; they make sense as reactions to the events and environments in which different generations came of age.

Taken together, generational studies pose a serious challenge to the discourse of “rising Taiwanese nationalism,” because each generation has a different pattern of preferences on the various dimensions thought to comprise this nationalism: identity, independence versus unification, partisanship, and attitudes toward mainland China. Furthermore, the attitudes of young Taiwanese suggest that the attitudes believed to comprise “Taiwanese nationalism” are not increasing among the young.

*generational studies pose
a serious challenge to the
discourse of “rising
Taiwanese nationalism”*

Generation and Identity

Scholars and policymakers have followed identity trends in Taiwan closely for almost twenty years. The importance of the identity question comes mainly from the belief that identity changes will drive shifts in Taiwan's

*surveys show that
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as Taiwanese*

mainland policy. In a nutshell, surveys show that Taiwanese are identifying less as Chinese and more as Taiwanese. If this trend continues, observers fear it will diminish Taiwan's willingness to compromise with the PRC on unification and increase demands for independence. To some extent, however, this expectation reflects confusion over what these identity categories mean and how they should be

measured. By tracing the development of identity studies I hope to persuade the reader to take a different view of identity—one that differentiates among different categories of identity and distinguishes between identity and policy preferences.

Provincial Origin (shengji)

From 1945 until 1991, the ROC government treated "provincial origin" as the basic identity category for all citizens. This information—recorded and revealed on the national identification card carried by every Taiwanese man, woman, and child—gave legal weight to the historical and social divide between those whose "ancestral home" (father's birthplace) was Taiwan and those whose families arrived from provinces in mainland China in the 1940s. The gap between the "people of this province" (*ben-shengren*, normally rendered "Taiwanese" in English) and the "people of other provinces" (*waishengren*, or "mainlander") was thus inscribed in the rigid arena of law as well as the more plastic realms of language, culture, and daily life.

Nonetheless, the meaning of "provincial origin" was not static. The categories "Taiwanese" and "mainlander" displaced a rich store of identities that existed before 1949. The new arrivals' painful awareness of their minority status forced them to surrender their identities as migrants from China's many provinces in favor of a single identity: Tibetans, Beijingers, and Hainanese alike all became mainlanders. At the same time, groups within Taiwan that had fiercely defended their independent identities—Hakkas and Aborigines and also a riotous collection of Minnan-speaking

subgroups—found themselves subsumed under a single label: Taiwanese. The old categories reemerged as political forces only decades later.

The meaning of “provincial origin” continued to evolve, particularly for “mainlanders” born on Taiwan. For these second (and now third and even fourth) generation mainlanders, the idea that they were “people of other provinces” was deeply problematic. A Taiwan-born mainlander quoted in 1994 said: “My identification card says that my home is in Rehe Lindong. Lindong is a small place; it’s very hard to find on a map. As for Rehe, my impressions of it end with the fact that the Empress Dowager went there to escape foreign troops; that’s what my middle school history textbook said. Beyond that, it is difficult for my heart to hold any impression of this so-called hometown” (Huang Hsun-fan quoted in Zuo 2002: 18).

As the events of the 1940s faded from memory, “provincial origin” seemed increasingly arbitrary and artificial. Among the first and second generations of Taiwanese, segregation and prejudice were widespread. A Taiwanese woman interviewed for a documentary about Taiwan’s history captured the feelings of many when she said that in the 1950s, if a Taiwanese woman married a mainlander, her family would want to “chop her up and feed her to the pigs.”⁵ For the third and fourth generations, however, provincial origin was a far less emotional topic. In a 1998 paper, the political scientist Chen Wen-chun looked at surveys of high school and college students taken in 1997 and 1991, respectively. The surveys asked whether the youths would consider provincial origin in forming a variety of relationships ranging from making friends to choosing a marriage partner. Neither group showed much concern for provincial origin. The percentage of high schoolers who said they would take provincial origin under consideration ranged from 6 percent (when making friends) to 18.5 percent (when choosing a marriage partner). Among college students, the percentages were even lower: only 2 percent said they would consider provincial origin in forming a friendship, while 7.5 percent said they would consider it when choosing a marriage partner. Although the youths estimated their parents’ level of concern higher, the highest percentage who thought their parents would be concerned about provincial origin in any case barely reached 25 percent (Chen 1998: 29). Chen’s findings are consistent with my focus group research. Participants in the focus groups consistently (and emphatically) reported that provincial origin is not important to people their age.

National Identity (*guojia rentong*)
and Ethnic Consciousness (*zuqun yishi*)

With the conceptual limits and explanatory value of provincial origin increasingly evident, Taiwanese researchers began looking for more meaningful measures of identity. They hoped to create measures that would get at the real tension in Taiwanese society: the tension between identifying with the literal homeland of Taiwan or the official (but unrealized) nation-state, China. In 1984, scholars at the Academia Sinica's Institute of Ethnology led by Yang Kuo-shu and Ch'u Hai-yuan conducted an island-wide survey that included a daring question. They asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement: "Unifying China is more important than building Taiwan." This was the first effort by social scientists to understand how Taiwanese respondents prioritized their two potential identities (Ch'u 1993: 151).

In 1987, Chang Mao-kuei and Hsiao Hsin-huang asked a more pointed version of this question: "Do you consider yourself Taiwanese; Chinese; Taiwanese first, then Chinese; Chinese first, then Taiwanese; or both Chinese and Taiwanese?" In asking the question, Chang and Hsiao implied that identity was a matter of personal choice and feeling, rather than a category imposed from above. This study was the starting point for a large and insightful literature composed of survey-based studies of identity in Taiwan. Chang and Hsiao's question was politically risky and substantively interesting, but it was unclear how it should be understood theoretically. Were "Taiwanese" and "Chinese" ethnic categories or national categories? Given that the central political question for Taiwan in the early 1990s was whether Taiwan should seek to become an independent country or continue to view itself as part of China (and therefore work toward unification with the mainland), many social scientists believed the most interesting question was Taiwan's *national* identity, so they tried to develop survey questions and conceptual frameworks that would get at the national identity question.⁶

In 1992, the political scientist Chu Yun-han argued that national identity should be understood in terms of a "Chinese unification or Chinese complex" and a "Taiwan independence or Taiwanese complex." He wrote: "Chinese complex refers to a value orientation which favors the ultimate unification of Taiwan with Mainland China and insists on the inseparability of Taiwan and China both politically and culturally. Taiwanese complex, on the other hand, favors a separate identity for Taiwan both politically and

culturally” (Chu 1992: 68). In essence, Chu argued that national identity was fundamentally a matter of independence versus unification.

Wu Nai-teh followed this same logic in a 1993 paper. He argued that national identity could best be measured by asking respondents whether they preferred independence or unification. But he saw a problem with this approach: practical concerns, especially the fear of PRC retaliation if Taiwan were to declare independence and worries about the economic costs of unification, could cause some respondents to choose other than their ideal outcome. In that case, their responses would not be a true indication of their “national identity.” To get at their *true* identity, Wu asked two questions: “(1) Some people say, ‘If Taiwan could maintain peaceful relations with the Chinese communists after declaring independence, then Taiwan should become independent and establish a new country.’ Do you support this way of thinking? (2) Some people say, ‘If Taiwan and the mainland were comparable in their economic, social and political conditions, then the two sides should be unified.’ Do you support this way of thinking?” (Wu 1993: 46). Only those who either support unification and oppose independence or support independence and oppose unification could be said to have a “national identity.” As it turned out, fewer than half of the respondents in Wu’s study had a “national identity,” a percentage that declined as the survey was repeated.

Shyu Huo-yan, writing in 1994, followed the same logic as Chu and Wu, but with some adjustments. He continued to define “national identity” in terms of the preference for unification or independence, but he added a second dimension that asked whether the respondent felt himself to be Taiwanese or Chinese. Not surprisingly, he found that those who called themselves “Taiwanese” were also more likely to support independence. Shyu was troubled, however, by the large (and increasing) share of respondents whose position on these issues did not conform to the “national identity” categories defined by scholars. The share of respondents calling themselves Taiwanese was rising (from 13 percent in 1991 to 17 percent in 1993), but the share of respondents who either supported or opposed *both* independence and unification was also rising—from 44 percent to 52 percent over the same period. Shyu (1994) concluded that this incoherence was evidence of an identity crisis.

As the field matured, scholars began shifting the blame from “incoherent” respondents to their own flawed concepts. In 1996, Chu Yun-han and Lin Tse-min published a paper in which they defined ethnic identity

as a subjective psychological orientation—measured by the question “How should we call ourselves, the 20 million people living on Taiwan? Chinese? Taiwanese? Or both?”—while continuing to define national identity in terms of the preference for independence or unification (Chu and Lin 1996: 90). Two papers that appeared in 1996 found the correlations among the various dimensions thought to comprise “identity” less than impressive (Yu 1996; You 1996). While 85 percent of respondents in a 1995 survey gave their provincial origin as Taiwanese, only 30 percent identified themselves as Taiwanese, and just 16 percent said they supported independence (Yu 1996). A 1997 study by Lin Tsong-chi found a similar trend. While mainlanders were more likely than Taiwanese to identify themselves as Chinese, Chinese identity among *both* groups had declined between 1992 and 1996 (Lin 1997). In short, the data suggested that provincial origin, Taiwanese/Chinese identity, and preference on the independence/unification issue did not fit together neatly in a package labeled “national identity.” While these dimensions were correlated, the correlations were weak—and growing weaker.

In 1998, Liu I-chou argued that national identity should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon. Based on this idea, he designed survey questions to measure three dimensions: what territory “China” includes (mainland only, mainland and Taiwan, Taiwan only); what people “the Chinese people” (Zhongguoren) includes; and what people have the right to decide Taiwan’s future. The paper found that respondents treated these dimensions as independent of one another. Half said that “China” included both Taiwan and the mainland, while 70 percent thought “the Chinese people” included both mainland and Taiwan residents. But three-quarters said Taiwan residents alone should have the right to decide Taiwan’s future; barely 10 percent were willing to give mainland Chinese a say (Liu 1998: 8–9). These data suggest that Taiwanese are willing to link their island to China geographically and themselves to China culturally or ethnically. But when it comes to politics, there is a strong consensus that islanders should govern themselves.

A version of Liu’s questions was incorporated into the “Survey on Mainland Policy and Cross-Strait Relations” administered periodically by the Election Studies Center at National Chengchi University. Wu Yu-shan’s report on data from this survey suggests that “national identity” is a highly nuanced phenomenon. Asked what they mean by “China” (Zhongguo) and “Chinese people” (Zhongguoren), about half of the respondents said

they included both the mainland and Taiwan. But asked what they meant by “our country” (*women de guojia*) and “the people of our country,” about 80 percent said these terms referred to Taiwan only (Wu 2001: 83). Evidently a large majority of Taiwanese view themselves as citizens of a state that comprises only Taiwan, while half the respondents identify Taiwan and its people as Chinese.⁷ The implications of this finding are important. On the one hand, they reinforce the perception that Taiwanese are not interested in unification; they believe they are citizens of a state (the survey cleverly avoids the issue of what it should be called) that exists only on Taiwan. On the other hand, they challenge the notion that Taiwanese no longer see themselves or their island as meaningfully connected to “China.”

Wu Yu-shan's 2001 article summarizes the changes in these various measures over the course of the 1990s, and he urges his colleagues to differentiate clearly and consistently among the various dimensions of identity and policy preference. For the dimension measured by the question “Are you Taiwanese, Chinese, or both,” Wu uses the label “ethnic consciousness” and shows that, over the course of the 1990s, Taiwanese consciousness has risen, mainly at the expense of Chinese consciousness. He argues that “national identity” is best measured by questions that ask what people have in mind when they say “our country” and “the people of our country”—not by questions about ethnic consciousness or public policy (including independence/unification preference).

Generational Studies

Now that I have delineated the categories that social scientists use to analyze identity in Taiwan, it is time to delve into the statistical relationship between identity and generations. Many studies have found correlations between age and various types of identity, but only a handful analyze these relationships from a generational perspective. Among those that do, one strong finding is that members of older generations are more likely to choose exclusive identities (either Taiwanese or Chinese), while people in the younger generations tend to embrace dual identities (both Taiwanese and Chinese) (Chen 1996; Zuo 2002; Chu 2004; Chang and Wang 2005a).

Chang and Wang analyze this finding in detail. They show that the two youngest generations are quite similar in their identity patterns, but there is a large jump in dual identity from the second generation to the

third. Members of the second generation (born 1931–53) tend to hold an exclusive identity (for example, feeling Taiwanese as opposed to Chinese), while those in the third (born 1954–68) and fourth (born after 1968) generations tend to hold inclusive identities (for example, not rejecting either identity category). This trend is also apparent in Table 1, which shows the results of the 2005 Taiwan National Security Survey. According to these data, the second generation is the most strongly Taiwanese, while the third and fourth generations have similar proportions of Taiwanese and dual identifiers. In sum, the first and second generations take a more dogmatic view of identity, while the third and fourth generations are more flexible.

Generation	Taiwanese (%)	Both (%)	Chinese (%)	Refuse (%)	Other (%)
1	35.9	32.8	26.6	4.7	0.0
2	46.0	40.8	6.6	1.4	5.2
3	40.2	48.4	5.4	0.7	5.2
4	39.8	51.5	6.3	0.4	2.0
Total	41.2	46.9	7.1	1.0	3.8

Source: Taiwan National Security Survey, 2005; $\chi^2 p < .000$.

Generation and the Independence/Unification Issue

The discourse of rising Taiwanese nationalism suggests that as more and more islanders come to “feel Taiwanese,” the demand for independence will grow. But the evidence suggests that as the younger generations take their place at the political center, pressure for independence actually will diminish. A plurality of Taiwanese in the youngest generations rejects hard-line pro-independence views. They would prefer to defer a decision to the future. This finding is consistent across a number of studies (Chen 1996; Zuo 2002; Chu 2004; Chang and Wang 2005a). Chang and Wang’s study of surveys conducted in the 1990s shows that on this issue, as on the ethnic consciousness dimension, the third and fourth generations are similar. And again the biggest difference is between the second and third generations: “When the third generation is compared with the second, being in a younger generation increases the odds of taking a ‘wait and see’ attitude and decreases one’s odds of supporting independence” (Chang and Wang 2005a: 42).

Table 2. Generation and Independence/Unification Preference

Generation	Unification now (%)	Status quo then unification (%)	Independence now (%)	Status quo then independence (%)	Status quo and decide later (%)	Status quo forever (%)
1	0.0	12.7	7.9	12.7	11.1	34.9
2	1.7	10.0	8.7	12.8	25.6	18.0
3	1.7	13.5	7.1	14.0	33.7	22.4
4	2.9	14.5	5.1	18.3	39.3	16.3
Total	2.1	13.0	6.8	15.3	32.7	19.7

Source: Taiwan National Security Survey, 2005; $\chi^2 p < .000$.

Table 2 shows that the trends identified in these earlier studies persist. While fourth-generation Taiwanese are slightly more likely than others to hope for independence in the future, they are less enthusiastic about pursuing it in the near term—and they also are more willing than previous generations to consider unification as an option. Most importantly, a majority (about 55 percent) refuse to express a preference for either option. These data support Chang and Wang's conclusion: "Because an increasing number of younger generation islanders are taking a 'wait and see' attitude on the issue of independence versus unification, Taiwan's future relations with China are far from settled" (Chang and Wang 2005a: 43).

In a 2004 article, Chu Yun-han analyzed data asking respondents to agree or disagree with two conditional statements: "If Taiwan can maintain peace with mainland China after declaring independence, Taiwan should become a new nation (state)" and "If the social, economic, and political conditions in the mainland become comparable to Taiwan, the two sides should become unified." He calls those who agree with the first statement and disagree with the second "principled believers in independence." Two findings are especially relevant here. First, while the percentage of "principled independence believers" increased over the course of the 1990s, it appears to have stagnated after 2000. Second, "the ratio of *principled believers in independence* among the E-generation [roughly correspondent to the fourth generation] is not very high, despite the fact that they have been exposed more extensively to the democratization process and the state-sponsored cultural [Taiwanization] program" (Chu 2004: 504).

Generation and Partisanship

The third area in which generational change matters is partisanship. If we can distinguish a strong partisan trend in the younger generations, we can

make more confident predictions about the future development of Taiwan's party system. Such a trend is hard to discern, however. Party identification is both weak and volatile among the youngest Taiwanese. Moreover, young Taiwanese have little interest in the issue cleavages that provide the underlying logic for

Party identification is both weak and volatile

Taiwan's party system. This means that any party which can come up with ideas and strategies that mobilize young people has a chance to gain their support.

Before the late 1980s, "party identification" was not a concept that could be applied to Taiwan politics. With only one legal party, discussion of the topic was meaningless. Not long after the DPP was founded, however, political scientists began applying theories and methods developed to study partisanship in the United States to Taiwan's electorate. In the earliest studies, scholars found that provincial origin was an important predictor of party preferences (Wu 1993). Over the course of the 1990s, generation and age also came to be seen as key factors. A number of studies found that whether one looked at mainlanders, Taiwanese, or both groups together, support for the KMT was weakest in the younger generations (Liu 1993, 1994; Chen and Tsai 1997; Chen 2000). More important, however, was the conclusion that partisanship itself was weak among the young; Chen and Tsai, looking at the 1996 presidential election, discovered that almost half of young voters neither liked nor disliked any political party (Chen and Tsai 1997; Chen 1996).

In a 1999 article, Wu Nai-teh offered a generational explanation for changing patterns in party identification. He observed that Taiwan's rapidly changing political environment was reducing the salience of the social and political cleavages that underlay Taiwan's political parties. He acknowledged that ethnic consciousness (which he called ethnic identity, *minzu rentong*) had not disappeared, but "it is tending to ease up" (Wu 1999: 54). He then asked: "In a political context in which ideological divisions are gradually narrowing, how will the voters' party identification evolve?" The time was right to look at these issues from a generational perspective, Wu argued, because deep changes in the political environment had created

forces for generational change. Specifically, “the young voters who grew up in the early period of political liberalization in the 1980s have grown into a full age cohort” (Wu 1999: 56).

Wu compared the roots of party identification across three generations: the senior generation (Taiwanese born before 1951, approximating this study's first and second generations); the middle generation (those born between 1951 and 1965, close to my third generation, born 1954–68); and the new generation (those born after 1965, similar to my fourth generation). Based on the literature, Wu selected three variables known to be important predictors of party identification in Taiwan: democratic values (or ideology), preference on the independence/unification issue, and ethnic consciousness. Wu found that for the senior (first and second) generation, all of these variables were significant. For the middle (third) generation, ideology was not important, but independence/unification preference and ethnic consciousness were significantly related to generation. Among the “new” (fourth) generation, however, *none* of the independent variables had a significant effect on party identification. (Neither did two other variables Wu tested, education and provincial origin.) The only significant predictor of party identification among the young was the respondent's father's party identification, leading Wu to conclude that “parental transmission is the sole significant factor explaining the formation of party ID among young voters” (Wu 1999: 53). Wu concluded that the major political parties' converging stands on these issues had left “parental transmission” as the only mechanism through which young Taiwanese acquired party preferences. This conclusion underscores my focus groups' strong assertion that the issues which preoccupy the current generation of political leaders—Taiwan identity, cross-strait relations, independence versus unification, partisan competition—are of little concern to them. They are far more interested in pragmatic issues involving economics, employment, and education than in ideological debates. As one participant put it, “old people are easy to mobilize” because they care about ethnic and ideological issues. Young people, he averred, do not.

Thus while the 2005 Taiwan National Security Survey data shown in Table 3 indicate that fourth-generation Taiwanese are evenly split in their support for the DPP and KMT, other evidence tells us that their motivation for choosing a party has little to do with ideology or identity. Another interesting feature of the fourth generation revealed by the TNSS data is

their low opinion of political parties in general. While each generation is more likely than the one before it to dislike all political parties, the fourth generation is the only one in which the antiparty group outnumbers any other category—and by a substantial margin. This, too, is consistent with evidence from my focus group research. Few participants expressed enthusiasm for a particular political party; the typical response dismissed all parties as self-interested manipulators.

Table 3. Generation and Party Identification

Generation	KMT (%)	DPP (%)	PIP (%)	TSU (%)	Don't support any (%)
1	47.9	17.5	4.8	4.8	6.3
2	25.5	27.6	4.9	4.9	11.2
3	29.2	18.3	4.2	4.7	22.8
4	23.6	25.3	5.8	1.8	30.0
Total	26.9	23.1	5.0	3.7	21.9

Source: Taiwan National Security Survey, 2005; $\chi^2 p < .000$.

An article published in *Caixun* magazine in June 2000 provides a revealing portrait of partisanship among fourth-generation voters. The article is titled “E-Generation Puts Chen Shui-bian on the Presidential Throne,” but it warns Chen—and Taiwan’s politicians generally—not to count on young voters’ support. The article points out that the New Party was once the darling of the young intellectuals, but it has been completely forgotten. In mid-2000, just after his first inauguration, Chen and the DPP enjoyed strong support from youth. But as the sociologist Michael Hsiao Hsin-huang told *Caixun*: “Young people have not pledged their loyalty to a particular political figure; young people are always looking for a new political idol. The only thing that doesn’t change about them is change” (Tseng 2000: 219).

Generation and Views of Mainland China

The idea that Taiwanese nationalism could unravel the peaceful relationship between Taiwan and mainland China implies that in the past, when most Taiwanese people identified themselves as Chinese, Taiwanese attitudes toward the mainland were more positive than they are today. Here again, while historical data are hard to come by, genera-

tional trends suggest the opposite: younger Taiwanese view the PRC in more favorable terms than their elders.

The 2005 Taiwan National Security Survey asked a number of questions about respondents' views of the mainland. And from these views a clear pattern emerges. On each measure, the second generation is the most negative in its attitudes toward the mainland, while the younger generations are more positive. On the question of whether Taiwan should increase or decrease its economic interactions with the mainland, for example, the second-generation respondents were only slightly more inclined to support increasing than decreasing economic ties (Table 4).⁸ The third and fourth generations were much more supportive of cross-strait economic engagement. Fully twice as many fourth-generation respondents supported increasing ties as supported decreasing them. A survey of 18 to 35 year old Taiwanese conducted for *Winner (Shengjia)* magazine in late 2004 found a similar result. Asked what kind of cross-strait policy was most favorable to their own future development, 73 percent chose "increasing cross-strait exchanges" (Li 2004: 80).

*younger Taiwanese view
the PRC in more favorable
terms than their elders*

Table 4. Should Taiwan Increase or Decrease Economic Ties with Mainland China?

Generation	Increase (%)	Decrease (%)	Don't know (%)
1	52	11	32
2	32	27	24
3	47	25	18
4	49	24	15

Source: Taiwan National Security Survey, 2005; $\chi^2 p < .000$.

Table 5 reinforces this finding. The TNSS survey question asks: "In facing the mainland's military threat, do you think Taiwan should increase its military procurement budget or use political and diplomatic methods to cope?" Despite the direct reference to a military threat, most third- and fourth-generation respondents prefer a political and diplomatic response, as

opposed to increased military spending. How much of this response should be attributed to skepticism about the efficacy of military spending and reluctance to pay higher taxes for military purchases as opposed to a favorable view of the mainland is unclear. It is evident, however, that while the military option has little appeal to any age group, the younger generations, especially the fourth, are far more enthusiastic about nonmilitary options.

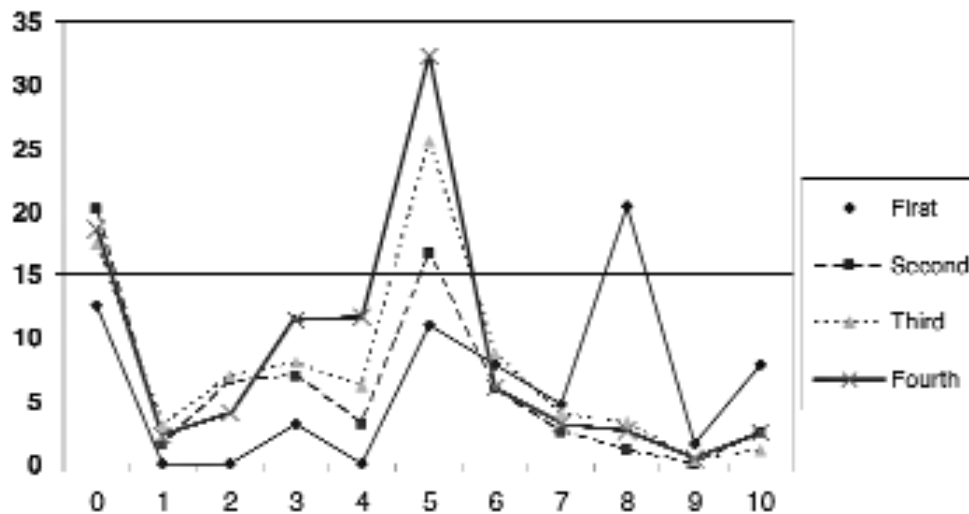
Table 5. Military Spending or Political and Diplomatic Engagement?

Generation	Military (%)	Political (%)	Both (%)	Don't know (%)
1	18.8	42.2	0.0	23.4
2	19.7	39.1	12.8	22.8
3	19.1	51.2	11.1	13.1
4	17.4	60.8	8.2	8.5

Source: Taiwan National Security Survey, 2005; $\chi^2 p < .000$.

Figure 1 shows respondents' assessment of the PRC government, with 0 signifying the least favorable view and 10 indicating the most favorable view. With the exception of the first, each generation leans toward an unfavorable view of the mainland government. Yet the proportion of

Figure 1. How much do you like the mainland China government? (percentage, 0 = dislike)



Source: Taiwan National Security Survey, 2005.

respondents giving the PRC government a neutral score (5) increases in each successive generation. The second generation is the most negative, while the fourth generation is the least polarized and most agnostic of any generation. As one focus group participant put it: "Old people have been through a lot. My grandfather really hates China, really loves the U.S. People my age just don't have that kind of emotion."

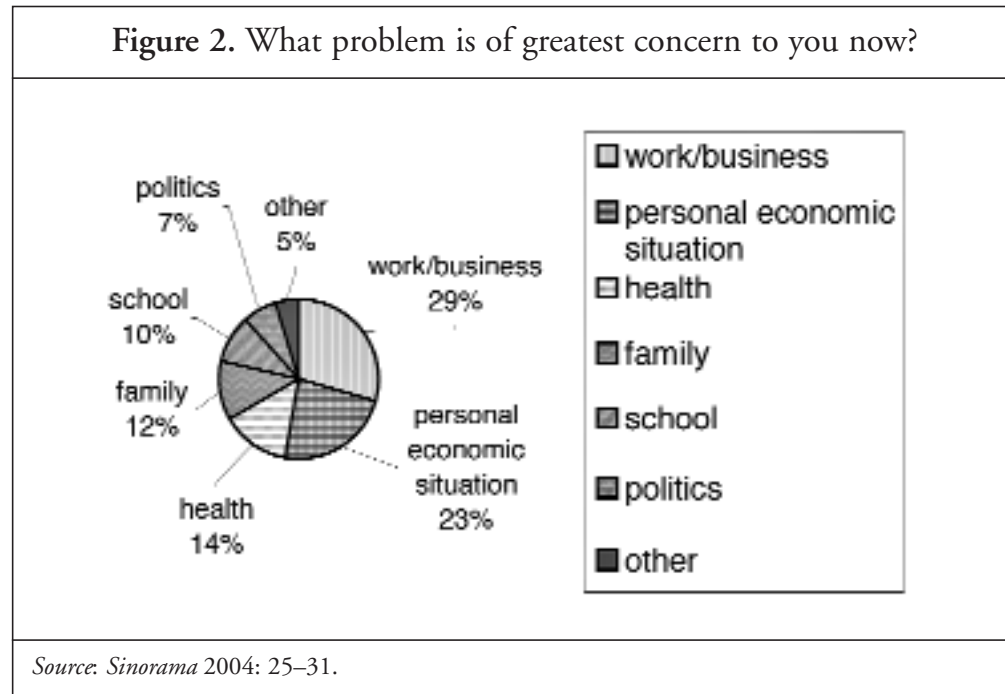
Taken together, these quantitative measures of Taiwanese attitudes toward the mainland suggest that, far from worsening, views of the PRC in Taiwan actually are improving. The idea that mainland China is more popular among young people than among their parents and grandparents is supported by qualitative evidence as well. In focus groups, many participants said they did not have strong feelings about mainland China, either negative or positive. But asked whether they would consider working or studying in the mainland, most said yes. Many observed that working for a Western or Taiwanese company in the mainland for a few years would be a good career move, although few expressed an interest in relocating to the mainland permanently. The focus group participants' comments are consistent with other findings. For example, *Winner* magazine's survey of 18 to 35 year olds found that 10 percent would be happy to go to the mainland to work, while another 41 percent said they could accept employment in the mainland (although they were not eager to go). In other words, young Taiwanese are not longing to go to the PRC to live and work, but a slight majority say they would go if the right opportunity came along.⁹

A Note About Salience

The data presented here on identity, partisanship, independence/unification, and attitudes toward the mainland suggest that the views of young-generation Taiwanese are not consistent with the "rising Taiwanese nationalism" discourse. But there is another dimension which deserves mention, and that is salience: how important are these issues to the younger generations? Pollsters can always get answers to questions people do not really care about; if that is true of these questions, then rising Taiwanese nationalism is even less of a force than the data suggest.

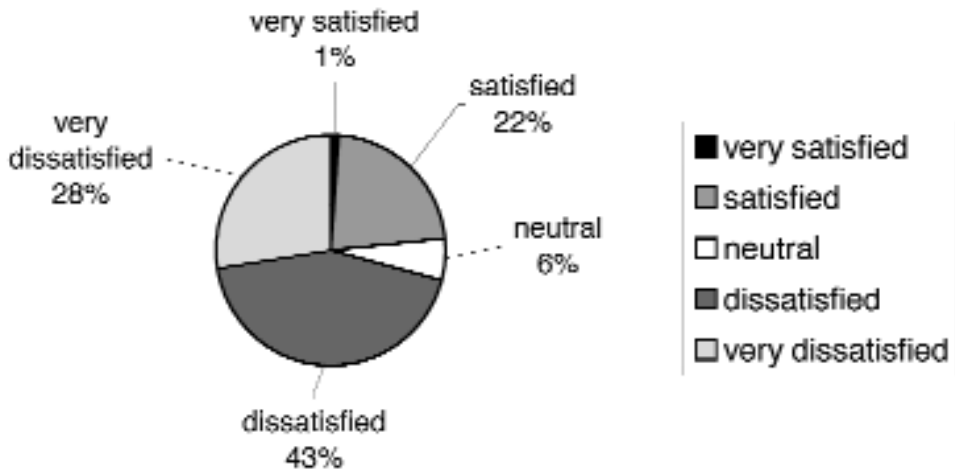
Based on my focus group research, I believe issues like identity and independence are not very salient for the fourth generation. In focus group after focus group, participants stressed that they are mainly concerned about concrete problems of economics, education, and employment. They insisted that the issues driving the elite political discourse were irrelevant

to their lives, and they expressed frustration that the “real” issues were being ignored in favor of polarizing symbolic politics. As an article in *Caixun* magazine put it: “Unification and independence, the nation’s future, party turn-over . . . maybe these are important, but they don’t have much to do with young people, who have no power to decide or change them” (Tseng 2000: 218).



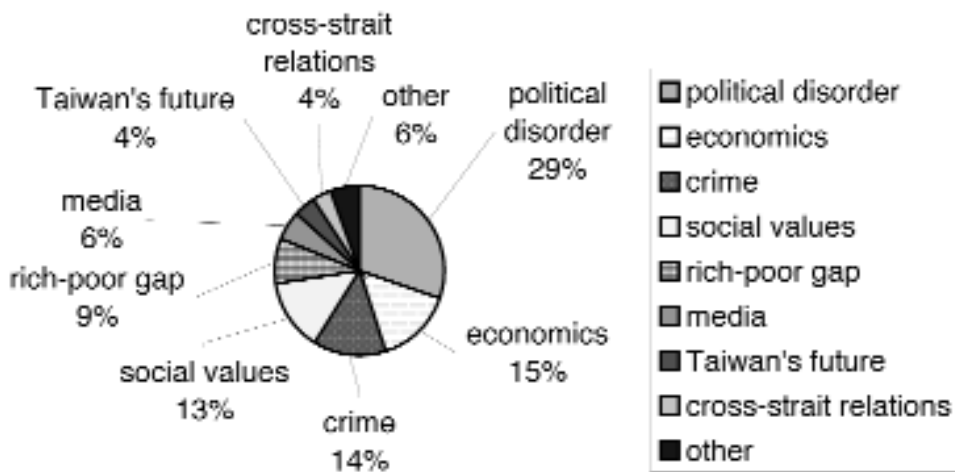
Figures 2 and 3 offer a quantitative view of this question, although they do not allow for a cross-generational comparison. They are drawn from a survey of youths aged 19 to 30 taken in 2003 and reported in *Sinorama* magazine. Figure 2 shows that young people were most concerned about personal matters, mainly their economic situation. Only 7 percent said politics was the problem of greatest concern to them. This lack of concern did not stem from a feeling of satisfaction with the situation in Taiwan’s society, however, as Figure 3 shows. What was the source of their dissatisfaction? Figure 4 suggests that frustration with the ineffectiveness of the political process was the leading grievance, followed by worries about the economy. Overall these figures suggest that the issues which drive the second generation and motivate their partisan bickering have a limited audience among young Taiwanese.

Figure 3. How satisfied are you with the overall condition of society?



Source: Sinorama 2004: 25-31.

Figure 4. In Taiwan's politics, economics, and society, which aspect do you think is most in need of improvement?



Source: Sinorama 2004: 25-31.

A Generational Model of Taiwan Politics

The data presented in the previous section show strong generational differences in public opinion. But as the literature on generations makes clear, dividing a population along generational lines requires a historical justification. This section provides a rationale for generational politics in Taiwan that follows the analytical logic of the generational politics literature and explains the observed patterns in public opinion.

The First Generation: Taiwan Residents

Born by 1931

The greatest dislocation in Taiwan's twentieth-century history occurred in 1949, when the Republic of China (ROC) government was forced to relocate to the island. For newcomers and long-term residents alike, this event profoundly disrupted political, economic, and social norms. One result was a generational rupture.

From 1895, when China's Qing-dynasty rulers ceded the island to Japan as a condition of the treaty ending the Sino-Japanese War, until the end of World War II, Taiwan was part of the empire of Japan, and Japanese influences were deep and lasting. Politically the Japanese imposed much tighter controls on Taiwan than had been the case during the Qing rule. In the 1920s, some Taiwanese began agitating for home rule. Although the Japanese authorities strongly opposed this idea, they did invite a small number of Taiwanese to participate in an advisory council. Later, elected local assemblies were convened, although few Taiwanese were eligible to vote.

The period of Japanese colonization saw rapid economic development on the island. The colonial government was determined to demonstrate its efficiency and skill by building infrastructure, broadening access to education, and integrating Taiwan into regional economic networks. Although the island's economy remained primarily agricultural, the colonial government increased the scale of commodity farming and promoted agricultural processing industries. As a result of these policies, by 1945 Taiwan had surpassed mainland China on most indicators of development.

The colonial government's social and cultural policies emphasized assimilation. Taiwanese were educated in the Japanese language; many took Japanese names. Migration from mainland China to the island largely ceased. Thus nearly all the non-Japanese residents of the island in 1945 had deep roots there dating back at least 50 years and in most cases much longer. The Chinese migrants to Taiwan had come mostly from Minnan

(Hoklo) and Hakka-speaking areas; Mandarin was rarely heard in Taiwan before 1945. To this day, many elderly Taiwanese—most famously former president Lee Teng-hui—are more comfortable speaking Japanese than Mandarin.

In 1945, Japan was forced to give up its colonies, including Taiwan. The Allied Powers turned the island over to the ROC, which was under the control of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang, or KMT). For four years, the ROC governed Taiwan from afar; its primary preoccupation was the civil war raging on the mainland. In 1947, the ROC's inattention and mismanagement led to a major uprising, followed by violent suppression. This incident (the February 28, or 2-28, Incident), along with the accumulation of countless negative encounters between Taiwanese and Nationalist soldiers, administrators, and migrants, created lasting discord between the two groups—and lasting resentment of the KMT by many Taiwanese people. In 1949 the Nationalists lost the war for control of mainland China; the ROC government moved lock, stock, and barrel to Taiwan. Almost overnight, the island's population increased by 2 million souls (Roy 2003: 76). In four years' time, an island that for 50 years had seemed far closer to Japan than to China suddenly became the sole remaining territory of the Chinese Republic. Japanese colonization was not an unmitigated boon to Taiwan. Nonetheless, Taiwanese who grew up under Japanese colonial rule formed their worldview in response to it. Only the most assimilated Taiwanese had a fully Japanese mindset; most were steeped in Chinese culture as well as Japanese. But even those who resisted Japanese colonization were shaped by the institutions and practices of the age. For this reason, analysts of Taiwan's generational politics agree that those who came of age during the Japanese era constitute a generation.¹⁰

The leading figure in the first generation is former president Lee Teng-hui. Born in 1923, Lee studied at Kyoto Imperial University during World War II and reportedly fought in the civil defense force there. After 1950 he began his steady rise to the top of the pro-unification KMT, a party he served for almost 50 years. Yet after he stepped down from the presidency, Lee became Taiwan's most prominent advocate of independence. The psychological insights Karl Mannheim brings to the study of generational politics help to explain this astonishing turnaround. Lee grew up as a Japanese at a time when Japan was the strongest nation in East Asia. His self-image and his idea of Taiwan were formed in an era in which Taiwan

was wholly disconnected from mainland China. For Lee, China is an abstraction whereas Japan and Taiwan are real. An adult in 1949, Lee incorporated his experiences under the ROC into a worldview that was already established when the Japanese empire broke apart. Thus half a century as a KMT politician instilled in Lee Teng-hui little real feeling for China. Although he paid lip service to KMT ideology, ultimately he was impervious to it. After he left the party, he repudiated the positions he had advocated for decades.

First-Generation Mainlanders

Taiwan's population today includes an important subgroup that never experienced Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan, regardless of their age: those who lived in mainland China before the civil war. Using 1931 as the cut-off birth year for the first generation works for this group, too, because it divides those who were adults when they came to Taiwan from those who came before their formative years. Of course, these dates are imprecise; the horrors and privations of life in China during the war years surely made many of the Nationalist soldiers who came to Taiwan in the late 1940s old beyond their years. Nonetheless, if 1949 was the most destabilizing event in Taiwan's twentieth century history, it was even more destabilizing for mainland Chinese loyal to the republic. If we are to draw a generational line anywhere, we should draw it between those whose patterns of thought were set before 1949 and those young enough to have had their worldviews shaped by these events.

First-generation mainlanders are an exceptionally diverse group. They came from all of China's provinces and from all walks of life within main-

land society. There were peasant conscripts in their ranks, as well as military brass, government administrators, scholars, and industrialists. Some of China's greatest thinkers came to Taiwan in 1949, along with tens of thousands of illiterate soldiers. Nonetheless, first-generation mainlanders' political attitudes became very homogeneous (Zuo 2002: 120).¹¹ Early on, a brave few tried to continue the political

and academic debates that had flourished on the mainland, but the KMT quickly imposed an ideological straitjacket, insisting that disagreement was a luxury that could not be indulged at a time of military crisis. Later, as the

***First-generation
mainlanders are an
exceptionally diverse group***

mainlanders came to realize the extent of their predicament, they were driven together by another force: the discomfort of being a resented minority in an unfamiliar land (see Chang 1991). Because the survival of individual mainlanders depended on maintaining solidarity within the group, mainlanders tended to toe the KMT line closely.

The Second Generation: Taiwan Residents

Born Between 1931 and 1953

Defining the first generation of Taiwanese is relatively easy, given the earth-shattering rupture of 1949. There is less agreement on where the boundaries of the second generation should be set. Some have argued that economic changes had reached a critical level by 1965, altering Taiwan's living environment so drastically that a new generation was created (Liu 1993, 1994). Others find international and domestic political changes in 1960 (Chen 2000) or 1972 (Chen 1996; Chen and Tsai 1997) more decisive. In my view, the most persuasive arguments are found in Zuo (2002) and Chang and Wang (2005a). These papers argue that converging political and economic developments reached a critical point in 1971, so they locate the end of the second generation in the birth year 1953. In other words, Taiwanese who entered their formative years after the KMT arrived in Taiwan but before the political crisis of 1971–72 constitute Taiwan's second generation.

The period between 1949 and 1971 saw the high tide of KMT authoritarian rule. In the 1950s and 1960s, the ROC government was largely free of domestic or international pressure to democratize. Internationally the KMT government benefited from Manichean Cold War thinking that allowed the ROC to occupy the exalted role of "Free China" in contrast to the mainland's reviled "Red China." Most Western governments—led by the United States—accepted the ROC's claim to be the legitimate government of all China. This sense that the international community supported the KMT reinforced the party's control at home. Potential dissidents within Taiwan were deterred by the knowledge that challenges to the ROC government would attract little international sympathy. Meanwhile, the notion that the "whole world" (that is, the whole noncommunist world) agreed with the ROC claim of sovereignty over all of China made it difficult for Taiwanese to question that claim.

As for domestic politics, the KMT government devoted itself in the 1950s and 1960s to mobilizing Taiwan's public behind its goal of restor-

ing ROC rule in all of China. Those who expressed doubt about the desirability or feasibility of this plan were silenced. The central government, headquartered in Taipei, was effectively walled off from local participation on the grounds that the ROC represented all China. To allow the people of one province (Taiwan) a disproportionate influence over that government would disenfranchise the great majority of Chinese who were suffering (temporarily) under the yoke of the “communist bandits.” Under this logic—and because the ROC technically was at war with the communists—the ROC’s relatively democratic constitution was suspended. Members of national representative bodies who had been elected on the mainland retained their positions; when one died, he was replaced by another appointed from his home province. Quotas were created to ensure that people from Taiwan province would not gain more than their “share” of bureaucratic positions—a practice that guaranteed mainlanders a huge majority of civil service posts.

Although Taiwanese now refer to these years as the period of “White Terror,” the KMT did not use sticks alone to control Taiwan. It offered carrots as well. The KMT, for example, offered Taiwanese limited opportunities to participate in government. The rudimentary local elections initiated during the Japanese period were expanded to allow Taiwan’s villages, townships, towns, counties, and cities (with the exception of Taipei and later Kaohsiung) limited self-government. Taiwanese elected a provincial assembly, although the governor of Taiwan province was appointed by the central government. These local governments had little authority, but the opportunity to run for office appealed to many Taiwanese, and from the early 1950s on, elections at all levels were hotly contested. The KMT did not allow opposition parties to form, but it did permit independent candidates to compete against KMT nominees. The most successful of these were often enticed to join the ruling party. The result was that by the early 1970s, there was a vibrant political life at the local level, and many Taiwanese had accepted membership in the KMT. Although the KMT was still overwhelmingly a mainlander organization in 1971, especially at the upper levels, many Taiwanese identified with their local party branches.

The KMT government’s economic policies were equally far-reaching. Although Taiwan’s “economic miracle” really took wing in the 1970s, economic conditions improved rapidly in the first two decades of KMT rule, with high growth rates and distributional patterns that allowed Taiwanese from all walks of life to enjoy rapidly rising living standards. Growth rates

in the 1950s averaged about 8 percent per year; in the 1960s they were closer to 10 percent (Roy 2003: 103). These economic results were built on sound economic policies and substantial U.S. assistance, but ordinary Taiwanese seized their economic opportunities with vigor, diligence, and entrepreneurial zeal.

Socially, the 1950s and 1960s were an era of high mobilization, rigid conformity to political norms, and heavy indoctrination. Taiwanese and mainlanders alike were expected to put their backs into the task of preparing the ROC to retake the mainland. Taiwanese had an added responsibility: to recreate themselves as loyal citizens of China. This meant weeding out Japanese influences and also setting aside “local” beliefs and practices (that is, things that were uniquely Taiwanese) in favor of “national” ones. Taiwanese were required to use Mandarin in schools and government offices. Television and radio stations broadcast mostly in Mandarin; like newspapers and magazines, they were subject to tight control by the KMT party-state. The regime denigrated folk religion and other traditional practices (most of which had originated in mainland China) as unworthy of proper “Chinese.”

The KMT's policies in these decades were a confusing stew of rigid authoritarian politics, vibrant local electoral competition, stifling ideological orthodoxy, and breakneck economic development. Taiwanese who matured during this period faced the challenge of blending this multifaceted experience into a coherent worldview. Many had seen the KMT's repressive violence at first or second hand, and nearly all had endured insults to their mother tongue and culture. In some households, mainlanders were reviled. Social relations between mainlanders and Taiwanese were strained, with most mainlanders residing in segregated neighborhoods.

At the same time, however, Taiwanese enjoyed rapid improvements in their living standards. Thanks to land reform, landless farmers who had been locked in poverty and dependency found themselves independent. Small businesses flourished, including family-based manufacturing firms, and educational standards rose quickly. By the late 1960s, prospects for young adults in Taiwan were extremely bright. What were impressionable Taiwanese youths to make of these times? Like the first generation, the second generation polarized into generation units. For many (probably

*the second generation
polarized into
generation units*

most) Taiwanese, the KMT government's successes during these decades were impressive. While it is impossible to know how people really felt about the KMT—no surveys were taken, and few respondents would have dared to give the KMT an unfavorable assessment in any case—the behavior of most Taiwan residents suggests that they accepted the strictures and learned to work within the system. While they may have found aspects of it unfair (for example, the emphasis on Mandarin proficiency in school gave mainlanders a huge academic advantage) or even humiliating, they kept their objections quiet. Others went even further, setting aside their disquiet and attaching themselves to the KMT. Thus by the early 1970s, there was a cadre of young Taiwanese politicians working their way up the ladder of local elections and through the party bureaucracy. These are the most visible members of one of the generation units within the second generation.

Other Taiwanese in the second generation weighed the pros and cons of KMT rule differently. For them, rising living standards and limited local self-government paled in the face of the more onerous aspects of KMT authoritarianism. While few spoke out publicly, many resented the mainland minority's monopoly on political power. Although the 2-28 Incident was unmentionable for decades, it was not forgotten. In the 1950s and 1960s, dissidents living in exile in the United States and Japan organized a movement to throw off the KMT by declaring Taiwan an independent republic, thereby removing the ROC government's justification for keeping Taiwan under the thumb of its "emergency" rule. While only a handful of people inside Taiwan openly challenged the KMT during these decades, many more bided their time, quietly harboring their resentments. These individuals formed the core of the opposition movement that surfaced in the 1970s.

To members of this generation unit, the fundamental obstacle to justice and fairness in their land was the KMT. The KMT's sins were many, but three were especially resented:

- The KMT imposed itself on Taiwan by force and denied Taiwan's people a voice in their government.
- Under the KMT, the will of the majority was subjugated to the will of a privileged minority: the mainlanders.
- This "émigré regime" (*wailai zhengquan*) denigrated Taiwan's culture and tried to force Taiwanese to adopt "Chinese culture" as the mainlanders defined it.

Taken together, these offenses directed the anger of disgruntled Taiwanese against the KMT, mainlanders, and, by extension, all things “Chinese.” The resentment of “China” thus began as bitterness toward the China within: the KMT and mainlanders. Everything this generation knew about “China” was the product of their interactions with the KMT and mainlanders in Taiwan; even the youngest in the second generation were well into their thirties before it was possible for Taiwanese to travel to the mainland. But once they did have a chance to visit the mainland, their interactions with the PRC—the China without—only reinforced this generation’s antipathy toward China. For by the mid-1980s, Beijing’s hostility to a separate status for Taiwan already was evident.

The language chosen by the taxi driver quoted in the *Washington Post* illustrates the meaning of Taiwanese identity for this group. He references the White Terror, then says: “Over the past ten years, listening to campaign speeches, I realized the Nationalists had lied to all of us, and that I’m Taiwanese, not Chinese.” For members of this generation, identifying as Taiwanese means rejecting the KMT and its lies; it means discarding an artificial and imposed Chinese identity in favor of another, contradictory identity. The label this generation chose for its political movement—the Dangwai, or “outside the party” movement—has a similar flavor: in a one-party system, we in the opposition will become the antiparty. President Chen spoke this generational language when he described the meaning of Taiwan identity in his January 1, 2006, New Year’s address: “Taiwan consciousness breaks the shackles of historical bondage and political dogma, and is founded upon the 23 million people of Taiwan’s own self-recognition, devotion to the land and understanding of their shared destiny.”¹²

The conditions under which this generation unit came to its political consciousness produced an ideology that celebrates Taiwan identity not only for its own sake but also as a way of rejecting Chinese identity. But

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***the second
generation...play[s] a
key role in Taiwan's
contemporary politics***

as Chen's speech makes clear, this ideology goes farther still; for this generation, Taiwan consciousness neutralizes history and demands self-determination. While it is not an outright call for independence, it is easy to see how a statement like this one (and Chen's speeches are larded with such comments) could be interpreted as a manifestation of "Taiwanese nationalism" as it is popularly understood. Members of the second generation who rejected the KMT play a key role in Taiwan's contemporary politics. Most of the island's top executive branch officials belong to this generation unit, including President Chen, Vice-President Annette Lu Hsiu-lien (b. 1944), National Security Council head Chiou I-jen (b. 1950), former Foreign Minister Mark Chen Tan-sun (b. 1935), and four out of Chen's five premiers. Only a few important cabinet

posts are held by individuals outside this group. Looking ahead to the 2008 presidential election, all three leading DPP presidential hopefuls—Yu Shyi-kun (b. 1948), Frank Hsieh Chang-ting (b. 1946), and Su Tseng-chang (b. 1947)—are members of this generation unit.¹³

The visibility of this generation unit goes a long way toward explaining the preoccupation with "rising Taiwanese nationalism" among foreign observers, for these individuals precisely embody the complex of attitudes associated with the popular notion of "Taiwanese nationalism." They have built their political careers fighting against the KMT and all that it represents. They are Taiwanese both in their provincial origin and in their ethnic consciousness.¹⁴ Although the DPP has made an effort to avoid "ethnic politics" in recent years, DPP leaders of the second generation have a strong, almost instinctual, impulse to view politics in ethnic terms. Recently a member of this group told me that the real setback in the December 2005 elections was not the DPP's large loss of seats but the fact that so many mainlanders were elected in predominantly Taiwanese districts.¹⁵ In May 2005, another second-generation DPP politician blamed mainlander manipulation for the DPP's weak showing in the National Assembly election held that month.¹⁶

DPP politicians of the second generation led the fight in 1991 to make Taiwan's independence a plank in their party platform, and with a few exceptions (most notably Frank Hsieh and second-generation members of the New Tide faction) their public statements reveal them to be deeply suspicious of mainland China today. This group came to office in 2000 promising to ease restrictions on cross-strait economic relations and travel, but it has implemented few of those promises. On the contrary, in early 2006, the Chen administration announced a policy shift aimed at slowing the growth of cross-strait ties. In short, anti-KMT politicians within the second generation display all the characteristics associated with "Taiwanese nationalism." In this they resemble their age group in the general public: as Chang and Wang find, the second generation is the most Taiwan-identified and most pro-independence of Taiwan's four generations (Chang and Wang 2005a: 36 and 40).

These statistical findings, discussed in detail in the previous section, are important because they suggest that members of this generation who openly participated in the opposition movement represent the tip of an iceberg. If we look only at political activists, we might think that the generation unit represented by Chen Shui-bian and his comrades was very small. Of course, only the boldest and most determined Taiwanese became political activists during the authoritarian period, and many of them paid a high price for their activism. Still, voting patterns suggest that a huge majority of Taiwanese supported the KMT, not the opposition. Even in the 1970s and 1980s, at the height of the democratic movement, the opposition considered a 30 percent share of the vote a victory. We might interpret this to mean that "Taiwanese nationalism" is relatively rare, even within the second generation. But if we look at the attitudes expressed by members of this generation in the 1990s, after restrictions on free speech were lifted and survey respondents no longer had to fear giving politically incorrect answers, we find the "Taiwanese nationalist" complex quite strong in this second generation. This suggests that the feelings which motivated Chen and others to join an opposition movement and fight the KMT are shared by many others in his generation, even those who did not act on those feelings during the authoritarian period.

Second-Generation Mainlanders

Mainlanders in the second generation were little more integrated into Taiwan society than their parents. Most were born in the mainland; grow-

ing up, they had few opportunities to socialize with Taiwanese. The language barrier presented a problem, but social and residential segregation were even more important. The children of party and government officials were groomed for service in the KMT party-state. For their part, these young mainlanders observed firsthand their parents' grief at the loss of their homeland. The state encouraged mainlanders to hold onto their faith that they would soon return home, and many parents hoped their life on Taiwan would turn out to be a temporary sojourn. So in this generation, too, mainlanders were urged to stick together and their political attitudes remained relatively homogeneous, although Zuo found mainlanders in the second generation slightly less homogeneous than those in the first generation (Zuo 2002: 117–18).

The Third Generation: Taiwan Residents

Born Between 1953 and 1968

Taiwanese born between 1953 and 1968 reached maturity in the 1970s and 1980s, a period of breakneck change in Taiwan.

*the third generation
tends to be flexible
and pragmatic*

This, more than anything else, shaped their political identity. Where the second generation can be rigid and dogmatic, the third generation tends to be flexible and pragmatic: their formative years accustomed them to change.

For all its shortcomings, the high-tide era of KMT authoritarianism did offer stability. Even though the prospects of “recovering” the mainland were dimming, the ROC still enjoyed the support of an important segment of the international community. The economy was growing rapidly, living standards were improving, and the ROC was treated as an important country. So when the international tide turned against Taiwan in the early 1970s, the shift shook the regime and its citizens to the core. For Taiwanese coming of age after these historical events, the world looked very different than it had for those born earlier. The advent of uncertainty brought anxiety, but it also brought hope: if the outside world could change its view of the ROC, maybe things could change inside Taiwan, too.

The most obvious threat to the ruling party's position came from the international community. After two decades of existence, the People's Republic of China seemed less likely than ever to disappear or be “recovered” by the ROC. In 1971, the ROC lost its seat in the United Nations. A year later President Richard Nixon visited China and the United States began preparations to derecognize the ROC. These international chal-

lenges complicated the KMT government's effort to address growing economic and political problems within Taiwan. Where only a few years earlier there had been certainties, now there were questions. And one way or another, all these questions came down to this: without a realistic chance of recovering the mainland, on what basis could the ROC government justify itself to the Taiwanese people—and to the world?

Between 1975 and 1995, Taiwan's government completed its transit from a closed, authoritarian regime cut off from its nearest neighbor to a free, democratic society with broad ties to the PRC. The people who led this journey were, for the most part, members of the second generation. Dangwai activists were emboldened by their passion for justice and their rage against authoritarianism to mount an audacious challenge to a repressive regime. Without that pressure, Chiang Ching-kuo and his leadership team would have seen little reason to open the system to competition. At the same time, second-generation Taiwanese who cooperated with the KMT also contributed to democratization. Their participation lowered the stakes of reform and made it possible for the KMT to survive the transition and even remain in power. Because there were Taiwanese willing to work within the ruling party, majority rule did not mean the death of the KMT.

The second generation drove the transition to democracy; the third generation grew up with that transition and was indelibly shaped by it. While their formal education emphasized the same Chinese Nationalist narrative that so infuriated the second-generation activists, the history that was unfolding around them offered them a less settled narrative. Was the ROC the government of all China? Or was Taiwan, alone, enough? How much longer should democracy be postponed? Could the ROC survive given its wobbly international status? Was the PRC necessarily an enemy? These were sensitive questions. But at least they were questions, and people were asking them. Because their formative years occurred during this period of transition, the choices confronting the third generation were less stark than those facing the previous generation. For the second generation, democracy, freedom, and equality were problematic values. Those who supported the KMT saw them as long-term goals that must be deferred in favor of more immediate objectives: domestic stability and mainland recovery. For the opposition, the ROC government's lip service to democracy was rank cynicism. By the time the third generation came of age, these values were moving from the margins to the center; lip service was giving way to real action; and the need to choose between fighting for

democracy or rationalizing its postponement was rapidly disappearing. Where the second generation experienced politics through the lenses of alienation or resignation, the third generation looked at politics more optimistically. As a result, the sharp-edged ideologies of the second generation yielded to a more flexible and pragmatic perspective. In short, the third generation developed attitudes that reflected the uncertain, transitional environment in which they came of age.

For those in the third generation who wanted to participate in the grand narrative of democratization, there was one last chapter yet to be written. Beginning in the late 1980s, university students began joining the pro-democracy movement. In March 1990, students from around Taiwan held a huge rally near the presidential office building in Taipei. The student protesters had four demands: dissolve the National Assembly, abolish the restraints on civil liberties, convene a National Affairs Conference, and establish a timetable for political and economic reform (He 2001: 10). The demonstration was the first in a series of student-organized protests aimed at eliminating the last remaining barriers to democracy. The student movement's goals were soon achieved, although some young activists paid a price for their participation. Overall, however, the risks they incurred—and the odds against them—were considerably lower than they had been for activists in the previous generation. For this reason, and because its goals were widely embraced by young Taiwanese, the student movement attracted large numbers of participants. And even those who did not participate were affected by the movement. As the student leader Fan Yun put it: “The ‘student movement generation of the 1990s’ sounds relatively narrow, but democratization actually shaped our entire generation. Even those students who didn’t join with us to form the student movement all felt the liberalizing wave of that time. When I went abroad [for graduate school] I met people from that era who hadn’t participated, and they all said they felt that influence” (quoted in He 2001: 260).

Although most young people did not actively participate in the student movement, the experience did not polarize the generation into “generation units.” The values the student activists were promoting—democracy and freedom—were mainstream ideas within their age group. Only when some student activists became champions of Taiwan’s independence did the generation divide. What is interesting about the third generation, though, is that even among the student movement activists, the great majority of whom ended up affiliated with the DPP, support for independ-

ence is relatively weak. Third-generation DPP politicians tend to emphasize procedural democracy and pragmatism in cross-strait relations; there are few third-generation politicians in the fundamentalist camp. Overall, compared to the DPP politicians in the second generation, third-generation DPP activists are less ideological, more pragmatic, and less antagonistic toward the KMT and mainland China.

Evidence of their moderation can be seen in the series of initiatives third-generation DPP activists and politicians have undertaken to make the party's positions more moderate and less exclusionary. In 1996, young DPP activists led by the student movement leader Jou Yi-Cheng (b. 1967) published a "Manifesto for the Taiwan Independence Movement in a New Era." They called for an inclusive definition of Taiwanese identity: Taiwan's independence, the young activists argued, belongs to everyone, including Mainlanders, even the KMT. According to this group, Taiwan's independence is a matter of spirit, not symbolism; thus, changing the flag or the name of the state is not important. The goal is to bring Taiwanese of all backgrounds together to love and defend their country. Kuo Cheng-liang (b. 1961), a student movement activist and DPP legislator, has described this push to make Taiwan's independence more pragmatic and inclusive in terms of the generational logic laid out in this study: "The old generation advocated Taiwan's independence because of the past, tragedy, and nationalism, while the new generation advocates Taiwan's independence because of the future, hope, and democracy" (Kuo 1998: 76).

Another third-generation initiative occurred during the fall 2005 election campaign, when Luo Wen-chia (b. 1966), the DPP candidate for Taipei County executive, joined with the New Tide convener Duan I-kang (b. 1963) to call for a "New DPP" movement. Luo discussed the movement's goals with reporters on October 1. He said that he and Duan believed the party's performance in recent years had left voters dissatisfied and that it needed to revitalize its core values, including introspection and innovation. He also stressed the importance of the party's founding ideals, which he said were freedom, democracy, equality, and justice. Luo said the idea for the movement came from conversations with "new generation (*xin shidai*) friends from academic and party circles" (Central News Agency, October 1, 2005).

*Taiwan's independence
is a matter of spirit,
not symbolism*

The New DPP movement attracted strong support from third-generation DPP politicians. More than 70 legislators, led by another former student movement activist, Lee Wen-chung (b. 1958), announced their support for the idea. A group of third-generation legislators asked their colleagues to commit themselves to a “self-discipline” pledge to show their opposition to corruption. Despite strong support from young party members, however, senior leaders shut down the movement and forbade further discussion of a New DPP movement. Their decision was clearly aimed at crushing a challenge from the third generation, and it was followed by a series of hard-line decisions from the Chen administration on cross-strait issues that seemed almost calculated to frustrate and disappoint young DPP politicians. Apparently, some in the second generation find the third generation’s rising influence threatening.

These two incidents illustrate the ideological differences between the second and third generations in the DPP. Both the New Taiwan Independence Manifesto and the New DPP movement reject a Taiwanese nationalist agenda that begins with exclusive identities and ends with de jure independence. In enumerating the DPP’s ideals and values, Luo and Duan never mentioned Taiwan independence or even Taiwan identity; instead they emphasized their party’s democratic virtues.

Third-Generation Mainlanders

Although their parents were born in mainland China, mainlanders in the third generation were born and raised on Taiwan; thus they feel the tension of competing identities more strongly than their parents and grandparents. A *Liberty Times* article on Taiwan-born mainlanders published in 1990 carried a poignant quotation:

Overseas, no one thought we were Chinese; they said we were Taiwanese. In Taiwan, no one thought we were Taiwanese; they said we were mainlanders. In the mainland, no one thought we were part of them; they said we were Taiwan compatriots (Taibao). We wandered around through all these different statuses and titles in all these different regions and places, and felt we were always at a crossroads. We were like homeless orphans; we ourselves didn’t know what we were. [Quoted in Zuo 2002: 18]

Mainlanders have responded to this tension in a variety of ways. Some, like Duan I-kang and the student movement activist and scholar Fan Yun, have cast their lot with Taiwan, even to the point of participating in the

DPP. Even among KMT supporters, many third-generation mainlanders embrace the label “New Taiwanese.” Still others have emigrated, some to mainland China. Wherever they are, however, third-generation mainlanders seem attached to Taiwan. A mainlander businessman interviewed in Shanghai in February 2006 exemplified this quality. Although he has lived in the United States and mainland China for most of his adult life, he follows events in Taiwan closely. When I commented that he seemed to worry a lot about a place he rarely visits, he replied: “Of course! Of course I care about the fate of Taiwan. I feel very far away, but I hope they will move in the right direction.”¹⁷

One of the best-known mainlander politicians in the third generation is the Taoyuan County executive Eric Chu Li-lun (b. 1961). Chu was a professor of business before entering politics. He is often named alongside Ma Ying-jeou and Jason Hu as one of the KMT's most promising politicians. His mainlander background is no obstacle to his electoral success, even in a heavily Taiwanese county like Taoyuan. In an interview in December 2005, Chu explained his identity: “I am called a mainlander, but my father is the only mainlander in my family. My mother is Taiwanese, my wife is Taiwanese. I'm a ‘mainlander,’ but I'm totally Taiwanese.”¹⁸ As for unification, Chu dismisses the idea that the KMT is a pro-unification party. Instead, he says, it is a pragmatic party concerned about maintaining Taiwan's economic and political viability so that future generations can decide freely what kind of relationship they want to have with China. Isolating Taiwan from the PRC will lead only to ruin, he says. Moreover, Chu thinks it is possible that in a few decades mainland China will evolve into a state with which Taiwanese will want to be unified, so foreclosing that option now would be a mistake. This pragmatic outlook is characteristic of the third generation, mainlanders and Taiwanese alike. Chu also stressed that generational change is reshaping the KMT in fundamental ways. Under the leadership of Ma Ying-jeou, the top mainlander politician in the second generation, Chu says the KMT today is “totally democratic.” Ma is a chairman, not a “boss,” and he is ushering in a new image of the KMT: young, well-educated, rational, moderate, and clean. Nonetheless, Chu perceives a slight generational divide between himself and Ma Ying-jeou. He suspects that Ma may still feel the burden of the civil war between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party. “Our generation,” he said, “has no experience of this.”

the differences between [third-generation] mainlanders and Taiwanese are smaller...than in the first or second

Overall, the differences between mainlanders and Taiwanese are smaller in the third generation than in the first or second, which reflects

the fact that the historical forces which tended to separate and polarize members of the second generation were largely spent by the time the third generation came of age. For example, Chang and Wang find mainlanders born after 1949 (roughly corresponding to my third and fourth generations) more likely than older mainlanders to have Taiwanese or dual identities and to favor a wait-

and-see approach to the unification/independence debate—attitudes that bring them closer to Taiwanese of similar age (Chang and Wang 2005b: 55 and 57).

One especially interesting finding in Chen Yi-yan's 1996 study linking attitudes with generation and provincial origin is that there was virtually no difference between third-generation mainlanders and Taiwanese in attitudes toward democracy (Chen 1996: 116). Nonetheless, third-generation mainlanders' party affiliations tended to echo those of their predecessors. While less attached to the KMT than older mainlanders, mainlanders in the third generation still were far more likely to choose Blue parties (KMT, PFP, or NP) than Green parties (DPP or TSU) (Zuo 2002: 118; Chen 1996: 118).

The Fourth Generation: Taiwan Residents
Born After 1968

The oldest members of the fourth generation entered their formative years in 1986, the year the DPP was founded. Before they were 25, they had seen martial law lifted, travel to the mainland legalized, restrictions on free speech removed, independence advocacy permitted, and all-new legislatures elected. People in this generation have never voted in an election without multiple parties; they have never thought of the PRC as off-limits or Taiwan independence as taboo. Democracy is the only political system they know; the only presidents they can remember are Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian.

This generation is often referred to as the "Strawberry Tribe" because older Taiwanese believe today's young people are like strawberries: beauti-

ful to look at but easily bruised. Young Taiwanese, it is said, cannot bear any pressure; they have never had to struggle. Growing up in Taiwan's miracle economy, they have never lacked for money or material comforts. As *Caixun* magazine put it: "From the time they were in elementary school they've often gone abroad. Once they get to high school and college, they can go abroad to study or travel on their own. They don't write letters, only email" (Tseng 2000: 217). They have never experienced political repression; nor have most of them had to face the brutal examination system that fostered endurance in earlier generations. The number of university students doubled between 1992 and 2002; by 2005, politicians were beginning to worry that universities had expanded too quickly, creating overcapacity (Lin 2004: 13).

For previous generations, ethnicity was a fraught and painful issue, but Taiwanese born after 1968 have grown up in a society where Taiwanese identity is celebrated. By the early 1990s, nativist literature was widely available; bookstores that once had only "Chinese history" shelves were devoting whole sections to studies of Taiwan's history, geography, and culture. Speaking Taiwanese was not only no longer taboo, it was positively fashionable. The *Washington Post's* Philip Pan argued that the widespread use of Taiwanese (Minnanese) proved that Taiwanese nationalism was on the rise: "Perhaps the most obvious sign of this is the growing use of Minnanese, the main local dialect, which Chiang's Nationalist Party banned in schools and restricted on radio and television to promote China's national language, Mandarin. Today, youngsters rap in Minnanese, politicians from all major parties deliver campaign speeches in it and characters in the most popular TV dramas speak it" (Pan 2004: A-13).

There is no doubt that being Taiwanese has become a source of pride instead of shame. It is not clear, however, that young Taiwanese see their Taiwanese identity in the stark, either/or terms the Taiwanese nationalism discourse implies. While Taiwanese is widely spoken, for example, virtually all young Taiwanese are fluent in Mandarin. In the 2005 TNSS survey, respondents could answer in Mandarin, Hakka, or Taiwanese; about 45 percent of the second-generation respondents spoke Taiwanese or a mixture of Taiwanese and Mandarin. Among fourth-generation respondents, more than 95 percent chose Mandarin. This is not to say that these

*[the fourth generation]
is often referred to as
the "Strawberry Tribe"*

respondents do not speak Taiwanese in some situations, but the lingua franca for Taiwan's youth today is Mandarin.

My focus groups support this conclusion. Focus group participants said that while they often speak Taiwanese with friends and older relatives, their primary language of communication at school and work is Mandarin. Most dismissed the idea that language choice is an important marker of one's identification with Taiwan. On the contrary, they believe language is a communication device, and many seemed tired of the whole issue. Nor were they enthusiastic about efforts to build pride in Taiwan. Again and again, focus group participants expressed cynical views about the identity debate, which many believe is a tool of political manipulation. One participant said she is sympathetic with a friend who hates the phrase "Love Taiwan," which she feels has been co-opted for political gain. Others in her group expressed agreement; one said that each Taiwanese should be able to love Taiwan in his own way; "loving Taiwan" should not be the exclusive province of any political party.

Taiwan's contemporary youth culture mixes local influences with pan-Asian and global elements. Japanese and Korean pop culture are popular, although Hollywood dominates the multiplex. In 2005, a new youth movement sparked a brief flurry of excitement. A group of rock musicians began calling themselves "Taike." The word originated as a term of abuse used to label young Taiwanese in the 1950s and 1960s; by embracing it, Taiwanese youth seemed to be signaling their resolve to appropriate the language of their oppressor. Commentators drew parallels to American gays' embrace of the word "queer." In practice, however, the movement quickly degenerated into self-parody. On college campuses, Taike parties became an opportunity to dress up as stereotypical characters from rural Taiwan—the bumptious pseudo-gangster, the ridiculously underclothed betelnut girl—hardly the kind of ethnic empowerment the earnest curriculum reformers in the second generation were trying to promote.

This anything-goes attitude extends to politics. According to the political scientist (and former student activist) Hsu Yung-ming: "As far as the new generation is concerned, politics seems to have become fun. This is different from the idealistic, aspirational, emotional, political participation of the past. Because this new generation is not under any pressure, politics can become a kind of consumption, a kind of entertainment with politicians as the raw material" (quoted in Tseng 2000: 219). Growing up in the 1980s and 1990s, the fourth generation has developed a pragmatic, self-

interested attitude toward politics. The former DPP Youth Affairs chairman Jou Yi-Cheng observed:

When it comes to politics, the new generation has adopted “relativism.” They have attitudes, but not positions. In the past, students participated in politics based on fairness, justice, or democratic governance, but these sorts of demands were gradually realized, so the new generation’s participation in politics is determined more by individual preferences. It’s simply a matter of likes and dislikes; it’s hard to see any particular reasons. And they don’t necessarily care about parties; if the candidate is good, that’s enough. . . . This generation of young people is also quite pragmatic. In the past, politics was a matter of virtue, but now it is a matter of interests. For example, regarding the choice of Taiwan’s future, the new generation seems not to consider mission or ideals, but only practical interests.¹⁹ [Quoted in Tseng 2000: 219]

In focus groups, young people assessed their political participation even more negatively. The word they used most often was “indifferent” (*lengmuo*). In their view, politics is distant and irrelevant. A 2004 *Sinorama* youth survey reflects this view. Asked “Do you feel you have the power or opportunity to change or improve the current political, economic, and social situations in Taiwan?” 49 percent said they had no power at all, and another 40 percent said they did not have very much power (*Sinorama* 2004: 27). Young people who have strong political views are considered a bit strange; students tended to laugh when I asked whether there were KMT or DPP youth groups on their campuses. One respondent said of her politically active younger sister: “Her ass makes up her mind” (*pigu jueding naodai*).

***[for them] politics is
distant and irrelevant***

They also are highly cynical about politics. Again and again in the focus groups, young Taiwanese attributed the parties’ positions to political posturing. Many said they believed identity politics, and even the independence/unification debate, are political tools, not real issues. Said one student: “My dad is a big independence supporter, but even he says politicians have turned the Taiwanese language into a commodity for their advertising campaigns.” They are apathetic about politics, but strongly attached to democracy. Asked which of Taiwan’s characteristics were most

important, one focus group participant replied: “Our most precious thing is our economy.” Another offered a clarification: “The economy is more direct, but that’s because democracy is ingrained—it is like air and water.”

Ironically, given their “Strawberry Tribe” sobriquet, this generation is deeply anxious about Taiwan’s economic prospects. While unemployment is low by U.S. standards, it is perceived as a serious problem by Taiwanese entering the labor force. Young people would like to maintain the standard of living they have enjoyed in the past, but they worry that they will not be able to match their parents’ incomes. They have been educated, for the most part, for technical or professional employment, but they see opportunities in those fields shrinking. The fourth generation is sometimes criticized for preferring higher education to work; in fact, many young Taiwanese believe they are not employable without postgraduate degrees.

This is a familiar picture. Globalization has thrown young people in industrialized economies around the world into a new and unpredictable economic arena. In Taiwan, however, globalization is often perceived in bilateral terms. While young Americans worry about competition in India, China, and Europe, the anxiety young Taiwanese feel is directed almost entirely toward the PRC. One of the strongest findings in my focus groups was that among young people who had not been to the mainland, there was a very strong sense that Taiwanese cannot compete with PRC workers.

This creates a dilemma. On the one hand, most focus group participants believed Taiwan’s continued prosperity depends on increasing economic ties with the mainland. They expect Taiwanese businesses to continue to expand into the PRC, and they are willing to work there. On the other hand, they are deeply worried that they will not be able to compete for jobs in these cross-strait companies, and they see little evidence that the current generation of Taiwanese leaders (in either party) takes their concerns seriously. The combination of anxiety and political powerlessness drives some Strawberries (presumably those whose parents are willing to subsidize them) to lose themselves in entertainment and consumerism. But many others are determined to maximize their competitiveness by studying, taking advanced degrees in Europe or the United States, and getting work experience, in the PRC if necessary, in foreign companies.

Ted Galen Carpenter’s assertion that young Taiwanese view the mainland as “alien and threatening” is simply wrong; in fact, the fourth generation rejects sinophobic isolationism. As one young journalist put it: “China is a reality; it is right next to us. When it comes to Taiwan’s future

development—whether it's politics, economics, society, and culture, even international relations—the so-called 'China factor' is something we cannot ignore" (Yeh 2004: 85). Even the handful of strong independence supporters in the focus groups agreed that Taiwan must confront China's challenges directly. This puts them at odds with the second generation. For their grandparents, resisting authoritarian rule and ethnic injustice are the central political tasks of their lifetime. For the fourth generation, the defining challenge is responding to the economic opportunities and political threats posed by mainland China.

Fourth-Generation Mainlanders

Young mainlanders are much better integrated into Taiwanese society than their parents and grandparents. Of this group, Chang and Wang write:

Since the early 1980s, a new generation of Taiwanese and waishengren [mainlanders] has matured into adulthood and they have been relatively indifferent to the historical memories that divided them in the past. Constant contacts between these ethnic groups in schools, workplaces, and other social settings have helped narrow the differences between them . . . [and] interethnic marriages over the past few decades have blurred ethnic lines and produced a new generation that adapts more easily to different ideas from all ethnic groups. [Chang and Wang 2005b: 47–48]

Despite this progress toward integration, identity conflict persists for many young mainlanders. When one mainland in a focus group was asked "Are you Taiwanese, Chinese, or both," she responded that her grandmother would instantly answer "Chinese," because she was born in China and has always thought of herself as Chinese. The participant's mother might want to say "Chinese" but would feel this was not politically correct, so she might say "both." For the participant, none of the answers feels quite right.²⁰ Moreover, although the social gap between mainlanders and Taiwanese in the fourth generation is very narrow, a political gap remains. Of the 63 fourth-generation mainlanders in the 2005 TNSS survey, 65 percent said they supported the KMT or the PFP, while only a handful affiliated themselves with the DPP. This finding is consistent with Wu Nai-teh's claim that fourth-generation Taiwanese choose the parties their parents prefer.

Implications for Cross-Strait Relations

Since the end of World War II, relations between the United States and Taiwan have been close, but not always easy. A succession of U.S. presidents expressed strong support for the ROC while quietly thwarting Chiang Kai-shek's schemes for recovering the mainland. Since 1971, Washington has struggled to reassure Taiwan that it will not be abandoned, even as U.S.-PRC relations have deepened. Under Lee Teng-hui, the United States found itself facing a new problem—Taiwan's effort to assert itself more strongly on the international stage. With the arrival of Chen Shui-bian, many U.S. observers feared the worst: with an avowed Taiwan independence advocate in the presi-

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dential office, serious conflict—even war—seemed likely. Washington has scrutinized Chen's every move; more than once, U.S. officials have stepped in to try to change his course.

Over the past six years, the Chen administration has avoided actions that would provoke a military response from the PRC. At the same time, it has undertaken a series of small steps aimed at weakening the historical and cultural ties between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Some of these moves, including suspending the National Unification Council and Guidelines and promoting the idea of a new constitution, were explicitly political. Others fell into the category of cultural “de-Sinification” (*qu Zhongguo hua*). These measures include promoting local languages and customs and changing school curricula to give a larger role to Taiwan's geography and history. Taken together, many observers inside and outside Taiwan believe these steps—the so-called salami slices—constitute a significant move in the direction of independence.

The idea that the de-Sinification efforts undertaken by the Chen administration and groups in civil society are leading the island toward de jure independence is related to the conviction that Taiwanese nationalism is a real, and rising, phenomenon. De-Sinification is dangerous because it could erode the idea that Taiwan is Chinese in meaningful ways, with the ultimate result that islanders will identify with Taiwan alone. If that effort is successful, the logic goes, it will fuel support for independence and undermine the Taiwanese people's enthusiasm for engagement and rapprochement with the PRC. The fact that de-Sinification efforts are focused on young people suggests that tension in the strait will worsen in the future.

In one important sense, this logic is correct: support for unification has declined precipitously, and it shows little sign of rebounding. Therefore, if the PRC cannot tolerate Taiwan's continued de facto separation from the mainland, the future looks ominous indeed. But de facto separation (or, if you prefer, de facto independence) is the status quo; the decision to change that status quo by compelling unification is in Beijing's hands. For the time being, at least, Beijing vows that it is not interested in compelling unification, only blocking independence. If this position changes, there is little Taiwan can do to prevent a crisis, since the very fact that China had decided to *compel* unification would itself ensure Taiwan's resistance to the process.

Assuming that Beijing can tolerate the status quo, the focus then returns to Taiwan: will it insist on independence in the face of Beijing's firm opposition? And on this question, the evidence suggests the future is not so dark—especially once Chen Shui-bian leaves office in 2008. “Taiwanese nationalism” has played a big role in the Chen administration because Chen and many of his top officials embrace the complex of attitudes that comprise it. They hold a strong, exclusive Taiwanese identity; they would prefer de jure independence (even though their official policy stance says they will not pursue it); and, most important, they have a deep, visceral antipathy toward China—both the China within, embodied by the mainlanders and the KMT, and the China without, the PRC. Listening to this administration's rhetoric, it is easy to see why “Taiwanese nationalism” has become the focus of so much anxiety in Beijing and Washington.

If we look beyond the Chen administration, however, the picture is quite different. Even within Chen's generation, where the “Taiwanese nationalist” complex is strongest, most Taiwanese do not share the president's aversion toward all things Chinese. And among younger Taiwanese, the Taiwanese nationalist complex is relatively weak. In particular, young Taiwanese—while they oppose unification—are agnostic in their views of the PRC. They recognize, although they do not understand, the political

Will [Taiwan] insist on independence?

among younger Taiwanese the...nationalist complex is relatively weak

hostility emanating from many PRC citizens and officials. But they also believe that mainland China holds rich economic opportunities for Taiwanese, and they are not afraid to grasp them. Above all, they see no reason for conflict between the two sides, and they believe that wise political leadership can sustain peace in the strait.

As the third and fourth generations take positions of leadership in Taiwan, we can expect the island's politicians to behave less like Taiwan nationalists and more like pragmatic politicians. They will not jump at the

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chance to complete a unification deal, but they will not rush blindly toward independence either. The leading candidate for the 2008 presidential election, Ma Ying-jeou, is a second-generation mainlander. He is not a Taiwanese nationalist; nor is he a PRC lackey. Ma's public statements and past actions suggest that if he is elected president he will strive to preserve the separate status of the Republic of China on Taiwan while pursuing close economic ties with the mainland.

If Ma is not elected, the next president will almost certainly be a DPP politician from the second generation. Whoever that may be, he or she will have a decision to make: stick to the failed and unpopular policies of the Chen administration, or stake out a new line that is more in keeping with the electorate's moderate preferences. As of mid-2006, the leading contender for the DPP nomination is Premier Su Tseng-chang. During the early months of his premiership, Su presided over significant relaxation of Taiwan's mainland policy—expanding direct passenger flights during holidays, increasing the flow of mainland visitors to Taiwan, opening direct cargo charters, and establishing a mechanism for negotiating issues related to cross-strait tourism. Su's chances of winning the presidential nomination are much enhanced by the support he enjoys from the party's pro-engagement New Tide faction. In short, trends at the elite level reinforce the popular trends: cross-strait engagement will deepen.

As for the leaders who will follow Chen, Su, and their second-generation peers in the DPP, they are less hostile toward the PRC than the current generation. The third and fourth generations also are less divided than the first and second, which makes them less vulnerable to polarizing political appeals. Here again the PRC holds the key: if Beijing treats future DPP presidents as it has treated Chen—demonizing and stonewalling—it may

well produce another Chen Shui-bian. The engagement the Taiwanese people want cannot proceed without reciprocation from Beijing.

Ultimately, the fate of Taiwanese nationalism rests with Beijing. Taiwanese so far have rejected Taiwanese nationalist logic; they have refused to look upon mainland China as an enemy from which Taiwan should isolate itself. But if Beijing behaves like an enemy, it could alter this view. Refusing to engage a succession of their duly elected governments will intensify islanders' sense that the PRC has animus toward Taiwan and its people. Threatening a trade war against Taiwan, adding to the arsenal of missiles targeting the island, and isolating Taipei in the international community all lend credence to the Taiwanese nationalists' arguments. And of course, a single unprovoked military strike against Taiwan almost surely would transform ambivalence to hatred in an instant.

This is not a study of Beijing's policy toward Taiwan, however; it is a study of the attitudes prevailing in Taiwan's society today. And for the moment, at least, the dominant trend, especially among the young, is to hope for the best: a future in which Taiwan enjoys positive relations with the mainland while maintaining the high degree of freedom and autonomy it enjoys today. This hope does not exclude any outcome. As intractable as the problems in the Taiwan Strait appear today, they can be managed—and someday even solved—if both sides show sufficient flexibility, creativity, and goodwill.

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Endnotes

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1. Provincial origin has not been recognized as an official demographic category since 1991.
2. “Taiwanese nationalism,” as it is used in this study, refers to the common understanding of the term described in this section. There is of course a rich and sophisticated scholarly literature that explores the concept of nationalism in great detail. That literature has been usefully applied to the Taiwan case by a number of scholars. This study, however, refers to “Taiwanese nationalism” in the popular sense.
3. Unless otherwise noted, the data used in this study are from the Cross-Strait Relations and Taiwan’s National Security Survey. Designed by several U.S.-based political scientists, the survey was sponsored by the Program in Asian Security Studies at Duke University and carried out by the Election Study Center of the National Chengchi University on May 27–31, 2005. The total sample size was 1,221.
4. Even if the trends in Taiwanese attitudes are a case of life-cycle patterns rather than generational change, their policy implications are largely the same. The most conservative Taiwanese are those between 30 and 50. If this is a matter of life cycle, we should expect today’s youngsters—who already hold more moderate views than their grandparents—to become even more moderate as they enter midlife.

5. Quotation from “Tug of War: The Story of Taiwan,” a documentary produced by WGBH in 1997.
6. Surveys continued to ask respondents whether they considered themselves Taiwanese, Chinese, or both, but this question came to be understood as a measure of ethnic consciousness, not national identity.
7. This finding seems to contradict findings on the question “Are you Taiwanese, Chinese, or both?” I believe the apparent contradiction should be attributed to a difference in respondents’ interpretations of the two questions. Asked whether they themselves are Taiwanese, Chinese, or both, respondents may consider the terms’ significance within Taiwanese society and politics. At the same time, they might consider Taiwanese collectively to be Chinese because they have Chinese roots.
8. The TNSS survey sample size for the first generation is small; findings for this group should be interpreted cautiously.
9. In interpreting this result, we need to remember that most Taiwanese who work in the mainland receive very limited home leave—one or two home visits a year is not unusual. For young people who have grown up in a tiny country, within at most a few hours’ distance from family and friends, moving to the mainland is a big step. Also, it is clear from my focus group research that young Taiwanese view moving to the mainland as going abroad; they routinely use the word “*chuguo*” (leave the country) when talking about traveling to the mainland.
10. We can distinguish generation units within the first generation—groups that responded differently to life under Japanese rule. Some first-generation islanders were relatively assimilated and comfortable under Japanese rule, while others resisted. A few in the latter group ended up going to China to help build the ROC; others worked within Taiwan for home rule.
11. Stéphane Corcuff (2000, 2002) has analyzed the process through which the diverse individuals who came from the mainland after 1945 came to identify themselves as members of a coherent group.
12. For the complete text see:
www.president.gov.tw/en/prog/news_release/print.php?id=1105498802.
13. Within the DPP, it is popular to differentiate between the “Formosa Generation,” politicians who were active in the opposition movement before 1979, and the “Lawyers Generation,” consisting of politicians who, like Chen and Hsieh, first emerged on the scene as defense attorneys for Formosa-era politicians arrested in 1979. This distinction is important for the DPP’s internal politics, but it does not really reflect generational distinctions as social scientists define them. The members of the two groups are separated not by their age, or when they passed through their formative years, but by when and how they became active in the movement. They bear more resemblance to factions than to generations.
14. When the DPP was first founded in 1986, several prominent mainlanders participated. Eventually, however, they all withdrew from the party. Their reasons were complicated, but they included the party’s tendency to reflect the “Taiwan nationalism” of its top leaders. For example, DPP politicians from the second generation often used language that marginalized and even demonized mainlanders as a group. While the party’s official position today opposes such discourse, it still can be heard in the heat of DPP election campaigns. Moreover, in its eagerness to celebrate and affirm

- Taiwanese culture and language, the DPP tended to appear exclusive, which further alienated its mainlander members—along with many opposition-leaning Hakkas and Aborigines. Finally, the decision to make Taiwan's independence a platform issue drove a number of mainlanders out of the party.
15. Private communication, December 6, 2005.
 16. Private communication, May 15, 2005.
 17. Interview, Shanghai, February 22, 2006. This subject volunteered that he “takes advantage” of identity labels, because he believes they do not matter: “If I’m talking to Chinese, I say” ‘I’m a Chinese from Taiwan.’ If I’m talking to Taiwanese, I say: ‘I’m from Taiwan, can I get your business?’ I can get on a plane tonight and be in New York tomorrow. What difference do these labels make?”
 18. Interview with the author, December 14, 2005.
 19. Members of the fourth generation are aware of the third generation's attitudes toward them. One focus group spent several minutes discussing their irritation at their “student movement” professors, whom they find patronizing and conceited, constantly reminiscing about their glory days.
 20. This response illustrates a serious problem with the survey question “Do you think of yourself as Taiwanese, Chinese, or both?” Other research I conducted in Taiwan shows that respondents do not share a common understanding of this question. Thus answers to this question should be interpreted carefully.

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About this Issue

There is a widespread perception among Taiwan-watchers that the rising proportion of islanders who identify themselves as Taiwanese is driving increased enthusiasm for an independent Taiwan and flagging interest in political rapprochement with the PRC. They perceive a steady increase of “Taiwanese nationalism,” as a serious obstacle to stabilizing cross-strait relations. This study, however, argues that Taiwanese public opinion is increasingly favorable to peaceful relations in the Taiwan Strait. Using generational analysis, it shows that while many older Taiwanese hold passionate views about cross-strait relations, younger Taiwanese tend to be pragmatic, moderate, and open-minded.

It disaggregates the components of “Taiwanese nationalism” and shows that while the phenomenon is common among older Taiwanese—including most of Taiwan’s current political leadership—it is less widespread among younger age groups. For those born after 1950, a strong Taiwanese identity often coexists with neutral or even positive views of China. Overall generational analysis supports an optimistic assessment of the future of cross-strait relations. Attitudes that are most destructive to cross-strait ties are held by age cohorts whose political influence is waning. Younger Taiwanese lack the passion that drives today’s leaders. This is not to say that young Taiwanese do not feel a strong connection to Taiwan as their homeland. For them, loving Taiwan does not mean hating China. If the PRC refrains from acting in ways that provoke negative reactions from young Taiwanese, current trends suggest that Taiwan’s public will demand better relations between the two sides in the future.

About the Author

Shelley Rigger is the Brown Professor of East Asian Politics at Davidson College. She can be contacted at shrigger2000@yahoo.com.

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