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# Generation Matters: Taiwan's Perceptions of Mainland China and Attitudes Towards Cross-Strait Trade Talks

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## ABSTRACT

It has been widely assumed that perceptions about mutual relationships positively influence attitudes toward trade talks. The Sunflower Movement in Taiwan that took place in the spring of 2014 seemed to create an empirical puzzle, leading observers to believe that Taiwan's younger generations hold conservative attitudes about trade talks with Mainland China. This study, based on an analysis of representative data collected before the movement, suggests that younger generations in Taiwan are hostile to Mainland China politically but support trade talks. In summary, the authors find that family orientation, national/ethnic identification, state/country identification, belief in Taiwan's democratic impact, and generation serve as critical factors in the formation of positive attitudes toward trade talks. These findings contribute to the literature by providing a deeper insight into the dynamics of the Sunflower Movement and updating the political orientation profile of Taiwanese voters.

## Introduction

Trade talks, an important political approach to peacefully solving conflict and advancing mutual trust, have been practiced by Beijing and Taipei in the past two decades. However, in the spring of 2014, Washington, Beijing and Taipei were surprised, if not shocked, by a large-scale social movement opposing this policy. The effect of this event reverberated: the nationalist party (KMT) had significant losses in the 'nine-in-one' elections at the end of 2014 and presidential and legislative elections in January 2016; trade talks across the Strait have been halted. The general public attributed this event to younger voters, particularly students, who hold a different picture about Mainland China and Taiwan's future.

The analogy of brotherhood has played an important role in the initiation and development of trade talks across the Strait.<sup>1</sup> On 14 March 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao talked about his expectation for the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with Taiwan, the most important legal foundation for later trade talks, and he emphasized the fact that Taiwan and China were 'brothers' who 'cannot sever their blood ties' and whose 'problems [over the trade talks] will eventually be solved.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tsai-Lung (Honigmann) Hong, 'The ECFA: a pending trade agreement?', in Peter C. Y. Chow, ed., *National Identity and Economic Interest: Taiwan's Competing Options and Their Implication for Regional Stability* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 39–65.

<sup>2</sup>Yinwei women shi xiongdi, wenti zong keyi jie jue' ['As we are brothers, problems will be solved'], *People.com.cn*, (14 March 2010), available at: <http://2010lianghui.people.com.cn/BIG5/181624/11136184.html> (accessed 12 March 2015); Editorial, 'ECFA requires more than "belief"', *TaipeiTimes.com*, (16 March 2010), available at: <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2010/03/16/2003468134> (accessed 15 March 2015).

Not only have the Ma Ying-Jeou administration's officials been using this analogy in their cross-Strait policies, Taiwanese elites proposing political independence have also employed this analogy to signal friendly attitudes toward Chinese officials.<sup>3</sup>

On 18 March 2014, a group of young scholars and students broke into the Legislative Yuan as a radical reaction to the Ma administration's attempt to ratify the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), a treaty that was extended from the ECFA and signed in June 2013 as a means to liberalize trade in the service sector between the two economies. This so-called Sunflower Movement of 'occupying the [Taiwanese] Congress' was the result of a continuous social movement against the ratification of the CSSTA. This movement, in which 500,000 citizens participated, called for island-wide attention to the controversial trade talks with Mainland China.<sup>4</sup> This movement has led observers to regard Taiwan's younger generations as being hostile to Mainland China and relatively conservative regarding future trade talks between the two sides of the Strait. However, a few questions remain unanswered. Why did this movement, initiated by young voters, not end with an island-wide movement against Mainland China? Is the perception of an agonistic relationship with Mainland China the only factor causing the rejection of trade talks? Can attitudes toward trade talks be secured by more friendly attitudes? What is the extent to which the general public adopts the analogy of brotherhood that has been shared commonly by Taiwan's political elites? Who would reject this analogy and regard Mainland China as an enemy and why? And most importantly, is this group of voters restricted to the youngest generation?

This study, based on representative telephone survey data collected several weeks before the start of the Sunflower Movement, reveals how Taiwanese voters view Mainland China and the generational differences regarding their views on cross-Strait relations. Taking into account voters' identifications with nation/ethnicity, party and country, the analysis presents how these variables influence the perceptions of 'brothers', 'friends' and 'enemies', as well as what different generations of voters anticipate will happen in Taiwan's future trade talks with Mainland China. The series of analyses below depict a paradoxical picture about the younger voters and the dynamics of the Sunflower Movement: compared to a generation ahead of them, young Taiwanese voters are relatively more likely to view Mainland China as an enemy, but at the same time, they look forward to more active trade talks with Mainland China. The article begins with a brief theoretical discussion and a review of all the factors that explain Taiwanese voters' perceptions of Mainland China and their attitudes toward trade talks. The analytical models build upon and extend from these empirical findings.

## Theoretical Framework

Traditionally, scholars of cross-Strait relations have mainly used realism and liberalism as the main theoretical frameworks to analyze the relationship in the Taiwan Strait. Both realism and liberalism emphasizes the materialist capacity of state actors. Realism views cross-Strait relations through the lens of balance of power or balance of threat.<sup>5</sup> Peace can be achieved through establishing a balanced equilibrium between China and Taiwan. Realists expect inevitable conflict in the Taiwan Strait as the balance is gradually tilting in China's favor.<sup>6</sup> However, realism has failed to explain the continued economic

<sup>3</sup>Chen-Kai Chu and Xiao-Wui Lan, 'Kuang-Min Ku: Xiongdi zhi bang bu neng da zhang' ['Kuang-Min Ku: no war between brothers'], *ChinaTimes.com*, (13 June 2014), available at: <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20140613000381-260102> (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>4</sup>Yu-Zhong Wang, '50 wan heichao shang kai dao: Fei-Fan Lin yao Ma chu mien huiying' ['Over 5 million Black Tide on the street; Fei-Fan Lin wanted responses from Ma'], (30 March 2014), available at: <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/978491> (accessed 1 May 2015). This movement 'ended' on 6 April 2014, when the student leaders agreed to leave the Legislative Yuan when Wang Jin-Pyng promised that the Legislative Yuan would give the CSSTA a transparent ratification process under the monitoring of the political parties.

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959); Stephen M. Walt, 'Alliance formation and the balance of world power', *International Security* 9(4), (1985), pp. 3–43.

<sup>6</sup>Ted Galen Carpenter, *America's Coming War with China: A Collision Course over Taiwan* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

and social integration across the Taiwan Strait. More specifically, as relative power is crucial in a realist scenario, people should not have seen an increased level of economic integration in the Taiwan Strait.

Liberalism, on the other hand, sees the possibility of peace in the Taiwan Strait through cooperation and institutionalization. For example, functionalists would expect a 'spillover' from trade talks to further political integration.<sup>7</sup> According to functionalists, continued economic integration and the increasing dependence of Taiwan on China in the economic arena would lead to steps of gradual and further political convergence. However, evidence in the Taiwan Strait suggests the opposite: Taiwan and the Mainland have significantly deepened their economic ties in the past decades, yet the two sides are drifting further apart in their political integration.<sup>8</sup> Contrary to the liberalist expectation that closer economic ties would lead to increased desire for closer political integration, people in Taiwan are increasingly thinking of themselves as Taiwanese instead of Chinese and they increasingly reject political integration. Therefore, liberalism has fallen short of providing an explanation about what is happening in the Taiwan Strait in recent years. If neither realism nor liberalism could appropriately explain what is happening in the Taiwan Strait, what theoretical framework could best guide the study of cross-Strait relations? Constructivism emerges to be a more appropriate theoretical perspective that advances the explanation of the paradoxical dynamics across the Strait, particularly the phenomenon of economic convergence and political divergence.

Constructivists do not deny the anarchical nature of the system structure and the existence and importance of materialist capacities, but constructivism focuses more on the importance of agency in the system.<sup>9</sup> In other words, individuals and their social relations are far more important than material capabilities. Cross-Strait relations are largely determined by the social interactions that happen in this particular context. Therefore, two relevant points can be drawn from constructivism. First, Taiwan and Mainland China have developed two different social environments since their separation in the late 1940s. Taiwan has gradually become a multi-party democracy, while Mainland China on the other hand has remained an authoritarian party-state. The different social environments have helped create and solidify two different identities. As the identity in Mainland China remains Chinese, people in Taiwan have increasingly wanted a separate Taiwanese identity that would distinguish themselves from the people in the Mainland.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the new Taiwanese identity and Taiwan's rising nationalism as the consequences of the unique socialization process have attracted scholarly attention.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, economic integration and Taiwan's increasing economic dependence on Mainland China have not changed the respective socialization processes in the Taiwan Strait. This is why economic convergence has not led to any visible and meaningful political convergence.

The second point in this constructivist context is that how to frame and construct the discourse about cross-Strait relations is an important topic. To maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait, Beijing and Taipei need to shift from a dialog of confrontation or conflict to a dialog of peace. The cross-Strait relationship is a social construction based on the interactions between the two sides. Constructivism suggests that the relationship can be re-constructed if the social interactions change in the Taiwan Strait. As this study presents, different generations of Taiwanese have gone through different socialization processes. Understanding their perceptions of Mainland China and attitudes towards trade talks across the Strait has become a foundation of this constructivist turn in studying cross-Strait relations.

<sup>7</sup>David Mitrany, *The Functional Theory of Politics* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

<sup>8</sup>Yi-Wen Yu, Ko-Chia Yu and Tse-Chun Lin, 'Political economy of cross-Strait relations: is Beijing's patronage policy on Taiwanese business sustainable?', *Journal of Contemporary China* 25(99), (2016), pp. 372–388; Stan Hok-wui Wong and Nicole Wu, 'Can Beijing buy Taiwan? An empirical assessment of Beijing's agricultural trade concessions to Taiwan', *Journal of Contemporary China* 25(99), (2016), pp. 353–371.

<sup>9</sup>Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup>One explanation is that the continued denial by Mainland China of the existence of the Republic of China on Taiwan has forced people in Taiwan to seek a Taiwanese identity that would distinguish themselves from the Chinese on the Mainland. While most Taiwanese people reject being called 'Chinese' (*zhongguoren* or Chinese nationals), they do not necessarily deny their ethnic and cultural Chinese identity. See Yang Zhong 'Explaining national identity shift in Taiwan', *Journal of Contemporary China* 25(99), (2016), pp. 336–352.

<sup>11</sup>Yun-Han Chu, 'Taiwan's national identity politics and the prospect of cross-Strait relations', *Asian Survey* 44(4), (2004), pp. 484–512.

## Critical Factors of Perceived Cross-Strait Relationships and Trade Talks

Since the 1980s, two important developments have occurred across the Taiwan Strait. The first development occurred in Mainland China. Through economic reforms and opening, China has become an economic powerhouse. According to a recently released International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, China has overtaken the United States (US) to become the world's largest economy as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).<sup>12</sup> As the result of rapid and continued economic growth, Mainland China has become an economic magnet for Taiwan.<sup>13</sup> It is clear that Taiwan is increasingly more dependent on the mainland for economic prosperity.

The second development occurred on the island of Taiwan. Taiwan has transformed from a single-party authoritarian political system to a multi-party democracy. During the four-decade process, the national goals and policies of the Taiwanese government regarding Mainland China and the identity of the Taiwanese people have changed too. For example, during the dominant years of KMT rule, both the government in Taiwan and many Taiwanese people, including Presidents Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, believed that the ultimate goal of the KMT was to liberalize the Mainland and achieve national unification.<sup>14</sup> Today, however, the liberalization of the Mainland is no longer the national goal of the Taiwanese government.

Before Taiwan's recent consolidation of its democracy, the Taiwan issue was largely an issue of territorial and/or historical lineage with Mainland China. Increasingly, the Taiwan issue has become an issue of identity largely due to the fact that people in Taiwan have experienced and created an entirely different social and political environment compared to the authoritarian environment in Mainland China. The changes in Taiwan's social environment have led to changes in the identity of the Taiwanese on the island.<sup>15</sup> In the past, many Taiwanese regarded themselves as Chinese. Today, however, people in Taiwan increasingly view themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese.

The question of unification has always been an important issue for the two governments across the Taiwan Strait. With Taiwan becoming ever more economically dependent on Mainland China, one would expect the two sides to move closer to an eventual unification. Empirical findings show that those who are pessimistic about Taiwan's economy are more likely to support unification.<sup>16</sup> However, the converging economic and social interests have paradoxically led to a diverging path towards political unification.<sup>17</sup> The most recent example was the Sunflower Student Movement in the spring of 2014. Although some argue that the CSSTA would have benefited Taiwan's economy, many Taiwanese see the CSSTA as a threat to and an infringement on Taiwan's sovereignty. One possible explanation is that democratization in Taiwan and the single-party authoritarian rule in Mainland China have created two different social experiences for the two respective peoples. Changes in these social experiences have led to changes in the Taiwanese identity. While people in Mainland China consider Taiwanese as part of the Chinese nation, people in Taiwan increasingly think of themselves as Taiwanese instead of Chinese.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, identity politics has become increasingly more important in explaining the future of cross-Strait relations.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup>'China surpasses US as world's largest economy based on key measure', *RT News*, (8 October 2014), available at: <http://rt.com/business/194264-china-surpass-us-gdp/> (accessed 10 October 2014).

<sup>13</sup>David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>14</sup>Yu-Shan Wu, 'The evolution of the KMT's stance on the one China principle: national identity in flux', in Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm, eds, *Taiwanese Identity in the 21st Century: Domestic, Regional and Global Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 51–71.

<sup>15</sup>Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup>Chia-Hung Tsai, Ding-Ming Wang and Livianna S. Tossutti, 'Between independence and unification: an ordered probit analysis of panel survey data on Taiwan's constitutional future', *Issues & Studies* 44(4), (2008), pp. 71–98.

<sup>17</sup>Yitan Li, 'Constructing peace in the Taiwan Strait: a constructivist analysis of the changing dynamics of identities and nationalisms', *Journal of Contemporary China* 23(85), (2014), pp. 119–142.

<sup>18</sup>Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*

<sup>19</sup>Dafydd Fell, 'More or less space for identity in Taiwan's party politics?', in Schubert and Damm, eds, *Taiwanese Identity in the 21st Century*, pp. 95–112.

In this article, the authors focus on four factors drawn from empirical studies on Taiwan's identity politics to explain people's perception of cross-Strait relationships, namely national/ethnic identification, state/country identification, party identification and unification/independence preferences. First, national/ethnic identification has been the driving force of Taiwanese people's attitudes toward Mainland China. It is self-strengthened through selective and psychological processes.<sup>20</sup> This type of identification refers to one's psychological attachment to a group of people living in a political entity and the feelings toward them. It has been found that those who have dual-national/ethnic identifications are more likely to be KMT supporters.<sup>21</sup>

The second factor involves state/country identification, i.e. identification with the Republic of China (ROC). As the proportion of Taiwanese people who identify themselves as Taiwanese instead of Chinese continues to increase, many wonder whether Taiwan would declare *de jure* independence; and if so, how Taipei would deal with or avoid any potential military conflicts with Mainland China. Some prefer that Taiwan should establish an independent nation-state, which is independent from either the People's Republic of China (PRC) or the ROC.<sup>22</sup> To some others, staying with the ROC, rejecting Taiwan's independence from the ROC and protecting the ROC's state name from being changed to any other names is an important mission or value of life.

Party identification is the third driving force behind Taiwanese people's attitudes toward Mainland China. Party identification in this study refers to voters' support for either the Pan-Blue Camp, led by the KMT, or the Pan-Green Camp, led by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The ecology of political parties in Taiwan has evolved from the KMT-dominant system since 1945 to the two-political camp system today. Studies of the history of recent Taiwanese politics have shown that the rise of the DPP is based on the opposition to the KMT as the primary reason and the opposition to the ROC constitutional tradition as the secondary reason. The use of Taiwanese nationalism in electoral campaigns is typically highlighted as the DPP's main strategy for winning elections.<sup>23</sup>

The fourth important factor of Taiwanese's political attitudes toward Mainland China involves unification/independence preferences. For example, when the proportion of Taiwanese national identification increased to 60% and the proportion of voters who favor independence increased to 23.8% in June 2014, both figures had reached their historically highest points, implying a direct and causal relationship between the two parameters.<sup>24</sup>

## Democratic Impact and Generation Politics in Taiwan

Beyond the three variables that have been identified by the literature as the primary explanatory variables of Taiwanese attitudes toward Mainland China, two other factors are analyzed: Taiwan's democratic

<sup>20</sup>P. G. Klandermands, 'Identity politics and politicized identities: identity processes and the dynamics of protest', *Political Psychology* 35(1), (2014), pp. 1–22.

<sup>21</sup>Frank C.-S. Liu, 'When Taiwan identifiers embrace ROC: the complexity of state identification in Taiwan', *Issues & Studies* 48(2), (2012), pp. 1–34.

<sup>22</sup>Some in Taiwan, particularly activists of Taiwan independence, argue that a formal declaration of independence would not only mean independence from the PRC, but also independence from the ROC, as long as the ROC is symbolically connected to Mainland China [Chao-Tang Huang, 'Yao dili shi shuo taidu yao chong Zhong Hua Ming Guo tizhi nei dili' ['Independence means becoming independent from the ROC system'], *Youtube.com*, (19 November 2012), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ll4A0pKW530> (accessed 4 April 2014); Chang-Chin Tsao, 'Taidu: Taiwan chong Zhong Hua Ming Guo dili chuqu' ['Taiwan independence: independent from ROC'], *LibertyTimes.com*, (12 February 2007), available at: <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/opinion/paper/116007> (accessed 4 January 2014)]. While no one has seen any public survey on this sensitive issue of 'independence from ROC', this perspective has been circulated in Taiwan for decades and become a salient subject recently.

<sup>23</sup>Shale Horowitz and Alexander C. Tan. 'Rising China versus estranged Taiwan', in Shale Asher Horowitz, Uk Heo and Alexander C. Tan, eds, *Identity and Change in East Asian Conflicts: The Cases of China, Taiwan, and the Koreas* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 115–130.

<sup>24</sup>Wei-Zhen Zen, 'Jheng da tiao jha tai wan ren ren tong tai dou xhi chi lu jyun pan sin gao' ['NCCU survey: the proportions of identifying as Taiwanese and supporting for Taiwan independence achieved high records'], (11 July 2014), available at: <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1052425> (accessed 11 July 2014).

impact and the generational factor. Neither guided by liberalism nor stimulated by anti-communist nationalism,<sup>25</sup> Taiwan's democracy is a result of party competition and mobilization, social movement and political socialization and has become a collective memory that residents employ to distinguish between 'we' (the Taiwanese) and 'they' (the Chinese).<sup>26</sup> In this study, respondents' belief in Taiwan's democratic impact on the democratization in Mainland China was measured by the level of agreement with the following statement: 'Do you believe that our democracy and freedom can change Mainland China?'. Those who agree with this statement are likely to be those who hold a friendlier view regarding Mainland China, because a democratic regime is more likely to show respect to Taiwan's political needs and systems; therefore, they will perceive that Taiwan has a positive relationship with Mainland China. On the contrary, those who disagree with this statement are less confident that Mainland China could change or would conduct political reforms; hence, these individuals are likely to describe Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China using a negative or hostile language. Moreover, democratization in Taiwan has changed the social basis on which the Taiwanese identity is formed.<sup>27</sup> Today's Taiwanese increasingly think they are different from the Mainland Chinese, because the identity of the former is constructed in part from a democratic social environment, whereas the identity of the latter is constructed from an authoritarian social experience.<sup>28</sup>

Age has been used as another important control variable in Taiwan's empirical identity studies, but the concept of 'generation' has not been employed until recently. Scholars have suggested that generation is a critical factor of identity shifts. For example, Wakabayashi identifies several previous identity shifts among different generations of Taiwanese. The first occurred when Taiwan was annexed by Japan after the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895. The Japanese occupation helped to create a pan-Taiwanese identity, an identity limited to Han and centered on the resistance to the Japanese occupation. The second change occurred when Taiwan was 'gloriously returned' to the ROC in 1945. Many Taiwanese thought they were Chinese again. The third identity shift was likely marked by the 2.28 Incident, after which many people in Taiwan ('we, the Taiwanese') saw themselves as being different from the Mainland Chinese ('they, the Chinese').<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the most recent identity shift occurred together with Taiwan's democratization process. Today, most Taiwanese see themselves as being different from the Mainland Chinese. Thus, different generations of people may very likely have different identities based on the social experiences they live through. Therefore, as generations change, the political meanings of their identities change too.

Previous studies have identified four generations, each of which has particular political experiences.<sup>30</sup> Voters of the first generation were born in 1931 or earlier and entered their formative years before 1949. This generation witnessed the social conflicts between the ethnic groups. The voters of the second generation were born between 1932 and 1953 and entered their formative years between 1949 and 1971. The second generation witnessed the diplomatic difficulties the ROC experienced. The voters of the third generation were born between 1954 and 1968 and entered their formative years between 1972 and 1986. The third generation witnessed Taiwan's economic boom. The voters of the fourth generation were born between 1969 and 1978 and witnessed the era of student social movements for Congressional reform and the establishment of the DPP in their formative years between 1986

<sup>25</sup>Chih-Yu Shih, 'Constituting Taiwanese statehood: the world timing of un-Chinese consciousness', *Journal of Contemporary China* 16(53), (2007), pp. 699–716.

<sup>26</sup>J. Bruce Jacobs, 'Whither Taiwanization? The colonization, democratization and Taiwanization of Taiwan', *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 14(4), (2013), pp. 567–586.

<sup>27</sup>Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*

<sup>28</sup>Yitan Li, 'Constructing peace in the Taiwan Strait'.

<sup>29</sup>Masahiro Wakabayashi, 'Taiwanese nationalism and the "unforgettable others"', in Edward Friedman, ed., *China's Rise, Taiwan's Dilemmas and International Peace* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 3–21; Stefan Fleischauer, 'Perspectives on 228: The "28 February 1947 Uprising" in contemporary Taiwan', in Schubert and Damm, eds, *Taiwanese Identity in the 21st Century*, pp. 35–50.

<sup>30</sup>G. Andy Chang and Te-Yu Wang, 'Taiwanese or Chinese? Independence or unification? An analysis of generational differences in Taiwan', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40(1–2), (2005), pp. 29–49; Shelley Rigger, 'Taiwan's rising rationalism: generations, politics, and "Taiwanese nationalism"', *Policy Studies* 26, (2006), pp. ix–74.

and 1996. Studies based on this categorization of the generations suggest that the second, third and fourth generations are more likely to identify themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese than the first generation is.<sup>31</sup>

This categorization of generation, however, has not been updated since it was introduced to Taiwan studies. Following the logic of this categorization, this study added the fifth and sixth generations. The voters of the fifth generation were born between 1979 and 1988 and entered their formative years between 1997 and 2006. The fifth generation experienced the tension of the 'missile crisis' in 1996, when Mainland China fired missiles toward Taiwan's offshore areas before the island's first direct presidential election in 1996, and witnessed the transfer of power from the KMT to the DPP in 2000. The voters of the sixth generation were born after 1989 and entered their formative years after 2007. The sixth generation witnessed the transfer of power from the DPP to the KMT in 2008 and the debates and signing of ECFA between 2010 and 2013.

Previous studies have not systematically applied this categorization to examine if there are gaps between the generations regarding their perceptions about Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China, however historical observation has provided some clues. Pei-de Lien summarizes previous studies on the relationship between Taiwan's democratization and the reform of textbooks and finds that the early 1990s was when the fourth generation experienced the democratization and localization of civic education. For example, traditional civics and morality courses were gradually replaced by Taiwan Studies and civil societies between 1993 and 2006. She also points out that the fourth generation and younger have been educated less and less about their connection with Mainland China.<sup>32</sup>

Although Taiwanese nationalism may seem to be the popular ethos in post-reform Taiwan, some argue that the content of its character is much less about ethnic nationalism or the pursuit of independence than about civic nationalism or the pursuit of preserving the democratic and sovereign status quo ... Teaching national [state] identity as key to forging a collective and positive identity with the state in democratized Taiwan may be more complicated than before because of the perceived China threat, the ambiguous status of Taiwan's statehood, and the encouragement of critical thinking in student learning.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the fifth and the sixth generations' attitudes toward Mainland China can be seen as the evidence reflecting a consequence of this decades-long educational reform. They are expected to be more politically aware of, if not hostile to, the image of Mainland China being the one setting the rules and timetable for political reunification.

Shelley Rigger further suggests that Taiwan's younger voters are less concerned than the elder voters about trade talks with Mainland China, even though state identity is often seen as the main cleavage between political parties. She thinks that the younger voters are concerned about cross-Strait talks because they see Mainland China as a threat politically.<sup>34</sup>

Given these clues, the updated categorization of Taiwanese voters' generation should reflect the unique political life of each generation. The authors then advance this observation and systematically and quantitatively examine the following hypotheses: (1) voters of the first two generations may tend to be friendly to Mainland China while the younger generations feel politically less connected with the Mainland Chinese; and (2) the younger generations (particularly the fifth generation who started to work after graduation from school) see economic opportunities from interactions with Mainland China.

## Method and Data

The survey data used for the present study ( $N=1,072$ ) were collected from 10 to 24 January 2014 by a university-based survey institute. The survey was conducted using the landline only random-digit

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>Lien Pei-Te, 'Democratization and citizenship: education changing identity politics and shifting paradigms of teaching and learning in Taiwan', *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 10(2), (2014), pp. 25–48.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup>Shelley Rigger, 'Strawberry jam: national identity, cross-Strait relations and Taiwan's youth', in Cal Clark, ed., *The Changing Dynamics of the Relations among China, Taiwan, and the United States* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 117–135.



dialing (RDD) system, or a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system to maximize the sample's national representativeness. The random phone numbers were drawn from a national phonebook published in 2012 and the sampling error lies in the range of plus and minus 3%. The response rate was 23.9%, which was calculated on the basis of the formula 2 of the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).

The sample collected before the Sunflower Movement occurred has its advantage for this study. Just like an electoral forecast relying on data collected before elections, analysis based on this dataset depicts a very general, down to earth picture about voters' feelings toward the imagined Mainland China before the movement. To understand the movement, data collected before it are preferable to data collected after the movement because the former avoids emotionally biased responses aroused during the movement. Although no one could predict the occurrence of the movement and design a questionnaire for it, the questionnaire has captured ingredients that are relevant to the movement, particularly attitudes toward Taiwan's economic future, national/ethnic identification, party identification and state/country identification. Therefore, the analysis based on this dataset captures the picture of Taiwanese voters' identity politics a few months before and after the movement.<sup>35</sup>

Binomial logistic regressions were consistently applied to a series of analyses that share the same theoretical framework, in which national/ethnic, party and state/country identification, as well as gender, education and generation serve as control variables. The details regarding the question wording and frequency tables are provided in the Appendix.

## Findings and Analysis

The results presented below are composed of three parts: the first part describes how the respondents view Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China. The second part explains the formation of such perceptions. The third part explores the extent to which these perceptions influence voters' attitudes toward trade talks with Mainland China. As the previous sections depict how variables are chosen for this study, the section below specifies the measurement of the variables, the logic behind expected causal relationships, and the results of hypotheses testing.

### *Part 1: Descriptive Analysis of The Imagined Relationship with Mainland China*

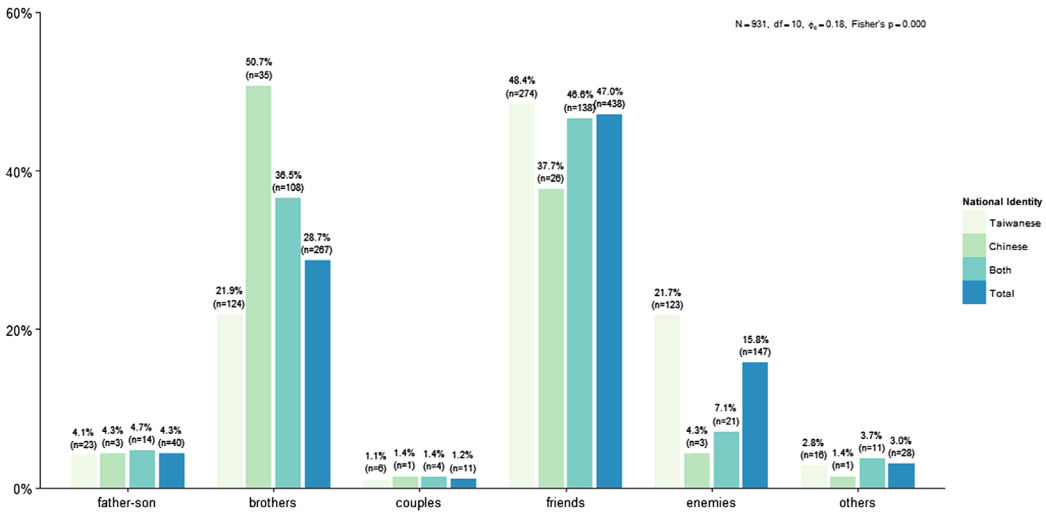
Respondents were asked, 'How do you see our relationship with Mainland China, is it more like father and son, brothers, couples, friends or enemies?'. The top three categories that respondents selected were friends (42.35%), brothers (25.84%) and enemies (13.71%). This distribution suggests that a few weeks before the Sunflower Movement in March 2014, the majority of the voters were not hostile to Mainland China.

Figure 1 shows how voters holding different national/ethnic identities view cross-Strait relations. The distribution suggests that Taiwanese identity is more associated with 'friends' and 'enemies' than 'brothers', while Chinese identity is, unsurprisingly, more strongly associated with 'brothers' and 'friends' than 'enemies'. Those with dual identities, i.e. 'I am both Taiwanese and Chinese', have a similar pattern with those of the Chinese identifiers, except with respect to the strength of the family connection.

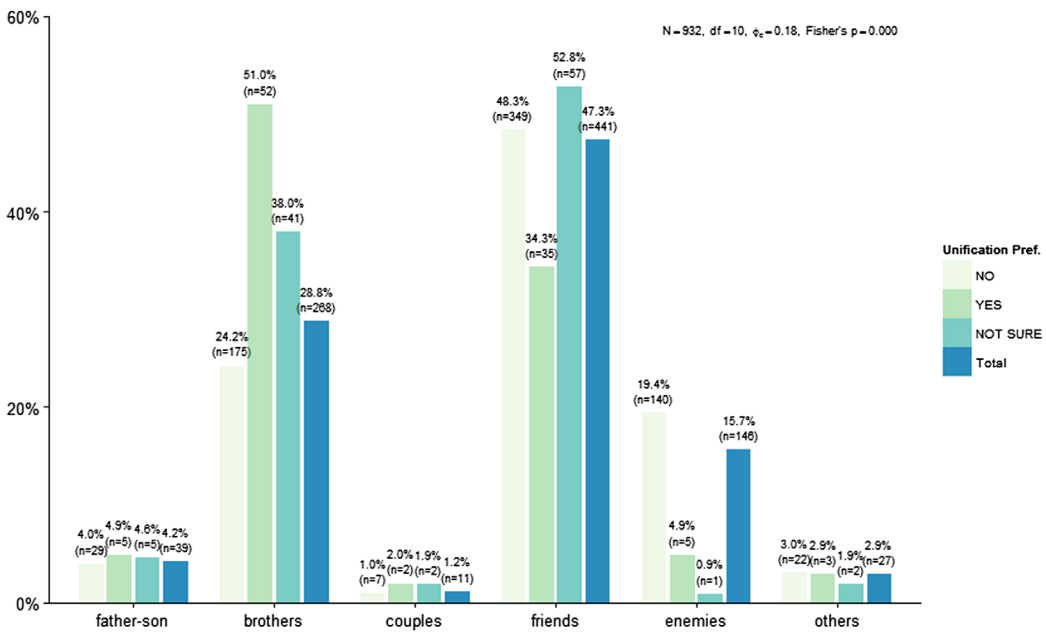
Figure 2 further shows the distribution of imagined relationships by unification preference, measured by the question 'Do you hope that Taiwan and Mainland China become one country?'. While more than half of the respondents who chose 'brothers' are associated with unification, it is not clear whether the unification preference is associated with the images of 'enemies' and 'friends'. The category of 'friends' is composed of both supporters and opponents of unification. This composition implies that 'friends' serves as a neutral term for those who hold strong political beliefs when they describe Mainland China.

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<sup>35</sup>All of the variables are selected based on their relevance to the perception about Mainland China. Therefore, the set of variables that are statistically significant based on this dataset, as to be shown in the next section, should at least remain so in other post-movement analysis.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of imagined relationships with Mainland China by national identity. Source: authors. Notes: N=931; Chi-square statistics=62.60; degree of freedom=10; significance  $p$ -value < 0.001.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of perceived relationships with Mainland China by unification preferences. Source: authors. Notes: N=932; Chi-square statistics=61.13; degree of freedom=10; significance  $p$ -value < 0.001.

**Part 2: Explanatory Analysis of The Imagined Relationships with Mainland China**

As scholars of party identification have confirmed, preferences and perceptions about a political entity, such as a candidate or a political party, are driven by one’s belief system that is rooted in one’s stereotype

**Table 1.** Factors of the perceived relationships with Mainland China.

	Brothers		Friends		Enemies	
	<i>Reg. Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Reg. Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Reg. Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
(Intercept)	-1.983***	0.556	0.888	0.481	-1.749**	0.674
<i>National/Ethnic Identification (base=Both)</i>						
Taiwanese	-0.252	0.217	0.001	0.189	0.796*	0.294
Chinese	0.063	0.349	0.015	0.331	0.167	0.669
<i>Party Identification (base=Non-Partisan)</i>						
Support for the Pan-Blue Camp	0.484*	0.234	-0.375	0.215	0.039	0.349
Support for the Pan-Green Camp	-0.253	0.251	-0.022	0.200	0.340	0.240
<i>State/Country Identification</i>						
Prefer using the country name Taiwan	-0.498*	0.227	0.323	0.195	0.386	0.274
Willing to change ROC to Taiwan	-0.037	0.081	-0.133	0.069	0.108	0.091
<i>Unification/Independence Preference</i>						
Hope Taiwan and PRC become one country	0.185*	0.085	-0.056	0.078	-0.404**	0.141
Our democracy can change Mainland China	0.179*	0.070	-0.041	-0.118	0.087	0.083
Taiwan can keep economic status quo	-0.036	0.077	0.174**	0.065	-0.248**	0.094
Male	1.077***	0.189	-0.661***	-0.085	0.216	0.210
Education	0.031	0.038	-0.046	-0.009	0.047	0.045
<i>Generations (base= 3<sup>rd</sup>, born 1954~1968)</i>						
1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (born before 1953)	0.605**	0.250	-0.744**	0.236	0.217	0.338
4 <sup>th</sup> (born 1969~1978)	-0.459	0.266	-0.276	0.220	1.072***	0.304
5 <sup>th</sup> (born 1979~1988)	-0.574**	0.308	0.034	0.248	0.750**	0.344
6 <sup>th</sup> (born 1989~1993)	-0.769	0.371	-0.485	0.295	1.275**	0.371
Observations		734		734		734
AIC		782.930		992.305		617.507

Notes: Significance level.

\* $p < 0.05$ .\*\* $p < 0.01$ .\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

and ideology and strengthened by selective reception of political information.<sup>36</sup> Following this theoretical path, Taiwanese voters' perception about Mainland China could be explained by their belief system composed of national/ethnic identification, party identification and state identification. A model of the imaged relationships with Mainland China is constructed, which takes into account gender, education and the belief that Taiwan's democracy can change Mainland China and that Taiwan's economic power can help keep the status quo. Specifically, these two control variables are measured by the two survey questions: 'How much do you hope that Mainland China becomes a democracy?' and 'Do you think that our economic power can keep the cross-Straits status quo?', respectively.

As Table 1 presents, these variables vary in their explanatory power for the types of imagined relationships. First, in terms of national/ethnic identification, respondents insisting on Taiwanese nationality (neither Chinese nor both) are likely to be hostile to Mainland China, but there is no evidence that Chinese identifiers share the same image about Mainland China.

Second, regarding party identification, there is *no* statistical evidence showing that all of the Pan-Green supporters (compared to the non-partisan respondents) regard Mainland China as enemies; however, it is evident that Pan-Blue camp supporters are more likely to regard Mainland China as brothers.

Third, given the strong evidence showing that the unification/independence preference plays a critical part in the formation of one's perception about Mainland China, those who prefer using Taiwan as the state's name when applying for membership of an international organization are less likely to see Mainland China

<sup>36</sup>Philip Converse, 'The nature of belief systems in mass publics', in David Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 206–261; Richard Johnston, 'Party identification: unmoved mover or sum of preferences?', *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, (2006), pp. 329–351; Kevin Arceneaux, Martin Johnson and Chad Murphy, 'Polarized political communication, oppositional media hostility, and selective exposure', *The Journal of Politics* 74(1), (2012), pp. 174–186.

as brothers.<sup>37</sup> This outcome reflects a commonly shared perception in Taiwan that Mainland China is not a helpful partner like a brother for solving the difficult problem of Taiwan's international status, but such frustration does not transform into hostility toward Mainland China. A person's hope for unification leads him or her to view Mainland China as a brother instead of an enemy, whereas hope for Taiwan independence drives him or her to view Mainland China as an enemy instead of a brother.

Fourth, the two control variables about confidence in Taiwan's democracy and ability to maintain the economic status quo provide further explanations. Those who believe that Taiwan's democracy and freedom can change Mainland China are likely to imagine Mainland China as a brother instead of an enemy; those who do not believe so are likely to see tension across the Taiwan Strait. Those who are confident in Taiwan's economic status quo are likely to view Mainland China as a friend, while those who are not as confident are likely to view Mainland China as an enemy.

Fifth, there is a clear gap between the older and younger generations, compared to the third generation, those born between 1954 and 1968 and who are now in the leadership positions in business, government and education.<sup>38</sup> The generations that are born before 1953 are likely to perceive the cross-Strait relationship as one between brothers rather than between friends. Interestingly, the generations that were born after 1968 are likely to regard Mainland China as an enemy. Particularly, the youngest generation of voters (those born after 1989) not only regards Mainland China as an enemy but also refuses to regard Mainland China as a brother.

Sixth, the authors did not find any explicit evidence that explains why respondents chose 'friends' as the analogy of the cross-Strait relationship. However, two factors, gender and level of education, could help explain why respondents did *not* choose 'friends' when controlling for respondents' age. Male respondents are likely to reject using the term 'friends' but accept the term 'brothers', whereas female respondents behave oppositely. While the gender disparity requires formal explanation in future studies, it is suspected that female respondents feel that 'friend' is a safer choice to describe cross-Strait relations. Those with a higher education level may attempt to digest information regarding cross-Strait relations and interactions more carefully. Therefore, better-educated voters may be more likely to form more complex attitudes toward Mainland China. These voters may either have options in their minds, such as 'both friends and enemies', other than the options they were provided with during the survey, or they may have chosen 'friends' as an alternative to their complex answers.<sup>39</sup>

In sum, Taiwanese voters vary in their perceptions about Taiwan's relationships with Mainland China. Those who are born before 1953, male, supporting the Pan-Blue Camp, preferring unification, and/or confident that Taiwan's democracy can change Mainland China are likely to use 'brotherhood' as an analogy in their description about Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China. Those who were born in 1969 and after have strong Taiwanese national/ethnic identity, reject unification and/or doubt that Mainland China will be politically influenced by Taiwan, are likely to hold hostile attitudes in their description about their mainland counterpart. As shown in Figure 1, the category 'friends' includes a variety of national identity, which implies that a good number of respondents hold complex views about Mainland China.

### ***Part 3: The Imagined Relationships with Mainland China and Future Trade Talks***

Next, the understanding about the formation of imagined relationships with Mainland China is discussed to examine the extent to which such perception influences one's attitudes toward cross-Strait

<sup>37</sup>The question wording is 'When we are applying for a membership of an international organization, do you prefer using the name of ROC or Taiwan?.'

<sup>38</sup>Taking this group (between 47 and 61) as the reference group helps check the hypothesis regarding whether the Sunflower Movement involves generation conflict (and this article presents a clear picture of it). Additionally, because in the present study the authors wanted to present how people perceive Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China, it made more sense to compare the most senior generations with the younger generations.

<sup>39</sup>In additional analysis that is not reported here, the authors found that 'father-son' and 'couple' relationships are also likely options for the fifth and sixth generations (compared to the third generation), where father refers to Mainland China. During interviews with a few young voters, the interviewees stated that Mainland China could be analogized as a rigid father who has been prohibiting his 'son' from leaving the family.

trade talks, measured by the question: 'Our government has been conducting trade talks with Mainland China, do you prefer a more aggressive process or a more cautious one?.'

To study the factors underlying attitudes toward trade talks, the model used in Table 1 is modified in two respects. First, the perceived relationships were added as dummy variables, including 'father and son', 'brothers', 'friends', 'enemies' and 'others'. The relationship 'Couples' was taken as the base of comparison because, among the six options, it represents the closest relationship between two individuals. Second, two control variables are included in the model: the evaluation of Taiwan's economic status and the perspective on the democratization of Mainland China. People with confidence in Taiwan's economic power in terms of keeping the cross-Strait economic status quo are more willing to continue trade talks with Mainland China. Those who think Taiwan's economy is vulnerable to the influence or pressure from Mainland China will be conservative about further trade talks. Those who share the belief that economic development leads to democratization are more likely than those who care less about the PRC's democratization to show support for cross-Strait trade talks.

Some results were quite consistent with conventional wisdom. As shown in Table 2, those who prefer unification and/or those who believe that Taiwan's democracy can change Mainland China are likely to welcome trade talks, whereas Taiwanese identifiers, compared to those who hold dual-national/ethnic identity and/or those who see Mainland China as an enemy, are likely to oppose further trade talks. Other results were unexpected. First, none of the other types of perceived relationships, compared to 'couples', has a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable. Second, those who identify themselves as Chinese, compared to dual identifiers, are *less* likely to support further trade talks. In other words, support for trade talks across the Strait cannot be attributed to imagined brotherhood, friendship or partisanship. Those who identify themselves as both Chinese and Taiwanese are more likely to

**Table 2.** Perceived relationships with Mainland China and attitudes toward trade talks (1).

	Reg. Coef.	Std. Error
(Intercept)	0.807	1.272
<i>Imagined Relationships (base=Couples)</i>		
Father-Son	-1.641	1.183
Brothers	-2.119	1.127
Friends	-2.034	1.121
Enemy	-2.408*	1.138
Others	-2.035	1.238
<i>National/Ethnic Identification (base=Both)</i>		
Taiwanese	-0.461*	0.204
Chinese	-0.868*	0.363
<i>Party Identification (base=Non-Partisan)</i>		
Support for the Pan-Blue Camp	0.155	0.230
Support for the Pan-Green Camp	-0.147	0.230
<i>Unification/Independence Preference</i>		
Prefer using Taiwan to ROC	-0.349	0.196
Prefer unification	0.495***	0.087
Hoping Mainland China become democratic	0.154	0.096
Our democracy can change Mainland China	0.138*	0.068
Taiwan can keep economic status quo	-0.128	0.074
Male	-0.606**	0.182
Education	-0.033	0.038
<i>Generations (base= 3<sup>rd</sup>, born 1954~1968)</i>		
1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (born before 1953)	0.012	0.270
4 <sup>th</sup> (born 1969~1978)	0.537*	0.251
5 <sup>th</sup> (born 1979~1988)	1.125***	0.278
6 <sup>th</sup> (born 1989~1993)	0.617	0.341
Observations		674

Notes: Significance level.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

support such trade talks. This suggests that the cross-Strait relationship is a complex issue involving a multitude of factors. Any one explanation is insufficient to explain the relationship.

Additionally, at the time of the survey respondents between the ages of 26 and 45 (the fourth and fifth generations in this study) are more positive than those between 45 and 60 (the third generation) regarding the cross-Strait trade talks. This result perhaps reflects their perception about the economic rise of Mainland China and the fact that Taiwan's economy and their career opportunities are related to Mainland China's economic development.

Because only a few respondents chose 'father-son' (3.73%) and 'couples' (1.03%), 'father-son', 'couples' and 'brothers' are grouped into a new variable: 'family'. 'Family' is then compared with the two additional models using 'friends' and 'enemies' as explanatory variables, respectively. As Table 3 shows, respondents who see Mainland China as family are likely to support trade talks; however, there is no evidence suggesting that opposing trade talks should be attributed to respondents' hostile perception about Mainland China. All other patterns shown in Table 3 are consistent with those in Table 2. The third model in Table 3 also shows that those between 21 and 25 (the sixth generation) hold more progressive attitudes toward cross-Strait trade talks than the third generation.

In sum, findings suggest five main points. First, unification/independence preferences and belief in Taiwan's democratic impact could explain why Taiwanese voters see Mainland China as a brother or an enemy. Second, Pan-Blue supporters tend to see Mainland China as a brother, but this does not imply that they are zealous about cross-Strait trade talks. Third, Taiwanese identifiers tend to see Mainland China as an enemy, but this does not mean that all Pan-Green supporters have this tendency. Fourth, diversity (if not a gap) exists between the older and younger generations regarding their perceptions about Mainland China. Compared to those who are 46–60 years old, Taiwanese voters who are older

**Table 3.** Perceived relationships with Mainland China and attitudes toward trade talks (2).

	Family		Friends		Enemies	
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>
(Intercept)	-1.244*	0.631	-1.241	0.642	-1.178	0.631
Family	0.747*	0.377				
Friends			0.085	0.178		
Enemy					-0.405	0.254
<i>National/Ethnic Identification (base=Both)</i>						
Taiwanese	-0.498*	0.201	-0.508*	0.200	-0.469*	0.202
Chinese	-0.896*	0.362	-0.907*	0.363	-0.896*	0.362
<i>Party Identification (base=Non-Partisan)</i>						
Support for the Pan-Blue Camp	0.138	0.228	0.130	0.229	0.137	0.229
Support for the Pan-Green Camp	-0.196	0.229	-0.191	0.228	-0.163	0.229
<i>Unification/Independence Preference</i>						
Prefer using Taiwan to ROC	-0.344	0.194	-0.352	0.194	-0.325	0.194
Prefer unification	0.502***	0.087	0.510***	0.086	0.500***	0.086
Hoping Mainland China become democratic	0.151	0.095	0.144	0.095	0.151	0.095
Our democracy can change Mainland China	0.133*	0.067	0.130	0.067	0.126	0.067
Taiwan can keep economic status quo	-0.113	0.073	-0.116	0.073	-0.124	0.073
Male	-0.618**	0.178	-0.610**	0.180	-0.624***	0.178
Education	-0.036	0.038	-0.036	0.038	-0.035	0.038
<i>Generations (base= 3<sup>rd</sup>, born 1954~1968)</i>						
1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (born before 1953)	0.001	0.266	0.025	0.268	0.027	0.266
4 <sup>th</sup> (born 1969~1978)	0.494*	0.246	0.533*	0.245	0.581*	0.248
5 <sup>th</sup> (born 1979~1988)	1.075***	0.274	1.107***	0.273	1.146***	0.275
6 <sup>th</sup> (born 1989~1993)	0.557	0.336	0.644	0.334	0.696*	0.336
Observations	674		674		674	
AIC	829.877		833.690		831.317	

Notes: Significance level.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

than 61 tend to use the brotherhood analogy in their description of the cross-Strait relation; conversely, those born after 1968 tend to use hostile expressions (such as 'enemy') to describe Mainland China but welcome more economic connection with Mainland China. This paradox reflects the reality of the younger generations of Taiwanese. Although younger Taiwanese wish to maintain their separate and unique identity, their future may be highly dependent on Mainland China. Fifth, as the majority of Taiwanese identifiers (58.86%) tend to be conservative about trade talks with Mainland China, one-third of the respondents (30.88%) who identify themselves as both Chinese and Taiwanese are likely to be the driving and supportive force for trade talks with Mainland China.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The attitudes of the Taiwanese government and voters toward trade talks with Mainland China have been identified as a salient issue in the interaction among Washington, Beijing and Taipei. The Sunflower Movement in 2014 showed the world that Taiwanese voters, particularly the younger generation, seemed antagonistic to Mainland China and conservative about further trade talks.

This study provides empirical evidence supporting a different picture: a generation gap exists regarding the perceptions about the Taiwan–Mainland China relationship. More specifically, those who are born after 1968 see Mainland China as *both* a political threat and an economic opportunity.

First, this study confirms conventional wisdom that those who identify themselves as Taiwanese (but neither Chinese nor both) and those who reject unification are likely to firmly oppose active trade talks. It further contributes to the literature by identifying five variables that explain Taiwanese voters' attitudes toward trade talks with Mainland China, namely family orientation (those seeing Mainland China as family), national/ethnic identification (dual-national identifiers), state/country identification (those favoring unification), belief in Taiwan's democratic impact (those believing that Taiwan's democracy will change Mainland China) and generation (those who were born in 1968 and earlier). Note that even though some respondents reported that they saw Mainland China as an enemy (13.71% of the sample), no evidence shows that such a perception would lead them to oppose active trade talks. This result suggests that, to Taiwanese voters, the perception of Mainland China as a political threat coexists with the perception of Mainland China as an economic opportunity.

Second, as data employed by this study are representative of voters in general but not the Sunflower Movement participants in particular, the findings help draw an understanding about how the generations of voters perceive the movement. Students regarded Mainland China as both a political enemy and an economic opportunity and they are *not* likely to be the initiators of the movement. In effect, the movement was initiated by non-students who resisted unification or held hostile attitudes toward Mainland China. Because the issue is salient and connected directly to Mainland China, the movement was echoed by those who share the same Taiwanese national/ethnic identity, particularly those born in 1969 and after. To the elder generation (those born in 1968 and before) who regard Mainland China as a brother (first and second generations) and who are less likely to regard Mainland China as an enemy (third generation), they may not have felt as involved as the voters who were born in 1969 and after.

Beyond explaining the dynamics of the Sunflower Movement, the findings suggest three more points for future studies. First, the meanings of 'brother' and 'friend' need more elaboration and exploration in the study of the cross-Strait relationship. In Taiwan, 'brother' was used only by the oldest two generations. This reflects their understanding about the civil war since 1945 when the ROC (KMT) and PRC (CCP) fought against one another like brothers competing for legitimacy. The rejection of the brotherhood analogy by the youngest generation implies that this 'civil war' way of thinking has ended with this generation. More interestingly, while the elder generation regards the ROC as the older brother because the ROC was born earlier than the PRC, the younger generations of voters who take this analogy are likely to regard the PRC as the older brother because of its political and economic power, which is consistent with the perceptions of Mainland Chinese regarding the current cross-Strait relationship. Moreover, 'friends' has become a term that accommodates both positive and negative

meanings and, therefore, this variable falls short of explaining the attitudes toward trade talks and possibly toward all other issues regarding Mainland China. This suggests that future research is needed to elaborate the meanings of 'brothers' and 'friends' in the contexts of both Taiwan and Mainland China.

Third, this study shows that Taiwanese people's belief in Taiwan's democratic impact plays an important role in explaining their attitudes toward Mainland China. While the majority of Taiwanese voters hope that Mainland China will democratize, this hope does not necessarily make them want more trade talks with Mainland China. Those who believe that Taiwan's democracy can change Mainland China are likely to support trade talks. This belief implies that Taiwanese people are likely to prioritize democracy over future trade talks. The Ma administration and the Legislative Yuan were forced to agree to adopt more democratic procedures before ratifying the CSSTA in order to put an end to the Sunflower Movement. Moreover, Taiwanese people who are less confident in Taiwan's democracy or who become indifferent in influencing Mainland China with Taiwan's experiences of democratization are likely to become conservative in future trade talks with Mainland China.

Furthermore, the negative coefficients of Taiwanese and Chinese identifiers in the models of trade talks deserve greater attention. Those who have dual-national/ethnic identifications are more optimistic about future trade talks. Chinese identifiers (7% in the sample) are less enthusiastic about trade talks than dual identifiers are. They are likely to be anti-Communist ROC diehards. Future research is needed to explore this diminishing group of voters in Taiwan as well as those who hide themselves behind the label of dual identities.

Last but not least, the historic meeting of the PRC President Xi Jinping and ROC President Ma Ying-jeou on 6 November 2015 in Singapore suggests an important aspect of observing how Taiwanese voters view prospective trade talks and perceived relationships across the Strait. Mr Xi and Mr Ma avoided discussing sensitive political issues but emphasized 'family' and the '92 consensus' established as the base of past trade talks. Future studies are invited to inspect how political and symbolic actions taken by Beijing and Taipei based on the 'brotherhood' and/or 'friendship' analogy and observe how generations of Taiwanese voters think about and respond to these actions that would inevitably affect their economic (and ultimately political) future with Mainland China.

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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## Appendix.

**Table A1.** Variable description of the telephone survey dataset.

Constructs / Variables	Measurement / Question wording	Options	Freq.	%
Perspectives on the cross-Strait relationship / Perceived relationship between mainland China and Taiwan	(r18) How do you see our relationship with Mainland China, is it more like father and son, brothers, couples, friends or enemies?	Father-son	40	3.73
		Brothers	277	25.84
		Couples	11	1.03
		Friends	454	42.35
		Enemies	147	13.71
		Others	30	2.80
		Enemies and friends	13	1.21
		Country to country	16	1.49
		Missing	84	7.84
		Moving forward bravely	393	36.66
Attitudes toward cross-Strait trade talks	(r13) Our government has been conducting trade talks with Mainland China, do you prefer a more aggressive process or a more cautious one?	Watching steps and slowing down	576	53.73
		Missing	103	9.61
National/Ethnic identification	(r12) Some people say they are Taiwanese, some say Chinese and some say both. What about you?	Taiwanese	631	58.86
		Chinese	76	7.09
		Both	331	30.88
		Others but non-PRC	16	1.49
		Missing	18	1.68
		Independent	367	34.24
		KMT	138	12.87
		DPP	163	15.21
		PFP	5	0.47
		NP	2	0.19
Party identification	(v1) Which political party's position is closer to yours?	TSU	11	1.03
		Pan-Blue	51	4.76
		Pan-Green	44	4.10
		Others	4	0.37
		No party affiliation	210	19.59
		Support none	67	6.25
		Missing	10	0.93
		ROC	464	43.28
		Taiwan	511	47.67
		Missing	97	9.05
Preferred country name in international affairs	(v9) When we are applying for a membership of an international organization, do you prefer using the name of ROC or Taiwan?	Hope not very much	202	18.84
		Hope not	286	26.68
Willingness to change country's name	(r10) Do you hope that one day ROC changes its name to Taiwan or Republic of Taiwan?	Neutral	187	17.44
		Hope so	166	15.49
Prospective on future unification with Mainland China	(r11) Do you hope that Taiwan and Mainland China become one country?	Hope so very much	175	16.32
		Missing	56	5.22
		Hope not very much	477	44.50
		Hope not	329	30.69
Neutral	123	11.47		

Prospective on the democratization of Mainland China	(r14) How much do you hope that Mainland China becomes a democracy?	Hope so	70	6.53
		Hope so very much	39	3.64
		Missing	34	3.17
		Hope not very much	27	2.52
		Hope not	54	5.04
		Neutral	23	2.15
		Hope so	344	32.09
		Hope so very much	521	48.60
		Missing	103	9.61
		Not at all	337	31.44
Belief in Taiwan's democratic impact	(r15) Do you believe that our democracy and freedom can change Mainland China?	Do not believe	316	29.48
		Neutral	39	3.64
		Believe so	263	24.53
		Strongly believe so	64	5.97
		Missing	53	4.94
		Cannot at all	289	26.96
		Cannot	365	33.96
		About right	71	6.62
		Can	218	20.34
		Absolutely can	45	4.20
Sex	(r16) Do you think that our economic power can keep the cross-strait status quo?	Missing	85	7.93
		Male	503	46.92
		Female	569	53.08
		Missing	0	0.00
		Illiteracy	12	1.12
		Literate but no school	5	0.47
		Elementary school (incomplete)	16	1.49
		Elementary school	70	6.53
		Junior high (incomplete)	13	1.21
		Junior high	81	7.56
Education level	(r16) Do you think that our economic power can keep the cross-strait status quo?	Senior high (incomplete)	19	1.77
		Senior high	291	27.15
		College (incomplete)	16	1.49
		College	155	14.46
		University (incomplete)	32	2.99
		University	282	26.31
		Graduate school	74	6.90
		Missing	6	0.56
		(born by 1931)	4	0.37
		(born 1932~1953)	230	21.46
Generations	(r16) Do you think that our economic power can keep the cross-strait status quo?	(born 1954~1968)	419	39.09
		(born 1969~1978)	186	17.35
		(born 1979~1988)	132	12.31
		(born 1989~1993)	83	7.74
		Missing	18	1.68