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The awakening of Taiwanese consciousness: the sorrows of being born a Taiwanese

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THE AWAKENING OF TAIWANESE CONSCIOUSNESS
The Sorrows of Being Born Taiwanese

by

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DEDICATION

I would first like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mandy and Eric, who have been the biggest support system and guidance towards the completion of my higher education. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my Aunt Vivien and Uncle Bill. I would never have been able to achieve the lengths that I have without the support you have given me.

Thank you.
THE AWAKENING OF TAIWANESE CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

The Republic of China (ROC), also known as Taiwan, has been the haven of the Kuomintang (KMT) since its defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949. Taiwan has long been the subject of control by foreign powers, which has created a unique history for the autonomous region. Historical circumstances have created a space for a distinct Taiwanese culture that has diverged from that of the mainland. This paper examines the role of this newfound culture on civic engagement, specifically regarding the sentiment for separatism or lessened ties with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). I examine the history of the island by first discussing the evolution of Taiwanese culture over the 20th and 21st centuries. I take a closer look following Taiwan’s democratization, which developed a deeper cultural cleavage that is politically salient. Cultural cleavages have only increased the nationalist sentiment of the Taiwanese people in pushing for greater separation – if not full-fledged independence – from the PRC. The results of my historical analysis argue the relevance of culture theory on the growing divide between Taiwan and China. In addition, this paper provides a perspective the effects of identity politics in Taiwan and its effect on cross-strait relations.
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<tr>
<td>BU</td>
<td>Boston University</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<td>DPP</td>
<td>Democratic Progressive Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAPA</td>
<td>Formosan Association for Public Affairs</td>
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<td>FPRI</td>
<td>Foreign Policy Research Institute</td>
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<td>KMT</td>
<td>Kuomintang (Nationalist Party)</td>
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<td>NCCU</td>
<td>National Chengchi University</td>
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<td>NUG</td>
<td>National Unification Guidelines</td>
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<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<td>ROC</td>
<td>Republic of China</td>
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<td>TPOF</td>
<td>The Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The island of Taiwan has remained the subject of foreign governance for decades as native inhabitants have all too often been excluded from running their own institutions. Beginning with the Dutch trading posts in the 1600s to Japanese colonization in the late 19th century, Taiwan’s historic foreign occupation deprived the native Taiwanese of full realization of cultural identity. On December 8, 1949, Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang (KMT) retreated to Taiwan after they were beaten by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The defeated Nationalist government relocated the Republic of China’s capital to Taipei, taking over the island as grounds to rebuild their shattered hopes with future dreams of a triumphant return to the mainland.

This mainland centric goal made the people of Taiwan, particularly the culture and identity of the Taiwanese people, a low priority for the KMT. The KMT suppressed Taiwanese culture in an effort to promote assimilation into “Chinese” culture. Taiwanese were barred from engaging in governmental and bureaucratic affairs. In an effort to maintain the prospect of regaining the mainland, the KMT policies and brutal actions of suppression alienated the Taiwanese and artificially created a deep cultural divide between the waisheng (mainlanders) and the bensheng (Taiwanese). Making the expression of Taiwanese political culture illegal under martial law suppressed the political salience of cultural cleavages between the waisheng (mainlanders) and the bensheng (Taiwanese).

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) regards the Republic of China (ROC), more commonly referred to as Taiwan, as a lost province. The primary goal of the PRC is
to see an eventual reunification of Taiwan and the mainland. However, the foundational idea of the “Republic of China” is a far away concept that the people of Taiwan have trouble identifying with. Taiwanese culture and national identity are factors that cannot be easily won over by the PRC neither by gentle persuasion nor by display of force. The inability to convince the people of Taiwan, especially the millennial generation, to identify as Chinese will disrupt cross strait relations including, the possibility of peaceful reunification. Differences in governmental structure, language, culture, and economic growth have only deepened the divide between the PRC and Taiwan.

In this paper, I argue that the unique ethnocultural background of the people of Taiwan creates an environment for the cultural cleavage between the mainland and Taiwan to become politically salient. Specifically, I am examining the environments that lead the Taiwanese to favor separatism and full-fledged independence. What circumstances have afforded the Taiwanese the ability to fully express their political culture? How has a distinct Taiwanese identity translated into any particular cross-strait policy?

First, this paper examines the definition of culture, political culture and culture theory in comparative political analysis. I discuss the various forms of nationalism that coincide with culture theory. Second, my method of historical analysis is utilized to bring clarity to the specific aims of cultural theory. I then conduct my historical analysis on the sentiments of Taiwanese culture over the 20th century and up to the present time. I expect to find that while Taiwanese culture had a large role in the resistance against foreign rule,
Taiwanese political culture and mobilization was fully realized after the full democratization of Taiwan in 1996.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Defining Culture**

“Cultures differ, among other ways, in how people view authority relations, in their members’ commitment to particular religious or ideological views, and in the content and salience of their historical memories.”

*Defining Culture in the Context of Political Analysis*

Political culture as a concept came to fruition starting in the 20th Century when Gabriel Almond coined the term “political culture”. According to Almond, “Every political system is embedded in a particular pattern of orientations to political action”.  

“Political culture became a significant subfield of political science, and in 1963 Almond and Verba published *The Civic Culture*—a cross national study offering a theory of political stability and democracy that implicitly celebrated Anglo-American representative government—which became a major work of the political culture approach.”. Almond and Verba attempted to separate culture into separate cognitive, affective and evaluative domains. *Civic Culture* created high regards for the American government and its leaders. Thus, when confidence in American leadership was high, faith in the political culture theory was consequentially just as prominent. The

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resemblance of political culture success explains how the Anglo-American political
system and ethnocentrism led to the simultaneous rejection of the theory of
modernization. ⁴

Political scientists do tend to reject the value of political culture as an explanation
for one’s political decisions. Jackson and Miller reject political culture, stating that
“institutional variations provide a parsimonious and powerful explanation of political
participation rates across the industrial democracies.” ⁵ Further, Elkins and Simeon
emphasized that political culture could not be an explanation for events on its own. It
would have to be “almost always in conjunction with other variables.” According to
Elkins and Simeon, cultural, institutional, and structural explanations were “not
competitors, but collaborators… Instead of asking whether institutions cause culture or
culture causes institutions, we should look for their joint effects.” ⁶ Elkins and Simeon’s
recommendation is, however, rejected by the majority of political scientists.

Culturally defined meanings play a critical role in explaining human behavior.
Meaning systems orient people to situations, similar to the way that maps orient
travelers. ⁷ Each actor in a political scenario may choose how he or she wishes to interpret
the meaning of an event. According to Tianjian Shi:

After decoding the meaning of an event, actors need to decide whether to respond
and, if so, in what way. An actor responding to a political event with which he or
she disagrees may choose protest, write to newspaper editors; donate money to a

⁴ Ibid.,
⁵ Ronald P. Formisano, “The Concept of Political Culture”, The Journal of Interdisciplinary
History, Vol. 31, No.3 (Winter. 2001), pp. 396-397.,
⁶ Ibid.,
⁷ Tianjian Shi, The Cultural Logic of Politics in Mainland China and Taiwan, New York:
Cambridge University Press, 2014,
cause supporting his or her view…join secret societies or, in an extreme case, become a terrorist. Each actor’s evaluative and affective orientations help him/her decide on the proper goals and the proper means for pursuing such goals.  

This is not to say that the actor is motivated by “rational choice” as most rational choice theorists would explain this phenomenon. Shi implies that actors of different cultural backgrounds will vary systematically in the meanings that they derive from the same information.

For Weber, the primary objective of cultural study was to explore the normative rationality of social action. In order to achieve this, “researchers must focus on orientations that assign “meaning” and “purpose” to the political actions of individuals and to the political processes of societies. The most important of these orientations are norms.” Weber’s action theory of political culture is the portion of political culture that this paper will be focusing on. Not only will political culture be explaining attitudes but also its result on social action such as, joining a political party, attending a public protest, and even running for office. Political culture serves as a helpful starting point from which we begin the discussion in examining the rise of social action toward independence in Taiwan.

**Culture Theory in Comparative Analysis**

*Culture Theory in Comparative Politics*

Culture theory can aid in the process of understanding why particular actions are taken and others are not. Cultural theory typically states that cultural norms are formed

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8 Ibid.,
9 Ibid.,
10 Ibid.,
in one’s youth and are carried with them throughout their lives. People’s cultural values usually reflect the social, economic, and institutional environments in their society at the time they came of age. The environment may vary from one generation to the next, and thus generational replacement has the ability to alter the culture in a society over time.

Culture is at least partially independent from structure and institutions, so that social and institutional change does not quickly bring about corresponding changes in culture. Ross describes the many contributions of culture to the study of comparative politics as:

Culture frames the context in which politics occurs. Culture orders political priorities meaning that it defines the symbolic and material objects people consider valuable and worth fighting over, the contexts in which such disputes occur, the rules (both formal and informal) by which politics takes place, and who participates in it. Culture links individual and collective identities. Culture defines group boundaries and organizes actions within and between them. Culture provides a framework for interpreting the actions and motives of others. Few behaviors are so universal that they require little or no interpretation and invocation of culturally available narratives and scripts to help people make sense of ambiguous but emotionally salient situations.

In addition, culture provides the basis for gathering resources for political organization and mobilization. The focus of this paper is the way in which Taiwanese political culture and national identity motivates the Taiwanese to mobilize for a government that puts Taiwan first and Taiwan’s relationship with the PRC last. While it is imperative to recognize that culture is an extremely broad concept that can encompass much more than political mobilization, political culture serves as an encompassing theory for national identity.

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12 Ibid.,
13 Ibid.,
Culture is not a static, unchanging phenomenon marked by fixed beliefs and unalterable practices. “Instead, the emphasis is on the interactive, constructed nature of culture, which suggests a capacity to modify beliefs and behaviors, including shifts and rearrangements in the salience of specific cultural understandings.” It is imperative to inquire how organizations of any particular culture produce the specific effects attributed to it as well as why appeals to cultural identity are so powerful that people are willing to take high risks in its name. Change-oriented groups often emerge when there are shifts in culture as the change meets their core needs. This is exemplified with the creation of the DPP when democratization was rumored to be on its way in Taiwan. Political leaders take the opportunity to relay messages that would cater to the shift in culture.

Further, the examination of the transitional period between different systems of government is crucial to the study of culture theory and nationalistic identity. According to Horowitz and Tan, “One would expect changes from one authoritarian regime to another, or changes between democratic and authoritarian regimes, to have the potential to produce more drastic changes in national identities and interest…Changes under democracy are potentially larger when there has been a recent transition from authoritarianism, and when post-transition governments have remained relatively conservative.” Democratization of a government can lead to relative changes in the identity of the population. The opportunity for free speech provides those who have not

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14 Ibid.,
15 Ibid.,
16 Ibid.,
17 S., U. Heo Horowitz, and A. Tan, *Identity and Change in East Asian Conflicts: The Cases of China, Taiwan, and the Koreas*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2007), p. 6,
had the right to freedom of speech the chance to reclaim their political identity in a public space.

_Conscept of Nationalism and National Identity_

National identity can serve as a useful tool to understand Taiwanese political culture on the spectrum ranging from pro-unification to pro-independence. In order to study the developing Taiwanese national identity, it is imperative to understand the concept of nationalism. Nationalism combines a theory of society and politics with a prescription of action and change. 18 According to Anthony Smith, “it weds a cultural account of politics to an activist ethic” with the supreme goal for a “national identity”. 19 A national identity is created from the growth of deep bonds of emotional solidarity with citizens right to participation and decision-making. 20 A distinct national identity serves to guard sovereign independence as the population immerses itself into the identity of their shared history.

Nationalism as a political principle maintains that similarity in culture is the fundamental social bond. 21 As stated in Ernest Gellner’s piece _Nationalism_, the core idea of nationalism is the legitimacy of a group of people that are associated with the same culture. 22 Nationalism is not derived by accident—it is a consequence of specific social conditions that serve to consolidate a change-oriented group’s political goals for the purpose of political mobilization.

19 Ibid., p. 87,
20 Ibid., p. 87
22 Ibid., p. 4,
The Harmony of Ethnocultural and Civic Nationalism

A cultural examination of national identity must therefore stem from the topic of civic and ethnocultural nationalism. Schubert points out that “national identity can shift from ethnic to civic and vice versa, while the volatility of this shift depends upon how deeply the idea of the nation is entrenched in the social psychology of the community.”

Thus, examining the interconnected concepts of ethnocultural and civic nationalism could help to garner a better understanding of the shift towards a distinct Taiwanese identity.

According to David Brown, the concept of civic nationalism is best described as:

…a sense of community which is focused on the belief that residence in a common territorial homeland, and commitment to its state and civil society institutions, generate a distinctive national character and civic culture, such that all citizens, irrespective of their diverse ancestry, comprise a community in progress, with a common destiny. This commitment to a common destiny, tied into the idea of common loyalty to the territory and its institutions means that civic nationalism implies the acquisition of ethical obligations, and should not be regarded simply as a voluntary association lacking emotive power… sometimes depicted as ‘forward-looking’ in the sense that the vision is of a community in the process of formation, while ethnocultural nationalism is seen as backward-looking, in that the vision of the community is located in myths of the past.

Schubert argues that the Taiwanese society has been a society of civic nationalism since democratization in the 1990s. The idea of the “New Taiwanese” creates a political contract between all ethnic groups on the island including, Mainlanders, Hoklo, Hakkas, and Aborigines. This concept “aims at constitution of a new nation based on common

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history as well as the democratic achievements of all Taiwan people, irrespective of their former frictions and antagonisms.”

Subsequently, ethnocultural nationalism offers a vision of a community united by a belief in common ancestry. The “New Taiwanese” identity creates a community in that can be easily mobilized on the basis of shared experiences. It is the interconnected concepts of civic nationalism and ethnocultural nationalism that can explain the further departure from any identity that may coincide with the mainland.

Culture Theory of Politics in Taiwan

In the context of this paper, Taiwanese consciousness must be defined in relation to cultural identity, political culture, and national identity. Taiwanese consciousness has been through centuries of repression and resistance against the foreign government that has held power. As a result, Taiwanese consciousness has remained a subset of resistance that does not align with that of a foreign ruling party.

According to Liao Ping-Hui, “Taiwan has gone through several colonial stages—Dutch conquest (1622-1661), Chinese settlement (1661-1895), Japanese occupation (1895-1945), and Nationalist “recovery” (after 1945). Various ethnic groups came to the island at different times and brought with them diverse racial and cultural heritages. Taiwan’s different communities and their historical experiences have been made more complex by this hybrid ethnic and genealogical mixture.” The unique cultural

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26 Ibid. p. 89.,
experience of Taiwan has created an environment in which a combination of any, if not all, previous cultural experiences can be formed into a distinct Taiwanese identity, subsequently, fostering a Taiwanese identity that could serve as a focal point of resisting foreign rule.

Taiwanese cultural identity is a phenomenon described by Tu Weiming, as “on the surface, the issue of cultural identity seems to be the inevitable consequence of the disintegration of the dominant neo-traditional, conservative and conformist ideology.” However, in Taiwan’s case, “the matter is complicated by three factors: the inability of the newly emerging political centre to define Taiwan’s national identity, the transformation of Taiwan’s nativism from a counterhegemonic critique of Sino-centrism to a dominant ideology, and the development of a public sphere where numerous social forces contend for power and influence.” Taiwanese cultural identity is no longer within the control of the political center but has moved toward an extreme sentiment of nativism.

The term “Taiwanese” (Taiwanren) was initially coined during Japanese colonization as an attempt to express Chinese national sentiments against the Japanese. In Ito Kiyoshi’s book Taiwan: Four Hundred Years of History and Its Outlook, Kiyoshi summarizes four hundred years of Taiwanese history, starting from the Dutch rule during the age of mercantilism to present day. Kiyoshi locates the birth of “Taiwanese consciousness” in the early days of Japanese rule, and its further maturation in the

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30 Ibid.,
31 Ibid.,
struggle for Taiwanese independence that came out of the February 28 Incident, a brutal military crackdown against Taiwanese protest by the KMT in 1947.\textsuperscript{32}

Jean-Pierre Cabestan best describes the February 28 Incident as producing “a two-fold phenomenon which was to prove lasting: on the one hand, a feeling of nostalgia for the Japanese period… and on the other hand, the affirmation of a Taiwanese consciousness and a Taiwanese identity based on a specific historical path, as well as a demand for autonomy and democracy on the part of the Taiwanese elites which has gradually given birth to a genuine independence movement”\textsuperscript{33}. The events that occurred between the 228 Incident, as the February 28 Incident is popularly called, and the White Terror following full KMT takeover of Taiwan “contributes to this tragic history, which—by being remembered—creates national cohesiveness and identity. It is the shared historical memory of people that arouses the feeling to be part of a national community.”\textsuperscript{34}

Until the 1970s, KMT political goals were focused on returning to the mainland triumphant over the CCP. Thus, the KMT considered Taiwan as a province and disenfranchised the people of Taiwan from any political process. Following the full democratization of Taiwan, Taiwanese cultural identity has grown exponentially under the environment of free speech. Tu Weiming explains, “as already being implied, the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{32} As noted in, Binghui Liao, Dewei Wang, and JSTOR Provider. \textit{Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895-1945 History, Culture, Memory}. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.62.,
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Jean-Pierre Cabestan, and Michael Black. "Specificities and Limits of Taiwanese Nationalism." \textit{China Perspectives}, no. 62 (2005): 32-43,
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Gunter Schubert. "A New Rising Nation? The Discourse on National Identity in Contemporary Taiwan." \textit{China Perspectives}, no. 23 (1999): 54-64.
\end{itemize}
popularity of Taiwanization, not only for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) but also for the new leadership of the KMT, compels both the ruling minority and the cultural elite to abandon the seemingly outmoded China-centered cultural policy of past decades.”

In this transitional period, the “politics of recognition” will inevitably challenge all forms of institutional structure and cultural practice tainted with perceived Chinese chauvinism. Taiwanese consciousness inevitably clashes with Chinese identity. The emergence of Taiwanese culture serves as a nationalistic tool that aids in the rise of policy that puts Taiwan at the forefront.

According to Gunter Schubert, there are “three conceptual stages of theoretical nation-building within this discourse can be identified:

Taiwanese ethno (-cultural) nationalism, which is set against Chinese ethno-nationalism, describing Taiwan as a historically and culturally distinct community… sometimes even suggesting the existence of a specific Taiwanese ethnicity or race; multi-ethnic nationalism, promoting the idea of ‘four great ethnic groups’ (sige da zuqun) with equal rights and status, by that overcoming the old ‘provincial’ conflict and making ethnic harmony the basis of the new Taiwanese nation; political or state nationalism, which tries to transcend ethnicity and argues for a Taiwanese nation based on constitutionalism and the liberal state.

Furthermore, Horowitz and Tan describe the continued evolution of Taiwanese identity in terms of shift from authoritarian regimes to those that are democratic.

Democratization in Taiwan and South Korea and liberalization in China have forced

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36 Ibid. p. 1123,
leaders to compete for popular legitimacy by appealing to national identities. National identities are central to explaining the origins and ongoing character of the cross-strait relations between the PRC and the ROC. Particularly in democracies and less repressive authoritarian regimes, changing national identities interact with changing external conditions to influence political competition and leadership outcomes, and thereby, national security goals and strategies.

According to Jean-Pierre Cabestan, “a nationalist current has long existed in Taiwan that one could call fundamentalist, which favours pure and simple independence and is convinced that Taiwanese culture does not belong to Chinese culture.” The ROC was favored the emergence of a Taiwanese national consciousness that the democratization of Taiwan in 1986 has consolidated. Cabestan argues that the rise of Taiwanese national consciousness is the confirmation of the thesis of Gellner or of Hobsbawm, that the state of the Republic of China, by default Taiwan after 1949, is the main ferment of Taiwanese nationalism.

Stockton discusses national culture and identity with regards to the “Hutchinson’s dichotomy of nationalism” which distinguishes between political and cultural nationalism. Stockton describes this dichotomy as “an effort to secure a sovereign representative state for the community and to secure its members’ rights to

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38 S., U. Heo Horowitz, and A. Tan, Identity and Change in East Asian Conflicts: The Cases of China, Taiwan, and the Koreas, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2007), pp. 4-5,
39 Ibid., pp. 4-5,
41 Ibid., p.32,
42 Ibid., p. 32,
citizenship…” 43 Nationalism can be a powerful tool to reunite various aspects of the nation that utilizes the premise on a sense of community derived from shared history, beliefs, customs, and habit. Thus, Stockton notes, “cultural nationalism, as long as it was Chinese cultural nationalism under the KMT, facilitated reunification. 44 More recently, in the face of a rising Taiwanese cultural and political nationalism, prospects for reunification have dimmed.”

Taiwan’s isolationism from the mainland has provided the island with sufficient time and space for the emergence of a new Taiwanese identity. Stockton argues that Taiwan finds itself in an identity crisis, where political development and new historical conditions have created a situation in which, the traditional sense of identity, linked to the mainland, is being found untenable. 45 Political cultural identity has at large shifted towards the notion of being politically Taiwanese.

Tu Weiming contends that “Taiwan’s ready abandonment of its role as a model province for the PRC and its self-assigned mission to be the preserver and transmitter of Chinese culture is the result of a new political ecology that was shaped by the Taiwanized KMT to redefine its cultural identity.”46 Taiwanese political culture—the ability to publicly state a political ideology against the dominant ideology such as, independence leaning, remaining at status quo, and decreased ties with the mainland— was not fully realized until the advent of full democratization.

43 S., U. Heo Horowitz, and A. Tan, Identity and Change in East Asian Conflicts: The Cases of China, Taiwan, and the Koreas, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2007), p. 52,
44 Ibid., p. 52.,
45 Ibid., p. 53, 
Thus, “since the ‘sorrow of being Taiwanese’ (Taiwanren de beiai) has, in a
significant way, been caused by the hegemonic discourse of the pre-Taiwanized KMT,
the rejection of chauvinist Chinese culturalisms is perceived as a precondition for the
purification of the Taiwanese soul.”47 Taiwanese consciousness stems from eradicating
civic nationalism for the Republic of China in favor of a Taiwanese national identity.

METHODOLOGY

Culture theory, in this context, can be best demonstrated through the use of
historical analysis. Comparative historical analysis has a long history in social science,
largely introduced by the likes of Adam Smith, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Karl Marx.
Historical analysis maintains its central position of today’s social sciences. Mahoney and
Rueschemeyer reserve the term “comparative historical analysis” for a distinct type of
research defined by relatively specific characteristics:

Comparative historical inquiry is fundamentally concerned with explanation and
the identification of causal configurations that produce with explanation and the
identification of causal configurations that produce major outcomes of interest. In
comparative historical studies, the causal argument is central to the analysis; thus,
causal propositions are carefully selected and tested rather than introduced ad hoc
as incidental parts of an overall narrative. As such, comparative historical analysis
does not include work that explicitly rejects causal analysis or that eschews it in
favor of other research goals.48

Thus, it is appropriate to utilize historical analysis to understand the events that has
caused a Taiwanese consciousness to emerge.

47 Ibid.,
48 James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social
The historical analysis in this paper consists of four major periods – pre-Japanese colonization, Japanese colonization, KMT hegemonic rule, and post democracy in Taiwan. I emphasize events following the end of Japanese colonization in 1945 to highlight the events that resulted in cultural cleavages between the people of Taiwan and mainland China.

My analysis covers over a century of Taiwanese history in an attempt to create a comprehensive timeline of the social, institutional, and economic environments that created Taiwanese ethnocultural identity and civic nationalism. A distinct Taiwanese cultural identity, political culture and national identity have grown in importance among the Taiwanese community as the result of a sentiment of solidarity for a shared Taiwanese history. Culture theory can best describe the shift towards this newfound Taiwanese consciousness by describing the social, economic, and institutional environment each generation has experienced.

The historical examination of each of the selected periods of time will distinguish what it meant to be Taiwanese at each given moment in history up to the present time. It is imperative to note that in order to explain or even predict Taiwan’s attitudes towards the mainland, we must uncover the Taiwanese political culture and ethnocultural identity. In particular, we must look into the cultural positions of the major players involved in the making of the mainland policy.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Taiwanese cultural identity did not always translate into a shared sense of Taiwanese civic nationalism or political culture. It was the rise of a full democracy that created an environment in which the Taiwanese
could not only their political culture in an open, engaging, and effective manner, but also, take social action—including, joining a opposition political party, attending a public protest, and even running for public office.

Democracy and the awakening of Taiwanese consciousness can be studied as intertwined concepts that may be utilized to explain the shift in Taiwanese policy on unification. It is my expectation that the historical analysis will display an emergence of Taiwanese consciousness following democracy. Taiwanese consciousness creates a clear cultural cleavage between Taiwan and the mainland that is politically salient as it affords the Taiwanese people the freedom to take social action. Thus, Taiwanese consciousness can explain the fervor towards nation building and civic engagement of a Taiwanese government rather than a unified country with the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Pre-Japanese Colonization

Taiwan’s position in the Western Pacific Rim has landed itself to be a maritime crossroads. The island was a stopping point for the Spanish and the Dutch in the 1600s. In 1626, the Spanish set up forts and missions at Keelung and Tamsui on the island’s northern tip. The Dutch utilized the area that is known as the city of Tainan in present-day to set up trading posts. The objective of the Dutch was to disrupt Portuguese trade at Macao and interfere with the Spanish shipping near the Philippines. In 1642, the Dutch Protestants drove the Spanish Catholics out of the north and held Taiwan for the next two

decades with relatively low conflict. The Dutch faced a decent amount of resistance in Tam-sui and sent reinforcements to bring the area under control in 1644.

The Dutch built a seminary in 1657 to set up to educate thirty indigenous seminarians in the Dutch language. By this time, 6,078 of the 10,109 members of the aboriginal population understood Christian teachings and 2,784 understood more than simple prayers. Dutch missionary education and its rule came to an end in 1661 when Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga) attacked with 25,000 soldiers. This European period of control on Taiwan was short lived as the Chinese reclaimed the island. In addition, the short nature of Dutch colonization made for a much smaller impact on the formation of Taiwanese identity.

Zheng Cheng-gong’s family ruled Taiwan from 1661-1683. Zheng’s life was riddled with tumultuous family politics and later slipped into insanity and died on June 23, 1662. The Qing imperial empire sent admiral Shi Lang, who had previously broken away from Zheng’s camp, to conquer the island and in 1683 Shi Lang quickly consolidated control over Taiwan. From 1661-1895, the Qing imperial China ruled Taiwan as the first Chinese ruler on the island. During this period of time, the Han ethnic population increased by 1.8 million reaching 2 million.
Japanese Colonization

Japan has no previous planning to take over the island of Taiwan. During peace negotiations, Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi stipulated that both Taiwan and the Pescadores islands were to be ceded by imperial China. On May 8, 1895, the Qing imperial court ceded Taiwan and the nearby Pescadores islands to Tokyo in the Treaty of Shimonoseki after China was defeated in war with Japan. Japanese colonization was met by immediate resistance from the Taiwanese people. Governor Tang Ching-sung attempted to create an anti-Japanese resistance under an island regime, labeled the “Taiwan Republic”. Governor Tang’s followers feared that Japanese colonization would jeopardize the preservation of Chinese culture and civilization. However, these attempts at preemptive resistance were futile as Governor Tang Ching-sung and his aides escaped to the mainland shortly before the Japanese troops arrived in Taipei.

Under the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Meiji Japan allowed the registered inhabitants a choice to return to China by May 8, 1897 and remain Qing subjects or to stay in Taiwan, or return to Taiwan before the deadline, and become Japanese citizens. The wealthy elites were among the largest groups to leave Taiwan during this period of time as those who would remain would be heavily disenfranchised under the Japanese colonial government. Despite many instances of armed resistance against the Japanese, the inhabitants of Taiwan were growing less attached to the mainland as a result of the 1895

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61 Ibid.,
62 Ibid.,
cession. Thus, by the time the 1897 deadline was reached, the Taiwanese were no longer subjects of Chinese nationality, beginning a new era of a struggling Japanese identity.

Japanese colonial reform was a harsh burden on the inhabitants of Taiwan. The most important law that provided power to the governor-general was Law 63, the right to enact “decrees as law” (ritsurei). This law empowered governor-generals to “suspend or cancel any order or any administrative measure of local government that they deemed ‘inconsistent with the rules or regulations, or to be prejudicial to the public interest, or to trespass beyond the proper jurisdiction of such authority.’” 63 Under Law 63, governor-generals were also authorized “to appoint and dismiss at their discretion of the lowest-ranking rank of local officials, and if they were able to secure Imperial assent, they could impose disciplinary measures upon upper-ranking officials and dismiss middle-ranking officials.” 64

Much armed resistance to the Japanese thrived during the first two decades of Japanese colonization. “Banditry”, defined as guerilla organized crime against the Japanese, ensued as a disruption of the established Japanese colony. In response to banditry, the Japanese government enacted the Bandit Punishment Ordinance in which according to Fong Shiaw-Chian, the punishments were as follows:

Those bandits who gather themselves to coerce or threaten others, no matter what their purposes are, are subject to punishment according to the following criteria:
1. The leaders and the instigators are sentenced to death.
2. Those who participate in the decision-making or commanding are sentenced to death.

64 Ibid.,
3. The mere participants or those who provide services are subject to imprisonment for a definite term and to harsh corvée.

Banditry and organized resistance against the Japanese was not to be tolerated by the Japanese government. For example, Houbling, a Taiwanese stronghold in the Kaohsiung area, was a group led by guerilla Lin Shao Mao beat back attempts by Japanese soldiers to disband them. Lin was able to obtain a deal with the Japanese who had suffered large casualties in fighting the Houbling. However, in 1902, a larger force of Japanese troops attacked and massacred about two hundred Taiwanese and wiped Houbling from the map.

The Japanese government was brutally adamant about assimilation to the Japanese culture. Assimilation was a key component of each governor-general’s platform of governance in Taiwan. The Taiwanese were expected to give up their customs and language but also their Chinese heritage as a whole. In some cases, the Taiwanese were more willing to become more Japanized as the systematic exploitation and discrimination of the newly “Japanese” would be harder to justify.

Policies enacted towards assimilation were different between administrations throughout the years of Japanese rule. General Akashi Motojiro (June 1918-October 1919) and Den Kenjiro (October 1919-September 23) serve as examples of different applications of assimilation policies. While both Governor-generals believed in the need for assimilation, they differed vastly in regards to their assimilationist outlooks and

66 Ibid.,
agendas. Akashi favored a limited form of assimilation in which only a set number of Taiwanese would be Japanized. Strict segregation in the colony was heavily enforced by Akashi. On the other hand, Den favored the Japanization of Taiwan to overcome discriminatory colonial practices, which he felt obstructed the assimilation process. Den believed that education played an important role in the assimilation process and declared acculturation (kyoka) must be extended beyond the instruction offered through formal schooling.

Taiwanese sekimin, or Taiwanese registered people, were given extraterritorial privileges under the Japanese consular jurisdiction. Overseas Taiwanese settlements became business communities in which the sekimin were able to operate with relatively low levels of surveillance by the Japanese. However, the sekimin identity became ambiguous and detrimental to community residents in the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. Following the 1895-1897 period in which Taiwanese residents could choose a either Chinese or Japanese residency, many Taiwanese who fled to the two coastal provinces became prominent entrepreneurs in the local treaty ports. While these entrepreneurs associated themselves with the Japanese consuls, they never attained official Japanese registry. Some Chinese residents in these business communities were thus able to obtain sekimin status in order to maintain extraterritorial privileges.

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68 Ibid., p. 221.
69 Ibid., p. 221.
70 Ibid., p. 229.
71 Ibid., p. 229.
72 Ibid., p. 229.
Taiwanese sekimin status would, however, be degraded as many Taiwanese ronin opened opium dens, brothels, and gambling stores, and even committed crimes sometimes with the support of the Japanese government. Chinese nationals grew to resent the Taiwanese sekimin and cast the Taiwanese as a whole as outsiders to the coastal provinces. Further, anti-Japanese sentiment only added to the Chinese resentment of the Taiwanese sekimin. Taiwanese shops and establishments were frequent targets of abuse, especially during anti-Japanese boycotts and demonstrations.

Taiwanese culture was also used as a guise for practicing a political stance against the Japanese hegemony. In 1920, leaders of the Taiwanese intelligentsia began to establish associations and publish periodicals. Taiwanese-inspired political movements developed more fully with the founding of the New People’s Society. According to Harry Hamley, “the possibility of full assimilation and fusion with metropolitan Japan became unacceptable to most of the new intelligentsia after the unpopular Law 63 was again extended by the Imperial Diet, but this time for an indefinite period. In protest, the leaders of the New People’s Society rejected the options of integration with Japan or restoration to China then being debated and, instead opted to advance home rule by establishing a parliament in Taiwan.” Japanese colonization had only pushed the Taiwanese people away from Chinese solidarity and instead, the desire for autonomy.

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75 Ibid., p. 231,
76 Ibid., p. 233,
In 1921, the Taiwanese Cultural Association, organized primarily by Chiang Wei-shui, operated under the guise of advancing Taiwanese culture and disavowed any political aspirations. However, the association supported many political movements that called for home rule and the establishment of a Taiwan parliament. The Taiwanese Cultural Association is often regarded as the “one organization most responsible for the development of Formosan nationalism”. The Governor-general would shut down any advancement towards self-governance or universal suffrage for the Taiwanese.

In 1936, much of the oppressive sentiment against the Taiwanese began to change as the Second Sino-Japanese war began in North China. Under the rule of Admiral Kobayashi Seizo, Taiwan’s seventeenth Governor-general, Taiwan became a strategic springboard for Japan’s “southward advance” into southern China and Southeast Asia. Taiwan served as a staging area for the capture of Canton and later the occupation of Hainan island in February 1939.

During the wartime period, the policy of *kominka*, meaning Imperial-subjectization, provided a number of government-sponsored assimilationist programs and reforms. As a part of the policy, the government legalized Taiwanese-Japanese intermarriage, opened the Imperial University in Taipei to Taiwanese students, and banned Chinese-language radio broadcasts. The Japanese eradicated the use of the Chinese language in newspaper publications and educational systems in favor of

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77 Ibid, pp. 231-232.,
78 Ibid., pp. 232,
79 Ibid., p. 235,
80 Ibid., p.235,
Japanese language versions. Further, the Japanese attempted to replace the predominant Chinese cultural and religious practices. ⁸² *Kominka* was also utilized to stir fervor for military recruitment campaigns, as military service was not made compulsory in Taiwan. Military recruitment depended on persuasion and incentives by portraying military service as a further step towards Japanization. ⁸³

Religious assimilation was an integral part of the Japanization as Shintoism, the Japanese state religion, was forced upon the Taiwanese. Governor-general Kobayashi then ordered the construction of more Shinto shrines in the colony and the destruction of traditional Chinese religious sites that many Taiwanese communities practiced in. ⁸⁴ *Kominka* seeped into the everyday lives of the Taiwanese as even Chinese attire was policed by the Japanese authorities. Few Taiwanese were transformed into “true Japanese” by way of the imperialization process, and local resentment was stirred by harsh and demanding *kominka* measures. ⁸⁵

Taiwanese *sekimin* experienced instances of discrimination during the war as they were forced to remain loyal to Japan. *Sekimin* communities in Fujian suffered many casualties and property damage over the first two years of the war, when a Guangdong army division, and the principal governor and local Chinese authorities moved to clear out the Taiwanese from the seaport areas of the province. ⁸⁶ Taiwanese were disenfranchised both on the mainland as well as in their island home. Both the Japanese

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⁸² Ibid.,
⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 242,
⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 242,
⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 245,
and the mainland Chinese maintained a strict distinction between the Taiwanese sekimin and their respective communities.

During the Sino-Japanese war, Nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek, turned his attention to retaining the lost territories that had previously been ceded to the Japanese. Chiang Kai-shek met with United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in Cairo, Egypt on November 1943. The United States recognizing that China was a valuable ally in the effort against Japan released an official statement demanding that “all the territories that Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China”.  

The Cairo Declaration, as it later became known, was a document that served as the basis of the eventual turnover of Taiwan into the hands of the KMT and consequentially the ROC. The Potsdam Declaration signed in July of 1945 demand that the territories mentioned in the Cairo Declaration be handed back to China. Under the authority of the allies and the orders from Supreme Allied Commander Douglas MacArthur, ROC troops officially accepted Japanese surrender on Taiwan on October 25, 1945. Chiang appointed Chen Yi as the Administrator of Taiwan in order to oversee the transition process and to oversee the people of Taiwan. For the Taiwanese, the transition from being a Japanese colony to Chinese Nationalist rule would prove to be as tumultuous if not more than the initial transition from Imperialist China to Japan.

ROC/KMT Rule 1945-1987

1945-1949 Transitions After Handing Back Taiwan

Taiwanese sekimin and military personnel suffered at the hand of the Chinese troops when the war came to an abrupt end. However, as the Japanese withdrew, the Taiwanese were hopeful at the liberation from the Japanese at the hands of the Nationalists would afford them more self-governance. The six million Chinese-descended natives of Taiwan were generally enthusiastic at the prospect of returning to Chinese rule after half a century of colonial subjection to Japan.  

To much dismay, the KMT made brutal attempts to eradicate any trace of Japanese culture as well as traditional Taiwanese culture. Inhabitants of Taiwan spoke Japanese for half a century as a result of colonial rule. The Nationalists struggled to spread the immediate use of Mandarin Chinese (guo-yu), the officially sanctioned dialect of the mainland government, to eradicate the use of the Japanese language. 

In addition, the laws applied by the KMT were protectionist of state owned enterprises and maintained a monopoly on many goods that forced the people of Taiwan to act desperately for economic prosperity. On February 27, 1947, agents of the State Monopoly Bureau berated, arrested, and physically beat a street vendor for illegally selling cigarettes in the capital city of Taipei. Reports of the incident indicate that an

92 Stefan Fleischauer, “The 228 Incident and the Taiwan Independence Movement’s Construction of a Taiwanese Identity”, The Documentation and Research Center for Modern China, Vol XXI, p. 376,
angry crowd soon gathered as this incident was taking place and protested the treatment of the street vendor.

Mass protests broke out in the coming days following the protests that broke out over the maltreatment of the street vendor. Taiwanese elites originally cautious with the KMT but later believed it to be a good opportunity to maintain more rights for the island. Shortly after the incident, the Taipei City Council attempted to quell protests and seek punishment for the police officers responsible for the original outbreak by setting up the “Committee to Investigate the Case of the Arrested Smuggler”. 93

On March 6th, the February 28 Incident Resolution Committee drafted a plan for reform under the broad heading of “letting the Taiwanese rule the Taiwanese,” demanding that islanders be able to hold important posts in the provincial administration. 94 Administrator Chen Yi appeared to accept many of the requests made by the Taiwanese people and took the request to the Nanjing government to be negotiated. Although the complications that led up to March 8, 1947 are largely unknown, the KMT government most likely saw these demands as an act of rebellion by the Taiwanese people. A brutal military crackdown descended on Taiwan through the port of Keelung to reassert Nationalist control over the island by indiscriminately shooting anyone in the streets. 95 The widely disputed casualty total can range anywhere from 500 to 100,000. 96 In the aftermath of the military crackdown, Chiang had instilled the fear and obedience in the

94 Ibid.,
95 Ibid.,
96 Ibid.,
Taiwanese that he had previously hoped for. The period of repression, which followed the 228 Incident, destroyed the Taiwanese dream of a harmonious return to the Chinese nation.  

Just 18 months following the return of Taiwan to the ROC, the local people of Taiwan revolted against the KMT rule. The Incident serves as a difficult reminder of the oppressive decolonization and reintegration of the inhabitants of Taiwan into the ROC. The 228 Incident disenchanted the Taiwanese people with the mainland cause even further. Vocal Taiwanese elites from the time of Japanese colonization were either killed, had fled, or were silenced into submission to the Nationalist government. The 228 Incident became a shared experience that all Taiwanese remember as a moment of extreme suppression by mainland forces. A common identity was born out of the 228 incidents that could distinguish the Taiwanese from the mainland Chinese that were attempting to rule them.

Today, the 228 Incident is often exploited by separatist groups to promote the idea that nothing good can come out of mainland rule. Many independence leaders cite it as evidence of dangers to come if unification were to be allowed. In present times, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) push for an official memorial of the incident, largely to produce a sentiment of Taiwanese solidarity against the mainland and those who desire closer ties to Beijing. On the other hand, the Nationalists argue that the violent

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97 Jean-Pierre Cabestan and Michael Black. "Specificities and Limits of Taiwanese Nationalism." China Perspectives, no. 62 (2005): 32-43,
98 Steven Fleischhauer, “The 228 Incident and the Taiwan Independence Movement’s Construction of a Taiwanese Identity”, China Information, The Documentation and Research Centre for Modern China, Leiden University. Vol XX1 (3) 373–401.
crackdown on the island also had to do with the possibility of Communist ideology spreading throughout the island causing more disruption that was already gathering on the mainland at this time.

For the next two years, Administrator Chen Yi carried out full-fledged decolonization. Any use of the Japanese language was explicitly banned and any relics of Japanese colonial rule were confiscated. In the attempt to create a singular Chinese identity, separate from the Japanese identity of the past, the Nationalists only created an even stronger Taiwanese solidarity as victims of the Mainland Chinese rule. The period of time under martial law bred a strong sentiment of a distinct difference between the mainlander (waishengren) and native Taiwanese (benshegnren) that would be passed down to the next generation. The 228 Incident was among the first acts committed by Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT to earn the hatred of the Taiwanese people.

Many Taiwanese leaders had been “liquidated” or driven into exile, and those that remained following the 228 Incident had been terrorized into silence. 99 Native Taiwanese people in the central part of the island talked of “three hopes”: wishful hope (hsi-wang) from the time of Japan’s surrender though the arrival of Nationalist administration two months later; lost hope (shi-wang) that resulted from the performance of the new government; and hopelessness (chueh-wang) as many felt “the future was black”. 100 Inflation and unemployment was rampant from 1945-1949 and the Nationalist government, caught up in a civil war of its own, did nothing to alleviate the economic

100 Murray A. Rubenstein. *Taiwan: A New History*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 284,
distress on the island. KMT rule at the start of Nationalist “recovery” can be deemed a clear failure in competence to transition the Taiwanese out of Japanese society and reintegrate them back into Chinese society.

1949-1987 KMT Hegemonic Rule

In 1949, Chiang Kai-shek was defeated by Mao Zedong and the Communists and is forced to retreat with Nationalist supporters to the island province of Taiwan. Chiang relocates the capital of the ROC to Taipei and refuses to accept defeat. Chiang unrealistically dreams of a fourth military campaign to defeat the “rebel” groups that have taken over the ROC temporarily.101 Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government ruled Taiwan as a foreign power, unwilling to allow for any local political integration. The Taiwanese were not allowed to hold public office nor were they given much say. Most learned to keep their mouths shut in fear of a reprisal of the 228 Incident.

Martial law had already been declared making it illegal to maintain any opposition political party. Anti-KMT political culture was heavily suppressed as tens of thousands of people that were suspected of such crimes were arrested and at least 1,200 were executed between 1949 and 1992.102 This institutional environment of oppression against any nationalism other than Chinese nationalism made it impossible to sustain an openly practiced Taiwanese political culture. Independence sentiments were silences and

101 Steven M. Goldstein, China and Taiwan, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016),
only resurfaced under the guise of calling for a democratic environment that coincided with Sun Yat-sen’s Three People’s Principles.  

The Taiwanese elite lost their social status and cultural expressions of history, language and voice. From 1945-1965, the KMT introduced a Glorious Restoration (guang fu) campaign to legitimize the rule of the KMT’s mainlander elites on Taiwan. Cultural cleavages between the mainland and the native Taiwanese would grow throughout this period of time. These programs aided the native Taiwanese in distinguishing the difference between what was Taiwanese and what was regarded as Chinese customs. The KMT was not convincing the Taiwanese people that they would have a significant role in the ROC if unification were achieved.  

From 1966 to 1976, a campaign of cultural renaissance was carried out to localize Chinese culture on the island as well as to provide a stark contrast to the Cultural Revolution in the mainland. However, the anti-communism propaganda further failed to prove to the Taiwanese that they had a common identity with the mainland. Mainland rule disenfranchised the Taiwanese in government participation and gave rise to Taiwan nationalism based on “Taiwan for Taiwanese”.  

While the KMT attempted to subdue, exile, and/or stifle any opposition voices to Nationalist rule, one organization the KMT had trouble putting down was the

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103 Sun Yat-sen was the first president and founding father of the Republic of China. Sun’s Three People’s Principles include: Democracy, Nationalism, and People’s Livelihood.  
106 Ibid., p. 55,  
107 Ibid. p.55,
Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church played a key role in preserving the Taiwanese culture and language in the face of the Japanese, and then the Nationalist Chinese, who attempted to impose their own culture on the island. The Church supported greater political rights for those who advocated democratization or independence but never resorted to violence. The Nationalist attempt to silence the Church would prove to be problematic as it sparked strong criticism by the United States.

Chiang Kai-shek passed away on April 5, 1975\(^{108}\) with an international legacy as a leader pushed aside by the international community in favor of the Beijing government. Chiang Kai-shek’s death symbolized the decline of the mainland-born Nationalists, the waning of the ideology of the Three Principles of the People, and promises of restoring eventual unification.\(^{109}\) A political culture shift was initiated with policies less focused on anti-communism and recovery of or unification with the mainland.

Chiang Kai-shek’s death brought about the chance for reform of discriminatory practices against the Taiwanese. A key issue in such reforms was the promise of full democracy. One of the first movements towards democracy by the KMT was the inclusion of native Taiwanese in leadership positions at the middle and lower levels of the party.\(^{110}\) Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek’s heir and son, promoted this process known as “Taiwanization” as Chiang recognized the need to legitimize the regime by bringing more Taiwanese into the KMT and government ranks.

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\(^{108}\) Chiang Kai-shek. Statement by the President on the Death of the President of the Republic of China, 1975.


\(^{110}\) Shih-shan Henry Tsai., and Ebrary Provider. Lee Teng-hui and Taiwan's Quest for Identity. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 108,
Furthermore, the rumors of democracy emboldened the opposition on the island as many took advantage of this newfound political freedom to create political factions outside of the Nationalist party. Many Taiwanese who were forbidden from forming their own political party were often referred to as dangwai, “outside the Nationalist Party”.  

Dangwai had struggled for decades against the corrupt elections along with their overall lack of resources.

**Towards Democracy 1987-1996**

From 1896-1897, Chiang Ching-Kuo made reforms to fully realize the scope of democracy in Taiwan. Specifically, in March 1986, Chiang’s displayed uncharacteristic tolerance of the formation of the Formosan Association of Public Policy Studies (FAPA, Taiwanren gonggong shiwu xiehui), a sort of opposition party with local branches around the island.  

Further, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, Minzhu jinbudang) was created in 1986 and became the first meaningful opposition that was formally and publicly established in Taiwan.

Chiang Ching-kuo lifted martial law in July 1987, months prior to his death, ending decades of silence on issues regarding Taiwanese political culture and the prospect of Taiwanese independence. Chiang Ching-kuo’s unprecedented actions for democracy developed a clear distinguishing factor between the PRC and the ROC that laid the foundations for Taiwanese civic nationalism.

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An environment of electoral freedom granted the Taiwanese, specifically the non-KMT politicians and intellectuals, the ability to speak out and form their own independent political ideology. The moment that political dissent became officially permitted, the old culture clash was formalized as an ethnic struggle in which “Taiwanese” faced off against “mainlanders.” Longtime persecution of the Taiwanese political identity under the KMT regime brought about a sentiment of “common suffering” or a “community of fate” that was exploited by the DPP in seeking to craft a separate Taiwanese identity. Cross-strait relations between Taiwan and the mainland grew more complicated as the Taiwanese opened exploration of a “cultural identity as ambiguous as their island’s political identity”.

Lee Teng-hui Era

Lee Teng-hui was born in 1923 during the period of Japanese rule. During his years of compulsory Japanese education, Lee studied under the guidance of Japanese teachers, learned to speak Japanese, and even memorized Japan’s national anthem Kimigayo that praised the emperor. Lee’s quest for higher education was always met with discrimination in a system that was preferential towards Japanese students. In his youth, Lee was able to comprehend the meanings of educational discrimination, political inequality, and social injustice. Lee Teng-hui’s upbringing in a discriminatory environment could very well have contributed to his quest a Taiwanese civic identity that

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115 Steven M. Goldstein, *China and Taiwan*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p. 23,
116 Ibid., p. 23,
117 Ibid., p. 23,
118 Shih-shan Henry Tsai., and Ebrary Provider. *Lee Teng-hui and Taiwan's Quest for Identity*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 28,
119 Ibid., p. 29,
was equal to that of the Chinese. Following the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988, then Vice-President Lee Teng-hui assumed the presidency.

In 1990, President Lee Teng-hui announced the National Unification Guidelines (NUG) as a formalized process by which the PRC and Taiwan could get to their stated goal of unification. The National Unification Council adopted the NUG in February 1991 and the Executive Yuan did as well in March of the same year. However, in 1994, President Lee Teng-hui participated in an interview with Japanese writer Shima Ryutaro entitled, “the sorrow of being born a Taiwanese,” that revealed separatist sentiments. Lee would go on to save the KMT from certain defeat at the hands of the DPP. “Lee’s impeccable credentials as the native son outmaneuvered the DPP’s trump card of “native Taiwanese in control of their own destiny.” In 1996, Lee Teng-hui became Taiwan’s first directly elected president, earning 54 percent of the vote, and the first leader of Taiwan to publicly promote moving away from the unification goal. The election represented the culmination of Taiwan’s democratic transition that had been a decade in the making.

Ultimately, Lee Teng-hui rejected the idea of “One Country, Two Systems” as Beijing had not only refused to renounce the use of force in unifying Taiwan and the PRC but also, because such a system would make Taiwan into a local provincial

121 Ibid. p. 75,
123 Ibid.,
Taiwan consistently desires for an international role, as it would solidify the Taiwanese political identity. In addition, Lee argued that the Beijing government upheld the “Four Cardinal Principles” while Taipei practiced Sun Yat-sen’s objective of a free and democratic China with equal distribution of wealth. In Lee’s opinion, one country, two systems was not up the standards of a free and democratic system. Lee wished to open communication for unification and established three steps the PRC would have to take in order to begin communications: Democratization; Renunciation of force; Diplomatic restraint.

President Lee declared a “New Taiwanese” identity during the 1998 legislative elections as an effort to find a point of national political unity for the ethnic divide on the island and to induce people to localize their send of cultural identity, regardless of place of origin. Lee’s comments gave the people of Taiwan the ability to formulate a unified identity that was separate from the previous KMT mandated Chinese identity that had been forced upon the Taiwanese for decades. President Lee argued in his 1999 book Advocating for Taiwan that the “‘Taiwanese identity’ need not be tied down by the formality of ‘Taiwan independence’”.

President Lee’s interview with Deutsche Welle in July 1999 marked a decisive shift in Taiwan’s political culture. Lee was provoked when asked a question in regards to

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Taiwan’s status as a “province in rebellion.” This question prompted President Lee to answer with the controversial statement that: “The 1991 constitutional amendments have placed cross-strait relations as a state-to-state relationship or at least a special state-to-state relationship, rather than an internal relationship between a legitimate government and a renegade group, or between a central government and local government.” Lee Teng-hui’s comments insinuating that the ROC was a separate state set off alarming reactions in the PRC. Beijing viewed this statement as a major shift in Taiwanese policy towards independence and the recognition of a Taiwan state.

**Full Democratization (2000-Present Time)**

*Chen Shui-bian Administration (2000-2008)*

While the KMT initiated the awakening of Taiwanese consciousness in the 1990s, it was the ascendancy of the DPP to the presidency from 2000-2008 that created an environment to mobilized the Taiwanese to divest from the Chinese identity. On March 18, 2000, the election of Taiwan’s first opposition leader, Chen Shui-bian, marked the true beginning of democracy in Taiwan for many Taiwanese. Some Taiwanese called Chen’s win the final step in Taiwan’s “political miracle”. However, it soon became clear that Chen had not won the election based on DPP popularity but because James

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130 Steffen Heinze. “„Ein China, zwei Staaten (One China, Two States)“, *Deutsche Welle* (Online), 24 October 2013, accessed 2 April 2017, Translated from German to English utilizing Deutsche Welle’s English website, original interview by Günter Knabe.

131 Ibid.,

Soong, who had failed to garner the KMT candidacy, ran as an independent and divided KMT votes.\footnote{Ibid., p. 20}

Initially, Chen Shui-bian had vowed in his 2000 inaugural address that his administration would not seek independence with the prospect of unification still on the table. Chen’s inaugural address worked to invoke a Taiwanese political culture that had been stirring since the first free and open elections in 1996. The DPP utilized their newfound power to make systematic efforts to mobilize self-awareness of a separate Taiwanese nation that has fully realized its democratic state that would include: “holding referenda, drafting a new constitution, renaming public buildings and places, erecting monuments to remember (and celebrate) the past, researching, writing and interpreting the nation’s history…engaging in cultural construction by branding, “folklorizing”, and commercializing the nation and its narratives.”\footnote{Steven M. Goldstein and Julian Chang, Presidential Politics in Taiwan: the Administration of Chen Shui-Bian, (Norwalk: Eastbridge, 2008), p. 98, Ibid., p. 94, Ibid., p. 94, Ibid., p. 99,}

Chen Shui-bian’s administration promoted the shift in national identity from civic to ethnic that was already taking place.\footnote{Ibid., p. 94, Ibid., p. 94, Ibid., p. 99,} The ethnocultural underpinnings of the Taiwanese national identity, while still preserving some Han-Chinese layers, could disregard the Chinese identity as it may hinder the grown of a Taiwanese nation.\footnote{Ibid., p. 99,} The DPP employed a “de-sincization” (qu Zhongguohua) effort to divest Taiwan from it’s Chinese national identity references.\footnote{Ibid., p. 99,} Naturally, “de-sincization” efforts caused cross-strait relations to deteriorate rapidly. The pan-blue opposition—pro-unification and KMT
leaning political group—fiercely opposed “de-sinicization” but did not contest the rise of a Taiwanese consciousness (Taiwan yishi). The KMT attempted to maintain an ambiguous unification policy under the guise of supporting ROC sovereignty.

Soon, the previously joyous response to Chen Shui-bian’s administration was fleeting as many issues soon arose within Chen’s largely failed leadership and poor management of government entities Chen and the Democratic Progressive Party did not fully understand how to manage. In August 2002, Chen made the bold claim that there is “a state on each side” (yibian yiguo) of the strait. Reminiscent of Lee Teng-hui’s “special state-to-state” comment, Chen’s statement revived sentiments of independence from the mainland. In a 2003 interview with FPRI president Harvey Sicherman, Chen boldly claims, “The Republic of China (ROC) is a sovereign state. This is the clear and obvious status of our country. The ROC effectively exercised jurisdiction over the islands of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu—a fact that no one can deny.” Chen did not deny that the people of Taiwan and China share a certain degree of history and culture. However, Chen remarks that the political reality is that neither Taiwan nor China is subordinate to the other, and Taiwan is not a part of the PRC.

Further, Chen proceeded to push for a referendum vote to be paired alongside the 2004 Presidential election. The idea of a referendum vote in Taiwan was incredibly troubling for PRC leaders as referendums are historically linked to independence. Rigger

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138 Ibid., p. 100,
141 Ibid.,
142 Ibid.,
regards the Chen administration as evidence of inexperience or demagoguery but also points to the fact that these incidents highlight the degree to which Taiwan’s democratic consolidation is incomplete. 143

Chen Shui-bian’s administration was later filled with countless charges of corruption. From January to November 2006, 1,487 persons were indicted on corruption charges; 1,252 had been convicted. 144 Of those, 77 were high government officials, 244 were mid-level, 394 were low-level, and 58 were elected. 145 The first family, including Chen’s son-in-law and the First lady, was charged with using their status for personal profit. In 2009, Chen Shui-bian was sentenced to life in prison on charges of bribery and money laundering. 146 The harsh sentence was later reduced to 20 years after appeals. 147

Return of the KMT with Ma Ying-jeou

In 2008, Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT was elected to the presidency in a landslide victory due to great discontent with the DPP and the actions of Chen Shui-bian. The country had turned towards the KMT once again with President Ma looking towards more open relations with the mainland. Ma Ying-jeou’s policy objectives from the very start were to ease tensions across the strait, citing the opening up to the mainland in 1987

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144 John F. Copper, "The Devolution of Taiwan's Democracy during the Chen Shui-bian Era." Journal of Contemporary China 18, no. 60 (2009): 463-78,
145 Ibid.,
146 Tania Branigan, “Taiwan court jails former president for corruption,” The Guardian (Online), last modified 11 September 2009, accessed 4 April 2017,
147 Ibid.,
to allow Taiwan residents to be reunited with Chinese mainland relatives.\textsuperscript{148} Trade regulations between Taiwan and China were still in a roundabout fashion when Ma’s administration began in 2008. Although exports to China and Hong Kong made up about 40 percent of Taiwan’s total exports, the vessel carrying the goods would have to first go to Okinawa to be stamped by the Japanese before it could go to the mainland, costing an average of 15,000 Japanese yen per trip.\textsuperscript{149}

At the start of his administration, Ma Ying-jeou was optimistic about the normalization of relations between Taiwan and the mainland. In addition, President Ma promised to ease Taiwan’s ambitions for diplomatic relations stating that “cross-strait” relations were more important to maintain in this period of time. President George W. Bush praised the Ma Ying-jeou’s pursuits for warmer cross-strait relations, taking Taiwan off the table of issues that dominate the United States’ relationship with China.\textsuperscript{150}

By Ma Ying-jeou’s second term, the policies of strong ties with the PRC drew intense criticism from the DPP as they believed that the President was attempting to create a “one-China economy”. DPP dissent with the friendly policies with China led up to the question of a separate Taiwanese economy and identity that cannot just rely on the mainland to prosper.

The quick passage of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) fueled the negative sentiment towards close relations to the PRC. The CSSTA opens selected

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{150} William Wan, “Taiwan’s president, Ma Ying-jeou, plans to expand relations with China”, \textit{The Washington Post}, 24 October 2013, accessed 10 December 2016,
service-sector markets in Taiwan to Mainland Chinese investment, and vice versa, within the context of the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA).  

Although the public at large rejected the agreement, Parliament and Ma Ying-jeou passed it through the legislature quickly and as a result drew large amounts of protest. Protests turned into what is now known as the Sun Flower Movement in which mainly college students staged a sit-in in the Legislative Yuan and Executive Yuan for three weeks to protest the CSSTA. Protestors claimed that the negotiations were kept hidden from the public. This movement bred a certain degree of distrust between the people of Taiwan and any sort of negotiations with the mainland.

In 2014, the KMT was defeated in landslide nine-in-one local elections. These results were shocking even for those that predicted the KMT would fare poorly but never predicted such a devastating loss of the parliament. The Sunflower Movement earlier in the year shifted the political landscape of Taiwan into a more favorable landscape for the DPP. The Taiwanese people were now extremely any negotiations with the PRC as the Taiwanese political culture shifted towards separatism.

Furthermore, in late 2015, Ma Ying-jeou met with PRC President Xi Jin-ping in a landmark meeting in Singapore as the first meeting between the KMT and CCP since 1949. During the historic meeting, President Xi remarked that “We are brothers, connected by flesh even if our bones are broken, we are family whose blood is thicker

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152 Ibid.,
than water.” President Ma expressed support for the 1992 consensus with the interpretation that there is “one China” with respective interpretations of this phrase.

Tsai Ying-wen and the Revitalization of the DPP

The subsequent election of DPP’s leader Tsai Ying-wen to the presidency in 2016 solidified the changing political landscape of Taiwan. Partially to do with the perceived failure of the KMT, Tsai Ying-wen became the first woman to be elected to the presidency in Taiwan. A greater number of the youth identified with the DPP platform that favors a distinct Taiwanese national identity, sovereignty for Taiwan, and decreased ties with the PRC. In accordance with the DPP party platform, Tsai Ying-wen has refused to verbally support the 1992 Consensus as a framework for eventual unification of the ROC and PRC. While Tsai accepts the 1992 consensus to be “historical fact”, Tsai does not go as far as to promise that she will adhere by the historical agreement.

In light of President Tsai’s position, the PRC has shut down formal channels of communication with the ROC government.

As cross-strait relations worsen and the economy remains in stagnation, public dissent grows against the Tsai Ying-wen administration. The Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation (TPOF) poll showed that 60 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with the government’s handling of the economy, and 70 percent were dissatisfied with the current

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153 Neil Connor, “‘No Force can pull us apart’: China’s Xi says in historic China-Taiwan summit”, *The Telegraph (Online)*, (London, U.K.), 7 November 2015,
156 Ibid., p.9,
economic situation. A December 2016 TPOF poll placed President Tsai at a 38 percent approval rating. In addition, the Taiwan tourism industry in Taiwan has suffered a 20 percent drop in mainland tourism since President Tsai took office. President Tsai’s worsened cross-strait relations have disrupted the once abundant flow of mainland tourists and slowed down the tourism industry.

Despite these economic setbacks, President Tsai shows no intention of backing down from her refusal to abide by the 1992 consensus. In December 2016, President Tsai conducted a phone call with then United States President-elect Donald Trump, breaking a 40-year-old diplomatic understanding and simultaneously reinvigorated the international debate on the status of Taiwan. While the United States has reaffirmed their understanding of the “one China” policy, sentiments in Taiwan have moved further away from eventual unification.

**FINDINGS**

The evolution of Taiwanese identity and political culture can be divided into two historical categories: first, the period of foreign rule—from Dutch colonization to the end of KMT hegemonic rule—and second, the period of democratization—the end of KMT hegemonic rule in 1987 to the present time. The historical analysis above serves as a foundation to examine the environment of each period of Taiwanese history. Cultural identity of a population may shift in accordance to a variation of the social, institutional,

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157 “Economic performance mars Tsai’s approval ratings”, *China Post* (Online), 24 January 2017, accessed 3 April 2017,

158 Jessica Meyers, “As tensions over Taiwan's national identity reignite, tourists from mainland China avoid the island,” *Los Angeles Times* (Online), last modified 21 October, 2016, accessed 5 April 2017,
and economic environment that each generation experiences. Thus, the freedoms of each generation to express Taiwanese consciousness differ greatly. While the meaning of Taiwanese consciousness remains relatively the same, the expression of cultural identity, political culture and national identity were not uniform throughout each period of history.

**Era of Foreign Rule**

Taiwan’s history of foreign rule serves as a unique experience that many Taiwanese cite for their shared sense of “fate”. The era of foreign rule includes the history of Taiwan preceding the 1987 lifting of martial law. I define foreign rule to include KMT hegemonic rule to exemplify that Taiwanese consciousness of political culture, especially separatist sentiments, could not have emerged until after democratization. Taiwanese identity, especially Taiwanese political culture, was not able to thrive under the hegemony of Japanese colonization or Nationalist rule. Imperial Japan employed policies such as, *kominka* to ensure a certain degree of assimilation. Although carried out in different ways, most governor-generals deemed assimilation policies a priority in governance over Taiwan.

Furthermore, Nationalist hegemonic rule from 1945-1987 did not allow the native Taiwanese (*benshengren*) to create a distinct Taiwanese political culture. The mainlander (*waishengren*) dominated KMT focused on a chauvinist Chinese identity and did not allow any public dissent against Chinese nationalism. Martial law ensured that Taiwanese political culture was illegal to practice—especially in regards to policies of Taiwanese independence. Chiang Kai-shek regarded Taiwan to be a province of the ROC that would aid the Nationalists in rebuilding the republic.
Taiwanese national identity could not have been realized in the period of time preceding a full democratization of Taiwan. A democratic environment was the catalyst in unraveling Taiwanese national identity—an identity distinct from the Japanese and the Chinese identity.

**Democratization and the Awakening of Taiwanese Consciousness**

A distinct Taiwanese identity unraveled rapidly following Taiwan’s democratization in the late 1980s. Prior to the end of KMT hegemonic rule, political dissidents worked in unofficial political groups known as the *dangwai* in order to achieve any form of Taiwanese political culture. The *dangwai’s* initiatives were unorganized and unsuccessful under the repressive environment of martial law.

The end of KMT hegemonic rule created an environment in which the individual political ideology of principle actors could influence significant shifts in political culture. Principle actors—the president, the executive and legislative Yuan, party leaders—were responsible for stirring a sense of Taiwanese nationalism. Democracy allowed the actions of principle actors to reflect the will of the people and afforded the Taiwanese the ability to hold each principle actor accountable for their actions.

Democracy paved the way for Taiwanese consciousness to rise in a free and open society. Political groups that were against the ultimate unification of the PRC and ROC were able to form a new Taiwanese political culture that leaned towards autonomy and even full-fledged independence. Principle actors no longer felt the pressure to maintain ambiguous cross-strait policies. Although Lee Teng-hui remained cautious in the creation of the 1991 National Unification Guidelines (NUG), by the end of Lee’s presidency he
employed the term “special state-to-state relations” in an interview with Deustche Welle, subsequently insinuating that the ROC was a foreign entity.

An open democratic environment not only provided the Taiwanese the opportunity to publicly declare a distinct Taiwanese civic and ethnocultural national identity but also, the ability to hold the government accountable to uphold Taiwanese values. The DPP promoted policies to foster a politically salient Taiwanese national identity that would favor Taiwan independence.

Furthermore, democracies depend on the will of the people—evidently it also helps to rid of corruption by drawing public attention to it. In Taiwan’s case, democratization exposed corruption\(^{159}\) during the Chen Shui-bian administration, shifting the political landscape for a period of eight years following the end of Chen’s second term. Taiwanese political culture The Ma Ying-jeou administration displayed a period of close relations with the PRC that was characteristic of the KMT. A distinct Taiwanese national identity served to move public opinion away policies that would result in a singular Chinese economy. As a result, Taiwanese political culture provided a basis for public protest against the KMT known as the Sunflower Movement.

The revitalization of the DPP—following two terms of KMT rule—is the sign of a healthy and functioning democracy. The will of the people now lean towards a pan-green alliances—indpendence leaning, pro-DPP political ideology—that puts “Taiwan first.” Taiwanese consciousness has achieved maximum realization under the political freedoms of the democratic government. President Tsai’s landslide 2016 election victory

\(^{159}\) John F. Copper, “The Devolution of Taiwan's Democracy during the Chen Shui-bian Era.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 60 (2009): 463-78,
is the result of social action taken by a majority Taiwanese society. The development of Taiwanese consciousness has recently translated into favoring a pro-independence political ideology. Taiwanese national identity, under the DPP government, does not favor significant ties to the PRC let alone future implications for unification.

DISCUSSION

Taiwanese consciousness included the development of a national identity that united previously divided ethnic groups in Taiwan. It is important to note that cultural cleavages in Taiwan between the native Taiwanese (benshengren), the mainlanders (waishengren) and the aborigines, following democratization, rarely escalates beyond proper channels of political dissent. The end of KMT hegemonic rule resulted in a significant decrease in the threat of force. Although often politically divided along political party lines, the native Taiwanese (benshengren) and the mainlanders (waishengren) do not struggle to agree on a shared civic identity that involves the democratic system of government in Taiwan. The native Taiwanese has historically favored pan-green alliances while mainlanders or those who had identified as Chinese have favored pan-blue alliances.

The Election Study Center at the National Chengchi University (NCCU) developed a long-term survey to track important political attitude trends in Taiwan following democracy. In a survey on the identity of the Taiwan population, the Election Study Center asked: “In our society, there are some people who call themselves ‘Taiwanese,’ some who call themselves ‘Chinese,’ and some who call themselves both.
Do you consider yourself to be ‘Taiwanese,’ ‘Chinese,’ or both? In 1996, 49.3 percent identified as “both Taiwanese and Chinese”, 24.1 percent identified as Taiwanese, 17.6 identified as Chinese and 9 percent did not respond. However, in 2016, 58.2 percent identified as Taiwanese, 34.3 percent identified as “both Taiwanese and Chinese”, and only 3.4 percent identified as Chinese. This 34.2 percent increase in those who identify as Taiwanese reflects the significant growth in Taiwanese consciousness.

**CONCLUSION**

Taiwanese consciousness began as a reflection of resistance against foreign rule for the greater portion of Taiwan’s history. However, following democratization in the 1990s, Taiwanese consciousness has been the foundation for civic and ethnocultural nationalism. The Taiwanese are more concerned with nation building under the sentiment of a shared history and a common destiny. Taiwanese consciousness encompasses the sentiment for ROC sovereignty as well as a distinct Taiwanese ethnocultural identity. Thus, the PRC is not able to win the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese who are unable to identify with the Chinese identity.

While the current Tsai administration has experienced setbacks as a result of its cross-strait policy in the first year of presidency, it is unlikely that Tsai and the DPP will back down from their separatist sentiments. A Taiwanese identity was the inevitable consequence of a free and democratic society born out of decades of isolation from the mainland. Taiwanese consciousness has shifted into a sense of being not only politically

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160 Core Political Attitudes Trend Chart, Election Study Center, National Cheng Chi University (1996-2016), http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=166,
161 Ibid.,
162 Ibid.,
Taiwanese but also culturally Taiwanese. Although the PRC may be able to consolidate Taiwan politically, either peacefully or by force, it may not be able to reverse the Taiwanese cultural identity that is now deeply rooted within society.

Cultural cleavages between Taiwan and the PRC continue to grow as a result of the differences in governmental environments. Taiwan’s free and democratic society produces an inevitable Taiwanese consciousness that creates a distinct Taiwanese national identity. Taiwanese nationalism has thus, translated into social action by the people in the form of public protest against ties with the PRC and voting for the opposition DPP in the 2016 election. The steady rise in those who identify as Taiwanese has resulted in a politically salient cleavage between the ROC and the PRC. Although it is likely that both the PRC and ROC will move away from the status quo—the de facto sovereignty of the ROC—, it is apparent that the Taiwanese are moving further away from sentiments of unification.
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