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Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Employing national identity theories and survey data in Taiwan, this article explains national identity shift in Taiwan. Descriptively we find that most Taiwanese people reject being called 'Chinese' (zhongguoren) when asked about their national identity. However, they do not deny their ethnic and cultural Chinese identity. What they object to is being called Chinese nationals, especially this China which is internationally recognized as the People's Republic of China. In other words, most Taiwanese people do not identify themselves with the mainland Chinese state even though they still associate themselves with the Chinese nation. It is also noted that there is no consensus with regard to national identity in Taiwan, since close to one third of the population still do not object to be called zhongguoren. The author's analytical findings further confirm that external sovereignty-related factors are related to the Taiwanese national identity shift. Specifically, a changed state boundary, separation desire from mainland China, and recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state, not the distinctive cultural reconstruction inside Taiwan, contribute to the national identity shift in Taiwan.

Introduction

Identity is essential for human beings since it 'determines how you are treated, what is expected of you, what you expect of yourself, ...'¹ Who we are, what our identity is and what defines us have far reaching consequences. Whether in the form of states, nations, societies or regions, construction, ascription, internalization, refusal or reclaiming of identities play a crucial but complex part in national and international politics. The end of the Cold War has led to problematization of national identity in many parts of the world. Construction and shaping of new national identity, for example, are crucial for the national development in newly independent states in eastern and southeastern Europe. Identity politics has also become one of the central issues in national politics in industrialized Western Europe in the aftermath of massive immigration from non-European countries.

The main concern of this article is the shifting national identity in Taiwan. Across the Taiwan Straits, political elite's attention has been drawn to the identity issue, especially after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the presidential election in Taiwan in 2000. The identity issue in Taiwan is often tied to the question of whether Taiwan should or should not be part of China.² As a result, Taiwanese identity

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¹Marysia Zalewski and Cynthia Enloe, 'Questions about identity in international relations', in Kenneth Booth and Steve Smith, eds, *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 299.

²John Fuh-Sheng Hsieh, 'National identity and Taiwan's mainland China policy', *Journal of Contemporary China* 13(40), (2004), p. 479.

politics has the potential to seriously impact cross-Taiwan Strait relations and regional stability. The mainland Chinese government is often shocked and alarmed by the fact that fewer and fewer people in Taiwan identify themselves as Chinese. The mainland Chinese government is obviously worried that the refusal of most people in Taiwan to identify themselves as Chinese could seriously undermine the prospect of unification in the future. In fact, some Chinese mainland scholars are so worried about the dwindling number of self-identified Chinese in Taiwan that they believe the mainland Chinese government should step up pressure on Taiwan to be united with mainland China before it is too late. Independence advocates and supporters in Taiwan, on the other hand, can hardly hide their delight with this identity shift, and argue that the national identity shift lays the foundation for Taiwan to become a *de jure* independent country.

Identity is a multidimensional concept and the issue of national identity shift in Taiwan is often taken for granted. There is still not sufficient research on the different layers or dimensions of Taiwanese national identity and empirical explanation on the sources of national identity shift in Taiwan. In this article the author specifically intends to explain the nature of national identity shift in Taiwan and explore the sources for the shift. Through analysis of the most updated survey data, the author found that there is indeed a national identity shift among most Taiwanese. Most people in Taiwan no longer identify themselves as 'Chinese' or *zhongguo ren* or even both 'Taiwanese and Chinese'. Instead most people in Taiwan now only identify themselves as 'Taiwanese'. Further examination concludes that what has shifted with regard to most Taiwanese national identity is the political/state aspect, not the cultural/ethnic aspect. And this shift is defined and shaped by Taiwan's external relations with mainland China and the world, not by Taiwan's internal ethno-cultural reconstruction. In fact, ethno-culturally speaking, an overwhelming majority of people in Taiwan still identify themselves as members of the big Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*). When most people in Taiwan say they are Taiwanese instead of Chinese, they are simply identifying themselves as nationals of Taiwan as a sovereign state and rejecting being nationals or citizens of the People's Republic of China. This multivariate analysis shows that this new Taiwanese national identity is mostly explained by Taiwanese recognition that Taiwan is a sovereign state separate from a sovereign China. The author further argues that Taiwan is a state-nation defined by sovereignty and geographical location rather than a nation-state built on distinctive and unique Taiwanese culture.

Data

Since this study is about subjective national identity among people in Taiwan, survey research offers the best strategy in studying this subject matter. The main data came from an island-wide, anonymous, random, telephone survey conducted by Taiwan Indicators Survey between 6 and 9 October 2014. The questionnaire was designed by the Center for Taiwan Studies at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Respondents were Taiwan residents over 20 years old, living in all 22 cities and counties in Taiwan. Employing the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) system, a total of 1,072 respondents were surveyed, with the margin of error $\pm 3.0\%$. Other survey data are also used in the research, including survey findings from the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University in Taiwan and the Asian Barometer Survey.

The concept of national identity

One part of national identity is the concept of identity, which is notoriously contested and does not have a universally accepted definition within the existing literature. For example, Montserrat Guibernau puts identity as 'a definition, an interpretation of the self that establishes what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms.'³ James Kellas agrees and adds that it is partly a spontaneous

³Montserrat Guibernau, *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 72.

feeling which people have; and it relates to the position individuals have in society, especially their membership of groups which can inspire emotion and loyalty⁴. William Bloom argues that identity is a channel for people to relate themselves to the environment.⁵ In his study of identity issues, James Fearson culled 14 interpretations of the concept just from the areas of political science and international relations.⁶ This article is not the place to survey all the complex literature on identity; however, for the purpose of this article, the author argues that identity is derived from a blend of factors, such as human will, material circumstance and so on; and it is fundamentally about the sense of belongings—who I am and where I belong to. It is something that individuals cannot live without and that cannot easily be changed. Here ‘identity’ is defined as the properties an agent has and is thus used to describe how an agent defines itself, is defined by the others and relates itself to the environment in which it lives.

Another part of national identity is the concept of nation. Benedict Anderson famously defines a nation broadly as an ‘imagined political community’ and imagined as sovereign.⁷ A nation is commonly understood as a community of people who share the same or similar culture, history and language and live in a particular territory, which allows collective recognition of a group membership. Hence, national identity is composed of at least two dimensions: a political/state dimension and an ethno-cultural dimension. Ethno-culture tends to be intrinsic and forms the core of a nation and national identity. Formation of an ethno-cultural national identity takes a long time and is hard to change. Formation of the political aspect does not necessarily go parallel with the ethno-cultural aspect. On the other hand, the state and political aspect of national identity is more extrinsic or external in nature and, relatively speaking, is easier to form and change. State sovereignty, a fixed territory and boundary are important factors to define one’s national identity and belonging. A defined territory serves as one of the prerequisites for a state to exist in the international community.⁸ States function to ‘police the borders of their territory’.⁹ Shifting territory of a certain state then suggests the changing scope of the policing effect of this state. External physical boundary changes may have a transforming effect on national identity alteration, since the policing effect necessarily includes identity consolidation and reformation.

National identity is a form of collective identity. Melucci defines collective identity as an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their action, as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place.¹⁰ For collective identity to form, the relationship among actors needs to be activated so that they can communicate and negotiate with each other and also make emotional investments, which enable individuals to recognize themselves in each other. To be fully expressed and developed, national identity requires that the people forming the nation enjoy the right to decide upon their common political destiny. National identity makes relationships with others possible at a personal level and it gives strength and resilience to individuals in so far as it reflects their own identification with an entity—the nation—that transcends them.

Identity is relational and it involves not only the relationship within ingroups, but also relations between ingroup and outgroup. The construction of we-ness is only part of the story. Another crucial element for national identity formation is the construction of the outside. We know who we are only by knowing who we are not and also whom we are against, which carries considerable weight in shaping viable identities. That is to say, to form an identity we need to identify within the group to form a ‘self’

⁴James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1991), p. 15.

⁵William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 50.

⁶James Fearson, *What is Identity as We Now Use the Word?* (Stanford, CA: Manuscript of Stanford University, 1999).

⁷Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edn (London: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

⁸James R. Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹Paul Q. Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalisation in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996).

¹⁰Quoted in Guibernau, *Nations without States*, p. 74.

and also identify against outgroups to form an 'other' (or others). According to Roxanne Doty, 'a useful way of conceptualizing the inside in contrast to the outside is as a relational totality that constitutes and organizes social relations around a particular structure of meanings.'¹¹ The inside–outside boundary is a function of a state's discursive authority, i.e. its ability to impose fixed and stable meanings about who belongs and who does not belong to the nation in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty, and thereby to distinguish a specific political community from all others.¹² Marysia Zalewski and Cythia Enloe argue that the very concept of a nation is unthinkable without the notion of others or foreigners.¹³

National identity shift in Taiwan

Taiwanese people's national identity is considerably complicated by the twists and turns of history of Taiwan. Taiwan was originally inhabited by the Aborigines whose culture is similar to that of Southeast Asians.¹⁴ Historical records show that a significant number of permanent Chinese settlements began to appear in Taiwan in the thirteenth century. However, it was not until the seventeenth century that major Chinese migrations from China's Fujian and Guangdong Provinces to Taiwan occur. Over the next three centuries Chinese migrants became the majority of inhabitants on the island of Taiwan. For a brief period in the seventeenth century Taiwan became a Dutch colony even though there were Spanish footprints on Taiwan for a while. Zheng Chenggong, a Ming general, defeated the Dutch and took Taiwan over in 1661 and set up a pro-Ming base in Taiwan. In 1683, after the Qing government crushed Cheng's military forces and took control of Taiwan, Taiwan was made a prefecture as administratively part of Fujian Province. Facing the military advancement of France which was eyeing control of Taiwan, the Qing government declared Taiwan a province in 1885. However, this move did not prevent the eventual colonization of Taiwan by Japan. The Qing government ceded Taiwan to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, after China's defeat by Japan in the first Sino–Japanese War in 1895. After the treaty was signed, political elites in Taiwan hastily set up a Democratic Republic of Taiwan (*Taiwan Minzhuguo*), with the support of the Qing government, as a last ditch effort to prevent the takeover of Taiwan by Japan, in the hope that Western countries would come to the rescue of Taiwan.¹⁵ That effort failed miserably when Japan took total control of Taiwan in the summer of 1895 and began 50 years of colonial rule in Taiwan.

It is debatable to what degree Taiwanese people experienced national identity shift under Japanese colonial rule since there are no survey data from that era. It is, however, not hard to imagine that some degree of identity shift occurred among people in Taiwan in the first half of the twentieth century, since at least two generations of Taiwanese grew up under the heavy-handed Japanese colonial rule. Leo T. S. Ching has chronicled the Taiwanese internal struggle over identity during the Japanese colonial period.¹⁶ Even though the Taiwanese were forced to become Japanese culturally, they were still treated as second-class citizens politically and socially. There is no doubt that colonial Japan left its cultural imprints on the people of Taiwan, some of which are still evident today. The Kuomintang (KMT) government felt it had to adopt policies to 'reintegrate' Taiwanese into the Chinese nation (or what Taiwan independence advocates called 'recolonization' efforts by the Chiang Kai-shek government).¹⁷ The reintegration efforts

¹¹Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Immigration and national identity: constructing the nation', *Review of International Studies* 22(3), (1996), p. 239.

¹²Erik Gartzke and Kristian Gleditsch, 'Identity and conflict: ties that bind and differences that divide', *European Journal of International Relations* 12(1), (2006), pp. 53–87.

¹³Zalewski and Enloe, 'Questions about identity in international relations'.

¹⁴John F. Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?*, 5th edn (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), p. 12.

¹⁵Andrew Morris, 'The Taiwan Republic of 1895 and the failure of the Qing modernizing project', in Stephane Corcuff, ed., *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 3–24.

¹⁶Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming 'Japanese': Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁷Robert Edmondson, 'The February 28 Incident and national identity', in Corcuff, ed., *Memories of the Future*, p. 27.

were seriously hampered by the events of the February 28 Incident of 1947. The brutal repression of mostly Taiwanese *benshengren*¹⁸ during the February 28 Incident arguably ignited the Taiwan independence movement.¹⁹ Subsequently KMT's policies to suppress the separate Taiwanese identity and to harden 'Chineseness' among Taiwanese residents further alienated many Taiwanese *benshengren* and fueled the Taiwan independence movement, particularly among Taiwanese elites. However, there were no credible survey data on popular Taiwanese national identity during KMT rule under Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo between the 1950s and the greater part of the 1980s.

The first credible data on Taiwanese residents' national identity came in a survey conducted in 1989 (a year after Chiang Ching-kuo died) by *The United Daily* published in Taiwan, where 52% of the surveyed identified themselves as 'Chinese' (*zhongguoren*), 26% as both 'Taiwanese' (*taiwanren*) and 'Chinese', and 16% as 'Taiwanese' only.²⁰ The Election Study Center at the National Chengchi University (NCCU) in Taiwan provides probably the most reliable longitudinal data on national identity trends among the people of Taiwan since the early 1990s. As shown in Figure 1, significant shifts clearly occurred in the 1990s with regard to Taiwanese people's national identity. People who identified themselves as 'Chinese' dropped precipitously to around 10% while people who identified themselves as 'Taiwanese' increased to close to 40% by the end of the 1990s. This trend continued beyond 2000. By 2014, people claiming to be 'Taiwanese' went above 60% while 'Chinese' identifiers dropped to a single digit. It should also be noted that the number of people who identify themselves as both 'Taiwanese' and 'Chinese' has also gone down from the mid-1990s and was surpassed by the number of people who solely identify themselves as 'Taiwanese' around 2007 and 2008. Our survey, conducted in late 2014, confirms the latest findings on the national identity trend among Taiwanese residents. As shown in Figure 2, an even higher percentage (67.4%) of the people we surveyed identify themselves as 'Taiwanese', 25.2% of them as both 'Taiwanese' and 'Chinese', and a minuscule 4.2% identify themselves only as 'Chinese'. It should be recognized that even though most people in Taiwan only identify themselves as Taiwanese, close to a third of the population have not given up their Chinese (*zhongguoren*) identity. This means that Taiwan is still a much divided society when it comes to the basic concept of national identity. Answers to this national identity question are used as the dependent variable of national identification among Taiwan residents in this study. People who identify as 'Chinese' only, or both 'Taiwanese and Chinese' are coded as '0' while people who identify as 'Taiwanese' only are coded as '1'.

National identity of most Taiwanese residents has undeniably evolved and changed over the last two decades, according to random survey data conducted in Taiwan. These findings have really irritated and alarmed the Chinese government and people on the mainland. How can the people living in Taiwan deny their Chinese identity if they speak Chinese, write Chinese, eat Chinese food, practice Chinese religions and observe Chinese traditional holidays? Is there any Chinese sentiment left in the Taiwanese public's self-identification? If so, what is it? In other words, what aspect of Taiwanese identity has shifted? To what extent do Taiwanese people still identify themselves as Chinese? Bearing those puzzles in mind, the survey asked another question that directly taps into Taiwanese residents' ethnic and cultural identity. The question was: 'From the perspective of blood and culture, whom do you think you are?'. Respondents were provided with five possible answers: 'a member of the Chinese nation' (*zhonghua minzu yifenzi*), 'Chinese' (*zhongguoren*), 'both', 'neither' and 'don't know'. The findings (see Figure 3) are very telling. Over 50% of our respondents claim that they are ethnically and culturally a member of the Chinese nation and around 25% believe they are both a member of the Chinese

¹⁸Residents in Taiwan are divided into three ethnic groups: the Aborigines whose ancestors lived in Taiwan long before the Chinese migrations into Taiwan in the thirteenth century; *benshengren* (Taiwan natives including both the Holo and *Hakka* peoples) whose ancestors migrated to Taiwan from China before the mid- to late-1940s; and *waishengren* (the Mainlanders) who or whose parents or grandparents fled from mainland China to Taiwan after the mid- to late-1940s. Both *benshengren* and *waishengren* are Han Chinese while the Aborigines are not.

¹⁹Wei-der Shu, 'Who joined the clandestine political organization? Some preliminary evidence from the overseas Taiwan independence movement', in Corcuff, ed., *Memories of the Future*, pp. 25–46.

²⁰Chia-lung Lin, 'The political formation of Taiwanese nationalism', in Corcuff, ed., *Memories of the Future*, p. 222.

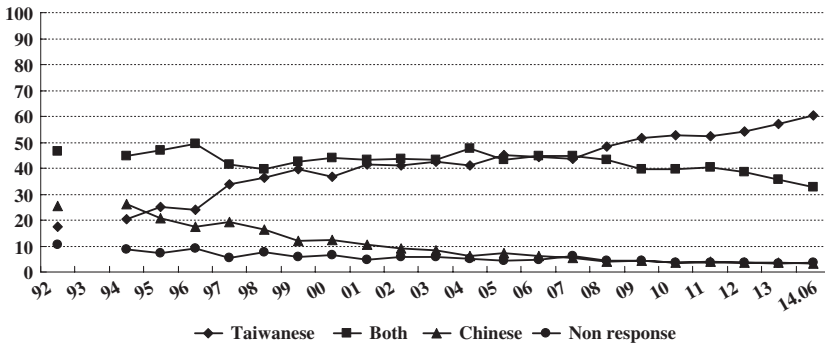


Figure 1. Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese identity of people in Taiwan: 1992–2014 (%). Source: The Election Study Center, NCCU (<http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=166>).

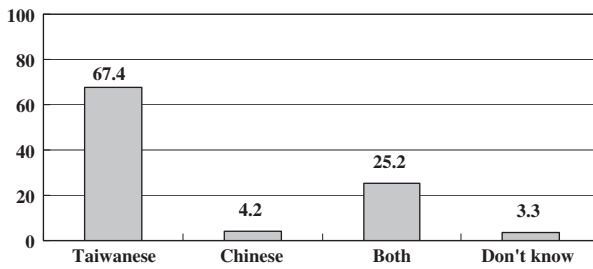


Figure 2. In our society, some identify themselves as Chinese, some identify themselves as Taiwanese, and still others say they are both. Whom do you identify with (%)?

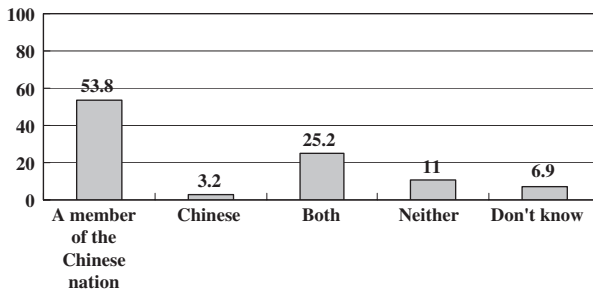


Figure 3. From the perspectives of blood and culture, whom do you think you are (%)?

nation and Chinese. If we put people choosing ‘a member of the Chinese nation,’ ‘Chinese’ and ‘both’ together, the percentage is well over 80%. These findings indicate that the majority of Taiwanese people do not reject their Chinese ethno-cultural identity and reject the notion of a separate and distinctive Taiwanese ethno-cultural identity as promoted by some Democratic Progressive Party politicians and intellectuals.²¹

It is clear from these findings that what has shifted among most people in Taiwan with regard to their national identity is the political/state aspect of their identity, not the ethno-cultural aspect since the

²¹Gunter Schubert provided an excellent summary of this school of thought in: Gunter Schubert, ‘A new rising nation? The discourse on national identity in contemporary Taiwan,’ *China Perspectives* 23, (1999), pp. 54–64.

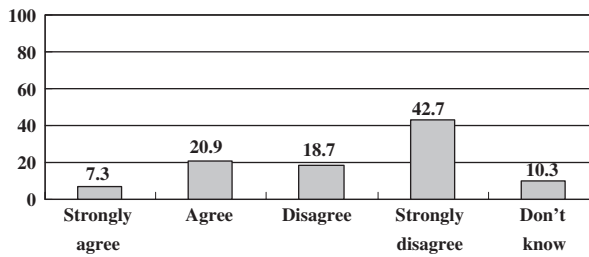


Figure 4. Some people say that Taiwan's official name is the Republic of China and, therefore, people living in the Republic of China should be called Chinese. Do you agree with such a saying (%)?

word 'Chinese' that is used in the surveys is *zhongguoren*. *Guo* means 'state'. This is equivalent of asking which country you belong to or whose country's national you are. In English the more appropriate translation should be: Are you a Chinese national or a Taiwanese national? The truth of the matter is that the People's Republic of China (PRC) has by and large replaced the Republic of China (ROC) in the international arena. In other words, the PRC has successfully monopolized the proper country name 'China'. In the minds of most people in Taiwan, the Chinese term *zhongguoren* is equated with nationals of the People's Republic of China, not nationals of Taiwan or the Republic of China. Would Taiwanese residents be willing to identify themselves as 'Chinese' if the term referred to nationals of the Republic of China, since the Republic of China or *zhonghua minguo* can be shortened as *zhongguo*? Still only around 28% of the respondents agreed that people living in the Republic of China should be called 'Chinese' or *zhongguoren*, while over 60% of the surveyed rejected this notion (see Figure 4). It seems that in the minds of most people living in Taiwan, the term 'Chinese' or *zhongguoren* has been monopolized by or exclusively given to the people living in mainland China or the PRC.

Ironically, it can be argued that traditional Chinese culture is better preserved in Taiwan than on mainland China. Visitors, especially mainland visitors to Taiwan, come away with the impression that Taiwan is more Chinese than mainland China, and people in Taiwan exhibit more traditional Chinese cultural behavior than Chinese on the mainland. Indeed, Taiwan has never experienced massive and systematic destruction of traditional Chinese culture like the one experienced on mainland China during events such as the Cultural Revolution, the Eradicating Four Olds (old thoughts, old culture, old customs and old habits) and Creating Four New Ones movement (*posijiu lisixin*) and the Anti-Confucianism campaign under Mao. In their book *The Great Wall in Ruins*, Godwin Chu and Yanan Ju convincingly demonstrated, through empirical survey research, the destruction of Confucian values among mainland Chinese and how much Chinese traditional culture disintegrated in the 1980s, one decade after the Cultural Revolution.²² On the other side of the Taiwan Straits, Taiwan, under both Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, fostered and championed traditional Chinese culture and values, partly for the sake of claiming political legitimacy in the regime competition with the communist government on mainland China. Even today, Taiwanese people still use traditional Chinese characters and some still use the Chinese traditional vertical writing style. Chinese traditional folk religions enjoy huge popularity among Taiwanese residents.

Explaining the national identity shift in Taiwan

As demonstrated in the earlier section, there is indeed a national identity shift among most people in Taiwan, and what has shifted is the state/political aspect of their national identity. In the meantime, survey data show that most people in Taiwan do not reject their Chinese cultural identity even though

²²Godwin Chu and Yanan Ju, *The Great Wall in Ruins: Communication and Cultural Change in China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993).

they do not identify as 'Chinese' (*zhongguoren*). How do we explain the apparent national identity shift in Taiwan? What factors have contributed mainly to the drastically declining number of people in Taiwan who identify themselves as 'Chinese'?

There are at least two schools of thought we can derive from the literature on the formation and transformation of national identity. One school of thought can be derived from realism in international relations. Even though realism is not concerned with national identity issues *per se*, realism does emphasize the importance of the state, state sovereignty and boundary. By the extended logic of realism, sovereignty primarily shapes people's national identity. Sovereignty involves both internal hierarchical political rule in a bounded territory and external relations; national identity comes mainly after sovereignty. Belonging to a sovereign state defines people's national identity. As mentioned earlier, identity is relational and it involves not only the relationship within ingroups, but also relations between ingroup and outgroup. A crucial element for identity formation is the construction of the outside. Identities in the modern nation-state system rest on the construction of clear and unambiguous inside/outside and self/other distinctions.²³ Physical boundary defines the group identities, as Fredrik Barth argued long ago.²⁴ In fact, the very boundaries created to separate one party from another function to form an identifiable self within the boundary and an identifiable other outside the boundary.

The other school of thought is held by cultural constructionists who argue that the separation between self and other is primarily built on common culture, which provides individuals with a sense of group identity. Hence, nations try to promote a cultural homogeneity that makes them culturally unique.²⁵ For a start, the very foundation of national identity relies on cultural elements such as language, religious, consciousness of common descent and so on. James Kellas goes so far as to argue that nationality and culture are almost synonymous and there is little left of nationhood without national culture.²⁶ Culture provides a set of beliefs and opinions people have about themselves and enables a deep-seated need for emotional security and life enhancement. Cultural differences serve as the very basis for a people to define themselves as a distinctive group.

Both of the two factors above are likely to have contributed to the national identity shift in Taiwan in the last few decades. Based on the fact that what has shifted is the state/political aspect of Taiwanese people's national identity instead of the ethno-cultural aspect, the author hypothesizes that state- and sovereignty-related factors, especially external factors such as international recognition, redrawn boundary and relations with mainland China, play a crucial role in shaping the Taiwanese people's new national identity. A number of questions were used in our survey to tap into Taiwanese people's feelings and perceptions regarding the representation of China in the world arena, Taiwan's relations with mainland China, and favorability toward the mainland Chinese government and people. One question was also used to measure Taiwanese residents' identification with Taiwanese culture as an indicator for internal construction of a separate Taiwanese cultural identity. Answers to these questions are used as independent variables to explain national identity shift in Taiwan in the multivariate analysis.

Representation of China in the international arena

Between the 1950s and 1970s mainland China and Taiwan engaged in an intense battle on which regime, the People's Republic of China or the Republic of China, should represent China in the international arena. Since the 1970s the later began to lose that battle, with the expulsion of the ROC from the United Nations in 1971 and subsequent loss of a seat in all major international organizations with sovereignty

²³Bahar Rumelili, 'Constructing identity and relating to difference: understanding the EU's mode of differentiation', *Review of International Studies* 30, (2004), pp. 27–47.

²⁴Fredrik Barth, 'Pathan identity and its maintenance', in Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), pp. 117–134.

²⁵Guibernau, *Nations without States*.

²⁶Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*.

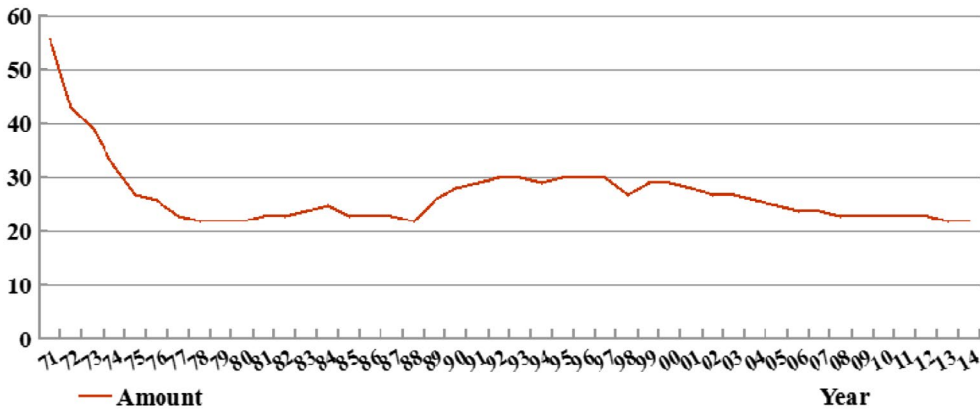


Figure 5. Number of countries having diplomatic relations with Taiwan (1971–2014). Source: Information collected by the author from Taiwanese official sources.

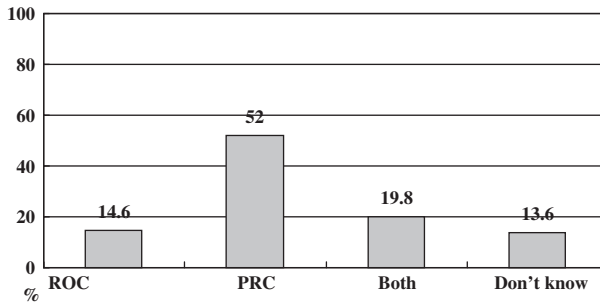


Figure 6. Representation of China in the international arena (%).

implications. Beijing’s success in winning international recognition, together with the ‘zero-sum’ policy²⁷ adopted by both Taipei and Beijing, has caused Taipei’s gradual loss of international recognition. The core of the policy suggests that if a state establishes diplomatic relations with the PRC, it is a must for this state to recognize the PRC as the sole representative of China and to cut off its diplomatic ties with the ROC. Over post-World War Two years, the ROC has also lost international diplomatic recognition from countries around the world, especially after the early 1970s (see Figure 5). Since the 1970s, the PRC has gained absolutely the upper hand in replacing the ROC as the sole sovereign state representing China in the international arena in general and in key international organizations in particular. Currently only 22 countries in the world maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan or the ROC. Almost all these countries are insignificant and small countries.

In the author’s survey participants were asked the question, which state, ROC or PRC, actually represents China in the international arena today. As Figure 6 shows, less than 15% of respondents believe it is the ROC, around 20% say both the ROC and PRC represent China in the world, while most people in Taiwan think the PRC is the representative of China on the world stage. The lack of international recognition and the disappearance of the very name ‘Republic of China’ from the international stage must have an impact on how people in Taiwan perceive themselves. From the Taiwanese perspective, when people from the outside world keep telling you that there is only one China and that one China is

²⁷Taipei has abandoned the policy since the 1990s.

the People's Republic of China and not the Republic of China, your country is physically removed from international organizations, and your country's official name is not even allowed to be used internationally, you begin to think that you need to choose another identity. In a sense people in Taiwan have been forced to reconsider their identity away from the Chinese state to the physical entity of Taiwan which most Taiwanese believe is a sovereign independent country. Therefore, the author hypothesizes that people who believe that the PRC represents China on the international stage are more likely to assume Taiwanese national identity. Believing the ROC or both the ROC and PRC actually represent China in the world is coded as '1'; 'Don't know' is coded as '2'; and the PRC representing China is coded as '3'.

Using 'Taiwan' instead of 'ROC' in the international arena

Since the 1970s, the PRC has gained absolutely the upper hand in replacing the ROC as the sole sovereign state representing China in the international arena in general and in key international organizations in particular. The PRC has effectively monopolized the use of the proper name 'China' diplomatically; The ROC has gradually lost its international recognition and utility. In fact, it has become so confusing to use 'Republic of China' internationally that Taiwan authorities had to add the word 'Taiwan' on its passport alongside 'Republic of China' to indicate the passport holder is not from the PRC, the internationally recognized China. The official PRC policy is that it does not allow 'two Chinas' or 'one China and one Taiwan' internationally. While this policy has successfully prevented cross-recognition of the PRC and ROC simultaneously by a third party in the international stage, many people in Taiwan claim that the PRC's policy of not allowing the existence of 'two Chinas' in the world has led to *de facto* one China and one Taiwan on the international stage. Indeed, when people in the survey were asked whether the proper name 'Taiwan' should replace 'the Republic of China' in the international arena, close to 70% of the respondents answered positively (see Figure 7). It is expected that people who favor the name of Taiwan to replace the Republic of China are positively associated with a Taiwanese national identity. 'Disagree'/'strongly disagree' are coded as '1'; 'Don't know' is coded as '2'; and 'strongly agree'/'agree' are coded as '3'.

Separation from mainland China

The Taiwan independence movement dated back to the 1940s after the February 28 Incident. The movement was primarily conducted clandestinely in Taiwan and by Taiwanese activists overseas between the 1940s and 1980s since the KMT government made advocating Taiwan independence a crime prior to the 1990s. There were no reliable data on how many people in Taiwan actually supported Taiwan's separation from mainland China. Once again reliable survey data with regard to Taiwanese residents' feelings toward unification with or independence from mainland China appeared only in the early 1990s. Figure 8 shows the changes in unification and independence stances of Taiwanese people between 1994 and 2014 tracked by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University in Taiwan. The number of independence-inclined people in Taiwan has clearly increased over the past two decades. The author's survey data (see Figure 9) found close to 50% of people in Taiwan either want Taiwan to

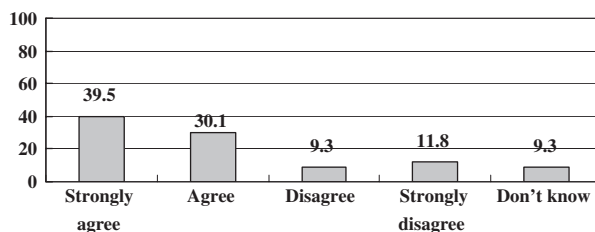


Figure 7. Do you agree that we should use Taiwan to replace the Republic of China in the international arena (%)?

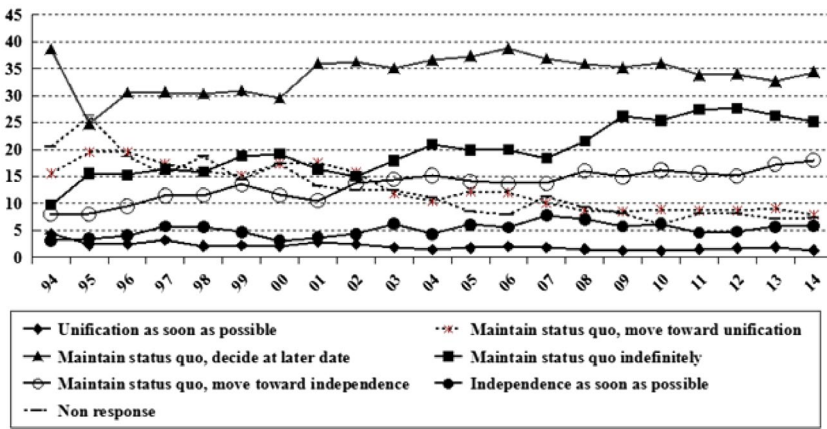


Figure 8. Changes in the unification-independence stances of people in Taiwan: 1994-2014. Source: The Election Study Center, NCCU (<http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=167>).

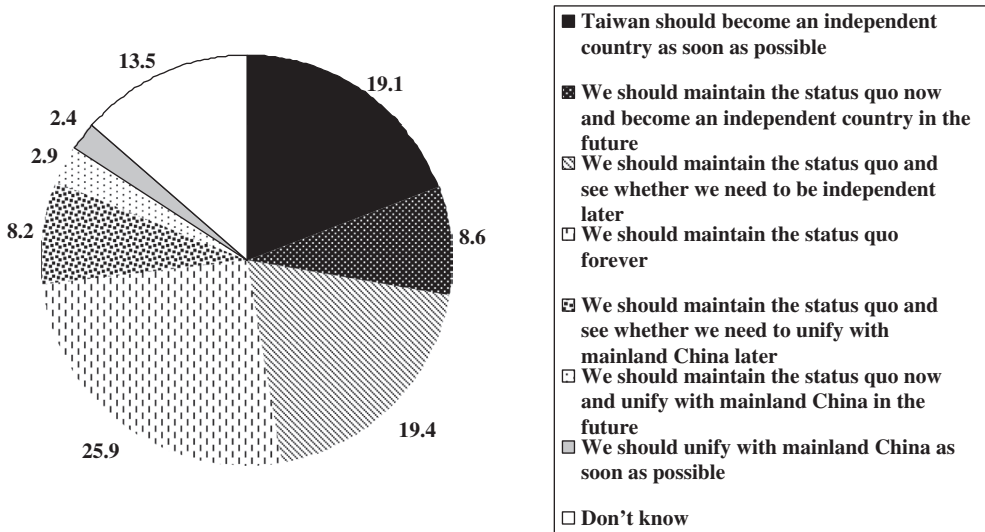


Figure 9. Unification or not with mainland China (%)?

be an independent country now or become an independent country in the future. Another quarter of those surveyed would like to maintain the status quo forever, which can be interpreted as a 'soft' independent stance since the status quo is that, in the mind of Taiwanese people, the PRC and ROC are two separate sovereign states. Less than 15% of Taiwanese people are inclined to unification with mainland China now or at some point in the future. Unification-inclined answers are coded as '1', maintaining the status quo forever is coded as '2', and independence-oriented answers are coded as '3'.

One long-held theory by people from both Taiwan and mainland China is that the main reason why most Taiwanese people do not want to unify with mainland China is because of the different political system in the PRC. Had the PRC been a democracy like Taiwan, most people in Taiwan would have supported the unification between the two entities. In the survey conducted for this article participants were asked 'If mainland China had the same political system as the one in Taiwan, would you support the unification of Taiwan and mainland China?'. Even though the percentage of people supporting

unification increases (to around 35%), over 50% of the respondents still would not support Taiwan's unification with mainland China. It does not seem that the ideological divide would change most Taiwanese people's mind with regard to unification with mainland China.

It should be pointed out that even though the Constitution of the Republic of China still geographically covers the whole of China (including mainland China), an amendment to the Constitution made in the 1990s, states that clauses in the Constitution are only applicable to the 'free areas of the Republic of China', i.e. the island of Taiwan and islands of Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. What the Republic of China has experienced internationally is basically a redrawn state boundary, which has shrunk from covering the whole of China to just Taiwan. The current *de facto* boundary of the Republic of China or Taiwan has already been in existence for over 50 years since 1949. When people in this survey were asked whether the Republic of China's territory includes mainland China or not, 70% of the respondents said 'no' and only 15% chose 'yes'. As mentioned earlier, boundary changes could potentially lead to identity reformation, creating a new demarcation of 'us' and 'them'. This, the author believes, holds true in explaining Taiwan's national identity shift. If most people in Taiwan do not want to be part of China, why do they want to be called 'Chinese' anymore? It is only logical that they assume a different identity. Furthermore, the unwillingness of most Taiwanese people to unify with mainland China makes it a logical move for most people in Taiwan to disassociate themselves from the Chinese national identity since identifying as Chinese or *zhongguoren* provides mainland China with the pretext to unify Taiwan, even by force. Some scholars have suggested that physical separation from mainland China plays a key role in the new identity formation in Taiwan.²⁸ Therefore, the author hypothesizes that people in Taiwan who favor permanent separation of Taiwan from mainland China are more likely to have assumed a Taiwanese national identity.

Feelings toward the mainland Chinese government and people

Other than the physical separation, another source contributing to the shift of national identity in Taiwan is the attitudinal feelings of people in Taiwan toward the government and people on mainland China. One national group's favorable feelings toward another national group do not mean the merge of national identity between the two groups. However, unfavorable feelings toward another group often strengthen one's national identity. Mainland China and Taiwan stayed bitter enemies toward each other between the 1950s and 1970s. Relations between mainland China and Taiwan have significantly improved since then. Even though few people in Taiwan believe that mainland China will militarily invade Taiwan or unify Taiwan by force any time soon, in the minds of most people in Taiwan, however, mainland China no doubt remains the most serious external threat to the island's security or its very existence. There exists a high level of anxiety among people in Taiwan over the rise of mainland China. The anxiety, however, is not so much on mainland China's military power, but its political and economic power.²⁹ Specifically, the concern is over Taiwan's economic dependence on the mainland, which was amply manifested in the Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan in May 2014. Given the overall improvement in relationships between Taiwan and mainland China and large number of people-to-people visits over the years, this survey finds that most people in Taiwan still have unfavorable feelings toward both mainland Chinese people and mainland Chinese government (see Table 1). Only around 12% and 22% of the respondents have favorable feelings toward the mainland Chinese government and mainland Chinese people, respectively. The author suspects that such negative feelings of Taiwanese people toward the mainland fortifies the Taiwanese national identity shift. Having very

²⁸Gunter Schubert, 'Taiwan's political parties and national identity: the rise of an overarching consensus', *Asian Survey* 44(4), (2004), pp. 534–554. Also see Jean-Pierre Cabestan, 'Specificities and limits of Taiwanese nationalism', *China Perspectives* 62, (2005), pp. 32–43.

²⁹See a report by Taiwan Thinktank, 'Taiwanese attitudes toward cross-Straits relations: findings from the polls', available at: http://www.taiwanthinktank.org/page/chinese_attachment_1/2704/Taiwanese_Attitudes_Towards_Cross_strait_relations.pdf (accessed 10 February 2015).

Table 1. Feelings toward the mainland Chinese government and people (%).

	Very favorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Totally unfavorable	Don't know
Feelings toward mainland Chinese government	1.7	10.6	31.1	35.4	21.2
Feelings toward people on mainland China	2.6	19.4	34.4	19.3	24.2

favorable or favorable feelings toward the mainland government is coded as '1,' don't know' is coded as '2,' and having unfavorable or very unfavorable feelings toward the Beijing government is coded as '3'.

Identification with a Taiwanese culture

Undoubtedly, a fundamental component of national identity is a common culture, however loosely the term culture is defined. Culture provides individuals with a sense of group identity. Culturally, Taiwan is a highly homogeneous society and what binds the Taiwanese together is, by and large, Chinese culture. Almost all the cultural traits found in Taiwan can be traced to mainland China. As mentioned earlier, Chinese traditional culture is much better preserved in Taiwan than on mainland China. According to cultural constructionist theories, the development of a separate and distinctive culture is extremely helpful with the establishment of a new national identity. Over the years, independence-minded politicians and elites in Taiwan have argued that Taiwan needs to undergo a Taiwanization or indigenization process to foster a distinctive Taiwanese culture by emphasizing and educating on local Taiwanese history, geography, cultural traditions and Taiwanese languages of Hokkien or Hoklo and Hakka (both of which are local dialects originated in mainland China). This process of Taiwanization was started by President Lee Teng-hui and continued by the Chen Shui-bian administration which systematically adopted, what some people called, 'de-Sinification' policies to promote an indigenous Taiwanese culture through Taiwan's educational system. Based on this article's argument that Taiwanese people's national identity shift is primarily caused by external and state sovereignty-related factors and not by internally constructed cultural factors, the author hypothesizes that identification with Taiwanese culture is not related to the national identity shift in Taiwan. Identification was measured with Taiwanese culture by asking the respondents to answer the following question: 'In your opinion, which of the following is the closest to the meaning of being Taiwanese?'. The survey respondents were split on this question (see Figure 10). Close to 40% believe being Taiwanese means that they have to identify with Taiwanese culture and history, while slightly more people (around 45%) think that the closest thing to being

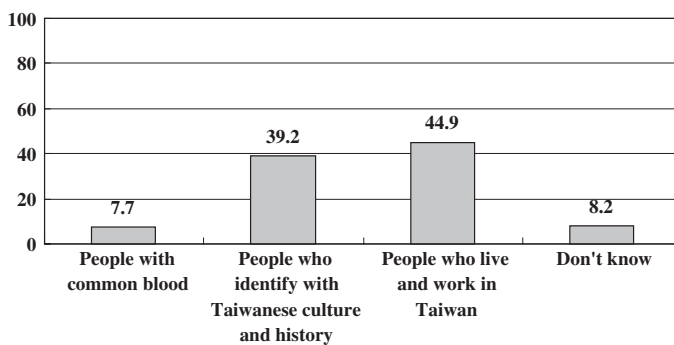
**Figure 10.** In your opinion, which of the following is the closest to the meaning of being Taiwanese (%)?

Table 2. Meaning of democracy (%).

	China	Taiwan	Korea	Mongolia	Philippines
Freedom and liberty	25.4	29.9	59.5	58.9	48.2
Political rights, institutions and processes	24.3	18.6	11.0	25.2	4.9
Market economy	0.1	1.4	9.9	7.0	0.0
Social equality and justice	4.4	6.3	34.0	33.4	4.0
Good government	2.7	3.2	4.7	11.6	1.2
For the people	28.8	17.1	5.1	7.5	1.8
In general positive terms	8.0	24.1	25.5	20.3	16.3
In negative terms	0.0	5.2	0.5	4.8	2.1
Other	7.1	8.2	7.0	1.7	3.9
Don't know/No answer	34.7	17.0	1.5	31.4	26.7
N=	3,183	1,415	1,500	1,144	1,200

Note: Totals exceed 100% because respondents could give up to three meanings. Source: Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, 'Introduction', in Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, eds, *How East Asians View Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 12.

Table 3. Support for democracy (%).

Democracy is ...	China	Taiwan	Korea	Mongolia	Philippines
Desirable for our country now ^a	72.3	72.2	95.4	91.6	88.1
Suitable for our country now	67.0	59.0	84.2	86.3	80.2
Effective in solving the problems of society ^b	60.5	46.8	71.7	78.4	60.7
Preferable to all other kinds of government ^c	53.8	40.4	49.4	57.1	63.6
Equally or more important than economic development ^d	40.3	23.5	30.1	48.6	21.8
None of the above	13.6	13.0	0.7	1.4	1.5
All of the above	17.8	7.4	15.7	25.9	6.7
Mean number of items supported	2.9	2.4	3.3	3.6	3.1

Notes: ^aSix or above on a ten-point dictatorship–democracy scale of where the country should or could be now. ^bDichotomous variable. ^cTrichotomous variable recoded into a dichotomous variable. ^dFive-way variable recoded into dichotomous variable. Source: Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, 'Introduction', in Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, eds, *How East Asians View Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 22.

Taiwanese simply refers to living and working in Taiwan. 'People with common blood' and 'people who live and work in Taiwan' are coded as '1'; 'don't know' is coded as '2'; and 'people who identify with Taiwanese culture and history' is coded as '3'.

Many scholars have argued that in the past two decades Taiwan has moved from ethno-nationalism to civic nationalism that is built on liberal democratic values.³⁰ The processes of Taiwanization (or Taiwan nationalism) and democratization of Taiwan have been highly intertwined over the past few decades in Taiwan.³¹ Indeed, Taiwan had held competitive local elections even during the authoritarian period between the 1950s and 1980s. Since the 1990s Taiwan has completely liberalized its political system and has established a vibrant and functioning democracy. Taiwanese citizens have practiced complete electoral democracy and have been exposed to democratic values for over two decades. It can be argued that the new Taiwanese identity is based on civic and democratic values that bind Taiwanese people together. But the question still remains, is the current political culture in Taiwan different enough to make Taiwan a separate nation from mainland China?

Comparative survey findings on democratic values from mainland China and Taiwan do not seem to support such an argument or observation. Tables 2–5 show Asia Barometer survey findings with regard to popular democratic values in mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, Mongolia and the Philippines. Findings from mainland China and Taiwan are remarkably similar and somewhat different from the other

³⁰Chia-lung Lin, 'The political formation of Taiwanese nationalism'.

³¹Stephane Corcuff, 'The symbolic dimension of democratization and the transition of national identity under Lee Teng-hui', in Corcuff, ed., *Memories of the Future*, pp. 73–101; and Schubert, 'Taiwan's political parties and national identity'.

Table 4. Commitment to democracy (%).

Type	China	Taiwan	Korea	Mongolia	Philippines
Very strong supporters	15.89	16.65	33.87	27.07	35.72
Strong supporters	21.05	20.58	24.73	24.81	28.65
Less dictatorial	5.3	2.6	3.7	8.6	4.4
Moderate supporters	20.41	16.46	21.20	16.65	15.98
Skeptical supporters	17.14	18.96	11.40	11.94	5.18
Weak opponents	10.07	8.80	4.33	4.98	2.30
Strong opponents	11.45	14.67	1.00	3.31	1.38
Mixed	3.99	3.88	3.47	11.24	10.78
Total		100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, 'Introduction', in Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, eds, *How East Asians View Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 28.

Table 5. Citizen empowerment (%).

	China	Taiwan	Korea	Mongolia	Philippines
Neither	63.3	60.8	38.5	21.0	12.9
Can understand politics	9.9	11.4	36.3	16.9	2.8
Can participate in politics	19.1	17.7	7.3	32.7	71.7
Both	7.4	10.0	17.8	29.4	12.5
N=	3,184	1,415	1,500	1,144	1,544

Source: Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, 'Introduction', in Yun-Han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew J. Nathan and Doh Chull Shin, eds, *How East Asians View Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 15.

three Asian countries. Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese share similar understanding of what democracy means and they show roughly the same level of support for and commitment to democracy. It is interesting that even though Taiwan has practiced electoral democracy for some time while mainland China has remained an authoritarian country, the same percentage of Taiwanese and mainland Chinese feel they can neither understand politics nor participate in politics. In other words, they have the same level of political efficacy. It is probably premature to say that people in Taiwan have established a distinctive political culture that is different from the one on mainland China.

What factors account for the new national identity in Taiwan? Table 6 presents findings from the author's multivariate analysis on Taiwanese national identity shift. As shown in the table, all the external state and sovereignty-related factors vis-à-vis mainland China are statistically significantly associated with people identifying themselves as Taiwanese.³² People in Taiwan who believe that the PRC represents China on the world stage and who would like to use the proper name Taiwan to replace ROC internationally are more likely to be identifiers of Taiwanese. In addition, independence-minded people and people who hold negative feelings toward the mainland Chinese government and people are also more likely to assume a Taiwanese national identity. On the other hand, identification with Taiwanese culture is not a significant factor in influencing Taiwanese people's national identity. It should be noted that the trend of Taiwanese identification continues to rise during President Ma Ying-jiu's administration even though President Ma largely abandoned Chen's 'de-Sinification' policies. In other words, domestic ethno-cultural constructive efforts do not seem to play a role in affecting Taiwanese national identity. Also included in this model are some control variables. It seems that people with higher income and supporters of the Democratic Progressive Party tend to identify themselves as Taiwanese.

³²Correlations matrix shows that some of the independent variables are moderately correlated with each other. A collinearity test shows, however, that VIFs (for all the substantive independent variables) are below 2.0. Thus it does not seem to have a multicollinearity issue in this model.

Table 6. Logistic regression of national identity in Taiwan.

Independent variables	Identifying as Taiwanese only	
	Estimated coefficients	Standard error
Gender (1=man, 2=woman)	-0.121	0.200
Age	0.019	0.032
Education	-0.054	0.103
Income	0.007*	0.003
Support for DPP	0.641**	0.143
PRC represents China in the world	0.605**	0.282
Using 'Taiwan' instead of 'ROC' in international arena	0.534**	0.108
Independence orientation	0.699**	0.140
Unfavorable feelings toward mainland China	0.406*	0.131
Identification with Taiwanese culture	0.085	0.102
Constant	0.787**	0.081
Log likelihood	685.423	
Model chi-square	187.534	
Degree of freedom	10	
N	1,072	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.000$.

Conclusion

Employing national identity theories and survey data in Taiwan, this article explains national identity shift in Taiwan. Descriptively the author found that most Taiwanese people reject being called 'Chinese' (*zhongguoren*) when asked about their national identity. However, they do not deny their ethnic and cultural Chinese identity. What they object to is being called Chinese nationals, especially when this China is internationally recognized as the People's Republic of China. In other words, most Taiwanese people do not identify themselves with the mainland Chinese state even though they still associate themselves with the Chinese nation. It should also be noted that there is no consensus with regard to national identity in Taiwan, since close to one third of the population still do not object to be called *zhongguoren*. Analytical findings further confirm that external sovereignty-related factors are related to the Taiwanese national identity shift. Specifically, changed state boundary, separation desire from mainland China, and recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state, not the distinctive cultural reconstruction inside Taiwan, contribute to the national identity shift in Taiwan.

There are many cases whereby national identity is constructed from outside rather than from inside. In their study of African countries' nation-building process, Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg explained why weak African states have persisted even though there is a serious lack of consensus on internal national identity.³³ Many African countries were artificially created by European colonizers. State boundaries were drawn arbitrarily without much consideration of local population composition. People of different ethnic, language, cultural and religious backgrounds were forcibly grouped together in artificially created countries called 'Nigeria', 'Kenya' or 'Sudan' where there exists serious lack of internal national cohesion and common national identity. After independence new national identity in these African countries was primarily constructed from the outside since these states were internationally recognized as sovereign states and they had diplomatic relations with foreign countries and were seated in and recognized by international organizations. Most African countries are not European-style nation-states where sovereign states are built upon a by-and-large internally cohesive and well-defined nation. These African countries should probably appropriately be called 'state-nation' where national identity is extrinsically defined by state sovereignty and boundaries.

³³Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, 'Why African weak states persist', *World Politics* 35(1), (1982), pp. 1–24.

From the perspective of Taiwanese subjective identification, Taiwan looks like a state-nation rather than a nation-state. Taiwan or the Republic of China experienced a state boundary or statehood change. As previously mentioned, Taiwanese people's perception of the ROC has evolved over time. The current ROC, in the minds of most Taiwanese people, is no longer the ROC of 30 years ago. With this new development came a new national identity for most people in Taiwan. For Taiwanese people there seems a split between their political/state self-identity as Taiwanese and their internal ethno-cultural identity as Chinese. Most Taiwanese people have developed a new sense of statehood separate from mainland China. They, however, have yet to develop a new nationhood that is distinctive and uniquely Taiwanese. A new state-nation is maybe the first stage of becoming a new nation-state, as proven by immigrant countries such as the United States, Australia and Canada which were all initially state-nations after independence from Britain and gradually became nation-states after they developed their own distinctive national culture.

Whether the identity shift in Taiwan is partly due to the PRC's long-standing 'One China' policy and the policy of banning Taiwan from international organizations is a good question. Based on sovereignty concerns, mainland China is less likely to abandon such a strict 'One China' policy though. As a result, Taiwanese people's statehood identity is likely to be further strengthened. However the Chinese government should also remain hopeful since an overwhelming majority of people in Taiwan still identify themselves as being part of the big Chinese nation. What mainland China and mainland Chinese seem to care about most is the ethno-cultural and blood aspect of national identity since the Chinese government always emphasizes that people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits are members of the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*). In fact, ethnic Chinese who were born and grew up overseas and are citizens of other countries are still often referred to as *zhongguoren* by mainland Chinese. If indeed mainland China and Taiwan can be physically unified (even nominally), it is still possible that identification of people in Taiwan as being Chinese nationals may increase. It would be much more difficult for unification to take place if most people in Taiwan do not even ethno-culturally identify themselves as Chinese anymore. When people in Taiwan assume a new national ethno-cultural identity that is different from their current Chinese ethno-cultural identity, Taiwan will become a new nation-state. This shift is probably going to take a much longer time to occur.

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