

**1992 Consensus:
Modus Vivendi Squeezed by the Sino-American Competition and Taiwanese Identities**

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I. Introduction

On April 28th 2000, Su Chi, the outgoing Minister of Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), appealed to Beijing and Taipei publicly that both sides should use the term “92 Consensus (九二共識)”¹ as a substitute for “one China principle.” According to Su Chi’s speech at that time, 92 Consensus refers to the consensus reached by Beijing and Taipei in 1992 that both sides had agreed on the “one China principle” but differed in the meaning of this “one China.” By using this unintelligible term, he expected that the two sides across the Taiwan Strait could avoid conflicts.²

Note that Su Chi was not the first person to propose the term “92 Consensus.” Some people had proposed a similar term before Su Chi in order for both sides to shelve their disputes.³ Ironically, the term “92 Consensus” per se was proposed first by a DPP politician named Lo Chih-cheng.⁴ Perhaps because of Su Chi’s notable position as the minister of MAC, this action coronates him the “formal proposer” of this post facto term.

The “92 Consensus” is post facto in the sense that from 1992 to 1999, CPC and KMT had never reached a consensus on the meaning of “one China” but the two parties tacitly pretended to have reached a consensus over “one China” by pressing the president-elect Chen Shui-bian to accept the 92 Consensus.

The 92 Consensus was accommodated as a *modus vivendi* when DPP came to power in 2000. After Lien Chan took charge of KMT, the 92 Consensus was adopted as a prescriptive discourse for KMT to interact with mainland China.

1. Intelligible “92 Consensus”

Genesis of the “Consensus” Reached in 1992

Before the first meeting between the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) and the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), two semiofficial organizations set up by

¹ The widely-circulated Chinese word “Jiuer Gongshi” is literally translated as the “92 Consensus” here. Most scholars use the “1992 Consensus” as a reference for the Chinese word “Jiuer Gongshi,” which makes sense from the perspective of semantics because this word refers to the “(non-)consensus” reached in 1992. Yet, in early 2000, a mainland Chinese scholar named Xu Shishuan proposed a similar term “1992 Nian Gongshi (1992 年共識),” which was similar to the 92 Consensus, and it is more proper to translate this term “1992 Nian Gongshi” to the “1992 Consensus.” Therefore, in this thesis, I translate the term “Jiuer Gongshi”, the term formally proposed by Su Chi, into the “92 Consensus.”

² Hongxiang Ni, “Su Qi: Zichuang ‘Jiuer Gongshi’ Baozhuang ‘Yizhong Gebiao’ Li Denghui Shihou Zhi 蘇起：自創「九二共識」包裝「一中各表」 李登輝事後知 [Su Chi: Self-creation of the ‘92 Consensus’ to Decorate ‘one China with two interpretations’ Lee Teng-hui Did not Know Until Afterwards],” *NOWnews.com*, February 21, 2006.

³ Xiangping Liu, “‘Jiuer Gongshi’ Yu Dalu Dui Tai Zhengce Zhi Guanxi Lunshu – Jianlun Zhongguo Gongchandang Dui ‘Jiuer Gongshi’ De Jianchi Yu Shijian ‘九二共識’ 与大陆对台政策之关系述论——兼论中国共产党对 ‘九二共識’ 的坚持与实践 [A Critical Review of the Relationship between the “92 Consensus”: and the Mainland’s Taiwan Policy -- An Additional Study of the Adherence to and the Practice of the “92 Consensus” by the Chinese Communist Party],” *Taiwan Research Journal*, no.1 (2015): 17-18.

⁴ Junshuo Chen, “Jiuer Gongshi Shoutizhe Yuanlai Shi Lvwei Luo Zhizheng 九二共識首提者 原來是綠委羅致政 [The First Person to Propose the 1992 Consensus was a DPP Legislator Lo Chih-cheng],” *China Times*, February 19, 2019; Chih-cheng Lo, “‘Yige Zhongguo, Gezi Biaoshu’ De Misi ‘一個中國，各自表述’的迷思 [The Myth of ‘One China with Two Interpretations’],” *China Times*, April 2, 2000.

the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan, in October 1992, Taipei's National Unification Council (NUC) adopted a resolution on the meaning of "one China" in August 1992, which was later summarized as "one China with two interpretations", the KMT version of the interpretation of the 92 Consensus:⁵

Both sides of the Taiwan Strait agree that there is only one China. However, the two sides of the Strait have different opinions as to the meaning of "one China." To Peking, "one China" means the "People's Republic of China (PRC)," with Taiwan to become a "Special Administration Region" after unification. Taipei, on the other hand, considers "one China" to mean the Republic of China (ROC), founded in 1911 and with de jure sovereignty over all of China. The ROC, however, currently has jurisdiction only over Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu. Taiwan is part of China, and the Chinese mainland is part of China as well.

Thereafter, during a Cross-Strait meeting on documents-related verification and registered mail in Hong Kong in October 1992 (the 1992 Hong Kong Meeting), ARATS and SEF discussed the meaning of "one China" but diverged on it.⁶ In November 1992, the two sides discussed the meaning of "one China" via telephone and letters but made no progress. Then, Taipei's SEF proposed to verbally express the two sides' stands on the "one China principle." Beijing's ARATS accepted this proposal but suggested negotiating about the specific content of their verbal expression⁷, which was interpreted post factum by the Chen Shui-bian administration as Beijing attempting to leave the public an impression that both sides had reached a consensus on the meaning of one China.⁸ They regarded Beijing's intention as viciously deliberate because such a consensus may leave the public an impression that Taiwan is part of China. The negotiation did not happen, but both sides acquiesced in this unwritten agreement to facilitate their communication.⁹

Taipei's attitude regarding Taiwan's status was clear at that time. The phrase "one China with two interpretations" meant the two sides had different interpretations of one China, which beard

⁵ Mainland Affairs Council, "Guanyu 'Yige Zhongguo' De Hanyi 關於「一個中國」的涵義 [Regarding the Meaning of 'One China']," August 1, 1992. The translation comes from: "China/Taiwan: Evolution of the "One China" Policy—Key Statements from Washington, Beijing, and Taipei," EveryCRSReport.com.

⁶ On the official websites of ARATS and MAC, both sides confirmed their divergence. See: People's Daily Online, "Wang—Gu Huitan 汪辜会谈 [Wang—Koo Summit]," *Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits*, June 26, 2008; Straits Exchange Foundation, "Lici Huitan 歷次會談 [Previous Talks]," <https://www.sef.org.tw/list-1-104>.

⁷ SEF updated its narration for this correspondence during Tsai Ing-wen's presidency: Huiyou Xu and Yafei Li, "Liang'an 'Wenshu Yanzheng' Ji 'Guahao Hanjian' Di Yici Huitan 兩岸「文書驗證」及「掛號函件」第一次會談 [The First Cross-strait Talks on 'Document Verification' and 'Registration Letter']," *Straits Exchange Foundation*, August 3, 1992; regarding ARATS's narration, see: Taiwan Affairs Office, "Wei Lishi Liuxia Gongzheng De Zhujiao—1992 Nian 11 Yue Lianghui Gongshi Shimo 为历史留下公正的注脚—1992年11月两会共识始末 [Leaving a Fair Footnote in History—the Beginning and End of the Consensus Reached by the Two Associations in November 1992]," *Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits*, September 8, 1999.

⁸ Kunhui Huang, "Polie De Jiuer Xianggang Huitan 破裂的九二香港會談 [The Broken 92 Hong Kong Talks]," Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (Taiwan), January 10, 2008.

⁹ MAC under Ma Ying-jeou admitted this unwritten agreement and interpreted it as evidence for "one China with two interpretations" that can be simplified as the 92 Consensus, see a policy leaflet released by MAC at that time: [https://ws.mac.gov.tw/001/Upload/OldFile/public/MMO/MAC/%E6%91%BA%E9%A0%81-%E4%B8%AD\(%E5%AE%9A%E7%A8%BF%E7%89%88\).pdf](https://ws.mac.gov.tw/001/Upload/OldFile/public/MMO/MAC/%E6%91%BA%E9%A0%81-%E4%B8%AD(%E5%AE%9A%E7%A8%BF%E7%89%88).pdf)

the connotation that there were two Chinas—PRC and ROC.¹⁰ It was different from another interpretation that both sides had no dissidence on their belonging to the same China but had dissidence on the name of this China.

Su Chi argues that Beijing had a complicated stance on the 92 Consensus from 1992 to 1999, as he words in his book that Beijing “had never fully accepted this characterization [of one China with two interpretations] since 1992, but it had never completely rejected it either...Beijing generally turned a deaf ear.”¹¹ I think “had never completely rejected” is grounded because Beijing continued communications with Taipei even though the two sides had not reached any agreements on the specific content of their verbal expression. Yet, “had never fully accepted” is controversial. As some scholars have pointed out that in their correspondence, Beijing had always reiterated the “one China principle” that both sides belong to the same China.¹² For instance, on September 15th 1995, Taiwan Affairs Office recited Wang Daohan’s words to refute Lee Teng-hui’s “two states theory” that “one China is not abstract but concrete. There is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China.”¹³ Four days later, ARATS publicly criticized Taipei for exploiting the verbal agreement to create two Chinas.¹⁴

In other words, when the so-called “one China principle” and the post facto term 92 Consensus presented themselves, they were proposed by KMT under Lee Teng-hui but not imposed by Beijing. Taipei wanted to use this ambiguous term to shelve their conflicts with Beijing but Beijing did not accept this proposal at that time. Beijing’s hardline posture today in coercing Taipei to adhere the 92 Consensus might be unimaginable for people living during this period.

92 Consensus as a Superordinate

To understand the unintelligibility of the 92 Consensus, it is helpful to treat it as a superordinate, an umbrella term including more than one specific term. In other words, the 92 Consensus as a superordinate does refer to one particular consensus reached by Beijing and Taipei. It includes the mutual agreement on the act of verbally expressing “one China principle” respectively. It also includes “one China with two interpretations,” “one China with the same interpretation,” “one country, two systems” and so on.

After Taiwan experienced the political realignment in 2000, when people from KMT and CPC claimed to have reached a consensus in 1992 about “one China,” they alluded to the unofficial agreement of the act of verbal expression.

¹⁰ Chen-yuan Tung and Chen Shuo-ting, “Jiuer Gongshi De Xingcheng, Shijian Yu Wajie 九二共識的形成、實踐與瓦解 [The Formation, Implementation and Dissolution of the 1992 Consensus],” *Zhanwang Yu Tansuo 展望與探索* [Prospect and Exploration] 2, no. 12 (2008): 38.

¹¹ Chi Su, *Taiwan’s Relations with Mainland China* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 14.

¹² Tung and Chen, “The Formation, Implementation and Dissolution of the 1992 Consensus,” 38-9.

¹³ Taiwan Affairs Office, “Wang Daohan Huizhang Tan ‘Yige Zhongguo’ 汪道涵会长谈“一个中国” [President Wang Daohan Remarks on ‘one China’],” September 15, 1995.

¹⁴ Taiwan Affairs Office, “Haixie Fuzeren Zhichu Zhiyou Jianchi ‘Yige Zhongguo’ De Yuanze Liangan Guanxi Cai You Wending Fazhan De Jichu 海协负责人指出只有坚持“一个中国”的原则两岸关系才有稳定发展的基础 [The ARATS President Points out that Only Adherence to ‘One China’ Principle Can Lay the Foundation for the Stable Development of the Cross-Strait Relations],” September 19, 1995.

My speculation is that KMT and CPC want to use this post factum to press on Chen Shui-bian to maintain the status quo because when KMT and CPC pretended to have reached a consensus, they could leave the public an impression that Beijing and Taipei have reached a consensus on the “one China principle” that Taiwan is part of China (a greater China includes the Chinese mainland and Taiwan). If they succeeded in forging this impression, then Chen Shui-bian must adhere to the “one China principle” because of audience cost. Chen did not want to be restrained by the two parties, therefore, to break down KMT and CPC’s tactics, his administration did not admit the agreement on the verbal expression of “one China” respectively.

Being said that, CPC, KMT and DPP are correct in their respective interpretation of the 92 Consensus generally. The 92 Consensus as a superordinate term does not correspond to any concrete agreements, therefore, DPP can declare the 92 Consensus void. CPC and KMT did acquiesce in the action of verbal expression, therefore, they can declare to have reached a consensus and term this consensus “the 92 Consensus,” though they did not admit this action from 1992 to 1999. Because CPC and KMT intended to make the 92 Consensus ambiguous, not defining the 92 Consensus in 2000,¹⁵ both sides can smuggle their respective interpretations into this superordinate term. In 2000, the 92 Consensus includes the agreement on the action of verbal impression, “one China with two interpretations,” and “one China with the same interpretation.”

After mainland China becomes more powerful, which makes Taiwan relatively less powerful, the term sours. The ambiguous definition gives Beijing an opportunity to make “one country, two systems” a hyponym of the 92 Consensus. Beijing plans to make “one country, two systems” squeeze other hyponyms so that they can connect the 92 Consensus with “one country, two systems.” Faced with this change, KMT has three options. First, it can renounce the 92 Consensus at the cost of infuriating Beijing. Second, it can re-define the meaning of the 92 Consensus. Third, it must accept any new definitions added by Beijing.

In the second, third, and fourth parts of this thesis, I would argue that KMT cannot renounce the 92 Consensus because of the pressure from Beijing, Washington, and KMT supporters. Moreover, KMT cannot challenge Beijing in the definition of the 92 Consensus for two reasons. For one thing, KMT cannot endure any possible disasters incurred by this challenge. For another, when KMT and CPC used the verbal agreement as evidence for their post facto recognition, they did not define their respective interpretations but set a bottom line that Taiwan is part of China. The nebulous agreement with a clear bottom line leaves a loophole for CPC to add more contents that serve their interests best. KMT can reiterate their adherence to “one China with two interpretations,” but when the 92 Consensus is associated more frequently with “one China with the same interpretation” or “one country, two systems,” it is hard for the Taiwanese public to be convinced that the 92 Consensus can be interpreted as “one China with two interpretations.”

Because the only option left for KMT is to accept any definitions added by Beijing, what KMT can do with this ambiguous term is to show more deference to Beijing in order to get in return Beijing’s good will. When KMT shows more deference, Beijing can leave more room for KMT to interpret the 92 Consensus or gives Taiwan more economic benefits. On the other side, KMT may show no deference but oppose the Taiwan independence (this kind of opposition may be

¹⁵ Taiwan Affairs Office, “Leaving a Fair Footnote in History.”

deemed as a kind of deference given to Beijing), as a result, they can leave the public an impression that KMT is not pro-China, though this inactivity makes Beijing give KMT no carrots or sticks that can be taken advantage of in Taiwanese electoral politics.

2. Cross-Strait Relations from 1992 to 1999

Cross-Strait Relations as a Roller Coaster

In the previous discussion, I argue that from 1992 to 1999, KMT and CPC had not reached any consensus on the definition of “one China” and that the two parties’ acceptance of the 92 Consensus is a post facto recognition. To better understand this argument, it is necessary to introduce the history of cross-Strait relations from 1992 to 1999.

In the whole 1990s, the cross-Strait relationship was a roller coaster. The then-KMT president Lee Teng-hui terminated the *Temporary Provisions against the Communist Rebellion* in 1991, signifying the end of the civil war between the two sides. Lee further facilitated the cross-Strait interactions after Chiang Ching-kuo allowed *waishengren* (外省人, mainland Chinese who relocated to Taiwan after the Chinese recovery of Taiwan in 1945) to visit their relatives on the Chinese mainland in 1987. However, this act made ROC no longer “a sovereign country representing the whole of China” and Taiwan became “a political entity” that is “more or less equal with [PRC]” instead of “a model province” that would showcase the merits of the ROC regime to the compatriots on the Chinese mainland.¹⁶

From 1992 to 1995, Lee adopted a seemingly accommodationist mainland policy and feigned willingness to negotiate with Beijing about the reunification. I argue that he feigned willingness for reunification because the precondition he requested for a negotiation is too unrealistic for Beijing to accept. For example, he demanded Beijing democratize the Chinese mainland rapidly and adopt a capitalist market economy, two conditions definitely unacceptable to Beijing.¹⁷ Beijing rejected his demand but reiterated that Taiwan should accept the formula of “one country, two systems,” which provided him a pretext to refuse negotiations because Beijing’s rejection and reiteration did not respect Taiwan as an equal political entity.¹⁸

Lee feigned a willingness for negotiation while at the same time, he took “pragmatic diplomacy” to expand Taiwan’s international space to undermine Beijing’s efforts of isolating Taiwan internationally.¹⁹ Lee’s approach was pragmatic because he abandoned the “one China principle” by “reestablish[ing] or maintain[ing] contacts with as many nations as possible—even those

¹⁶ Ya-chung Chang, “Liangyan Guanxi De Guifanxing Yanjiu—Dingwei Yu Zouxian 兩岸關係的規範性研究—定位與走向 [Normative Research on the Cross-Strait Relations—Position and Trend],” in *Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論* [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Strait Relations], second edition, ed. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 87-114; Chi Su, “Driving Forces Behind Taiwan’s Mainland Policy,” in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 47-49.

¹⁷ Ramon Hawley Myers and Jialin Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait: The Divided China Problem* (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2006), 55.

¹⁸ Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 39.

¹⁹ Lowell Dittmer, “Jiexi Liangan Guanxi De Jiuji 解析兩岸關係的糾結 [Analyzing the Taiwan Strait Tangle],” in *Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論* [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Strait Relations], second edition, ed. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 3.

having formal diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China." Under his presidency, Taiwan adjusted to the post-Cold War world order and took advantage of this new international setting to improve Taiwan's international space, "including the notion that no country or political entity should be barred from participating in the world community."²⁰

One ramification of Lee's goal to expand Taiwan's international recognition is his Cornell Visit. The cross-Strait relations deteriorated sharply since 1995 because Lee Teng-hui's Cornell Visit and inflammatory speech infuriated CPC leaders who launched an eight-month-long military exercise, which was named after the 1996 cross-Strait crisis.

However, this crisis was different from previous ones. First, it was a military exercise rather than a battle, though the then-Deputy State Secretary Susan Shirk believed that "China and the United States came to the brink of war in 1996."²¹ Second, growing economic and cultural interactions started since the late 1980s, and there was a prospect of reunification via political negotiation.²² In other words, military means became only the last resort for the post-Maoist China to incorporate Taiwan.

Six months after the crisis, Lee Teng-hui suggested to Taiwanese businesspeople "no haste, be patient," that is, he expected the Taiwanese businesspeople to refrain from investing in the lucrative Chinese market in case the increasing economic interdependence would lead to a political integration of Taiwan and the Chinese mainland.²³ Specifically, Lee did not want a rapid economic interdependence for three reasons: (1) Taiwanese investment in China makes Taiwan devoid of investment; (2) Taiwanese people will be dissuaded from seeking independence with growing economic connections between the two sides; (3) Taiwanese investment is facilitating the process of modernization in China, which will be followed by China's efforts of reunifying Taiwan.²⁴

Taiwanese business people came to invest in the Chinese mainland because of economic consideration, while Lee prevented them from such an investment based on his political consideration. However, the outbreak of the Asia Financial Crisis in 1998 and Lee's failure in the Southbound policy made the economic influence of China more salient. "In early 1998, in the context of improving U.S.-PRC relations and stable U.S.-Taiwan ties...Taipei took the initiative to resume the [cross-Strait] dialogue out of a clear...understanding of the island's interest."²⁵ The resumption culminated in a delegate to Beijing led by the then-chairman of SEF Koo Chen-Fu.

Lee planned the "two states theory" before 1999 but did not declare it until July 1999. The former President of the National Assembly Su Nan-cheng disclosed that Lee released his theory of "special state-to-state relationship" in 1999 to destroy the efforts of SEF and ARATS in

²⁰ John Franklin Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-state Or Province?*. 5th ed (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 192.

²¹ Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2008), 2.

²² Harry Harding, "The Concept of 'Greater China': Themes, Variations and Reservations," *The China Quarterly*, no. 136 (1993): 660-86.

²³ Yu-Shan Wu, "Taiwanese Elections and Cross-Strait Relations: Mainland Policy in Flux," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 4 (1999): 575.

²⁴ Robert L. Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U. S. -China Relations 1989-2000*. (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 201-02.

²⁵ Richard C. Bush, *At Cross Purposes: U.S.-Taiwan Relations Since 1942* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 232.

reaching a consensus of “one China.”²⁶Ramon Hawley Myers and Jialin Zhang share a similar opinion that Lee worried about Taiwan’s increasing economic dependency on the mainland, therefore, he intended to make the Koo-Wang meeting sour.²⁷

Prescriptive Discourse Inconsistent with Policy

Discourses like “one China with two interpretations,” “two states theory” and so on are prescriptive discourses that prescribe the relationship between PRC and ROC on Taiwan. Since Lee Teng-hui terminated the martial law in 1991, PRC and ROC became two equal entities that are part of “China.”²⁸ In 1999 when Lee released the “two states theory,” he prescribed the relationship between the two sides as a special relationship: PRC is “another sovereign country with a special relationship with sovereign Taiwan,” and Taiwan is “a distinct sovereign country which still bears the name the Republic of China.”²⁹

It is hard to define how specific the relationship between PRC and ROC on Taiwan is, but it suffices to conclude that from 1991 to 1999, both sides agreed that PRC and ROC on Taiwan belong to China, though this “China” may not be the same China. It is worth noting that “belonging to China” is not equal to “belonging to the same China.” The resolution passed by NUC, i.e., KMT’s “one China with two interpretations” does not mean that both sides belong to the same China. It is Beijing’s “two interpretations to designate one China” that has the meaning of “belonging to the same China.”³⁰

A question follows: how did this prescriptive discourse decide KMT’s mainland policy? From 1992 to 1995, when Lee feigned willingness for negotiating with Beijing about reunification, we might say that he pursued a mainland policy that is consistent with KMT’s prescriptive discourse. Yet, we might have a different judgment. Since NUC’s resolution does not designate the two sides as belonging to the same China, a negotiation about reunification is not inconsistent with the prescriptive discourse.

In 1999, Lee re-prescribed the relationship between the two sides but KMT as a ruling party in Taiwan did not modify its mainland policy. Rather, to pacify Washington, in early September 1999, a visiting official from Taiwan’s Presidential Office told the US State Department that Taiwan’s policy toward the Chinese mainland had not changed and that Taipei would not revise the ROC constitution or abrogate the National Unification Council.³¹

The history of KMT’s mainland policy under Lee Teng-hui’s presidency discloses the fact that prescriptive discourse does not need to be consistent with a concrete policy. People often summarize KMT’s mainland policy after 2000 as the 92 Consensus, but this kind of thought is

²⁶ Yuan Fang, “Li Denghui Yuanben Jiu Yao Ding ‘Ji Ben Fa’! 李登輝原本就要訂「基本法」! [Lee Teng-hui Had Planed to Make ‘Basic Law’!],” *Business Today*, October 07, 1999.

²⁷ Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 41-42.

²⁸ Su, “Driving Forces Behind Taiwan’s Mainland Policy,” 47-9; Chang, “Normative Research on the Cross-Strait Relations,” 89-93.

²⁹ Su, “Driving Forces Behind Taiwan’s Mainland Policy,” 47-9.

³⁰ Liu, “A Critical Review of the Relationship between the ‘92 Consensus’ and the Mainland’s Taiwan Policy,” 18-9. and the Mainland’s Taiwan Policy -- An Additional Study of the Adherence to and the Practice of the “92 Consensus” by the Chinese Communist Party],” *Taiwan Research Journal*, no.1 (2015): 18-9.

³¹ Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 43.

problematic. The 92 Consensus is a superordinate prescriptive discourse, it cannot serve as a direction for KMT to propose or implement a specific mainland policy.

Nevertheless, we can find that when KMT modify their interpretation of the 92 Consensus, they accordingly have some specific actions. For example, KMT chairperson Hung Hsiu-chu interprets the 92 Consensus as “one China with the same interpretation,” and when she served as the chairperson, she was active in facilitating interactions across the Taiwan Strait. In my opinion, the 92 Consensus is a tribute of KMT to show deference to Beijing, when they claim to adhere to the 92 Consensus, they take some actions that satisfy Beijing. As a return for KMT’s deference, Beijing may launch an economic initiative or leave more international space for Taiwan.

3. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is about how and why the 92 Consensus became a modus vivendi for KMT to cater to both China and America. In the second part, I argue that in the 2000s, China and America accommodated the 92 Consensus because they were concerned about other issues. For China, modernization was urgent and it could not afford the failure of reunifying Taiwan with forces, therefore, when the pro-independence party Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) came to power, Beijing put their hope in KMT. Before George W Bush started his presidency, he had decided to be clear about Washington’s China/Taiwan policy, but the 9/11 Terrorist Attack and Chen Shui-bian’s capriciousness possessed his attention, making him cooperate with then-friendly China.

In the third part, I argue that since around the 2010s, the distribution of power between China and America made the once-popular 92 Consensus gradually unmarketable. The new Chinese leader President Xi Jinping perceives the international and domestic environments as “two profound changes,” i.e., the Chinese domestic environment is becoming more fragile but in the international system, the US is comparatively in decline. To strive for China’s revival and overcome the “two profound changes,” he resorts to reunifying Taiwan. Accordingly, during his presidency, Beijing is squeezing the space for KMT to use the 92 Consensus.

Washington does not have a stance on the 92 Consensus, but I argue that the US-China competition is squeezing the 92 Consensus because this systemic imperative is changing Taiwanese people’s perception of cross-Strait relations. Briefly, the increasingly-aggressive China is making them afraid of reunification and oppose the 92 Consensus, but the escalating US-China conflict also cautions them against offending China. This explanation can partly explain why KMT still adheres to the 92 Consensus after this political rhetoric becomes unmarketable, but this explanation is not robust enough.

So, I turn to some domestic factors to explain KMT’s seemingly problematic mainland policy. I explore Taiwan’s electoral politics and find that the voter structure of KMT makes KMT afraid of changing its mainland policy. KMT supporters generally hold a positive opinion of the 92 Consensus, therefore, they oppose jettisoning the 92 Consensus. However, the number of these supporters is declining, so KMT has to take a centrist stance to cater to other voters. The conundrum is, the number of KMT’s basic supporters cannot help KMT win elections but can definitely doom KMT. Especially, if KMT drove off these supporters, KMT may even be unable to be the largest opposition party, let alone to be the ruling party.

In the fourth part, I push forward in the discussion of domestic factors. I expound on how different identities influence KMT's mainland policy. I refine the measurement of Taiwanese identities and contend that there are four Taiwanese identities that can influence the cross-Strait relations in different ways. There is an argument in previous studies that the emergence of Taiwanese identities is distancing Taiwanese people from the Chinese mainland, KMT and the ROC on Taiwan regime. But this definition does not align with the recent development. I argue that some kinds of Taiwanese identities have an identification with the ROC on Taiwan regime and are not in conflict with KMT should if KMT keeps a proper distance from the Chinese mainland. A refinement of identity measurements is not irrelevant to the analysis of KMT's mainland policy or Washington and Beijing's Taiwan policies because as is to be discussed in my thesis, different identities have different impacts on the three actors' policies.

In the fifth part, I conclude my thesis by combining the previous discussions with the recent developments including the passage of the National Security Law in Hong Kong, the Russia-Ukraine War, and China's Lockdown policy, all of which have implications for the future of the Beijing-Washington-Taipei triangle. My inference, which is also a prediction because we need more empirical evidence to test, is that in the face of a revisionist China Washington is planning to pass the buck to Taiwan, that the Chinese leaders have perceived a necessity of reunifying Taiwan in a foreseeable future, and that Beijing has found a possible model to rule Taiwan after incorporating it with forces.

The escalating US-China conflict and the emergence of Taiwanese identities are squeezing the 92 Consensus, but I think KMT has developed a strategy for survival. That is, whataboutism. KMT seems to eschew the questions related to the 92 Consensus and tries to win elections by criticizing DPP's same inability to respond to the US-China conflict or raising different issues as a countermeasure.

4. From the Framework of Neoclassical Realism

I use neoclassical realism as a framework for analysis in this thesis for four reasons. First, KMT's mainland policy is shaped by the US-China relationship and Taiwanese people's attitudes, therefore, the neoclassical realism that interrogates international and domestic level factors is more proper for my analysis.

Second, despite the critique against realism, I still argue for the hypothesis of neoclassical realism that power distribution in the international system and security are dominating Beijing and Washington's policies.³² In my discussion of China's grand strategy and the Chinese perception of the "two profound changes," I argue that the change of power distribution causes Beijing to change the dovish Taiwan policy. When I analyze Washington's China policy from George W Bush to Joe Biden, I argue that security rather than ideology plays a key role.

³² Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell etl. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20-1; Brian Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism," *Security Studies* 17, no.2(2008): 294-321.

Third, I dedicate about one third of the thesis body to the relationship between Taiwanese identities and KMT's mainland policy, which reflects the trait in neoclassical realism that power and identities can concurrently influence foreign policies.³³

Finally, in previous studies of the Washington-Beijing-Taipei triangle, it is argued that Taiwan can bandwagon, balance, or hedge. Yet, KMT is now focusing on whataboutism and shirking from figuring a solution to save Taiwan from wars. This phenomenon aligns with a neoclassical realist argument that even if states are faced with threats, they may improperly deal with the threats that could have been avoided or dealt with at low costs, a phenomenon called "under-balancing."³⁴ Randall L. Schweller argues that "under-balancing" happens when decision-makers misperceive the threatening state's intention or are concerned with domestic factors.

The previous reason can provide an explanation for KMT's adherence to the 92 Consensus, i.e., they believe that as long as Taiwan adheres to the 92 Consensus, China will not or cannot find a reason to attack Taiwan. Because it is hard to detect KMT leaders' thoughts, and there have been many similar accusations against KMT, I do not discuss this misperception in my thesis. The latter reason is tested in my thesis that KMT is afraid of displeasing its basic supporters and that KMT is still hoping to shape a Taiwanese identity in its favor.

II. Accommodate the 92 Consensus as a Modus Vivendi

1. Taiwan-Baiting: Make the Soft Hand Softer

High on the agenda of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao during their terms was to modernize the Chinese economy, which provided an economic base for Beijing to maintain domestic stability, incorporate Taiwan into the territory of the PRC, and recenter China in the world. It was not urgent for them to solve the Taiwan Issue during this process of modernization, but they must avoid the catastrophic aftermath of Taiwan's de jure independence because losing Taiwan can destroy the ruling legitimacy of the CPC and intercept China on the way to being recentered in the world.

Intimidated by the foreseeable calamity of the Taiwan independence and absorbed by the grand strategy, Beijing took a flexible approach to deal with the Taiwan Issue. They accommodated the 92 Consensus to shelve the sovereign disputes, leaving room and waiting for their preferred KMT to re-grasp power. Being said that, they were not sluggish or inactive in reunifying Taiwan. They did not adopt a hardline approach but they offered economic profits to Taiwanese people to solicit their support, an approach termed as "united fronts." Moreover, because what Beijing was pursuing at that time, i.e., a good neighbor policy, was accepted, if not welcomed, by Washington, Beijing's Taiwan policy enjoyed strong support from Washington as well.

The Catastrophe of Taiwan Independence

To understand why Beijing adopted a soft Taiwan policy in the early 2000s, especially for the first time accepted the 92 Consensus, it is necessary to understand the catastrophic implication of

³³ Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no.1(2010): 117-143.

³⁴ Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Under-balancing," *International Security* 29, no.2(2004): 167-8.

the Taiwan independence. I think because of this catastrophe, when DPP first came to power, Beijing chose to make a compromise over the definition of “one China.”

Generally, the Taiwan independence is disastrous for Beijing because it can endanger CPC’s ruling legitimacy. Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the socialist bloc, socialism as an ideology was no longer useful in legitimizing the regime of the CPC. In order to sustain their legitimacy, the CPC leaders resorted to nationalist patriotism for legitimacy.³⁵ Their self-claimed position can be found in an editorial of Xinhua News Agency, one of the prominent propaganda organs, that the CPC is “a staunch leading core for national revival and state reunification.”³⁶ The logic is that the CPC as the single ruling party of China is responsible for and capable of making China a wealthy and strong country to wash out the “century of humiliation.”³⁷ Taiwan constructed strongly as the relics of the “century of humiliation” since the 1950s has the very contribution to the ruling legitimacy and vice versa. For instance, when President Xi Jinping wanted to break the limitation on terms set by Deng Xiaoping, the strongman only second to Mao Zedong, to search for legitimacy, he needs to reiterate the possibility of reunifying Taiwan under his presidency.

The Taiwan independence has a direct impact on the sustainability of CPC’s rule. It also indirectly impacts China’s domestic stability. China as a multi-ethnicity country has a long-lasting predicament of dealing with different minor ethnicities to guarantee domestic stability.³⁸ Chinese domestic environment becomes more fragile since the rapid economic growth because of the widening social and ethnic cleavages. The Taiwan independence is the last straw that can destroy this fragile superpower. As argued by Melissa Brown, an independent Taiwan leaves a question to the mainland Chinese people that if Taiwanese people are allowed to separate from the Chinese nation because of the differences between Taiwanese and mainland Chinese, why not Tibetans, Uyghurs and Cantonese? In other words, the independence of Taiwan has “a domino effect that would break up the PRC.”³⁹

³⁵ Lowell Dittmer, “Taiwan’s Narrowing Strait: A Triangular Analysis of Taiwan’s Security since 2008,” in *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 19.

³⁶ Xinhua News Agency, “Taiwan Yu Xin Shidai Zhongguo Tongyi Shiye 台湾问题与新时代中国统一事业 [The Taiwan Question and the Reunification of China in the New Era],” August 10, 2022.

³⁷ In recent years, CPC is focusing attention on strengthening legitimacy by theory-construction. Here are some articles supporting this argument: Yi Qin and Binbin Guo, “Lun Zhongguo Gongchan Dangren De Chuxin Yu Shiming De Lilun Luoji, Lishi Luoji, Shijian Luoji 论中国共产党人初心与使命的理论逻辑、历史逻辑、实践逻辑 [The Theoretical, Historical and Practical Logic of the Original Aspiration and Mission of the Chinese Communists],” *Journal of Xinjiang Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 41, no. 5 (2020): 37-47; Zhenchao Ma, “Xin Zhongguo Chengli Yilai Zhongguo Gongchan Dang Zhengzhi Anquan Huayu: Neihan, Fazhan Ji Luoji 新中国成立以来中国共产党政治安全话语:内涵、发展及逻辑 [The Political Security Discourse of the Communist Party of China Since the Founding of the Peoples’ Republic of China: Connotation, Development and Logic],” *Public Security Studies* 4, no. 3 (2021): 35-62.

³⁸ Xiaozhu Sun and Yandong Chang, “Xinjiang Kuajing Minzu Wenti Yu Guojia Anquan 新疆跨境民族问题与国家安全 [Cross-border Ethnic Issues and National Security in Xinjiang],” *Journal of Sichuan Police Academy* 29, no. 06 (2017): 47-55.

³⁹ Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?: The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration On Changing Identities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 3, 247.

The catastrophic consequence of the Taiwan independence concerns the Chinese leaders as well. According to Susan Shirk, if Taiwan declared formal independence, the rivalries of these leaders would have a reason to oust them, and the PLA would stop supporting the civilian leaders, which left a vacuum for the opposition movement. “And unlike in a democracy, [p]olitical defeat could cost them and their families their livelihoods or even their lives.”⁴⁰ Because Jiang Zemin is an outsider to Beijing, and Hu Jintao is overshadowed by Jiang’s influence, while the PLA had more than a saying during their presidencies, personal gains and loss might be a reason why Jiang and Hu compromised a lot in the Taiwan issue.

Grand Strategy: Modernization First, Reunification Second

Generally, the grand strategy is a set of collective ideas of how to employ a state’s scarce resources to pursue its long-term strategic core interests.⁴¹ Barry Posen argues that “[a] grand strategy must identify likely threats to the state’s security and it must devise political, economic, military, and other remedies for those threats.”⁴² In the case of China, I think the major threats include China’s domestic instability and an irreconcilable conflict with the US over the Taiwan Issue.

According to Posen, “[p]riorities must be established among both threats and remedies because given an anarchical international environment, the number of possible threats is great, and given the inescapable limits of a national economy, resources are scarce.”⁴³ Posen’s argument exactly points out China’s dilemma that no more words are used. China is faced with a great number of possible international threats, including but not limited to Washington’s three island-chains, territorial disputes with neighbors, and terrorism at home and abroad. The existence of these threats is inescapable, therefore, China is more sensitive to domestic stability. The logic behind this consideration is self-evident: domestic problems are controllable but international ones are not. Therefore, China must control what it can control so that it can spare more resources to deal with unavoidable international conflicts.

Regarding priorities among threats and remedies, because I argue in the following sections that from 2000 to around 2014, Beijing perceived little possibility of threats from the US or Taiwan independence, they prioritized domestic issues. Chinese presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao relied on economic development to remedy domestic instability and undertake their united front works targeting Taiwan.⁴⁴ They used good neighbor policy and friendly attitudes toward the US as remedies for international threats. Moreover, this kind of strategy helps hedge against the “China threat theory” upheld by its neighbors.

⁴⁰ Shirk, *China*, 6-7.

⁴¹ Barry P. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 13-4; Paul Kennedy, “Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition,” in *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, ed. Paul Kennedy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 1-7.

⁴² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 13.

⁴³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 13.

⁴⁴ Kerry Brown argues that during this period, the economic growth created “harmonious” relationship among different communities within the greater China. See: Kerry Brown, *Hu Jintao: China’s Silent Ruler* (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Pub, 2012), 163.

Let us paraphrase the aforementioned discussions in a succinct way: China wants to restore its status as a strong power. To achieve this goal, it has to first modernize itself by engaging with the US to be integrated into various global institutions. Taiwan plays a paradoxical role in the grand strategy. For one thing, a stable Taiwan Strait is required before China finishes the domestic modernization. For another, after China finishes modernization, Taiwan must be incorporated into China so that China can become a marine power, a prerequisite to becoming a global strong power.

Now that I have introduced the concept of the grand strategy and defined China's grand strategy, I start to expound on my argument. It is widely circulated among scholars that CPC leaders had a century-long grand strategy of overcoming the US so that China can be re-centered in the world.⁴⁵ Before China achieved this goal, it hides its ambitions and capabilities, and conduct policies in a low-key way. This kind of belief was strengthened by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Chinese people often remind themselves that the Soviet lost the Cold War because of its poor economy, therefore, they are cautious about economic development and believe economic modernization is the key to solving internal and external problems.⁴⁶

China, albeit in rise, is faced with many internal and external challenges that could derail its rise. Therefore, Andrew Nathan argues that China is in search of security.⁴⁷ Susan Shirk argues that China is a "fragile superpower."⁴⁸ The premise of the CPC to maintain an open economy is to maintain its control over the domestic society, and the economic cooperation with other countries is used to strengthen China's power for goal-achievements along with better economic performance for its ruling legitimacy.⁴⁹ There has been no evidence that China wants to liberalize the Chinese political system after economic liberalization, let alone the economic liberalization is limited. The discourse that Taiwanese business people should invest more in China to get more leverage over Chinese politics during the Westward Movement is accordingly wishful.

Moreover, because the Chinese economy is energy-dependent but China does not have enough oil reserves, "[i]f China were to attack Taiwan, it would likely lose its access to Middle Eastern oil through combined maritime interdictions from the United States Navy's Seventh Fleet, Japan's Maritime Self Defense Forces" and so on.⁵⁰ For the same calculus, because a prosperous Chinese economy depends on international trade, China needs open sea lanes of communication.

⁴⁵ Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America As the Global Superpower* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2015); Michael D. Swaine, "The Policy Analyst and Historical Perspectives: Notes of a Practitioner," in *Past and Present In China's Foreign Policy: From "tribute System" to "peaceful Rise"*, ed. John E. Wills (Portland, Me: MerwinAsia, 2011), 1-2; Xia Cai, "China-US Relations In the Eyes of the Chinese Communist Party: An Insider's Perspective," Hoover Institution, June 29, 2021.

⁴⁶ Jian Yang, "The Rise of China: Chinese Perspectives," in *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, ed. Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (London: Routledge, 2009), 17-18; Pillsbury, *The Hundred-year Marathon*, 41.

⁴⁷ Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁴⁸ Shirk, *China*.

⁴⁹ Guoguang Wu, "The Politics of an Interim Truce in the Taiwan Strait," *China Information* 14, no. 1 (2000): 54-56.

⁵⁰ Kevin J. Cooney, "Chinese-American Hegemonic Competition in East Asia: A New Cold War or into the Arms of America?," in *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, ed. Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (London: Routledge, 2009), 47-49.

China may use military force or work through multilateral institutions to keep the sea lanes open. Because military force is not an option now, however, China shows its goodwill to its neighboring countries and increases its influence by abstaining from using forces.⁵¹

To overcome these challenges and survive threats in the future, China needs to modernize its economy, and fortunately for China, since the end of the Cold War, the US needed China to “support the status quo of a US-led regional and global order,” therefore, it helped China in modernization.⁵² On the other side, because China recognized that the unipolar world led by the US would last for a long time and understood that China would benefit from the engagement with the international economic system,⁵³ Beijing’s primary objective is to “de-securitize” China’s rise, that is, Beijing tries to persuade neighboring countries not to perceive China’s rise as a threat.⁵⁴ Against this backdrop, Beijing proposed the “Good Neighbor” policy to “delay these conflicts in order to avoid upsetting regional stability.”⁵⁵ Accommodating the 92 Consensus is one example of how China shelved its conflicts with the neighbors.

It has been proposed many times that Taiwan and the Chinese mainland can constitute a confederation to solve their disputes. The hostility of Beijing to incorporate Taiwan has alienated many Taiwanese people, which contributes to the declining number of Taiwanese people who regard themselves as Chinese. Therefore, a confederation seems to be a wise choice for Beijing if Beijing wants Taiwanese people to consider themselves as part of the Chinese nation and Taiwan as part of China. But Beijing does not accept such an option and has made it clear to the world that the reunification cannot be a mere formality and Taiwan must be a local government of China.

Even a confederation can eliminate the last symbol of China’s “century of humiliation” and makes more Taiwanese people identify with China, but Beijing dumps this option even without an attempt to first constitute a confederation and then transform Taiwan from a joining territory of this confederation into an inseparable territory of PRC. Underneath this paradox, I think the grand strategy of reviving China can be crystalized as making PRC a great power.⁵⁶ Therefore, I am encouraged to agree with Alan Wachman that Taiwan has a strategic significance for China.⁵⁷ According to Wachman, Beijing wants to incorporate Taiwan into the PRC territory not

⁵¹ Kevin J. Cooney, “Introduction,” in *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, ed. Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (London: Routledge, 2009), 11.

⁵² Björn Jerdén, “The Assertive China Narrative: Why It Is Wrong and How So Many Still Bought into It,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, no.1(2014): 186.

⁵³ Suisheng Zhao, “China’s Bottom Line and Incentives for a Peaceful Solution,” in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony’s College, Oxford, 2004), 85.

⁵⁴ Evelyn Goh, “US Strategic Relations with a Rising China: Trajectories and Impacts on Asia-Pacific Security,” in *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, ed. Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (London: Routledge, 2009), 63.

⁵⁵ Björn Jerdén and Linus Hagström, “Rethinking Japan’s China Policy: Japan as an Accommodator in the Rise of China, 1978–2011,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 12, no. 2(2012): 225.

⁵⁶ By italicizing PRC, I mean that CPC leaders want the revival of China, but this China must be a regime under their leadership. Therefore, they can accommodate the 92 Consensus and prefer KMT to DPP, but cannot accept a Taiwan with the ambition of recovering ROC sovereignty over the Chinese mainland.

⁵⁷ Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*.

due to their nationalism but because of Taiwan's "territorial salience," that is, Beijing needs to sufficiently control Taiwan so that PRC can project its power globally to become a global power.

I prefer to analyze Beijing's Taiwan policy from the perspective of grand strategy because grand strategy focuses on ideas projected into the distant future. This long-term perspective helps explain why some elusive short-term behaviors are feasible in the long run. If Beijing does not care about any long-term objectives, then reunifying Taiwan in formality is progress. But Beijing never considers such a proposal, which convinces me that Beijing's interpretation of the Chinese revival is equal to making the PRC a great power. This argument is also supported by many scholars. Wu Guoguang argues that an "interim truce agreement" could never be accepted to institutionalize the status quo by Beijing "because of the widely circulated assumption that China will become a great power in the next two or three decades."⁵⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski argues that because China is "patiently self-confident" in its capabilities and future, therefore, it does not need to resort to forces to solve the Taiwan Issue immediately.⁵⁹

Paradigm Shift: Development and Stability First

CPC's Taiwan policy experienced a series of paradigm shifts, notably from Mao Zedong's "Liberating Taiwan" to "Reunifying Taiwan" after Mao's death. How many paradigm shifts it had experienced, what are the turning points, and what were exactly included in each shift are three questions I do not intend to elaborate on. Suffice it to say that since Jiang Zemin released his "eight points' proposal" in 1995, Beijing softened its stance on the Taiwan Issue for the first time by not interpreting the "one China principle" rigidly that China is solely represented by PRC, and Taiwan is part of China.⁶⁰

One year later after offering this olive branch, however, Beijing launched a military exercise and military test in reaction to Lee Teng-hui's Cornell Visit, which was termed the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis. It is the first Taiwan Strait Crisis during the post-Mao period, but it does not mean that President Jiang terminated his soft stances toward Taiwan. According to Edward Friedman, from 1995 to 1996, President Jiang was continuing the grand strategy of "promot[ing] economic reform agenda needed for China's modernization," and his hawkish stance was intended at conciliating domestic hawks, especially those who are high-echelons within PLA. For Jiang, Taiwan could contribute to the Chinese economy by investment, which was especially important after the West sanctioned China economically due to the Tiananmen Square Incident. Therefore, he had to find a balancing point to appease these hawks.⁶¹

Friedman's argument is grounded. As has been discussed in the last sections, China at that time had a grand strategy of modernization. This grand strategy was aimed at providing the economic power for Beijing to reunify Taiwan in the future but was not wholly welcomed by conservative hawks within the party. These hawks opposed making compromises with Taipei, therefore, as a

⁵⁸ Wu, "The Politics of an Interim Truce," 53-54.

⁵⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "From Hope to Audacity: Appraising Obama's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2010): 26-28.

⁶⁰ Zhao, "China's Bottom Line and Incentives for a Peaceful Solution," 91-92.

⁶¹ Edward Friedman, "America's Pivots to Asia and the Taiwan Strait Crises," in *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 65.

reformist leader, it is advised for Jiang to use a military exercise to retaliate against Taipei, placate intra-party hawks, and not offend the actors (the US, Taiwanese business people, and Chinese neighbors like Japan) who were willing to help modernize Chinese economy.

Friedman's argument is also supported by other scholars' research. For instance, Wu Guoguang, an advisor for President Jiang's predecessor, argues that in the process of power transition, the CPC leaders with weak legitimacy would use the Taiwan Issue to instigate domestic nationalism and then utilize this nationalism to bolster their legitimacy. Jiang Zemin, as the weak leader and an outsider to Beijing, relied heavily on this strategy to bolster his legitimacy.⁶²

The previous discussion alluded to one cause of the paradigm shift, i.e., to pursue their grand strategy under a changing international and domestic environment, the CPC leadership needs to adjust their policies accordingly. The second reason why CPC has to make a paradigm shift is due to the internal dynamics happened in Taiwan since the last years of Chiang Ching-kuo. Chiang started to democratize Taiwan in the late 1980s, which, according to some scholars, was intended by him to resist the pressure from Beijing to incorporate Taiwan. The logic is that after the democratization, the undemocratic China is to be faced with more pressure from the Taiwanese public and a democratic global society after the second wave of democratization since the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

As readers would see in the fifth part of this thesis, whether Chiang intended to consolidate Taiwanese democracy or to legitimize the regime of ROC over Taiwan, this democratization did plant the seed of civic nationalism in Taiwan to resist the gravitation toward China. Lee's de-sinicization policy and the appearance of a Taiwanese identity further decrease Taiwanese people's willingness to be reunified by Beijing. Meanwhile, because the restriction on the Taiwanese investment in China was lifted since the 1980s, the increasing amount of Taiwanese business in China gives Taiwan more leverage in dealing with the cross-Strait relations. These Taiwanese domestic dynamics interact with the international set, requiring CPC to refine their Taiwan policy to deal with the increasingly complicated Taiwan Issue. The traditional hardline policy of "liberating Taiwan" does not suffice to solve the thorny problem.

According to Bin Yu, as the Taiwan Issue becomes more tricky and complicated, Jiang was restrained from dealing with it. He needed to "seek technical inputs from experts in those highly specialized areas," but there are no "policy-making communit[ies]" for him to use.⁶³ Firstly, there was no institutionalized approach for the paramount leader to deal with the Taiwan Issue. The bureaucracy was destroyed by Mao Zedong. Deng Xiaoping restored it but there were still no institutions, because Deng as a strongman, was able to bypass any rules and made decisions with his personal influence. Therefore, when Jiang was selected as the paramount leader, he had to first institutionalize a process to deal with the increasingly complicated Taiwan Issue.⁶⁴ Secondly, Jiang was an outsider to Beijing and there were no reliable advisors for him to employ.

⁶² Guoguang Wu, "Passions, Politics, and Politicians: Beijing between Taipei and Washington," *The Pacific Review* 17, no.2 (2004): 179-98.

⁶³ Bin Yu, "Structure and Process Behind Beijing's Policy Towards Taiwan," in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, edited by Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2004), 24-26.

⁶⁴ Yu, "Structure and Process Behind Beijing's Policy Towards Taiwan," 24-26.

He had to urge Shanghai where he worked and ruled for decades, to develop their own Taiwan policy research institute to rely on.⁶⁵ The Shanghai Taiwan Research Institute (上海台湾问题研究所) was established in 1999 by Wang Daohan. The establishment of this institute can be deemed as a milestone of Jiang's efforts to institutionalize the Taiwan policy-making process, however, it remains ambiguous when the paradigm shift ended.

I think there are three characteristics of Jiang's paradigm shift in the Taiwan Issue. The first and foremost important one is to adjust the Taiwan policy to cater to Beijing's grand strategy, which requires China to refrain from an assertive stance towards Taiwan.

Another characteristic of Jiang's paradigm was to prioritize stability. This was once again embodied by Jiang's compromise to the 92 Consensus. Beijing had never expressed a positive opinion on the 92 Consensus, but when the independence-seeking DPP came to power in 2000, things changed. President Jiang needed Taipei to at least maintain the status quo but could not achieve this objective by force. Accepting the 92 Consensus as a *modus vivendi* to create a nebulous atmosphere was a product of these new developments.

According to Liu Xiangping, scholars across the Taiwan Strait proposed different variations of the 92 Consensus around early 2000, which proved that the reception of the 92 Consensus was a tacit choice of both sides.⁶⁶ For example, he listed the "1992 Year Consensus (1992年共识)" proposed by Xu Shishuan, the then-director of Taiwan Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Social Science, and "'Two Meetings' 92 Year Consensus ('两会' 九二年共识)" proposed by another mainland scholar named Xu Bodong. Regarding Taiwanese scholars, Liu Xiangping gives only one example that Lo Chih-cheng created the word "92 Consensus (九二共识)" to refer to the consensus reached by Beijing and Taipei in 1992 in an article named "Myth of One China with Respective Interpretations" published in the *China Times* on April 2nd 2000.

However, the real scenario is slightly different from Xiangping Liu's narrative. From the archive of Lo's original article and an article in *China Times*, we can find that Lo Chih-cheng used the word "92 Consensus" to refer to the ostensible consensus disapprovingly.⁶⁷ Lo, as an official of Chen Shui-bian administration, doubted whether the two sides had reached consensus on "one China with respective interpretations" in 1992. With Taiwan's narrowing international space, he tended to believe the "creative ambiguity" created by the 92 Consensus was only wishful in solving the disputes.

My argument is that Beijing accommodated the 92 Consensus as a *modus vivendi* when faced with the radical change in Taiwan. Beijing could not bear the catastrophic aftermath of Taiwan's independence, therefore, to stabilize the cross-strait relations, Beijing had to make a compromise. My argument is supported by Liu Xiangping's statistics that from November 2000 to August

⁶⁵ Yu, "Structure and Process Behind Beijing's Policy Towards Taiwan," 28.

⁶⁶ Liu, "A Critical Review of the Relationship between the '92 Consensus' and the Mainland's Taiwan Policy," 17-18.

⁶⁷ Chen, "The First Person to Propose the 1992 Consensus was a DPP Legislator Lo Chih-cheng"; Lo, "The Myth of 'One China with Two Interpretations'."

2002, there had been 15 times Beijing appealed to Chen to accept the 92 Consensus.⁶⁸ Jiang needed stability not only because the separation of Taiwan from China could damage his ruling legitimacy but also because a stable Taiwan Strait is the prerequisite for China to be integrated into various international institutions and implement the “Good Neighbor policy”.

One thing worthy of noting is that “Beijing was initially very alarmed by Chen’s election and sought...to intimidate Taiwan’s citizens and the new ROC government [by military forces].”⁶⁹ From hindsight, we can find that hawkish military leaders did not take over the reign of Taiwan policy. Yet, the silence of the hawkish PLA leaders meant that the general secretary of CPC was still dominant in the Taiwan policy, though constrained by PLA hawks.⁷⁰ In other words, when we study Beijing’s Taiwan policy, we can neglect influence of PLA leaders who are more nationalist and do not want to keep a low-key profile to pursue the grand strategy. This simplification frees us from taking into consideration the conflicting roles of CPC civil leaders and PLA military leaders. Substantively, CPC civil leaders play the determining role in the Taiwan policy-making process while the PLA leaders play only the restraining role.

Around 2001, Beijing took a soft stance toward Taiwan by emphasizing one China and seldom mentioned reunification.⁷¹ Before that, China’s prescriptive discourse regarding “one China” is that: there is only one China in the world, Taiwan is part of China, and People’s Republic of China is the only legitimate government that represents China, which is termed “the old three sentences.” But after making the compromise with Taiwan, the last sentence is changed, and “the new three sentences” becomes that: there is only one China in the world, Taiwan is part of China, and it is unallowable to divide China’s sovereignty and land.⁷²

The “new three sentences” do not indicate which government will represent the whole China that includes both Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, giving Taipei some space to represent its position. As argued by Yu-shan Wu, China at that time proposed to treat both Taiwan and mainland China as parts of China because Beijing worried about the risk “that Chen might lead Taiwan to drift away from the mainland,” so “Beijing focused its rhetoric on Taiwan’s National Unification Guidelines.”⁷³ But this slight change in fact did not meet the requirement of those who oppose to reunification. Neither does it reflect the original meaning of “one China” proposed by Taipei’s National Unification Council because in 1992 Taipei’s National Unification Guidelines only agreed that the Chinese mainland and Taiwan belong to “one China,” but not the same China.

⁶⁸ Liu, “A Critical Review of the Relationship between the ‘92 Consensus’ and the Mainland’s Taiwan Policy,” 18-23.

⁶⁹ Chih-cheng Lo, “New Leadership Team, New Approaches toward Taiwan?,” in *China Under Hu Jintao: Opportunities, Dangers, And Dilemmas: Opportunities, Dangers, and Dilemmas*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng, Jacques deLisle, and Deborah Brown (Singapore: World Scientific, 2016), 362.

⁷⁰ Lo, “New Leadership Team, New Approaches toward Taiwan?,” 358-63.

⁷¹ Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 79-81.

⁷² “Gangmei: Jiuer Gongshi Sehnhua Yu Zhengzhi Dingwei Jietao 港媒：九二共识深化与政治定位解套 [Hong Kong Media: Deepen the 92 Consensus and Freedom from Political Position],” *Ifeng*, July 12, 2012.

⁷³ Yu-Shan Wu, “TAIWAN IN 2000 Managing the Aftershocks from Power Transfer,” *Asian Survey* 41, no. 1 (2001): 43- 44.

It is widely accepted by scholars that from 2000 to 2001, Beijing softened their stance toward Taiwan.⁷⁴ My explanation is that Beijing made a compromise so that they could sustain their grand strategy. Contrary to this soft stance, however, in the *One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue White Book* in 2000, Beijing warned to use forces to solve the Taiwan issue if Taipei indefinitely declined negotiations. Zhao Suisheng interpreted this as “Beijing’s increasing anxiety over Taiwan’s rejection of its terms for national reunification.”⁷⁵

Another explanation for this conflicting stance is the influence of hawks which I discussed before when talking about Jiang’s strategy to deal with the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Melissa Brown disclosed that one month before the 2000 ROC presidential election, there was “a behind-the-scenes struggle for control of the Communist Party and the government of the PRC.” To maintain his legitimacy, President Jiang Zemin “felt the need to appear tough on Taiwan in order to maintain the support of hardliners in the military.”⁷⁶ According to Edward Friedman, however, during this period, Beijing did not worsen the situation and tried to court DPP.⁷⁷ In other words, accommodating the 92 Consensus proposed by KMT and imposing it on DPP was a *modus vivendi* for Beijing to maintain the status quo so that Beijing can sustain their grand strategy. But on the other side, President Jiang needed some tough actions like publishing the *One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue White Book* to maintain his rule so that he can continue to lead the CPC to pursue the grand strategy.

United Fronts: A “Just” Cause Enjoys “Supports” from Washington and Taiwanese People

In the 16th National Congress of CPC, President Jiang proposed a new idea of “putting our hope on the Taiwanese people (寄希望于台湾人民).” Meanwhile, when Hu Jintao became the CCP leader in 2002, they had learned from the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis that hardline policy would alienate the Taiwanese people and made Asian neighbors welcome the US pivot to Asia, therefore, they soften their policies.⁷⁸ But a soft stance does not mean inactive, as argued by Bin Yu, Beijing at that time was active in its united fronts policy.⁷⁹ Beijing adopted “the united front [offensive] to isolate Chen Shui-bian” by labeling most DPP members as non-separatists and greeting Taiwanese business people warmly.⁸⁰ “Because Beijing’s position is now almost identical with that taken by the KMT government of the early 1990s,” Beijing found allies in Taiwan, including KMT, PFP, and NP,⁸¹ which laid the foundation for pan-Blue visit to the Chinese mainland. In all, during this period, Beijing cooperated with Taiwanese businesspeople, Taiwan political parties, and especially Washington to deter Chen from seeking independence.

Beijing can use the united fronts should be credited to CPC leaders’ ability to control the Taiwan-policy-making-process. Because their power was intact, they did not need to submit to

⁷⁴ Dittmer, “Taiwan’s Narrowing Strait,” 22; Jean-Pierre Cabestan, “Marginalizing Taiwan Weakens Mainland Security,” in *China’s Rise, Taiwan’s Dilemmas and International Peace*, ed. Edward Friedman (London: Routledge, 2006), 238; Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 79-81; Zhao, “China’s Bottom Line and Incentives for a Peaceful Solution,” 85.

⁷⁵ Zhao, “China’s Bottom Line and Incentives for a Peaceful Solution,” 85.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 246.

⁷⁷ Friedman, “America’s Pivots to Asia and the Taiwan Strait Crises,” 68.

⁷⁸ Friedman, “America’s Pivots to Asia and the Taiwan Strait Crises,” 67.

⁷⁹ Yu, “Structure and Process Behind Beijing’s Policy Towards Taiwan,” 33-34.

⁸⁰ Zhao, “China’s Bottom Line and Incentives for a Peaceful Solution,” 88-89.

⁸¹ Wu, “TAIWAN IN 2000,” 44.

PLA's nationalism. Moreover, the united fronts policy is evidence of Washington's success in its engagement policy. When "PRC had no channel to express its attitude on the Taiwan issue to the international community" in the 1950s, it used "a strategy of focused military threat."⁸² But after being integrated into the global society, PRC in the early 21st century sought to resort to international institutions to narrow Taiwan's international space. For example, when pursuing its good neighbor policy, China never renounces the right of using forces to solve the Taiwan Issue.⁸³ Washington was also successful in the sense that "Beijing welcomed Washington keeping Chen in check." Although the previous PRC leaders opposed the US to intervene in China's internal affairs, they trusted Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.⁸⁴ Yet, this rosy scenario is only transient because it is the domestic and international factors that forced PRC to not put their face against Washington.

Finally, Chen Shui-bian's losing the legislative election in 2004 also convinced Beijing to wait until 2008 when KMT can come to power.⁸⁵ According to Richard Bush, Beijing at that time believed that Ma Ying-jeou would push forward their political negotiation over the cross-Strait relations, therefore, Beijing was patient and offered more benefits to the Taiwanese people.⁸⁶

Taiwan Policy under Hu: Institutionalized, Conservative and Generous

In 2004, Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang Zemin as the chairman of the Central Military Commission. Possibly, Hu needed to get the support from PLA leaders so he had to show that he was less willing to compromise on Taiwan. Nevertheless, when Hu took power, China was in a crucial time when this fragile power was afflicted by "economic disparity, the problems resulting from China's accession to the WTO, a rising unemployment rate, rampant official corruption, the restructuring of state-owned enterprises, bad loans, and increased demand for political reform."⁸⁷ As a result, to maintain an environment conducive to economic development, stability was stressed and there was a continuity between Jiang and Hu's Taiwan policy.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, Hu's Taiwan policy shared the same skin as Jiang's but Hu's Taiwan policy was more sophisticated. According to Kerry Brown, Hu's personality makes him behave in a conservative and low-key way, different from his predecessor Jiang Zemin. Also, during the Hu period, his leadership has been institutionalized and most of his policies became a result of the party's collective will.⁸⁸ These factors make Hu behave in a more conservative way. The Anti-Secession Law is an example of Hu's conservativeness.

Chen Shui-bian won the 2004 presidential election controversially: he defeated the KMT contender Lien Chan by a trivial margin; police and military personnel who were regarded as the loyal voter of KMT were prohibited from voting; Chen and his vice president Annette Lu was shot during a campaign, which motivated many Taiwanese people to vote for them. These

⁸² Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 8.

⁸³ Denny Roy, "Taiwan's Response to the Rise of China," in *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, ed. Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (London: Routledge, 2009), 120-21.

⁸⁴ Friedman, "America's Pivots to Asia and the Taiwan Strait Crises," 68; Cabestan, "Marginalizing Taiwan Weakens Mainland Security," 238.

⁸⁵ Cabestan, "Marginalizing Taiwan Weakens Mainland Security," 240.

⁸⁶ This information is from a speech given by Dr. Richard Bush on March 25, 2021 at the University of Virginia.

⁸⁷ Lo, "New Leadership Team, New Approaches toward Taiwan?," 350-54.

⁸⁸ Brown, *Hu Jintao*, 140, 198-223.

controversies devalued the legitimacy of Chen's presidency. Moreover, TSU, a party more radical than DPP in cross-Strait relations, was squeezing DPP's space in elections. Therefore, to strengthen his ruling legitimacy, Chen appealed to radicalism or even brinkmanship. He appealed to the Taiwanese public to hold a referendum to "rectify" Taiwan's national name. Chen Shui-bian's "efforts to consolidate Taiwan's de jure independence" were "[t]o compensate his inability to compensate for his inability to reverse the trend of growing economic dependence on mainland China".⁸⁹ Under this background, the Anti-Secession Law passed in 2005 was interpreted by a Chinese scholar as to "permit the PRC to use force to restrain Taiwan from establishing or declaring independence from China, while providing sufficient incentive for the ROC regime to remain in the orbit of China."⁹⁰

However, Anti-Secession Law was not the cornerstone of Hu Jintao's Taiwan policy, it was aimed to deter Taiwan from pursuing de jure independence.⁹¹ Different from his predecessors, Hu prioritized economic development and was more cautious. Lee Teng-hui's Cornell Visit did not trample Beijing's bottom lines essentially, and Washington made every effort to placate Beijing, but Jiang launched the first military exercise across the Taiwan Strait after 1979. Chen's referendum and discourses obviously offended Beijing, but Hu did not even resort to force. Rather, he used to law to placate hawks, while focusing more on the united fronts approach, a method with little risks. "For most of the period since 1949, the PRC vacillated between sticks and carrots, hard and soft policies, to deal with Taiwan. It did not often present both." But since the passage of the Anti-Secession Law in 2005, Beijing "has signaled its intention to make its sticks more menacing while offering carrots that it hopes will be more alluring."⁹²

Hu's Taiwan policy is more sophisticated because of his prudent personality. It is also more sophisticated in the sense that Hu emphasized economic tools. As we have discussed before, foreseeing the prospect of KMT returning to power in 2008, Beijing invited pan-Blue politicians to visit Beijing and promised several preferential treaties to KMT chairman Lien Chan. Fortunately for Hu, the Chinese economy at that time empowered Hu to make his "carrots" sweeter. The economic growth during his presidency created a "harmonious" relationship between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese.⁹³

2. When Washington was Preoccupied with Other Accidents

When it entered the 21st century, the president candidate George W. Bush announced during a campaign activity that his administration would "be clear about Taiwan",⁹⁴ which seemed to end Washington's long-lasting strategic ambiguity policy since 1979. Taiwan had been an asset for the US to play the "China card" for a long time, therefore, with China's emerging ambition over East Asia and the consequent threats, Bush's words seemed to herald a significant change in Washington's Taiwan Policy. However, the outbreak of the 9/11 terrorist attack restrained the

⁸⁹ Yun-Han Chu, "Navigating between China and the United States: Taiwan's Politics of Identity," in *Taiwanese Identity In the Twenty-first Century: Domestic, Regional, and Global Perspectives*, ed. Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2011), 140.

⁹⁰ Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 105.

⁹¹ Shu Keng and Gunter Schubert, "Agents of Taiwan-China Unification? The Political Roles of Taiwanese Business People in the Process of Cross-Strait Integration," *Asian Survey* 50, no. 2 (2010): 292-93.

⁹² Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 15.

⁹³ Brown, *Hu Jintao: China's Silent Ruler*, 163.

⁹⁴ David E. Sanger, "US Would Defense Taiwan, Bush Says.," *New York Times*, February 26, 2001.

Bush administration from disappointing China. Obama was as aspirational as his predecessor before coming to office but his China policy ended in the same predicament. America's hegemon status was harmed by the 2008 Financial Crisis, which made Obama unable to achieve the expected outcomes in his "Pivot" to Asia policy.

In this part, I argue that security rather than ideology was a key factor in shaping Washington's China policy. George W. Bush and Barack Obama planned to be more hawkish than their predecessors in dealing with the Taiwan Issue for the sake of security, but they ended up preoccupied with the aftermaths of accidents of the 9/11 Incident and the 2008 Recession. They did not pay enough attention to how KMT interpreted the 92 Consensus during this period but just accommodated it as a *modus vivendi* that can stabilize the region, despite that the 92 Consensus might have a negative impact on the regional security.

Security Shapes Washington's China Policy

The US-China relationship was improved and differences between the two countries were reduced after Deng Xiaoping opened China to the world. Unfortunately, after the Cold War, the bilateral tensions increased that in 1994 President Clinton threatened to end China's most favored nation trading status unless China could meet the "human rights conditions", that the two countries confronted militarily each other in 1996, that Chinese embassy in former Yugoslavia was bombed by the US militaries, and that in April 2001 a US EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft collided with a Chinese fighter jet, which caused the loss of a Chinese pilot.⁹⁵

These tensions worsened the US-China relations. But without these tensions, could the US and China really be allies? The Taiwan issue has been a "principal obstacle to U.S.-China relations" for a long time because the two countries' security depends on Taiwan.⁹⁶ Since long ago, the American government has been repeating to condemn China for human rights issues like China's "coercive population control policies," the enforcement of production on prisoners, and other human issues like Tibet.⁹⁷ In other words, security and ideological factors like human rights are the factors that determine the US-China relations.

Being said that, I argue that security is far more influential than ideology in shaping Washington's hawkish attitudes in dealing with the Taiwan Issue.⁹⁸ There had been several times that America made compromises with China in exchange for security at the expense of its desired ideology.

In his book *Formosa Betrayed*, George Kerr, a former US diplomat to Taiwan who witnessed the KMT's massacre of Taiwanese people in the 228 Incident, discloses that after the nationalist

⁹⁵ Qingguo Jia, "The Impact of 9-11 on Sino-US Relations: A Preliminary Assessment," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 3, no. 2 (2003): 159-163.

⁹⁶ Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1992), 15-6.

⁹⁷ Marc Koehler, "The Effects of 9/11 on China's Strategic Environment: Illusive Gains and Tangible Setbacks," *Joint Force Quarterly* 68, no.1 (2013): 92.

⁹⁸ Steve Tsang also argues that even if different US administrations have different Taiwan policies, they unanimously want to protest the US security, see: Steve Tsang, "War or Peace Across the Taiwan Strait," in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2004), 5-6.

government lost the north China and Washington anticipated a communist victory on the Chinese mainland, Washington jettisoned their plan of forsaking the authoritarian Chiang Kai-shek and decided to make Taiwan a “free China” against the “communist China.”⁹⁹ It is worth noting that different American decision-making organizations had their respective ideas regarding this change, but they unanimously agreed on “betraying” Taiwan, that is, they did not support the Taiwan independence that might save the people from Chiang’s dictatorship. Specifically, the State Department decided to abandon Chiang and Taiwan, but they ignored the humanitarian disaster on the island; the military leaders decided to support Chiang because they did not want to let “Formosa fall into hostile hands.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, disputes between different institutions cannot be a pretext for Washington’s inhuman decision of making Taiwan a fortress against the communism.

As Masahiro Wakabayashi argues, the loss of China convinced the US to act as an informal empire over Taiwan,¹⁰¹ i.e., the US had no sovereignty over Taiwan but exerted a strong influence over Taiwan, making Taiwan a de facto colony. Although it is beyond the scope of my argument, it may be helpful to mention that the US is an informal empire that exerts influence to control other countries has been widely circulated among scholars.¹⁰² Deducing from this argument, I think that it is not problematic to argue that security shaped Washington’s policies more than ideology did.

Alliance with China to counterbalance the Soviet Union and the contemplation to abandon Taiwan during the 1970s also reflect Washington’s priority over security. Ironically, when it comes to the possibility of democratization in China, this scenario concerns but does not satisfy Washington because of the possible negative impact on regional stability.¹⁰³ Because concerns of security overshadow ideologies, it is not surprising that even though Washington decided to be more hardline on the Taiwan Issue since George W. Bush, it took more than a decade for Washington to complete the paradigm shift.

Terrorism Arrested Bush’s Attention

Because security is more prioritized than ideology, after terrorism presented itself to endanger the US, the herald of a clear Taiwan policy during Bush’s presidency became a prophecy that did not come to pass. The 9/11 terrorist attack ended the post-Cold War era when the US was the sole superpower and perceived little threats over the world, which consequently forced

⁹⁹ George H. Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

¹⁰⁰ Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed*, 382-3.

¹⁰¹ Masahiro Wakabayashi, *Zhanhou Taiwan Zhengzhi Shi: Zhonghua Minguo Taiwanhua de Licheng 戰後台灣政治史：中華民國台灣化的歷程* [A Political History of Post-War Taiwan: The Process of Republic of China Transformed into Taiwan], trans. Hung Yu-ru (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2016), 69-74.

¹⁰² Among the cases and scholars who study on the US as an informal empire, Chalmers Johnson’s research deserves the most attention. Johnson as a self-claimed defender of the US during the Cold War was converted into a critic of the US imperialism overseas after he studies Washington’s foreign policies. Especially, the US military presence in Okinawa was assuming China as an enemy, which attested more to the conclusion that security shaped Washington’s China policies. For an example of Johnson’s research, see: Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (Austin, Texas: Holt Paperbacks, 2001), 34-64.

¹⁰³ Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, “Introduction,” in *China Threat: Perceptions Myths*, ed. Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 5.

Washington to give anti-terrorism the most priority.¹⁰⁴ The re-array of Washington's to-do-list prioritized the anti-terrorist cooperation that created a benign atmosphere for China and America to improve their relationship,¹⁰⁵ partly because the US military capabilities and Washington decision-makers' attention were trapped and attracted by Middle East.¹⁰⁶

Before the 9/11 Incident, the Bush administration's China policy was "con-gagement", i.e., "containment" in security issues and 'engagement' in economic matters," but after the terrorist attack, Bush focused more on "seeking common ground and respecting differences."¹⁰⁷ However, it is worth repeating that the two countries had not changed their Taiwan policies. For Washington, stability is still the on top of its agenda. Whether to cooperate or confront China in the Taiwan Strait in the mid- or long-term depends on China's action to create a "mutual prosperity" for China and the US.¹⁰⁸ The word "mutual prosperity" alludes that Washington's Taiwan policy is contingent on America's security and excludes any influences from Taiwan should these influences be irrespective of the US interests.

Security comes first, therefore, during the Chen administration, there was a paradoxical phenomenon across the Taiwan Strait. For one thing, Washington modified its "one China policy" slightly. Since 2001, Chen Shui-bian was allowed to visit the US on his way to countries with diplomatic relationships with ROC. For many years, American diplomats working for the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) lost their identities as governmental employees but in 2003, the Bush administration secured the necessary legislation to negate this requirement. Synchronous with this exemption, these US diplomats could meet with their Taiwanese counterparts without restraints.¹⁰⁹

But on the other side, the vision of treating Taiwan as an anti-communist fort during the Chen Shui-bian period was "drowned out by concerns over cross-strait conflict."¹¹⁰ Washington helped deter Chen from declaring a de jure independence. For example, when the Chinese president Jiang Zemin visited the US in 2002, President Bush promised him that the US did not support the Taiwan Independence. In 2008 when Chen Shui-bian held a referendum on recovering ROC's United Nations membership, Washington opposed Chen publicly. Washington's inconsistent attitudes once again prove that security of the US rather than ideology propagandized by the US

¹⁰⁴ Kuniharu Kakihara, *The Post-9/11 Paradigm Shift and Its Effects on East Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Policy Studies, 2003), 1-4.

¹⁰⁵ Qingguo Jia, "One Administration, Two Voices: US China Policy during Bush's First Term," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 6, no. 1 (2006): 23-36.

¹⁰⁶ Marc Koehler, "The Effects of 9/11 on China's Strategic Environment: Illusive Gains and Tangible Setbacks," *Joint Force Quarterly* 68, no.1 (2013): 93-94.

¹⁰⁷ Jiann-fa Yan, "Taiwan's Bottom Line," in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2004), 99-101. It is widely circulated among scholars that the tension between America and China was eased after the 9/11 Attack, see also: Brown, *Hu Jintao: China's Silent Ruler*, 107.

¹⁰⁸ Kuniharu Kakihara, *The Post-9/11 Paradigm Shift and Its Effects on East Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Policy Studies, 2003), 10-13.

¹⁰⁹ Washington did more than these cases, see: Richard C. Bush, *A One-China Primer* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2017), 15-7.

¹¹⁰ Steven Philips, "Why Taiwan? ROC Leaders Explain Taiwan's Strategic Value," in *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 160-61.

decides its One China policy. Therefore, when Chen appealed to brinkmanship, destabilizing regional security, he pushed the US to Beijing's side.

Especially under the context of China's "Good Neighbor" policy and America's being trapped in the Middle East, Chen's brinkmanship was not welcomed by Washington. For instance, when Chen announced to cease the National Unification Guideline and the National Unification Council, two symbols of Taiwan as part of China, Washington criticized him as irresponsible and expressed frustration over him.¹¹¹ As a result, when KMT contender Ma Ying-jeou accepted the 92 Consensus to start a Cross-Strait rapprochement and ascended to his presidency in 2008, he enjoyed strong support from Washington.¹¹²

Note that, however, when the US-China relations processed smoothly while the cross-Strait relations deteriorated from 2001 to 2008, the concern of the "China threat" was still deeply rooted in Washington. China's "Good Neighbor" policy and moderate attitude towards the US did not signify a peaceful China-US relationship in the long-term because PLA did not slow down the pace of military buildup "targeted at Taiwan and US forces that might help Taiwan."¹¹³

The US hawks were active throughout the post-9/11 Bush presidency.¹¹⁴ Despite the olive branch offered by Hu Jintao after the Terrorist Attack, "[t]he US Defense Department was slow to resume high-level contacts with China, reflecting continued wariness in the face of China's ongoing military build-up focused on dealing with Taiwan and US forces that may seek to protect Taiwan, but formal relations at various senior levels were resumed by late 2002."¹¹⁵ Although Bush opposed to Chen's opportunism, America had a closer military relationship with Taiwan, which "cause[d] US officials to view with concern Taiwan's declining defense spending and less than resolute efforts to deal with organizational and equipment deficiencies in the face of the growing PLA threat."¹¹⁶ In other words, since the US did not abandon its commitment to Taiwan, it should consider the possibility of a war with China, which required Taiwan to strengthen the Taiwanese military power.

Ma's victory and the marketability of the 92 Consensus should be credited to Chen. There are two contending explanations why Washington had to tilt towards or even accommodate Beijing and KMT. The first argument stresses the decline of the US after the 9/11 Terrorist Attack. As argued before, the US was trapped in the Middle East during this period, and according to Robert Ross, it lost the ability to undermine Beijing's "capabilities and credibility" to endanger Taiwan.¹¹⁷ That is, augment of support from Washington to Taiwan does not make it safer and reduction of support does not make it more danger. This inability left the room for the "risk-

¹¹¹ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 278.

¹¹² Dean P. Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy: Security, Nationalism, and the 1992 Consensus* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 106-08.

¹¹³ Robert Sutter, "China's Good Neighbor Policy and Its Implications for Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 13, no. 41 (2004): 718, 725.

¹¹⁴ Qingguo Jia, "One Administration, Two Voices: US China Policy during Bush's First Term," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 6, no. 1 (2006): 23-36.

¹¹⁵ Sutter, "China's Good Neighbor Policy and Its Implications for Taiwan," 718, 725.

¹¹⁶ Sutter, "China's Good Neighbor Policy and Its Implications for Taiwan," 718, 731.

¹¹⁷ Robert S. Ross, "Explaining Taiwan's Revisionist Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no.48 (2006): 451.

acceptant leader” Chen Shui-bian to pursue the de jure independence of Taiwan that is proactive to Beijing.¹¹⁸

The second argument alludes to Washington’s influence. Because the US serves as a “pivot...endeavoring to balance between [the two sides],” after Taiwan deviated from the status quo, Washington has to “shift to a pro-Beijing ‘tilt’ in order to temper provocative Democratic Progressive Party moves toward formal independence.”¹¹⁹ In other words, Chen reinvigorated the merits of the 1992 Consensus by disrupting the Washington-Taipei relations.¹²⁰

In my opinion, during the Bush presidency, the two arguments worked. The decline forced the US to accommodate China’s policy over Taiwan should it be harmless to the US interests. If the US were as powerful as before, it could confront China militarily in the Taiwan Strait as it did during the Cold War and in 1996. On the other hand, the US was still more powerful than China and had a saying in the Taiwan issue. If the US were weaker, it should have abandoned Taiwan rather than selling arms to Taiwan or enlarging the international space of Taiwan. Because this decline was “limited,” and it was too early for the US to yield to China, Bush balanced between China and Taiwan to maintain a peaceful but divided Taiwan Strait that serves the US interests the best.

Recession Haunted Obama

Obama inherited Bush’s vigilance. Before his presidency, he had planned to shift the focus of foreign policy from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific Area.¹²¹ The bubble of a rosy US-China relationship started to burst around 2009 with a cascade of frictions between the two countries, including “the harassment of a U.S. naval vessel near [China’s] Hainan Island,” China’s assertive stance on the East and South China Sea, “a large Taiwan arms sales package in January 2010,” and Dalai Lama’s visit to the White House in the same year and so on.¹²²

Nonetheless, like his predecessor restrained by the accident of the Terrorist Attack, Obama was restrained by the outbreak of the 2008 Recession, against which China stood out. Consequently, the US had to elicit “Chinese cooperation on global governance issues, such as proliferation, intervention in regional and civil conflicts, and climate change.”¹²³

Being said that, it is not the decline of power per se that made the US seek cooperation from Beijing. The real landscape is more complicated because the consideration behind Obama’s

¹¹⁸ Ross, “Explaining Taiwan’s Revisionist Policy,” 451-5.

¹¹⁹ Dittmer, “Taiwan’s Narrowing Strait,” 19.

¹²⁰ See also: Philip S. Hsu, “Between Identity Quest and Risk Aversion: Lessons from the Chen Shui-bian Presidency for Maintaining Cross-Strait Stability,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 66 (2010): 715-16.

¹²¹ Vincent Wei-cheng Wang, “The U.S. Asia Rebalancing and the Taiwan Strait Rapprochement,” *Orbis* 59, no.3 (2015): 364.

¹²² Jean Garrison and Marc Wall. “The Rise of Hedging and Regionalism: An Explanation and Evaluation of President Obama’s China Policy,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 43, no.2 (2016): 51-54.

¹²³ Thomas J. Christensen, “Obama and China: Confronting the China Challenge,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 1, 2015. Regarding how the Recession made the US to cooperate with China, see also: Robert Sutter, “The Obama Administration and US Policy in Asia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 31, no.2 (2009): 201-03; Suisheng Zhao, “Shaping the Regional Context of China’s Rise: How the Obama Administration Brought back Hedge in Its Engagement with China,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no.75 (2012): 369-89.

foreign policy is more than the matter of security or balance of power. According to Robert Suter, under the context of the Recession, “[e]conomic priorities overshadowed” American military presence in the Middle East and Near East. Domestic pressure increased as well. Accordingly, Washington’s “prevailing policy” did not “[work] well to nurture Americans’ interests.” Under such a context, Obama had to make a paradigm shift to focus on the Asia-Pacific area. Therefore, the US-China relationship was relatively “positive” in global governance issues but quite “fragile” when it came to security issues.¹²⁴

Some scholars argue that during the Obama presidency, the American government was not active enough in dealing with China the Taiwan Issue. That is, during the Ma administration, the US did not pay proportional attention to Taiwan’s closer relationship with China. Peter Chow argues that the US did not pay enough attention to the cross-Strait economic integration that has a political impact in the long run.¹²⁵ A senior Taiwan expert of the Obama administration confided to John J. Tkacik that Pentagon once recommended the White House that Taiwan needed more interceptor aircrafts to strengthen its self-defense capacity, but Obama administration denied the recommendation on the belief that the rapprochement had decreased the need for Taiwan to defend itself.¹²⁶

This counter-intuitive phenomenon was termed “Pivot’s silence” and there are three explanations for it.¹²⁷ First, “Taiwan is so much in China’s orbit,” therefore the alliance with Taiwan would antagonize China and weapons sold to Taiwan “might end up in the hands of the Chinese military.” Second, the US did plan to pivot with Taiwan but it first needed to make more preparations and it did require time to implement the new strategies. Third, the US had allied with Taiwan, but to avoid provoking Beijing, they had to conduct this alliance in a clandestine way.

The first explanation is not in line with the facts. During this period of détente, the US did not sever its political, economic, and security ties with Taiwan. Rather, they made many breakthroughs, which included but were not limited to: waiver of the visa requirement for Taiwanese people to enter the US in 2012, “a new agreement on the privileges, exemptions and immunities of [ROC] diplomatic personnel [in 2013],” and Ma’s glorious visit to Los Angeles in 2014.¹²⁸ It is especially worth noting that in 2011, Taiwan was the largest buyer of the US arms.¹²⁹ The connection between the two governments added some credibility to the second and third explanations. Moreover, during the détente, the PLA had 2,000 ballistic missiles aimed at

¹²⁴ Robert Sutter, “The Obama Administration and China: Positive but Fragile,” *Asian Perspective* 33, no.3 (2009): 81-106.

¹²⁵ Peter C. Y. Chow, “Pacific Pivot, Taiwan Fulcrum: Maritime Taiwan and Power Transition in Asia,” in *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 5-12.

¹²⁶ John J. Tkacik, “Pacific Pivot, Taiwan Fulcrum: Maritime Taiwan and Power Transition in Asia,” in *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 243.

¹²⁷ Wang, “The U.S. Asia Rebalancing and the Taiwan Strait Rapprochement,” 368-72.

¹²⁸ Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, “Parallel Progress: US-Taiwan Relations During an Era of Cross-Strait Rapprochement,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 20 (2015): 376-81.

¹²⁹ William Lowther, “Taiwan Still a Top Buyer of US Arms,” *Taipei Times*, December 22, 2011.

Taiwan”, and Ma’s repeated call to remove them was to no avail.¹³⁰ The détente among the three governments was just a calm before the storm.

From the vantage point of hindsight, I think a mixed explanation may work well to interpret the “Pivot’s silence.” In 2022, there were several discussions over the risk of leaving Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company in Taiwan when a Chinese invasion looms. These discussions reflect the anxiety about the catastrophic effects after China seized the cutting-edge technologies the US transferred to Taiwan. However, this concern has never ruled out the option of selling arms to Taiwan. America does not need to sell advanced weapons to Taiwan as has been proved by its assistance to Ukraine during the Ukraine Crisis erupted in 2022. Mediocre weapons, albeit unable to defeat the enemies, can deplete the power of the enemies.

I believe that during the “Pivot’s silence,” the US had allied Taiwan to balance against China in this way but did not conduct their cooperation in a blatant way. Meanwhile, the US was in the process of a paradigm shift. A rising and revisionist China had made it necessary for the US to change its policy, but the Recession and the post-9/11 decline required Washington to be more careful. As a declining power, the US had to be parsimonious with its limited resources. Furthermore, because the US perceived China as “patiently self-confident” about China’s rise during this period, it did not hasten to “reset” itself after the Financial Crisis, shelving the conflicts with China so as to deal with other immediate challenges.¹³¹

As mentioned before, according to Robert Ross, since the 9/11 Incident, the US was in decline and gradually losing its leverage over Taiwan.¹³² No brake was put on this trend and China became stronger vis-a-vis America since the 2010s. The broken balance of power caused the US to decide to pivot to Asia. China’s assertiveness at the global and regional level also shaped this decision.¹³³ To adjust to these changes, a group of prominent American policy analysts proposed to adjust the previous policies. According to John Mearsheimer, because China would definitely incorporate Taiwan in the future as a result of its continuing rise and the surge of nationalism at home, the US should no longer commit to protect Taiwan.¹³⁴ Charles Glaser argues that allowing China to recover its “homeland...lost...during the Chinese Civil War” does not change the international system but helps prevent a war between China and America.¹³⁵ Different from them, Nancy Tucker and Bonnie Glaser suggest the US improve its ties with Taiwan despite the possibility of infuriating China because returning Taiwan to the orbit of China augurs badly for the maintenance of the US grand strategy.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Dittmer, “Taiwan’s Narrowing Strait,” 22.

¹³¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “From Hope to Audacity: Appraising Obama’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2010): 26-28.

¹³² Ross, “Explaining Taiwan’s Revisionist Policy,” 451-5.

¹³³ Yong Deng, “The Unwelcome Return: China Reacts to the US Strategic Pivot to Asia,” in *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 84-85.

¹³⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, “Say Goodbye to Taiwan,” *The National Interest*, February 25, 2014.

¹³⁵ Charles Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): 80-91.

¹³⁶ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” *Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (2011): 23-37.

Whether to support or abandon Taiwan, these proposals were unanimously based on security concerns and none of these analysts want to antagonize China because the US became less powerful and China more ambitious over Taiwan, any “[m]ajor policy shifts could jeopardize peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.”¹³⁷ Again, security is obviously significant in shaping the US policy. ROC’s Eleven-Dash Line advocated by KMT may destabilize the South and East China Sea but it was also during Ma’s presidency, Taiwan acted as a mediator between China and Japan. Ma’s dedication to peace crystalized in East China Sea Peace Initiative in August 2012, four months before the election. Therefore, during the 2012 ROC Presidential Election, when the DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen visited the US, an Obama administration official expressed America’s concern about Tsai Ing-wen’s pro-independence orientation, which played a role in Tsai’s failure.¹³⁸

Although Obama wanted to adjust Washington’s stance in Taiwan as a response to the advice of the policy analysts, the Recession disrupted his plan in a two-fold sense. First, the Recession forced him to postpone a more hawkish China policy so as to win more time for the US to get away from other issues and consider a paradigm shift. Second, China stood out during the Recession and changed the previous benign policy, which imposed the risk of escalating the regional frictions to a global war.

Conclusion

Washington accommodated the 92 Consensus from 2000 to 2014 because of a cascade of accidents that arrested its attention. The outbreak of the 9/11 Terrorist Attack and the 2008 Recession are accidents. The opportunism of Chen Shui-bian is also an accident. It is coincidental as well that the person who won the 2000 Presidential Election by fluke happened to be a “risk-acceptant leader” who made his decisions at his own discretion regardless of any outcomes.¹³⁹ In fact, Chen’s brinkmanship was opposed by many DPP politicians for the fear that he went far beyond Taiwanese voters’ request of an identity.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps because of Taiwan’s strong presidentialism, Chen had his discretion to decide the cross-Strait relations and domestic institutions cannot put a brake on his opportunism.

There are no structural factors for Washington to accept the 92 Consensus. Contrarily, in terms of international structure, there is still a threat to America imposed by a rising and ambitious China. Therefore, when Washington decision-makers succeeded to get away from these accidents and the security concerns become more prominent, they start to re-examine the role the 92 Consensus plays.

Further Discussion

Scholars like Jean Garrison and Marc Wall argue that the deterioration of the US-China relationship is not “predetermined” but an outcome of their increasing friction.¹⁴¹ This argument

¹³⁷ Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, “U.S. Policy Toward Taiwan: Time For Change?,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 40, no. 4 (2013): 175-198.

¹³⁸ Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy*, 12.

¹³⁹ For the discussion that Chen is a “risk-acceptant leader” who is determined to pursue the de jure independence of Taiwan irrespective of risks, see: Ross, “Explaining Taiwan’s Revisionist Policy,” 454-6.

¹⁴⁰ Dean P. Chen, “Security, Domestic Divisions, and the KMT’s Post-2008 ‘One China’ Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis,” *International Relations of the Asia Pacific* 15, no.2 (2015): 334.

¹⁴¹ Garrison and Wall, “The Rise of Hedging and Regionalism,” 47-63.

alludes to a possible scenario that the US-China relationship is not shaped by the determined international system but made of by two sides' behaviors. Robert S. Ross expresses a similar opinion that the US "ha[d] unnecessarily challenged Beijing," which caused China to be more assertive since the 2010s.¹⁴²

Robert Ross's stance does not conflict with my argument that security shapes Washington's China policy because he only addressed the possibility of "assuage[ing]...Beijing's anxiety" should Bush and Obama be more careful in dealing with China. He did admit that security made the US overreact to China's behavior. For example, he regarded the White House's worries about China's "becoming a destabilizing force" as the cause of Obama's pivot to Asia.¹⁴³ But I cannot agree with Garrison and Wall. First, Obama had planned to be more hawkish toward China even before his presidential term. It is illogical to conclude that the Pivot policy was a result of friction after he came to office. Second, they allude to one opinion that the strategic atmosphere can decide the decision-making process. If this opinion stands, why the benign atmosphere during the Bush administration did not put a brake on the deterioration of the US-China relations?

Third, according to realism, the concern of security, a structural factor, stipulates that if the two countries wanted to co-exist, one of them had to subdue the other. As has been and will be discussed in the part of China's Taiwan policy, Taiwan as a "core interest" of China excludes the scenario of capitulation. If China cannot reunify Taiwan for the time being, it prepares for it in the short run and will implement the plan in the long run at any cost. Especially when China is in rise and the US in decline, albeit slightly, it is impossible for China to give up Taiwan. So, the option comes to the US. The US was not as powerful as before, but it was still far more powerful than China during this period. China had a prospect of overcoming America but there was also widely perceived by the two countries that it is impossible for China to overtake the US in the short run.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, even when this period came, China would still be restrained by many internal problems that were still restraining it and be unable to create a disparity between itself and the US.¹⁴⁵ In other words, China's prospect was no better than America's, therefore, it was more impossible for the US to give up now.

Washington's inconsistent Taiwan policy, regarded by some pundits as "hedging," is interpreted by many Chinese scholars and American scholars that Washington is implementing a "salami slicing" policy on Taiwan against China.¹⁴⁶ In terms of outcomes, I agree with this statement because the status quo of the Taiwan Strait had been changed in a way favored to independence-seekers. First, the quantity and quality of American military weapons sold to Taiwan were

¹⁴² Robert S. Ross, "The Problem with the Pivot: Obama's New Asia Policy Is Unnecessary and Counterproductive," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2012): 70-82.

¹⁴³ Ross, "The Problem with the Pivot," 72.

¹⁴⁴ Cooney, "Chinese-American Hegemonic Competition in East Asia," 38-39.

¹⁴⁵ Brantly Womack, "China's Future in a Multinodal World Order," *Pacific Affairs* 87, no.2(2014): 269-70; Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), xvi.

¹⁴⁶ Alan D. Romberg, "Structure and Process Behind Beijing's Policy Towards Taiwan," in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2004), 114. The "salami slicing" interpretation is more popular among Chinese scholars, see: Wenxing Zhou and Huanyu Yao, "Ewu Chongtu Hou Meiguo Zhuliu Zhiku Duitai Zhengce Renzhi Jiqi Yingxiang 俄乌冲突后美国主流智库对台政策认知及其影响 [Mainstream U.S. Think Tanks' Perceptions of the US Policy towards Taiwan after the Russia-Ukraine Conflict and the Implications]," *Cross-Taiwan Strait Studies* 39, no. 1 (2023): 148-162.

improved during Bush and Obama's presidencies. Second, the US loosened many restrictions on Taiwanese officials, most of which were originally aimed at denying Taiwan's status as a sovereignty. The relaxation of constraints and the stronger military support gave more leverage to independence-seekers and decreased China's confidence in solving the Taiwan Issue without resorting to forces.

Nonetheless, I prefer not to use the term "salami slicing" because this word has an undertone that the Washington's China policy has a primary objective of driving a wedge between China and Taiwan. If the US intends to solicit Taiwan to seek independence that could cause conflicts between the two sides across the Taiwan Strait, it is illogical for the Obama administration to support KMT and accommodate the 92 Consensus. Wedge policy may be one of the means to pursue Washington's grand strategy, but it cannot be the primary objective. Security is the foremost concern. When a policy is in conflict with security, Washington abandons it. Dissuading Chiang Kai-shek from re-attacking the Chinese mainland, renunciation of the diplomatic relationship with ROC, the following plan to abandon Taiwan, and support for KMT attest to this opinion.

Realists believe that power can contribute to security. Following this logic, then we conclude that the way for the US to augur its security is to increase its power. But this logic cannot explain what happened in the Taiwan Strait. If power is equal to security, then the US should never help China to modernize its economy because economic modernization would increase the power of China. If power and security complement each other, after the US perceives an upcoming China threat, it is ill-advised for the US to cooperate with China. Also, if power matters, when the US-China tension increases, Washington should either abandon Taiwan or ally with Taiwan.

However, when KMT uses the 92 Consensus to maintain an ambiguous stance towards Beijing and Washington and make good relationships with the two governments, Washington supported rather than opposed the 92 Consensus. In the case of Taiwan, I think when the balance of power tilts toward the US or Taiwan, there is a countervailing effect on America's security.¹⁴⁷ These actions are perceived by China as provocative, which harms its national dignity. They make China feel more insecure and fragile, urging China to hasten its military build-ups. Moreover, even if the US did not intend to go to war with China or play the "Taiwan card," the augment of Taiwan's power gives Beijing a misperception that there is a destined war between the two countries. The US prefers security to power or ideology, therefore, it has adopted a hedging policy to deal with the Taiwan issue. But obviously, China is not satisfied with the hedging policy and perceives it as a "salami-slicing" strategy. Accordingly, Washington needs a policy paradigm shift.

¹⁴⁷ There have been many great literatures on why power does not contribute to security. Paul Kennedy argues that rising powers become established powers in different ways, see: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana Press, 1989). Legro also argues that power does not decide purpose, see: Jeffery W. Legro, "Purpose Transitions: China's Rise and the American Response," in *China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics*, ed. Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 169.

3. Taiwanese Election Politics under the US-China Detente

The modification of KMT’s Mainland policy followed after the debut of the term 92 Consensus in 2000. This modification was a result of KMT’s internal conflicts after the 2000 presidential election between Lien Chan and Lee Teng-hui. After KMT failed the election, Lee was accused of surreptitiously supporting DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian during the campaign, then he was forced by his resentful fellows to resign his chairmanship. One year later, Lee Teng-hui was expelled from KMT. Lee Teng-hui’s disciples chose to leave KMT with Lee Teng-hui and founded the Taiwan Solidarity Union, a party more radical in pursuing the de jure independence of Taiwan.

The expulsion of Lee and his disciples from KMT “brought the return to power of many pro-China members,” which opened space for a more accommodationist Mainland policy.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, escaping from the shadow of Lee, the succeeding chairman Lien Chan exuded a more obvious opposition to the KMT members who wanted to pursue Taiwan independence. However, the condition with which the party was faced was not promising. In the 2001 Legislator Election, KMT lost 55 seats while DPP secured 17 more seats than before. Although the pan-blue coalition still constituted a slim majority over the pan-green coalition in parliament, the pan-blue coalition lost 19 seats, while the pan-green coalition won 30 seats (see Figure 1). Accordingly, Lien Chan’s credential to take charge of KMT and his credibility to run for the 2004 presidential election were doubted.¹⁴⁹

Seat Changes in 2001 Legislator Election				
Pan-Blue Coalition			Pan-Green Coalition	
KMT	PPF	NP	DPP	TSU
-55	+46	-10	+17	+13

Figure 1: Seat Changes in 2001 Legislator Election¹⁵⁰

Lien Chan failed in his contending Chen Shui-bian in the 2004 Presidential Election, however, Chen Shui-bian could not relax himself after the controversial victory. The legitimacy of Chen to continue his presidency was undermined for several reasons. First, Chen defeated Lien at a very slim margin of 29,518 votes but the invalid votes accounted for about 337,297 votes, which was very abnormal. Second, during the campaign, Chen and his vice president Anette Lu were shot, though their lives were not endangered. This incident mobilized more Hoklo people to cast their votes to DPP. Since the shot touched off the institution of national security, about 100,000 military and police personnels were forbidden from leaving office, which prevented them from voting. Because these personnels were pro-KMT, it was argued that DPP intentionally violated the constitution to win the election.

Another thing afflicting Chen was that many of DPP’s staunch supporters were attracted by TSU, the party more radical than DPP in pursuing Taiwan independence. To save himself from

¹⁴⁸ Cal Clark, and Alexander Tan, *Taiwan Political Economy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 142.

¹⁴⁹ John Franklin Copper, *Taiwan's 2001 Legislative, Magistrates and Mayors Election: Further Consolidating Democracy?* (River Edge, N.J.: World Scientific, 2002), 27-28.

¹⁵⁰ I compiled the figure by using data from the Central Election Commission, ROC.

this change and undermined legitimacy, Chen must adopt a more radical stance in the cross-Strait relations.¹⁵¹

As discussed before, because of domestic and international factors, China and America wanted a stable and peaceful Taiwan Strait during this period. Therefore, Chen's deviation made himself a trouble-maker in the eyes of Beijing and Washington. He pushed Washington and Beijing to the side of KMT, contributing to the marketability of the 92 Consensus. Washington frequently criticized Chen's brinkmanship and expressed approval of KMT's accommodationist stance under the umbrella of the 92 Consensus. Beijing gave the existence of the 92 Consensus significant recognition,¹⁵² "welcomed Lien for an ice-breaking visit [to the Chinese mainland] in April 2005,"¹⁵³ and offered KMT a promise that China would offer Taiwan economic benefits and ensure a safe Taiwan Strait after KMT returning to power in 2008.¹⁵⁴

It is generally difficult to grade the influence of Washington in shaping KMT's mainland policy. Washington always concerns about security and had increasing worries about China's threats, therefore, it wants Beijing and Taipei to maintain the status quo. But what America wants cannot be translated directly into what America does. As a leader of the liberal international system, the US has to refrain from engaging with Taiwanese political parties or articulating its stance in the 92 Consensus in an open way. Yet, Washington has a stance in the 92 Consensus and favors only political parties that could best serve the US interests. During this period, it welcomed the 92 Consensus and favored KMT.

Being said that, Washington exerted a limited influence on Taiwan during this period because Washington had not committed to supporting KMT officially, from the Taiwanese people's perspective, they did not know to what extent Washington supported KMT. Moreover, even if Washington supported KMT fully, during a peaceful period when most Taiwanese people wanted to maintain the status quo and accommodate the economic and political influence of the Chinese mainland, even the full support meant nothing. Only when Taiwanese people wanted to change the status quo and resisted the Chinese mainland, Washington's support became important, because at that time, they needed Washington to deter China from invasion by making political promises and selling Taiwan more weapons. Otherwise, if China attacks Taiwan, Washington will intervene in.

I argue that during this period China was more influential than the US in shaping KMT's mainland policy. Because China adopted a Taiwan-baiting approach and held a good image at that time, Taiwanese people were open to more interactions with the Chinese mainland. Moreover, the industrial structure in this promising China provided a unique niche for *taishang*, which made them prefer KMT rather than DPP.

¹⁵¹ Yu-shan Wu, "Taiwan's Domestic Politics and Cross-Strait Relations," *The China Journal* 53 (2005): 35-60.

¹⁵² Yasuhiro Matsuda, "Cross-Strait Relations under the Ma Ying-jeou Administration: From Economic to Political Dependence?," *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 4, no.2 (2015): 9.

¹⁵³ Yu-Shan Wu, "Heading Towards Troubled Waters? The Impact of Taiwan's 2016 Elections on Cross-Strait Relations," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 23, no. 1 (2016): 65.

¹⁵⁴ Dittmer, "Taiwan's Narrowing Strait," 19-20.

What the Taiwanese public wanted from cross-Strait interactions can be summarized as follow: they want economic benefits but not at the expense of their cherished democracy. In the context of China's rise and Taiwan's deteriorating socio-economic conditions under Chen Shui-bian, it is not difficult to understand why they became open for the 92 Consensus.

I use the phrase "open for" because it reflects the Taiwanese public's pragmatism. During Chen's presidency, Taiwan's economy deteriorated due to the global economic slowdown since the Asian Financial Crisis, political deadlocks, and DPP's incapable statecraft. In sharp contrast to Taiwan, the economy of China thrived at the same time. Given the cultural, ethnical, and geographical closeness between the two sides, many Taiwanese people chose to go to the Chinese mainland for a better life.¹⁵⁵

Moreover, *taishang* needed a stable socio-economic condition more exasperatedly than general people. At that time, a majority of the Taiwanese businesspeople were export-oriented and labor-intensive industries. The Chinese mainland was the market for most of their products and provided them with cheap but disciplined laborers who shared the same culture and language. For another, these companies made plans from a long-term perspective, therefore, they did not want any surprises in the future to disturb their plans. These reasons made *taishang* welcome the 92 Consensus.

After the pan-blue coalition retrieved oral promises from Beijing that when KMT returned to power, the two sides would sign a series of treaties to help Taiwanese people share the economic development of China, more and more Taiwanese people tilted toward KMT. Taiwanese people's pragmatism explains their changing attitudes toward the 92 Consensus. The 92 Consensus seemed to be popular at least at the beginning of the 21st century when both sides between the Taiwan Strait did not define the "one China".¹⁵⁶

In addition to these factors from the international system, the issue convergence over economy also aggrandized the attractiveness of the 92 Consensus. Some scholars argue that the issue convergence occurred in the 2008 Presidential Election that Taiwanese people expected "competing parties...offered various policy proposals of revitalizing Taiwan's reeling economy."¹⁵⁷ Since the economic interactions between the two sides in the late 1980s, the threat from China's "economic united fronts" had haunted Taiwanese people, therefore Lee Teng-hui imposed restrictions on the Taiwanese investments to China and instructed *taishang* to "be patient without hustle."

I think this issue convergence is shaped by both domestic and international factors. Regarding the international factor, because the US-China relationship was benign at this period and China focused on the united fronts work rather than any coercive policies, security was not a problem

¹⁵⁵Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 70-75.

¹⁵⁶Syaru Shirley Lin, *Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests In Taiwan's Cross-strait Economic Policy* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), 123.

¹⁵⁷Ching-hsin Yu and T. Y. Wang, "Party's Issue Competence and Electoral Decisions in Taiwan's 2012 and 2016 Presidential Elections," in *Taiwan's Political Re-Alignment and Diplomatic Challenges*, ed. Wei-chin Lee (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 100.

the Taiwanese people had to worry about in the 2008 Presidential Election, different from the 1996 Presidential Election.

The domestic factors include the transformation of Taiwan's electoral system and the DPP's inability of issue manipulation. In 2005, Taiwan changed from the single non-transferable vote under multi-member-district system to the one under single-member-district system, which squeezed KMT and DPP into the middle place of the reunification/independence stances. Specifically, the previous multi-member-district system was "conducive to the survival of small parties and/or radical wings of the large parties and tend[ed] to radicalize the campaign debate" because at that time, a person might be elected as a legislator by just 3% votes. The multi-member-district system also "undermine[d] party discipline, because candidates compete not only with members of other parties but with their own comrades."¹⁵⁸ Since the start of the single-member-district system, small but radical parties like TSU and NP disappeared from the stage of politics. Because KMT and DPP had a relatively similar stance on the cross-Strait relations, Taiwanese people focused on other issues like economy. Chen Shui-bian failed to manage the Taiwanese economy, while KMT achieved many treaties from Beijing, the issue convergence on economy was in KMT's favor.

DPP's ability to manipulate issues was also harmed by its identity as a ruling party. When DPP was an opposition party, it accused KMT of ganging up with the mafia or plutocrats to exploit general people. It criticized KMT in issues that include but are not limited to "social and distributional justice," environmental issues, and bribery.¹⁵⁹ After DPP transformed from an opposition party to a ruling party, these criticisms bounced back against itself. When DPP was an opposition party, it could side with civil societies to require the government to protect the environment and narrow the gap between the poor and rich. What an opposition party needs to do is to speak without the need for fulfillment. But after DPP came to power, it could not speak without actions. It also had to make compromises with the businesspeople to get financial support.¹⁶⁰

Heijin, (黑金, i.e., mafia and bribery) was a label exclusive to KMT since the 1990s. The then-KMT leader Lee Teng-hui was nicknamed the "godfather of mafia and bribery." But after KMT lost power and expelled Lee from the party, they got rid of this criticism. Their discourse was that KMT was relatively clean during the Chiang Ching-kuo period, therefore, Lee Teng-hui instead of KMT should be criticized for introducing mafia and bribery to KMT.

I use the term "rhetoric" because it is hard to judge whether these discourses are true. It is true that KMT's top-echelons led by Chiang Ching-kuo had not been accused of involvement in any mafia or bribery, but KMT local organizations could not survive such an accusation. Because KMT could not control the whole society as a party founded outside Taiwan, after the nationalist government retreated to Taiwan, they had to rely on local factions compromised of mafia and

¹⁵⁸ Su, "Driving Forces Behind Taiwan's Mainland Policy," 53.

¹⁵⁹ Bruce J. Dickson, "The Quality of Democracy in Taiwan," in *Taiwan's Political Re-Alignment and Diplomatic Challenges*, ed. Wei-chin Lee (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 35.

¹⁶⁰ Su, "Driving Forces Behind Taiwan's Mainland Policy," 57-58.

corrupt politicians. To win support from the local factions, KMT acquiesced in their bribery.¹⁶¹ In other words, DPP was criticized for bribery, but KMT could not survive the same criticism. Indeed, because it is really difficult to figure out which party was corrupt and whether such an accusation was true, a party usually wins the election not due to its cleanness but because of its success in stigmatizing its opponents as corrupt. Before the 2008 Presidential Election, Chen Shui-bian's bribery had deprived DPP of the "ownership of the corruption issue,"¹⁶² therefore, KMT could manipulate the issue.

Therefore, I think "open for" is the best phrase to describe the Taiwanese public's attitude toward the 92 Consensus during this period. Different from Beijing who was eager for closer cross-strait relations, the Taiwanese public did not want Taiwan to rely too much on China. They are pragmatists. Their attitudes were similar to Washington's attitudes on the 92 Consensus. The 92 Consensus could help stabilize the cross-strait relations for the short term, but in the long run, closer relations would change the status quo, which violated their interests. Therefore, Taiwanese people only accommodated the 92 Consensus when they did not perceive an upcoming threat, and Washington only accommodated the 92 Consensus when it was preoccupied with other affairs and unable to deal with Chen Shui-bian, the trouble-maker destabilizing the cross-Strait relations.

III. When the 92 Consensus Stepped down the Altar

At least during Ma's first presidential term, the 92 Consensus fulfilled its role as a *modus vivendi*. It served as a tribute for KMT to show deference to Beijing, which was in exchange for Beijing's economic offers and political compromises. The previous ones allowed KMT to cater to Taiwanese voters and later ones enabled KMT to manage the cross-Strait relations.

Yet, scholars and politicians debated over whether the 92 Consensus still functions well after the outbreak of the Sunflower Movement in 2014. This part starts with a narrative of KMT's Mainland policy and prescriptive discourse on the cross-Strait relations, with related historical background. I argue that before 2019, it may not be ill-advised for KMT to continue to focus its prescriptive discourse on the 92 Consensus. Using this post-factum term to stabilize the Taiwan Strait was a *modus vivendi* for Ma to survive his final two years. He also needed Beijing's help to reach some political goals, which required the 92 Consensus to be a precondition. Also, after KMT lost the presidential election in 2016, which undermined DPP's accusation that KMT was selling Taiwan to China (because an opposition party was unable to do so), and the nationalism incurred by the Sunflower Movement faded after Tsai Ing-wen failed to manage many domestic issues, the prospect of bringing economic benefits to the Taiwanese people by a peaceful cross-Strait relationship once again contributed to KMT's victory in the 2018 election.

¹⁶¹ Many monographies have provided a detailed description of how KMT used mafia and bribery to win elections since 1950s, for example: Ko-lin Chin, *Heijin: Organized Crime, Business, and Politics In Taiwan* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); Rong Zhang, *Taiwan Difang Paixi Yu Guomindang Guanxi De Yanbian 台湾地方派系与国民党关系的演变* [The Evolution of the Relationship between Taiwanese Local Factions and Kuomintang] (Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2014).

¹⁶² Dickson, "The Quality of Democracy in Taiwan," 35-36.

Being said that, after President Xi Jinping's speech marked *Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan* and the Anti-Extradition protest breaking out in Hong Kong, two incidents successively happened in 2019, it is reasonable to doubt KMT's adhering to the 92 Consensus because President Xi's speech associated the 92 Consensus with the "one country, two systems" formula, which had been discredited in Hong Kong and caused many Taiwanese people to worry about the reunification.

Counterintuitively but reasonably, KMT still had to continue the discredited and unpopular 1992 Consensus, which could be understood from five factors: Beijing's pressure, intra-party opposition, *taishang's* weakened influence, Washington's attitude, and the complicated landscape of Taiwanese people's nationalism. I expound on these five factors in this and the following parts.

1. Beijing's Taiwan Policy during the Period of "Two Profound Changes"

As I have discussed in the last part that from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao period, China concentrated on developing its economy and was less hardline in its foreign policy. At that time, the international environment was conducive to this policy especially because the US was haunted by other issues and needed China's cooperation. For another, because China was not powerful enough to deal with the Taiwan issue, in avoidance of causing Taiwan to declare formal independence because of China's foiled military attacks, China chose the united fronts policy to deal with Taiwan. The confidence in its future added more incentive to shelve any hardline policies.

However, after President Xi Jinping ascended to his presidency, the domestic and international environments changed. The economic growth slowed down while domestic dissatisfaction upsurged, which made the fragile domestic environment more fragile. Furthermore, the US gradually got rid of the negative influence of terrorism and recession, and pivoted to Asia, making the international environment more threatening to China. These changes forced President Xi to rethink his Taiwan policy.

To explain why the domestic and international changes have caused President Xi to change China's Taiwan policy, I start this part by discussing Taiwan's status in China's grand strategy. I argue that the grand strategy rather than security or national dignity makes the Chinese leaders determined to reunify Taiwan. But insecurity is one reason that makes the Chinese leaders hasten to reunify Taiwan, therefore, I analyze how President Xi and his fellows perceive the current situation. I then discuss how President Xi uses the 92 Consensus in reunifying and conclude this part with a further discussion of President Xi's Taiwan policy.

Taiwan in China's Grand Strategy

In the last part, I argue that China prioritized modernization and did not hurry to reunify Taiwan. The discussion of this part may leave an impression that reunification constitutes a symbol of the revival of the Chinese nation, which is not true. Reunification of Taiwan does not mean the revival of the Chinese nation but is a foundation for China to become a great power, which means the national revival. In other words, China needs to use Taiwan as a springboard to expand the Chinese influence so as to become a great power.

There is a Chinese opinion that the mind of reunifying Taiwan came to CPC leaders' mind because Taiwan occupied by the ROC regime constitutes a threat to China,¹⁶³ an explanation stressing China's fragility but ruling out Taiwan from PRC leaders' grand strategy. The belief that China wants to reunify Taiwan because of insecurity endows with credibility one proposal that the formula of a Chinese confederation or quasi-confederation can solve the Taiwan issue peacefully.¹⁶⁴ According to Alan Wachman, however, CPC leaders had prepared to take over Taiwan in 1943 after the Grand Alliance announced to return Taiwan from Japan to China in the Cairo Declaration.¹⁶⁵ In other words, insecurity cannot explain why Chinese leaders want Taiwan. Another similar reason, national dignity, cannot explain China's assertiveness over Taiwan as well. If dignity does matter, why did Mao Zedong shelve the plan of reunifying Taiwan while joining in the Korean War? In fact, it is Taiwan's geostrategic importance making it a target of China.

The geostrategic significance of Taiwan has been recognized by the Chinese leaders who lived many centuries ago. York Chen discussed a policy debate over whether to attack Taiwan or not during Kangxi Era in the late 17th century. This debate is a classical debate that reflects the dilemma every Beijing government (imperial court of the Qing Dynasty and today's Beijing) is faced with when dealing with the Taiwan Issue. Moreover, it provides a background to understand why President Xi Jinping termed the current international and domestic environments as "profound changes unseen in a century (百年未有之变局)" when I analyze his Taiwan policy in the next section.

According to York, the debate regarding whether to recover Taiwan or not during the Kangxi period centered on security. Those who opposed reunifying Taiwan thought the sovereign recovery might be a strategic overexpansion: if the central government did not assign enough garrisons to the island, any revolution happened on the island may overturn China's rule; and even if the central government assigned enough resources to safeguard and develop Taiwan, if the administrators employed were not loyal enough, they might revolt against Beijing as well. But Shi Lang, a defector of the Koxinga Kingdom on Taiwan, refuted such an argument. He argued that: (1) Taiwan was in a strategic location that connected China to overseas; and (2) if Beijing only controlled Penghu Island, then no marine security would be guaranteed. After the debate, Shi Lang's advice was accepted but "not full-heartedly appreciated." For a long time, the

¹⁶³ In *The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era* white paper (台湾问题与新时代中国统一事业), the Chinese government argues that China must reunify Taiwan "to foil the attempts of external forces to contain China, and to safeguard the sovereignty, security, and development interests of our country." See: Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Melbourne, "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era," August 10, 2022.

¹⁶⁴ For example of it, see: Tai-chun Kuo and Ramon H. Myers, "Peace Proposal One: The China Commonwealth Model," in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2004), 189-94; Steve Tsang, "Peace Proposal Two: The Chinese Union Model," in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2004), 195-208.

¹⁶⁵ Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 76-117.

central government in Beijing assigned very limited resources to Taiwan that could only ensure Chinese rule and not enough for development.¹⁶⁶

Shi Lang's first reason for incorporating Taiwan stresses the geostrategic significance of Taiwan as well. His second reason and his opponents' reason reflect the quandary Beijing would be in after occupying Taiwan, that is, Beijing had to allocate plenty of resources to maintain its rule over Taiwan and ensured that the administration ruling Taiwan is loyal. Otherwise, the resources spent on Taiwan would be profitless. This worry may provide an explanation for the question of why Beijing cannot accept a Chinese confederation. Alan Wachman expresses a similar opinion that the past lesson for PRC leaders is that losing Taiwan could endanger Chinese strategic interests and national security "has led some PRC analysts to conclude that insufficient control of Taiwan by China's rulers is a liability that may invite aggression again."¹⁶⁷

Shi Lang's leader Emperor Kangxi did not fully appreciate Shi Lang's opinion, perhaps because at that time, Emperor Kangxi had to reserve some resources to oppress the revolutions happening in the northwest boundaries. Mainland China is more powerful than Taiwan all the time, but a stronger power is faced with incremental problems and constraints.¹⁶⁸ When China attacks Taiwan, China cannot spend all its resources, while Taiwan may scorch the earth to defend itself. Therefore, when analyzing a cross-Strait war, I think comparing mainland China's gross resources with Taiwan's is meaningless. It is better to calculate how many resources Beijing can spare to attack and incorporate the small island. Because of this reason, among Beijing's options to reunify Taiwan, reunification by force is a last resort.

Let us paraphrase this paragraph to understand why President Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao did not rush to take over Taiwan. To take over Taiwan and make it a foundation for the pursuit of CPC's grand strategy, a leader has to fully control Taiwan and ensure a long while strong control over the island. However, China as a large country has many internal and external problems that consume a lot of resources. In Chuan-tiong Lim's book, he expresses a similar opinion. The risk of attacking Taiwan is high because GDP would be negatively affected and China might fall in chaos, therefore, Beijing prioritized stability more than land integrity.¹⁶⁹

The risk of attacking Taiwan is high while the cost of maintaining control is higher, then, why are Chinese leaders determined to incorporate this small island? Nationalism or legitimacy cannot explain their determination. CPC has succeeded to use economic development to legitimize its rule. Nationalism encourages them to be more hawkish toward the Taiwan issue but at the same time constrains their policies. As discussed in the last part, the aftermath of the Taiwan independence is highly disastrous. Since nationalism has not ousted any leaders from their positions, no leaders should risk their positions to cater to nationalism.

¹⁶⁶ York W. Chen, "Taiwan's Geostrategic Significances: From the Past to US Contemporary Pivot Strategy," in *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics*, ed. Peter C. Y. Chow (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 184-9.

¹⁶⁷ Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 33-38.

¹⁶⁸ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 45-6.

¹⁶⁹ Chuan-tiong Lim, *Shei Shi Zhongguoren: Toushi Taiwanren Yu Xianggangren De Shenfen Rentong* 谁是中国人：透视香港人与台湾人的身份认同香港人 [Who are Chinese: A Perspective on the Identity of Taiwanese and Hong Kong people] (Taipei: China Times Co., 2017), 40-41.

Alan Wachman gives three reasons why Taiwanese territory does not inspire Chinese nationalism or contribute to the construction of a Chinese nation.¹⁷⁰ First, Chinese people have no “memory of attachment” to Taiwan, which would not “fervent sentiments of national pride or yearning.” Second, Taiwan is inhabited by Han people cannot explain such nationalism, because Beijing did attack Tibet in 1950 when there were very few Han people, and Beijing allowed Hong Kong and Macao where a majority of residents are Han people to be occupied by foreign governments until 1997 and 1999 respectively. Third, “the identity of Taiwan as ‘Chinese’ territory has precariously shallow roots,” because Taiwan was treated by the Chinese central government as a colonial until the late 1870s.

Based on these discussions, I think Taiwan has a dual role in China’s grand strategy. For one thing, the security of China is reliant on full control of Taiwan. For another, China needs Taiwan as a springboard to expand its influence overseas. Because Taiwan was once a base for Japan to attack China and an “unsinkable carrier” against communist China for the US during the Cold War, many Chinese people believe that Taiwan not yet incorporated into China would be an obstacle to China’s development or even survival.¹⁷¹ China’s identity as a fragile power strengthened Chinese leaders’ anxiety over Taiwan. For example, in their eyes, the DPP president Tsai Ing-wen is colluding with America and Japan to solicit them to protect Taiwan after the DPP government declared a de jure independence. They think that Washington takes advantage of Tsai’s malleability to “play the Taiwan card,” and that the US parliament is cooperating with the executive branch to “contain China by Taiwan (以台制华)” via a series of legislative tools.¹⁷² There had been several times when China had conflicts with foreign countries, the latter used Taiwan as a tool to humiliate or balance against China. For example, during the Sino-Soviet Split in the 1960s, the Soviet “occasionally made gestures toward the ROC on Taiwan” as a retaliation.¹⁷³ No wonder Beijing is becoming more sensitive to the Taiwan issue when the international environment becomes more hostile to China.

Taiwan’s significance for China to become a great power has been recognized by many scholars. China needs to modernize its military power to defend its political and economic power, “to safeguard its maritime interests”, and “to expand its dominion of Asia’s seas.” But to become “a global naval power”, China needs to control the first and second island chains.¹⁷⁴ Some PRC

¹⁷⁰ Alan Wachman, *Why Taiwan?: Geostategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007), 38-40.

¹⁷¹ Gabe T. Wang, *China and the Taiwan Issue: Impending War At Taiwan Strait* (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2006), 10.

¹⁷² Shushen Wang, “Meiguo ‘Taibei Faan’ De Neirong, Yingxiang Yu Yingdui 美国 ‘台北法案’ 的内容、影响与应对 [The Content, Influence and Response of the American ‘Taipei Act’],” *Journal of United Front Science*, no.5 (2020): 60; Jiayan Liu, “Cai Yingwen Zhuzheng Xia De Liangan Guanxi Xianzhuang Yu Fazhan Qushi 蔡英文主政下的两岸关系现状与发展趋势 [Current Situation and Development Trend of Cross-strait Relations Under the Cai Yingwen’s Administration],” *Journal of United Front Science*, no.4 (2018): 18-19.

¹⁷³ June Teufel Dreyer, “China’s Ability to Take a Military Option and Its Calculations,” in *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Steve Yui-Sang Tsang (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2004), 144.

¹⁷⁴ Elizabeth Freund Larus, “Technological Change and China’s Naval Modernization: Security Implications for Taiwan,” in *Cross-Taiwan Strait Relations in an Era of Technological Change: Security, Economic and Cultural Dimensions*, ed. Paul Irwin Crookes and Jan Knoerich (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 43.

scholars perceive that “Taiwan in hostile hands is presumed...to deprive Beijing of a platform that would enable it to have unfettered access to the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁷⁵

But among these scholars, the most convincing description comes from Alan Wachman. In his book *Why Taiwan?: Geostrategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity*, Alan explains why Taiwan has the “geostrategic rationale” to incur a Chinese invasion, that is, Taiwan is “imagined” by Chinese people to be a gateway to become a marine power.¹⁷⁶ Alan analyzes Taiwan’s geostrategic significance from a constructivist approach: Beijing’s geostrategic rationale for reunifying Taiwan is a matter of opinions and this opinion is shaped by the US-China relationship and Chinese leaders’ aspiration to make China a great power. His argument explains why the geostrategic significance of Taiwan is increasing during an era of “profound changes unseen in a century.”

Two Profound Changes Unseen in a Century

“Profound change” was used to describe China’s collision with the West after the Second Opium War in the 1850s to express Chinese people’s astonishment about the disparity between China and the West. President Xi first used this term in a Meeting of Collective Learning in 2014. In this Meeting, President Xi analyzed the current global trend and concluded that the world was currently at a crucial turning point, terming this point as “a profound change unprecedented.”¹⁷⁷ In 2019, he crystalized the definition of the “two profound changes”: the overall strategy of the great revival of the Chinese nation, and one profound change unseen in the international environment.¹⁷⁸ The term “two profound changes” has been repeated frequently by President Xi in different meetings and absorbed a large group of Chinese scholars.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, I use this term to describe how President Xi views the international and domestic environments.

In order to proceed with my analysis, it is necessary to expound on the two profound changes. Although the official discourse regarding the international-level “profound change” is that the world is developing toward a multipolar world, their true thought is that the US is in decline while China in rise, as many Chinese scholars summarize the trend as “the East in rise, while the West in decline (东升西降).”¹⁸⁰ Generally, the Chinese people analyze the international trend

¹⁷⁵ Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 23.

¹⁷⁶ Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*.

¹⁷⁷ Jinping Xi, “Jinjin Weirao Jianchi He Fazhan Zhongguo Tese Shehui Zhuyi Xuexi Xuanchuan Guanche Dang De Shibada Jingshen 紧紧围绕坚持和发展中国特色社会主义 学习宣传贯彻党的十八大精神 [Revolve around, Adhere to, and Develop Firmly the Socialism with Chinese Characteristics Learn, Propagandize, and Carry Through the Spirits of the 18th CPC National Congress],” in *Selection of the Important Literature since the 18th CPC National Congress (I) 十八大以来重要文献选编 (上)*, ed. Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, 79, Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 2014.

¹⁷⁸ Jinping Xi, *Xi Jinping Tan Zhiguo Lizheng 习近平谈治国理政* [Xi Jinping: The Governance of China] (Beijing: Beijing Foreign Language Press, 2020), 77.

¹⁷⁹ Feng Zhu, “Jinqi Xuejie Guanyu Bainian Wei You Zhi Dabianju Yanjiu Zongshu 近期学界关于 ‘百年未有之大变局’ 研究综述 [Review of the Recent Research on the ‘Great Change Unseen in a Century’],” *Frontiers*, no.7 (2019): 6-12.

¹⁸⁰ The belief is widely circulated among the Chinese scholars. In addition to some works cited in this article, there are some other scholarships that defend for this belief. For example: Cheng Gao, “Quanqiu Yiqing Xia De Dongxifang Pengzhuang 全球疫情下的东西方碰撞 [The East-West Collision under the Global Pandemic],” *Beijing Cultural Review*, no. 6 (2020): 141-7; Wenshan Jia and Haofeng Jiang, “Qiannian Shiye Xia Bainian

from a dialectical perspective. They believe that the Chinese economy has almost reached parity with the US,¹⁸¹ which provided China the power to lead a world moving toward a multipolar one, but also incurred the technological blockade imposed by the US.¹⁸² President Xi thought that since the outburst of the pandemic, the world become more turbulent due to the US “unilateralism” and “protectionism”, which posed more challenges for China’s development. But this international-level profound change provided an opportunity for China as well, as opportunities coexist with challenges.¹⁸³

According to these Chinese scholars, the reason why China can be optimistic about the international-level “profound change” is that the current international order is shaped by the Western imperialist countries monopolizing technologies and discourse, but the emerging developing countries are requesting more rights from this international order, therefore, it is China’s opportunity to overcome the immoral hegemon US.¹⁸⁴ We have discussed in the previous part that from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao when the international environment was conducive to China’s development, the Chinese leaders were patient in China’s development and confident in China’s future to overcome the US. Therefore, it is highly credible that the Chinese top echelon led by President Xi does perceive the current international order in a less optimistic way.

But in addition to the changed international environment, why is President Xi impatient with China’s development? After he ascended to his presidency, China has been becoming more active in expanding its international influence, which caused the US to pivot to Asia. If the international environment has become unfriendly to China, why President Xi does not try to remedy such a change? One explanation for this paradox is that China is faced with more internal challenges. The official rhetoric about the domestic-level “profound change” is a “strategic

Weiyu Zhi Da Bianju Yu Zhongguo Lujing 千年视野下百年未有之大变局与中国路径 [Profound Changes Unseen in a Century and the Chinese Approach from the Millennium Perspective],” *Contemporary International Relations*, no.7 (2022): 23-30.

¹⁸¹ Angang Hu “Zhongguo Yu Shijie Bainian Wei You Zhi Dabianju 中国与世界百年未有之大变局：基本走向与未来趋势 [China Facing Profound Changes Unseen in a Century: Basic Direction and Future Prospects],” *Journal of Xinjiang Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 42, no.5 (2021): 38-53; Bin Li, “‘Bainian Wei You Zhi Dabianju’: Shijie Xiang He Qu? ‘百年未有之大变局’: 世界向何去? [‘Great Change Unseen in a Century’: Where is the World Going?],” *Frontier*, no.7 (2019): 40-2.

¹⁸² A famous Chinese scholar Jin Canrong argues that when a country’s GDP reaches 70% of the US one, the US would unconsciously defeat that country, see: Cheng Song and Biao Zhou, “Zhongmei Xinxing Daguo Guanxi, Zai Lixiang Yu Xianshi Zhong Binjing 中美新型大国关系，在理想与现实中并进 [A New Type of Relations between the Great Powers as China and the US, Co-evolution under Idealism and Realism],” *QStheory.cn*, September 24, 2015. Another Chinese scholar Yuyan Zhang shares the same opinion, see: Yuyan Zhang, “Shijie, Buqueding Zhong Yunyu Zhe Xiwang 世界，不确定中孕育着希望 [World, Hope Harbored among Uncertainties],” *People’s Daily*, December 12, 2017.

¹⁸³ Jinping Xi, *Zai Jingji Shehui Lingyu Zhuanjia Zuotanhui Shang De Jianghua 在经济社会领域专家座谈会上的讲话* [Speech at the Meeting with Experts from the Socio-Economic Sector] (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2021), 2-4.

¹⁸⁴ Shuguang Chen, “Shijie Dabianju Yu Renlei Wenming De Chongjian 世界大变局与人类文明的重建 [The Global Changes and the Reconstruction of Human Civilization],” *Philosophical Research*, no.3 (2020): 5-15; Jinyou Pang, “Bainian Dabianju Yu Zhongguo Fangan 百年大变局与中国方案 [The Great Change Unseen in a Century and China’s Program],” *Frontiers*, no.4 (2019): 21-30.

overall situation of the great revival of the Chinese nation,” but even the paramount leader President Xi admitted the challenges behind this rosy landscape.¹⁸⁵

One indicator to assess Chinese domestic instability is the fiscal expenditure on public security. Although the central government also allocates provisional and special funds for the local governments to preserve stability, these provisional funds are too trivial compared to the fiscal expenditure.¹⁸⁶ So, a look at the fiscal expenditure is enough to conclude that China is faced with increasing challenges in maintaining its domestic stability.

In Figure 2, we can find that from 2012 to 2021, the overall expenditure on public security increased at an average of 8% each year. It almost doubled in less than one decade. From this rapid growth rate, we can conclude that China is faced with incremental challenges in maintaining domestic stability. The average yearly growth rate of the central government’s expenditure is 6%, while the expenditure of the local governments is 8%. This difference means that the local governments are sharing more responsibilities in maintaining stability.

Fiscal Expenditure on Public Security (CNY, Billion)						
Year	Overall Expenditure		Central Government		Local Governments	
2012	711.16		118.347		592.813	
2013	778.678	9%	129.703	10%	648.957	9%
2014	835.723	7%	147.776	14%	687.947	6%
2015	937.996	12%	158.417	7%	779.579	13%
2016	1103.198	18%	174.191	10%	929.007	19%
2017	1246.127	13%	184.894	6%	1061.233	14%
2018	1378.148	11%	204.151	10%	1173.997	11%
2019	1390.193	1%	183.945	-10%	1206.248	3%
2020	1386.29	0%	183.591	0%	1202.699	0%
2021	1378.115	-1%	189.005	3%	1189.11	-1%

Figure 2: Fiscal Expenditure on Public Security, PRC¹⁸⁷

The fact that the local governments are sharing more responsibilities in maintaining stability proves the popular argument that the central government has its fiscal problems¹⁸⁸ and accordingly has to de-centralize the task of public security. The domestic environment is more unstable but the resources to maintain stability become scarce. No wonder the Chinese central government is more careful about dealing with the US and Taiwan. As we discuss before, from the past to the present, when the central government is faced with domestic problems, the leaders pay more attention to domestic issues and allocate very limited resources to reunify Taiwan,

¹⁸⁵ Jinping Xi, *Zai Jingji Shehui Lingyu Zhuanjia Zuotanhui Shang De Jianghua* 在经济社会领域专家座谈会上的讲话 [Speech at the Meeting with Experts from the Socio-Economic Sector] (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2021), 2-4.

¹⁸⁶ Yue Xie, “Rising Central Spending on Public Security and the Dilemma Facing Grassroots Officials in China,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 42, no.2 (2013): 87.

¹⁸⁷ The statistics come from *The Yearbook of Statistics in China*.

¹⁸⁸ Xie, “Rising Central Spending on Public Security and the Dilemma Facing Grassroots Officials in China,” 82-4, 89.

which has little contribution to the ultimate goal of incorporating Taiwan or keeping Taiwan in the Chinese orbit.

As Susan Shirk argues that China is more secure internationally than domestically.¹⁸⁹ The domestic “profound change” may derail China’s modernization, but after perceiving the decline of the US, Chinese scholars have concluded that a perfect solution to the two “profound challenges” is to compete with the US internationally while preserving domestic stability and facilitate development domestically.¹⁹⁰ What does this strategy mean for the Taiwan issue? Priority over domestic stability under the context of slow economic growth means Beijing must make Taiwan deferential to China because Taiwan’s geostrategic importance can impact China’s security and Taiwan has been a major factor in facilitating the peaceful evolution in China by financing and proving shelters for Chinese dissidents from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. On the other side, this deference should be better achieved by peaceful means. Therefore, President Xi weaponizes the 92 Consensus, a more coercive but less risky approach.

Weaponization of the 92 Consensus

In 2012 during the 18th National Party Congress of CPC, for the first time, the 92 Consensus was written into the report of the 18th National Party Congress, which has a two-fold meaning according to Liu Xiangping. First, it reflected President Xi’s recognition of the merit of the 92 Consensus. Second, it is a symbol that the 92 Consensus became a key policy assertion of Beijing’s Taiwan policy.¹⁹¹

In the early 21st century, the 92 Consensus served as a *modus vivendi* for Beijing, Washington, and KMT to stabilize the cross-Strait relationship. Whatever the three parties anticipated when they proposed and accommodated this *modus vivendi*, the *modus vivendi* performed well for more than one decade. KMT used 92 Consensus to pay tribute to Beijing and win back the ROC founded by them. However, the rewards coming from Beijing were pre-priced.

I argue that since the 92 Consensus was written into the Party Report, Beijing started to weaponize the 92 Consensus. By using the term “weaponize,” I mean that Beijing uses 92 Consensus for two functions: (1) test to what extent Taiwanese politicians and the Taiwanese people are suggestible to their will; and (2) confuse the 92 Consensus with one China policy/principle to increase China’s moral power when dealing with the Taiwan issue.

Chuan-tiong Lim gives a perfect example of how Beijing uses the 92 Consensus as a weapon to test politicians. In May 2017, Wu Den-yih, a Hoklo politician was elected as the chair of KMT.

¹⁸⁹ Shirk, *China*.

¹⁹⁰ Almost all scholarships regarding the “two profound changes” reflect such a belief. Generally, they believe China must compete with the US to shape an international environment conducive for China’s revival, for example: Tuo Li, “‘Bainian Weiyou Dabianju’ Zhong De Kexue Shehui Zhuyi ‘百年未有之大变局’ 中的科学社会主义 [Scientific Socialism under the ‘Profound Changes Unseen in a Century’],” *Scientific Socialism*, no. 3(2019): 23-31. They also believe that the current US-China rivalry favors China because it reveals China’s disadvantages and pushes China to improve these disadvantages, see: Changping Fang, “Bainian Weiyou Zhi Dabianju Xia Zhongguo Fazhan Zhanlue Jiyu Qi De Sikao 百年未有之大变局下中国发展战略机遇期的思考 [Thoughts on Period of Opportunity for China’s Development Strategy under Unprecedented Changes in a Century],” *Teaching and Research*, no. 12(2020): 64.

¹⁹¹ Liu, “A Critical Review of the Relationship between the ‘92 Consensus’ and the Mainland’s Taiwan Policy,” 16.

Because of his background and Beijing's unfamiliarity with him, what kind of actions he would take was highly suspected by Beijing. Therefore, in avoidance of being exploited by Wu,¹⁹² two months after the chairmanship election, Xinhua News Agency published *Words that Should be Avoided or Used with Caution in Xinhua News Reports*, stipulating that "Republic of China" and "one China with two interpretations" should be prohibited in any news reports.¹⁹³ One year later, CNA News, a news agency suspicious of being controlled by Beijing, released an editorial to criticize Wu and his KMT of being clinging to the outdated "one China with two interpretations."¹⁹⁴

According to Chuan-tiong Lim,¹⁹⁵ the two actions reflect that Beijing is losing confidence in KMT and accordingly tightening the Taiwan policy. Therefore, Beijing used this way to exert pressure on KMT and tested to what extent they could influence Taiwan. However, because Wu recognized the 92 Consensus and opposed the Taiwan independence, even if Beijing was highly suspicious of him, Beijing had to ally with him.

President Xi also used the 92 Consensus to test DPP. Tsai Ing-wen was different from Chen Shui-bian and avoided provoking Beijing since she came to power, but Beijing did not accept her stance or express a willingness to talk with her so that the Taiwanese people would doubt DPP's ability to manage the cross-strait relations.¹⁹⁶ Note that this way tests not only DPP's reaction to Beijing's actions but also tests how malleable Taiwanese people's willingness can be under Beijing's pressure.

In 2019, Beijing was obviously tired of Tsai's "stoic resistance." President Xi lost his patience, issued the *Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan*, and connected the 92 Consensus with the "one country, two systems" formula. The best but the most impossible outcome for Beijing is that Taiwanese people would show deference so that Beijing could solve the Taiwan issue and spare more resources to compete with the US. However, it turned out that the situation was tricky. Tsai retarded Xi and for the first time, Taiwanese people found that they could survive without the 92 Consensus, which harmed the credibility of KMT's discourse that "[KMT] alone could talk to China."¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² It is argued that pro-independence politician "exploited Beijing's softness to advance the cause of independence." See: Wachman, *Why Taiwan?*, 19-20.

¹⁹³ Xinhua News Agency. "Xinhuashe Xinwen Baodao Zhong De Jinyong Ci He Shenyong Ci (2016 Nian 7 Yue Xiuding) 新华社新闻报导中的禁用词和慎用词 (2016年7月修订) [Words that Should be Avoided or Used with Caution in Xinhua News Reports (revised July 2016)]." November 3, 2017.

¹⁹⁴ CNA News, "Haizai 'Yizhong Gebiao', Guomin Dang Baocan Shouque 还在 '一中各表', 国民党抱残守缺 [Still on 'One China with Two Interpretations,' KMT Was Clinging to an Outdated Discourse]," July 27, 2017.

¹⁹⁵ Chuan-tiong Lim, *Dang "Jueqi Zhongguo" Yushang "Taiyangsan": Toushi Nianyi Shiji Liangan Sandi Xin Guanxi 当"崛起中国"遇上"太阳伞": 透视廿一世纪两岸三地新关系* [When the "Rising China" Encounter "Sun Umbrella": A Perspective on the New Relations among the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan] (Hong Kong: Ming Pao Press, 2019), 149-151.

¹⁹⁶ Richard C. Bush, "China's Marginalisation of Taiwan," in *Taiwan's Economic and Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Mariah Thornton, Robert Ash, and Dafydd Fell (New York: Routledge, 2021), 168.

¹⁹⁷ Gunter Schubert, and Chun-yi Lee, "Introduction," in *Taiwan during the First Administration of Tsai Ing-wen: Navigating in Stormy Waters*, ed. Gunter Schubert and Chun-yi Lee (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2022), 6; Gunter Schubert, Ruihua Lin, and Jean Yu-chen Tseng, "Liang'an vs. Kua'an: The Two Dimensions of Taiwan-China Relations during the First Tsai Administration," in *Taiwan during the First*

Taiwan's deference is necessary for China to deal with the "two profound changes," therefore, Taiwan's reaction negatively influenced China's policy in dealing with Hong Kong and Taiwan. Taiwanese people's aversion to the 92 Consensus gave Beijing a signal that they could not solve the Taiwan issue in a few years. Moreover, Beijing learned from Tsai Ing-wen's cooperation with the Hong Kong dissidents that Taiwan would be a trouble when China had more conflicts with the US. As we have seen in the *Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan*, President Xi reiterates that the Taiwanese compatriots should contribute to the great revival of the Chinese nation. He does not expect Taiwan to be on the US side when China is having more conflicts with the US. In an article published by the outgoing director of the Taiwan Affairs Office, Liu Jieyi, the relationship between the "revival of the Chinese nation" and "national reunification" is put in this way: "we should further define the important status of the national reunification in the strategy of the national revival."¹⁹⁸

Beijing has used 92 Consensus as a tool for their united front policies and Hong Kong was constructed as a model of "one country, two systems" to lure Taiwanese people to accept the reunification. Although previous works seemed to announce the futility of the two tools, abandoning them can bring a disaster to the cross-strait relations. Why did President Xi do this?

There is one speculation that President Xi wanted to reunify Taiwan as a legitimacy for his third term, therefore, he adopted a hardline approach to deal with the Hong Kong student movements and squeezed the space of 92 Consensus. This speculation is paradoxical because the hardline approach only pushes Taiwan away from the Chinese mainland.

I offer an explanation that President Xi's hardline approach is a calculation in the context of the "two profound changes." The uprising in Hong Kong continued to escalate in 2019 and there was a trend that this uprising would cause "serious political disruption" and spread to the Chinese mainland.¹⁹⁹ Because China is in competition with America and not in an advantageous stance, this possible chaos would definitely derail China from the competition or even doom China. Therefore, when stability is prioritized, Beijing had to sacrifice some progress they had made in reunifying Taiwan in exchange for a stable domestic environment.

Since 2018, Trump hastened the policy of containing China. China's shortcomings in high-tech industries and sluggish economic growth alarmed the Chinese people with their illusionary remark of the past. The US-China rivalry is making China weaker and more unstable, meanwhile, this rivalry is strengthening Chinese people's imagination of Taiwan's geostrategic significance. Taiwan has the high-tech industries China needs to compete with the US and survive the embargo imposed by the White House. Taiwan out of control became a tool for the US and other unfriendly foreign forces to play the "Taiwan card." Moreover, given that China is gradually

Administration of Tsai Ing-wen: Navigating in Stormy Waters, ed. Gunter Schubert and Chun-yi Lee (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2022), 71.

¹⁹⁸ Jieyi Liu, "Jianchi Guanche Xinshidai Dang Jiejue Taiwan Wenti De Zongti Fanglue 坚持贯彻新时代党解决台湾问题的总体方略 [Firmly Adhere to the Overall Strategy of Solving the Taiwan Issue under Party's Leadership in the New Period]," *Relations Across Taiwan Straits*, no. 11 (2022): 6.

¹⁹⁹ Richard C. Bush, *Hong Kong In the Shadow of China: Living With the Leviathan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 211.

slowing down its process of modernization, China has to challenge the US before it completely loses such a capability. In other words, Taiwan is a kind of the domestic “profound change.” When China is dealing with other domestic and international profound changes, China must take the helm of the Taiwan issue so that Taiwan will not breach China’s grand strategy during the period of “two profound changes.”

This kind of opinion finally persuades Beijing to be hardline in reunifying Taiwan even if a peaceful approach is preferred. In other words, because of the US-China rivalry, increasingly-unstable domestic environment, and Taiwan’s treatment of the Chinese mainland as an enemy, the time is not on China’s side. China must control Taiwan before a severe US-China conflict for two reasons. China needs a stable domestic environment (including a strong control of Taiwan) to spare as many resources as possible to compete with the US. Also, China needs the technologies in Taiwan and Taiwan’s geostrategic position to compete with the US. This explains why President Xi is eager in reunifying Taiwan after he stressed domestic stability.

So far, I have dedicated a majority of this section to how Beijing weaponizes the 92 Consensus by using it to test different Taiwanese actors. This approach is mainly a way for Beijing to overcome the domestic profound change of instability. In the remaining part of this section, I analyze how China confuses the 92 Consensus with the “one China principle/policy” to get more moral power.

Stress on moral power is a result of the paradigm shift in Chinese foreign policy. Since President Xi came to power, China gradually jettisoned Deng Xiaoping’s direction of a low-key foreign policy because of the “two profound changes.” Yet, this paradigm shift is a reluctant choice because China is still not powerful enough to adopt an ambitious foreign policy.²⁰⁰ The only way for the still-weak China to be more ambitious is moral power because it makes the West feel guilty and remorseful.²⁰¹ To defend for China’s ambitious/aggressive foreign policy, Yan Xuetong, a leading Chinese scholar, proposed the Moral Realism. In one of his articles, Yan Xuetong defends Beijing’s ambitious policy that Deng’s low-profile policy is not moral because at that time China only cared its own benefits, but when China is taking an ambitious stance, other countries can benefit from China’s development.²⁰² I do not aim at discussing the Moral Realism, but it is necessary to mention that one key argument of the Moral Realism is that China should use the moral power to shape a friendly international environment for China’s rise.²⁰³

Given China’s stress on moralism, it is grounded to argue that China confuses the 92 Consensus with the one China principle/policy in increasing its moral power. Besides DPP’s accusation that

²⁰⁰ Jisi Wang, “Zhongguo De Guoji Dingwei Wenti Yu ‘Taoguang Yanghui, You Suo Zuowei’ De Zhanlue Sixiang 中国的国际定位问题与 ‘韬光养晦, 有所作为’ 的战略思想 [China’s International Position and the Strategic Thought of ‘Keeping a Low Profile in Bide for More Time, But Being More Active’],” *International Studies*, no.2(2011): 4.

²⁰¹ Jiantao Ren, “Daoyi Lixiang Zhuyi: Zhongguo Waijiao De Zhengzhi Luoji 道义理想主义: 中国外交的政治逻辑 [Moral Idealism: The Political Logics of the Chinese Foreign Affairs],” *Studies on Party and Government*, no.2(2020): 13.

²⁰² Xuetong Yan, “Cong Taoguang Yanghui dao Fenfa Youwei 从韬光养晦到奋发有为 [From Keeping a Low Profile in Bide for Time to Being Active],” *Quarterly Journal of International Politics* 40, no.4(2014): 8-9.

²⁰³ Xuetong Yan, “Zhengzhi Lingdao Yu Daguo Jueqi Anquan 政治领导与大国崛起安全 [Political Leadership and the Security of a Rising Power],” *International Security Studies*, no.4(2016): 5-8.

Beijing uses the 92 Consensus to leave the global society an impression that both sides across the Taiwan Strait have reached a consensus on their belonging to the same China,²⁰⁴ there are plentiful evidences that Beijing confused the 92 Consensus with the “one China principle/policy” to increase their moral power. One example is the frequently-used discourse: “a small group of Taiwan-independence-seekers are trying to split Taiwan from China.” By confusing the 92 Consensus with the “one China principle/policy,” Beijing classifies those who accept the 92 Consensus as accepting the “one China principle.” Accordingly, in Beijing’s version of Taiwanese people’s attitudes, more people agree to reunify Taiwan with China. After the 92 Consensus became notorious, however, this strategy has been less effective.

2. Washington’s Paradigm Shift?

As has been discussed before, even in the early 21st century, China did not meet many of Washington’s expectations and George W. Bush had planned to adjust Washington’s China policy. Bush and his successor Obama were restrained by the changing international dynamics to make a paradigm shift, but with Obama’s Pivot to Asia, Washington seemed to be prepared for a paradigm shift. Around 2015, Harry Harding argues that “[t]he United States is now immersed in its most intense debate over China policy in decades—certainly since the Tiananmen Crisis of 1989, and possibly since the first serious discussion of normalizing relations with China in the mid-1960s.” He believes that given the increasing disappointment with China, Washington was heading toward a paradigm shift.²⁰⁵

From the vantage point of hindsight, we can find that Harding’s statement proved prophetic. Trump and his successor Biden have taken a more hardline stance towards China and made a stronger commitment to Taiwan.²⁰⁶ This fundamental change poses a question: has the 92 Consensus been unwelcomed by the US? My argument is in line with Richard Bush’s opinion that the US is pragmatic enough to accept any devices that serve its interests the best, which can be the 92 Consensus.²⁰⁷

It is worth reiterating that the 92 Consensus is a superordinate that can designate more contents than “one China with respective interpretations” or “one China with the same interpretation.” It is a prescriptive discourse that prescribes how the cross-Strait relationship should be rather than a guideline for KMT to make its mainland policy. Therefore, so long as KMT can make a policy beneficial to the US, it is not a matter whether or not KMT uses the 92 Consensus to tribute Beijing or solicit Taiwanese people’s votes. In other words, the 92 Consensus is just a skin sketched over KMT’s China policy. Washington does not care about the skin, but cares a lot about the substance stretched over by the skin.

Since Obama’s Pivot to Asia, some of KMT government’s policies were not in line with the US interests, but the 92 Consensus was not criticized by Washington. KMT’s condition during

²⁰⁴ Kunhui Huang, “The Broken 92 Hong Kong Talks.”

²⁰⁵ Harry Harding, “Has U.S. China Policy Failed?,” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no.3 (2015): 95-122.

²⁰⁶ Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein, “Rivalry and Security in a New Era for U.S.-China Relations,” in *After Engagement: Dilemmas in U.S.-China Security Relations*, ed. Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2021), 2.

²⁰⁷ Richard Bush disclosed this opinion to Dean Chen in a personal meeting, cited from: Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy*, 182.

Trump administration was different from George W Bush period. During the latter's presidency, the capricious leader Chen Shui-bian destabilized the Taiwan Strait and did not abide with Washington, therefore, George W Bush welcomed the KMT to use 92 Consensus to correct the ire made by Chen. However, when Trump ascended to power, the Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen worked well in maintaining the status quo while Trump needed to correct some former policies, KMT did not win any supports from Washington. Biden's policy is similar to Trump but focus more on institutions and avoid bold actions that could provoke Beijing. Yet, given the rising risk of a war between China and Taiwan, KMT seems to be expected to play a role in the future.

“Pivot to Asia” Made the Popular 92 Consensus Unmarketable?

Against the backdrop of China's assertiveness since 2009, the Obama administration had “greater resolve against China's challenges” in his last two years, but only focused on one issue, “the South China Sea disputes and related American maneuvers with [its allies].”²⁰⁸ However, according to some scholars to be cited in the following discussion, KMT was not perfectly in tune with Washington in these issues.

First, the Ma administration had an ambivalent attitude towards Obama's “resolve against China's challenges.” For one thing, Ma strengthened the US-Taiwan relationship. Taipei had many personnel exchanges with Washington; and the military expenditure surged during his presidency. For another, Ma did not see China as an enemy that Taiwan needed to defend against by allying with the US. As worded by Steven Philips, “[when Ma ascended to Power,] Taiwan was contextualized less as part of a community of democracies and more as a partner of the mainland.”²⁰⁹ Moreover, as to be discussed in the following sentence, when China had conflicts with Washington's democratic allies, Ma sided with Beijing.

Second, the Ma administration was one of the destabilizing factors in the South China Sea.²¹⁰ For example, because the Chinese territory claimed by PRC in the South China Sea was included in the “legitimate territory” of ROC, when Beijing had conflicts with Japan over Diaoyu Islands, ROC sided with Beijing to claim that Diaoyu Islands are Chinese territory. Taiwan's anti-Japanese stance synchronous with the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations since 2012 made the US anxious because the protection of the Diaoyu Islands is under Article 5 of the US-Japanese Security Treaty and had been reaffirmed by Obama persistently. When Ma Ying-jeou upheld China's (ROC) sovereignty over disputed territories, he was a trouble-maker in the eye of Washington.²¹¹

There is a third factor that may make the 92 Consensus unmarketable after Obama's “Pivot to Asia,” that is, the erosion of democratic values in Taiwan under Ma's presidency. Because of Chen's radical de-Sinicization process, when Ma came to power, Washington and some

²⁰⁸ Robert Sutter, “Barack Obama, Xi Jinping and Donald Trump—Pragmatism Fails as U.S.-China Differences Rise in Prominence,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 24, no. 2 (2017): 78.

²⁰⁹ Philips, “Why Taiwan? ROC Leaders Explain Taiwan's Strategic Value,” 160-61.

²¹⁰ Richard Bush told Dean Chen that the common stance on the South China Sea shared by KMT and CPC caused territorial disputes with other countries, which destabilizes the US interest, see: Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy*, 15.

²¹¹ Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy*, 156-64.

pragmatist Taiwanese people hoped a re-Sinicization project could correct Chen's efforts. However, Ma went more than expected, making Washington wary of Taiwan's alignment with China and the "erosion of Taiwan's democratic consolidation."²¹² Ma's determination to pass the controversial trade law and blatant way of dealing with students during the Sunflower Movement did not align with democratic values as well.

Nevertheless, I argue that the "Pivot" policy does not change Washington's attitude towards the 92 Consensus. Regarding Ma's ambivalent attitude, it in fact aligns with the US interests. China did not reach parity with the US economically or militarily, but it was far more powerful than Taiwan and other East Asian countries. Because the US is distant from East Asia, these countries in East Asia had to adopt the "hedging" policy. Ma's ambivalence is a representation of the "hedging" policy. Without sacrificing Taiwan or US security, he strengthened the security tie between Taiwan and America, enhanced Taiwan's economic power, and enlarged Taiwan's international space. Although Taiwan may not be a US ally from the ideological sense, this non-conformity is not a matter for the US. I have discussed and will discuss more in the next section that ideology plays only a marginal role in shaping Washington's China policy.

Taipei's common stance shared with Beijing over the South China Sea may cause some trouble to Washington, but the level of extent regarding this "trouble" is exaggerated. For the most time, the ROC government just claimed its sovereignty over these territories but had not exercised such a sovereign right. The Japanese-Taiwanese relationship did not deteriorate during the Ma era. It was under Ma's presidency that Taiwan and Japan signed a series of bilateral agreements, among which the most successful one was their agreement on allowing Taiwanese fishermen to catch fishes around the Diaoyu Island. Moreover, when China had conflicts with Japan over Diaoyu Islands, Ma mediated between them. One example of Ma's contribution is the *Peace Initiative for the South China Sea*, which won him a praise from the US State Department.²¹³

Ma's efforts in stabilizing the cross-strait relations cannot be negated as Steven Philips argues that "[t]he Taiwan Strait was one of the few areas around China where tensions were lower in 2013 than they were in 2008."²¹⁴ Although China shifted from good neighbor policy to "regional assertiveness" after 2008, its good neighbor policy toward Taiwan was strengthened.²¹⁵ Ma did not substantively destabilize the South China Sea but he contributed to the cross-strait rapprochement dramatically. There were no reasons that the US should oppose the 92 Consensus since this Consensus had benefited the US.

The erosion of democratic values is not wanted by Washington, but inculcating the 92 Consensus for this erosion is problematic. The 92 Consensus is a superordinate and only prescribes KMT's mainland policy formally. The "one China with respective interpretations" discourse was created when Lee Teng-hui was in office, but Lee's mainland policy distanced

²¹² Christopher R. Hughes, "Revisiting Identity Politics under Ma Ying-jeou," in *Political Changes in Taiwan under Ma Ying-jeou: Partisan Conflict, Policy Choices, External Constraints and Security Challenges*, ed. Jean-Pierre Cabestan and Jacques deLisle (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17.

²¹³ Ming Yang, "Ma Yingjiu: Taimeiri Guanxi Zuijia Zhuangtai, Liangan Guanxi Zuihao Shike 马英九：台美日关系最佳状态、两岸关系最好时刻 [Ma Ying-jeou: The Best Situation for the Taiwan-US-Japan Relationship, The Best Time for the Cross-Strait Relations]," *Voice of America*, August 25, 2015.

²¹⁴ Philips, "Why Taiwan? ROC Leaders Explain Taiwan's Strategic Value," 171.

²¹⁵ Friedman, "America's Pivots to Asia and the Taiwan Strait Crises," 69.

Taiwan from China. A prescriptive discourse is not the same as a policy. Rather, the 92 Consensus can be inconsistent with KMT's Mainland policy. If Ma did "sell Taiwan to China," it should be his own willingness rather than the 92 Consensus, a political rhetoric that has not been written into any laws. Some people may refute my argument by taking as a reason Beijing's action in squeezing the space for KMT to express the 92 Consensus. However, in the last part, I have discussed that Beijing started to squeeze the space since 2018 when Ma Ying-jeou had left his office for two years.

It is not Obama's "Pivot" policy that made the popular 92 Consensus unmarketable among the Taiwanese voters. The 92 Consensus became notorious due to Taiwan's domestic dynamics and China's assertive policies. Contrarily, because the US favored a peaceful Taiwan Strait, Washington helped Ma Ying-jeou defeat Tsai Ing-wen in the 2012 Presidential Election by doubting Tsai's China policy, though it is hard to judge whether Washington intentionally did so.²¹⁶

Trump and Biden's Policy Adjustment Doomed the 92 Consensus?

After winning the presidential election, Trump received a phone call from Tsai Ing-wen. It was for the first time the US president received a phone call from the "Taiwan authority." To make the matter more unacceptable for Beijing, Trump even remarked that, "why should another nation be able to say I cannot take a phone call." On December 11, he said he would not be bound by the "one China policy."²¹⁷ The situation changed in 2017. In a phone call to President Xi, Trump committed to honoring the "one China policy."²¹⁸

There are three explanations for Trump's inconsistency. First, he is a dealer-politician and treats every decision he made as transaction.²¹⁹ His inconsistent policy is consistent with his interests. Second, the Trump administration was a "transition team...populated by numerous China hawks" and "didn't even have a coherent China strategy yet."²²⁰ Trump was hawkish because he adopted hawks like Steven Bannon's advice on "poking Beijing's ire."²²¹ Third, Trump's decision was well-designed and he was a competent politician. For example, the reduction of the US financial support for some international organizations, though argued as a detriment to multilateralism, was a way to voice discontent against China's non-transparency during the COVID-19 and denying Taiwan's observer status.²²²

²¹⁶ Alan D. Romberg, "Taiwan Elections Head to the Finish: Concerns, Cautions, and Challenges," *China Leadership Monitor* 36, Hoover Institution, 2012.

²¹⁷ John F. Copper, "Understanding President Trump's Taiwan Policy," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 24, no. 2 (2017): v-vi.

²¹⁸ Euan McKirdy and Katie Hunt, "Trump Commits to 'One China' Policy in Phone Call with Xi," *CNN*, February 10, 2017.

²¹⁹ Dean P. Chen, *US-China-Taiwan in the Age of Trump and Biden: Towards a Nationalist Strategy* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2022), 93.

²²⁰ Chen, *US-China-Taiwan in the Age of Trump and Biden: Towards a Nationalist Strategy*, 42.

²²¹ Bob Davis and Lingling Wei, *Superpower Showdown: How the Battle Between Trump and Xi Threatens a New Cold War* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020), 161-65.

²²² Harry Harding, "Change and Continuity in American Policy towards Taiwan," in *Taiwan's Economic and Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Mariah Thornton, Robert Ash, and Dafydd Fell (New York: Routledge, 2021), 156.

The first and third explanations do not confront the 92 Consensus and they indicate that if the 92 Consensus could serve the US interest, it would be liked by Trump. The second explanation excludes the hailing of the 92 Consensus if we think the condition the extreme condition. Extremely, Washington would not endure Taiwan maintaining the status quo or bandwagoning China. Rather, it needs Taiwan to balance against China, and the 92 Consensus is accordingly not acceptable. During Trump's term, the real condition has never reached this point. However, this possible scenario plays a key role in Taiwan's election politics. Because Taiwan's security depends on the US, Washington's stance can influence Taiwanese people's opinions of their future and the cross-Strait relations. I think one reason why KMT lost the 2020 Presidential Election is that Trump's hawkish stance left the Taiwanese people an impression that they could not cater to both the US and China. Because they did not want the reunification, they chose the US, which made the 92 Consensus unmarketable.

The third explanation provides a more sophisticated way to analyze Trump's Taiwan policy. During Trump's presidency, he put the US first by a series of policies, which from the perspective of realism, secures the US security. Especially, Trump bolstered America's military power. According to John Copper:²²³

[Trump] proposed a defense budget increase bigger than China's and an enlargement of the navy's fleet to 350 ships - the biggest fleet expansion since the end of the Cold War. This had monumental implications. According to a 2015 Rand Corporation study, by 2017 China would have an "advantage" or "approximate parity" in "six of nine areas relevant to a showdown with the U.S. over Taiwan." Trump was correcting this to make sure the United States could defend Taiwan.

Arguably, Trump's China policy does not deviate from the ones of his predecessors. John Copper argues that Trump acts like a balancer. He warned against China but at the same time did not want Taipei to destabilize the Taiwan Strait.²²⁴ Trump's policy is similar to Obama's "Pivot to Asia," albeit more competitive.²²⁵ When Obama came to power, China's increasing assertiveness led to his decision of America's pivot to Asia.²²⁶ Yet, Obama "refrained from including China's policy toward Taiwan...[and] continued to adhere to an approach inherited from the George W. Bush administration that the Taiwan issue should be handled in ways that avoid serious negative consequences for American policy toward China."²²⁷

Each time when Trump infuriated China, he did something to balance this. For example, Alex Wong displeased Beijing as the first high-echelon US official visited Taiwan after the passage of the Taiwan Travel Act.²²⁸ His displeasing Beijing also registered displeasure of Trump. After his

²²³ Copper, "Understanding President Trump's Taiwan Policy," v-vii.

²²⁴ Copper, "Understanding President Trump's Taiwan Policy," v-vi.

²²⁵ Richard C. Bush, *Difficult Choices: Taiwan's Quest for Security and the Good Life* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2021), 296.

²²⁶ Deng, "The Unwelcome Return: China Reacts to the US Strategic Pivot to Asia," 84-85.

²²⁷ Robert Sutter, "American Policy Toward Taiwan-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century," in *Taiwan's Political Re-Alignment and Diplomatic Challenges*, ed. Wei-chin Lee (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 233.

²²⁸ Chris Horton, "In Taiwan, U.S. Official Says Commitment 'Has Never Been Stronger'," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2018.

visit, it is said that Trump screamed, “who is Alex Wong? And why didn’t anybody tell me he was going to Taiwan? Get him out of there!”²²⁹ Dean Chen attributed Trump’s capricious attitude to his way of treating the foreign policy as transaction,²³⁰ which reaffirmed the argument that Trump was a dealer-politician. Other examples that reflect Trump’s capricious character include that: in June 2018 when AIT opened up its new office in Taipei, the US did not send any top officials to attend the ceremony.²³¹ But in August 2018, Tsai was allowed to deliver a speech in Los Angeles that Taiwan’s freedom is not negotiable during her transit stop on the way to visit Belize and Paraguay, two countries still having the diplomatic relations with ROC.²³²

By examining a series of Washington’s Taiwan policy, Kastner argues that the US-Taiwan relationship was closer during the Trump administration but the improvement was more symbolic than substantive.²³³ Trump did not really “tilt toward Taiwan” and most of his “friendly endeavors” are “symbolic and nonbinding.” For example, according to Dean Chen, “Taiwan Travel Act...delineates a ‘sense of Congress’ and uses ‘should’ rather than ‘must’.”²³⁴ Generally, many scholars reached a consensus on the argument that Trump abided with the “one China policy” during his presidency.²³⁵ Being said that, again, because the US attitudes can shape Taiwanese people’s voting preference, even a symbolic action can have a substantive impact on Taiwan.

Biden contended Trump in the 2020 election and defeated this trouble-making incumbent. Surprisingly, he invited the representative of TECRO (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office) Hsiao Bi-kim to attend his inauguration ceremony. This was the first time “ROC’s de facto ambassador to the US” was invited since the renunciation of the US-ROC diplomatic relationship. During Biden’s presidency, Washington has gone more than just providing political support to Taiwan. It was the first time since 1979 that Washington disclosed to the world the US military was in the Island to help train the ROC troops. Many high-tech companies and production chains are in the process of being transplanted to the US and other countries. In my opinion, the Biden administration is preparing for a possible war that may happen across the Taiwan Strait.

Yet, the tension seems to be favored KMT now. First, it is worth noting that the atmosphere in Taiwan was different from 2020 when Trump took a series of actions targeted at China, which contributed to the failure of KMT in the 2020 presidential election and legislator elections. When Biden wanted to soften the relationship with China, and the war became possible, however, the atmosphere once again favored KMT because it became a party that could manage the cross-

²²⁹ Josh Rogin, *Chaos Under Heaven: Trump, XI, and the Battle for the Twenty-first Century* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021), 43.

²³⁰ Chen, *US-China-Taiwan in the Age of Trump and Biden: Towards a Nationalist Strategy*, 93.

²³¹ Chris Horton, “U.S. Unveils an Office in Taiwan, but Sends no Top Officials.” *The New York Times*, June 12, 2018.

²³² Agence France-Presse, “US denies change to ‘one China’ policy after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen’s speech in California,” *The South China Morning Post*, August 15, 2018.

²³³ Scott L. Kastner, “Stronger than Ever?: US-Taiwan Relations during the First Tsai Administration,” in *Taiwan during the First Administration of Tsai Ing-wen: Navigating in Stormy Waters*, ed. Gunter Schubert and Chun-yi Lee (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2022), 303-27.

²³⁴ Chen, *US-China-Taiwan in the Age of Trump and Biden: Towards a Nationalist Strategy*, 92.

²³⁵ Chen, *US-China-Taiwan in the Age of Trump and Biden: Towards a Nationalist Strategy*, 93.

Strait relations. Second, the US does not want any cutting-edge technologies in Taiwan to fall in the hands of CPC, therefore, it has been in the process of transplanting relevant industries to the US and other countries. However, the transplantation is not easy and may take more than one decade.²³⁶ Before the US finishes this process, it is disastrous to have a war across the Taiwan Strait. Under such a condition, letting KMT maintain the status quo is a good choice.

In the third place, Taiwan's strategic values as part of the first island chain became more significant under the US-China rivalry, which gave the independence-seekers an opportunity to pursue their ambition, may it be a salami slice strategy. But given the decline of the US power since the 9/11 Incident, it is not advised to have a war with China.²³⁷ China has been powerful enough to make the US-China war catastrophic, and China is too big to collapse now. Although the US can decrease its economic loss by disengaging with China, the humanitarian disaster of refugees from a country with 1.4 billion population is too horrible to imagine. Moreover, even if China does not satisfy the US in dealing with the Russia-Ukraine War, China is still a factor in shaping Russia and Ukraine's decisions. If China collapsed, it would be possible the Russia-Ukraine War would escalate to an unacceptable extent. Therefore, the US could not afford to invite the independence-seekers to pursue their ambition. If the US options for strategic clarity, pro-independence leaders might take advantage of this to win the election, which imposes more challenges on the US.

Legacy of Cold War: Security or Ideology?

My argument that 92 Consensus has not been discarded by Washington is based on the assumption that security is at top of Washington's agenda. In the *Accommodate the 92 Consensus* section, I discuss how security shaped Washington's China policy from the George W Bush administration to the Obama administration. Yet, during the Trump and Biden administrations, many discourses reminiscent of the Cold War challenges this assumption. For instance, on November 12, 2020, Pompeo stated that "Taiwan has not been part of China," but in the last days as a departing secretary, he said that, "Taiwan shows what a free China could achieve." Dean Chen argues that these discourses are reminiscent of the Cold War rhetoric because Pompeo might attempt "to reframe Taiwan as part of 'One China' that remains to be autonomously free from the CCP's authoritarian rule."²³⁸

According to Yuen Foong Khong,²³⁹ since Trump came to power, the US policy experts frequently used the Cold War as a historical analogy to analyze the US-China relations. Especially, the frequency of using the Cold War is obviously higher than other analogies (see Figure 3). This phenomenon reflects the influence of the Cold War in shaping Washington's China policy. Because the most salient trait of the Cold War is the difference between the two ideologies, the legacy of the Cold War alludes that ideology plays a key role in shaping Washington's China policy.

²³⁶ This argument comes from a lecture of Professor Syaru Lin. She also emphasized the difficult of transplanting the TSMC to Arizona.

²³⁷ Shushen Wang, "Baideng Zhengfu Dui Tai Zhengce Qianzhan Ji Qi Dui Liangan Guanxi De Yingxiang 拜登政府对台政策前瞻及其对两岸关系的影响 [The Biden Administration's Policy Towards Taiwan and Its Impact on Cross-Strait Relations]," *Journal of United Front Science*, no.1 (2022): 90-91.

²³⁸ Chen, *US-China-Taiwan in the Age of Trump and Biden: Towards a Nationalist Strategy*, 63.

²³⁹ Yuen Foong Khong, "How not to Learn from History," *International Affairs* 98, no.5 (2022): 1742-5, 1748-1753.

Search Terms	US-China Relations	Rank	US-China Rivalry
Thucydides Trap	157	3	44
First World War	85	4	18
Second World War	684	2	129
Cold War	2,453	1	689

Figure 3: “Factiva frequency analysis of analogies used to interpret US-China relations”²⁴⁰

Although readers can find from the previous discussion that security still plays a significant role in shaping Washington’s China policy, whether ideology becomes increasingly influential remains unclear in the previous discussion. This question is not negligible, however, because when ideology dominates Washington’s decision-making process, especially at the extreme conditions as discussed before, the 92 Consensus would be a liability for KMT to win Washington’s support²⁴¹ and DPP may exploit this opportunity to seek independence. In a contrary scenario when Washington stresses security, Taiwan would be abandoned. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the legacy of the Cold War in Trump and Biden’s cabinet to figure out what kind of roles security and ideology play.

I think the legacy of the Cold War is not an ideological consideration. The input of memories into the policy-making process should be processed under some mechanism to be the output of a decision. I argue that in the process of this mechanism, memories are transformed into other factors that can shape policies. One mechanism I can find is “emotional resonance,”²⁴² which has nothing to do with ideology. According to Philippe Beauregard, if the event arouses people’s memories, this event can easily cause their resonance, which persuades them to deal with the current event with similar emotions. In terms of the case of the Cold War, when decision-makers like Pompeo and Pence encounter the US-China rivalry, their memories of the Cold War are aroused, therefore, they respond to China with the emotion they had when the US dealt with the Soviet Union.

The existence of the “emotional resonance” declares the invalidity of a generalized rule to describe Washington’s China policy because different policy-makers have different memories. Trump and Biden experienced the Cold War, therefore, they treated China as if China were the Soviet Union. Although Obama underwent the Cold War, he does not treat China as the Soviet Union and when Trump accepted Tsai Ing-wen’s congratulation phone call, he criticized Trump for disrupting Washington’s China policy. I think Obama’s different attitude is shaped by his identity as an African American. The Cold War is racialized as Asiatic and reflects Orientalism.²⁴³ Obama may not resonate with a racialized Cold War, therefore, he cannot share the similar emotion with Trump and Biden.

²⁴⁰ Khong, “How not to Learn from History,” 1744.

²⁴¹ Jacques deLisle argue that China’s authoritarianism in recent years has raised the values of Taiwan in terms of values upheld by the US, an argument alludes to the influence of ideologies. Jacques deLisle, “United States-Taiwan Relations: Tsai’s Presidency and Washington’s Policy,” *China Review* 18, no. 3 (2018): 19.

²⁴² Philippe Beauregard, “International Emotional Resonance: Explaining Transatlantic Economic Sanctions against Russia,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 57, no.1(2022): 25-42.

²⁴³ Jodi Kim detects Orientalism from discourses used by Washington during the Cold War. Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 39-51.

The input of Orientalism becomes the output of a decision to contain China through the mechanism of “emotional resonance.” Orientalism describes Asians as “secretiveness and conspiracy,” i.e., Americans cannot know Asians’ true purposes and this uncertainty makes Americans decide to contain the Soviet Union and China. This process of deduction is similar to the one of Realism, so we can classify the influence of Orientalism as the same as security.

With the rise of China that can threaten the US security, Washington cannot accommodate China in the Taiwan issue. Yet, it still cannot remove its “one China policy” because this pushes the two countries to a more confrontational stance and produces “significant reservations” from those who in Taiwan prefer to maintain the status quo. The most possible way is to adjust its paradigm rather than change it fundamentally.²⁴⁴ Washington does not need a paradigm perhaps because there are still no solutions to solve the disputes between the two countries. Moreover, I think Washington can be patient in finding a solution because there is still a gap of military power between the two countries and in the foreseeable future, the Chinese capability cannot overcome the constraints of distance to threaten the US militarily.²⁴⁵ The three island-chains and the Pacific Ocean function well as two buffers against the China threat.

Washington’s official position concerning the 92 Consensus is that it has ‘no position’ and it would not press any parties to embrace the 92 Consensus. It “is not so much interested in form but rather hopes to see substance.”²⁴⁶ This ambiguous but flexible stance gives Washington more space to modify its China policy since Washington is still exploring how to deal with a rising China. But “no position” is a position: for one thing, “no position” or its more famous synonym “strategic ambiguity” means that Washington deters both sides across the Taiwan Strait to change the status quo; during Obama’s presidency, Washington’s silence made people doubt the US “deterrence capacity,” causing Taipei to comply with Beijing.²⁴⁷

3. 92 Consensus Squeezed by the US-China Competition

From 2000 to the early 2010s, the 92 Consensus as a *modus vivendi* was accepted by Beijing, Washington, and Taiwanese people. Unfortunately, *modus vivendi* is an arrangement for people with different attitudes or even conflicting interests to shelve their disputes and work together temporarily. When their conflicts become severe while their temporary cooperation fails to provide enough incentives, the *modus vivendi* comes to its end. Since George W Bush, Washington had planned a clearer “one China” policy in light of China’s looming security threats, President Bush and Obama accommodated the 92 Consensus only because they were constrained by accidents that they could not anticipate. China also held hostility against the US but chose to cater to the US in the bid for more time to modernize itself. After China entered the stage of “two profound changes” and the US got rid of the recession, their conflicts increased. Furthermore, they have perceived each other as unwilling to cooperate. No wonder the 92 Consensus no longer serves as a *modus vivendi*. Taiwan as a small island is hard to resist the

²⁴⁴ Harding, “Change and Continuity in American Policy towards Taiwan,” 155-7.

²⁴⁵ Patrick Porter, “The Tyrannies of Distance: Maritime Asia and the Barriers to Conquest,” in *US Grand Strategy in the 21ST Century: The Case for Restraint*, ed. A. Trevorthrall and Benjamin H. Friedman (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2018), 108-30.

²⁴⁶ J. Michael Cole, “The US Position on the ‘1992 Consensus’: Why it Matters,” *The Diplomat*, May 19, 2015.

²⁴⁷ Brantly Womack, “The Washington-Beijing-Taipei Triangle: An American Perspective,” in *Rethinking the Triangle: Washington, Beijing, Taipei*, ed. Brantly Womack and Yufan Hao (Singapore: World Scientific, 2016), 22-3.

influence of the US-China rivalry. With the US-China conflicts becoming sharper, the 92 Consensus is gradually extruded from Taiwan's domestic politics.

No doubt that some *taishang* still prefer the 92 Consensus because of their reliance on the Chinese mainland. For example, according to a survey by Baoming Li, 59.06% of the surveyed *taishang*'s revenues come from the Chinese mainland, and about 79.36% of their raw materials are imported from China.²⁴⁸ Only 10.29% of the surveyed *taishang* feel confident about their future on the Chinese mainland after Trump launched the trade war.²⁴⁹ Yet, it is worth noting that some *taishang* had left China before the trade war. "At the heart of...[Taiwan's] miracle was [its] ability to manufacture products for export," especially to the Chinese mainland, but since around the early 2010s, it has become doubtful "whether Taiwanese businesses will continue to thrive on the mainland" because the low-profit Taiwanese manufacturing industries cannot afford the higher salaries and the raised "bar for welfare contributions and working conditions."²⁵⁰ For those who are unable to upgrade their business in the value chain, exit has been a choice. Those who have not exited also are considering leaving China. According to Baoming Li's survey, about one fourth of the surveyed companies has chosen to transplant their industries to overseas.²⁵¹

According to Scott Kastner and Margaret Pearson's study on China's economic power, although the influence of China's economic sanctions is complicated and the mechanism to use sanctions to influence *taishang* is unclear, the power of economic sanctions should not be exaggerated.²⁵² Tung Chen-yuan has found the sanctions to be trivial and concluded that Taiwan is not vulnerable to China's economic sanctions.²⁵³ Even if Taiwanese Business Association has been penetrated by mainland Chinese local governments, because the Association had limited autonomy and only served as a transmitter of Taipei's policy, *taishang* were not controlled by the Association and they acted freely.²⁵⁴ Among the cascade of doubts, there is one scholar arguing for the effectiveness of sanctions. From case studies on several pro-DPP *taishang* who rely on the Chinese mainland, Cheng argues that Beijing stigmatizes these *taishang* to appeal to the public to boycott them.²⁵⁵ Because a growing number of *taishang* are leaving China, a study on *taishang* still staying in China cannot answer whether Beijing can exploit a limited number of

²⁴⁸ Baoming Li, "Zhongmei Maoyi Moca Dui Taishang Jingying Ji Qi Touzi Buju Yingxiang De Shizheng Fenxi 中美贸易摩擦对台商经营及其投资布局影响的实证分析 [An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Sino-US Trade Friction on the Business Performance and Investment Layout of Taiwanese Enterprises]," *Taiwan Studies*, no.1 (2020): 24-6.

²⁴⁹ Li, "An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Sino-US Trade Friction on the Business Performance and Investment Layout of Taiwanese Enterprises," 27.

²⁵⁰ Shelley Rigger, "Taiwanese Business in Mainland China: From Domination to Marginalization?," in *Cross-Taiwan Strait Relations in an Era of Technological Change: Security, Economic and Cultural Dimensions*, ed. Paul Irwin Crookes and Jan Knoerich (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 65, 71-2.

²⁵¹ Li, "An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Sino-US Trade Friction on the Business Performance and Investment Layout of Taiwanese Enterprises," 27.

²⁵² Scott L. Kastner and Margaret M. Pearson, "Exploring the Parameters of China's Economic Influence," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 56, (2021):18-44.

²⁵³ Chen-yuan Tung, "Cross-Strait Economic Relations: China's Leverage and Taiwan's Vulnerability," *Issues & Studies* 39, no.3(2003): 137-75.

²⁵⁴ Keng and Schubert, "Agents of Taiwan-China Unification?," 306-9.

²⁵⁵ Hyunwook Cheng, "Targeted Sanctions with Chinese Characteristics and 'Green Taishang'," *Pacific Focus*, no. 3 (2021):488-511.

taishang to impact Taipei. Especially, it is far more difficult to use this strategy to exert pressure on KMT because pro-KMT *taishang* incur less hatred from mainland Chinese

Given this change, KMT now needs to appeal to more general people to revitalize the 92 Consensus. However, since the Sunflower Movement, it has been more difficult to convince these people that the 92 Consensus can bring them benefits without sacrificing their security. Since Tsai started her presidency, China has accelerated efforts to squeeze Taiwan's international space and domestic economy. Tsai cannot create prosperity like Ma but she has succeeded in convincing the Taiwanese people that "decoupling from China... may in fact result in more meaningful progress for the island's international space over the long term"²⁵⁶ Because "a significant segment of the Taiwanese public remained largely distrustful about the KMT-CCP détente, fearing that a greater socioeconomic liberalization between the two sides would allow too much Chinese influence into Taiwan that could potentially undermine its democracy, freedom, and security," lots of Taiwanese people in fact are willing to witness a decline in China's economic offers.²⁵⁷

Security concerns fail to persuade them as well. In 1996, most DPP voters turned to support Lee Teng-hui because they worried about the possibility of a war with China if DPP won the election. After DPP really came to power, however, this worry turned out to be ungrounded. Moreover, as to be discussed in the next part, after Tsai stood against China with impunity, it dawns on Taiwanese people that they do not need to accept the 92 Consensus or show deference to Beijing in exchange for peace.

4. KMT Mysteriously Enchanted by the 92 Consensus

Taiwanese Politics and KMT's Mainland Policy after the Sunflower Movement

With the accumulating suspicion of Taiwan's excessive economic dependency on the Chinese mainland, and the unequal distribution of incomes from the cross-Strait economic interactions, the economic achievement during Ma Ying-jeou's presidency failed to convince Taiwanese people to choose the 92 Consensus.²⁵⁸ Moreover, the 92 Consensus and KMT became notorious after Ma's "approval rating hit a new low of 9.2 percent" in September 2013.²⁵⁹

The public image of the 92 Consensus continued to go downhill since Ma did not adjust KMT's mainland policy or the prescriptive discourse. In March 2014, KMT passed the *Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement* (CSSTA) in the Legislative Yuan without a clause-by-clause review. Because Ma Ying-jeou was regarded by the Taiwanese public as biased toward Beijing,²⁶⁰ KMT's hardline approach aroused public suspicion of Ma's determination in passing the unpopular CSSTA, which was based on political consideration than on economic

²⁵⁶ Mariah Thornton, "Walking towards China or towards the World? Taiwan's International Space under Ma Ying-jeou and Tsai Ing-wen," in *Taiwan's Economic and Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Mariah Thornton, Robert Ash, and Dafydd Fell (New York: Routledge, 2021), 173-6.

²⁵⁷ Chen, *US-China-Taiwan in the Age of Trump and Biden: Towards a Nationalist Strategy*, 78.

²⁵⁸ Richard C. Bush, *Uncharted Strait: The Future of China-Taiwan Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 53-60.

²⁵⁹ Chris Wang, "Ma's Approval Rating Plunges to 9.2 Percent," *Taipei Times*, September 16, 2013.

²⁶⁰ Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy*, 111.

considerations.²⁶¹ Some scholars believe that Ma's family education shaped his mind of committing to ROC.²⁶² Therefore, to get a historic reputation of promoting the cross-strait rapprochement, he reached out to Beijing so that he could be the first president of ROC to attend the APEC summit and met with Xi Jinping. Similarly, Beijing had pressure to meet with Ma to negotiate any political issues. If KMT lost the presidential election in 2016, Beijing had to wait until the time KMT comes back to power. For another, even if KMT won the 2016 Presidential Election, because of the pressure to be re-elected in the next election, it was less likely for the prospective KMT president to negotiate with Beijing about any political issues.²⁶³

The Sunflower Movement happened in Taiwan as a result of the accumulation of Taiwanese nationalism, and this nationalism was further fed by the enthusiasm deriving from the Sunflower Movement. The *tianrandu* (which translates literally as "born with the orientation of treating Taiwan as a sovereign country") generation entered the stage of Taiwanese politics. The Sunflower Movement in Taiwan and the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong dawned on them that Taiwanese people need self-reliance rather than deference to Beijing to survive Taiwanese autonomy.²⁶⁴

The public repudiation of the 92 Consensus did not cease after the Sunflower Movement. In late 2015, three KMT bigwigs further undermined the function of the 92 Consensus as a campaigning tool: after Hung Hsiu-chu was nominated by KMT as the presidential candidate, she proposed a formula of "one China with the same interpretation," which was interpreted by Taiwanese people as carrying a connotation of reunification; Lien Chan attended the military parade hosted by Beijing in September 2015; and Ma met with Xi in Singapore in November 2015.²⁶⁵

KMT suffered from a landslide failure in the 2016 presidential election and for the first time the pan-blue camp lost control over the Legislative Yuan. Different from 2000 when the defeat facilitated KMT's reformation (pro-Chinese members re-dominated the party and added the 92 Consensus into the party platform), KMT did not re-align its prescriptive discourse on the cross-strait relations in 2016. Rather, Hung Hsiu-chu, the radical who destroyed the effectiveness of the 92 Consensus as a campaign issue, was elected as the chairperson of KMT.

Being said that, it might not be ill-advised for KMT members to elect Hung as the chairperson and continue to interpret the 92 Consensus as "one China with the same interpretation". As Wu Yu-shan argues, during the election, political parties in Taiwan tend to adopt a moderate position on the cross-strait relations to solicit more votes from the median voters, but after the election, political parties return to their fundamental platform to solidify the support from their basic

²⁶¹ Ming-sho Ho, "Occupy Congress in Taiwan: Political Opportunity, Threat, and the Sunflower Movement," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): 69–97.

²⁶² Lim, *When the "Rising China" Encounter "Sun Umbrella,"* 158-59.

²⁶³ Matsuda, "Cross-Strait Relations under the Ma Ying-jeou Administration: From Economic to Political Dependence?," 26-29.

²⁶⁴ Lim, *Who are Chinese,* 158.

²⁶⁵ Wei-chin Lee, "Consensus Found and Consensus Lost: Taiwan's 2016 Election, the "1992 Consensus," and Cross-Strait Relations," in *Taiwan's Political Re-Alignment and Diplomatic Challenges*, ed. Wei-chin Lee (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 154-156.

supporters.²⁶⁶ The failure of KMT in the 2016 election had happened and was irreversible. If KMT modified its prescriptive discourse, according to Wu Yu-shan, it would lose support from its basic supporters. Furthermore, since the election had ended, KMT did not need to win more recognition from median voters.

A question may arise that why it was reasonable for KMT to modify its prescriptive discourse in 2000 but ill-advised to do so in 2016. This paradox was a legacy of the pathology of KMT's discourse on the cross-strait relations in 2000. Even if KMT was in the process of localization under the leadership of Lee Teng-hui, its basic supporters were still the pro-reunification people. Lee's "two-state theory" and the departure of James Soong from KMT caused most of KMT's basic supporters to abandon KMT. As a result, even if Lien Chan succeeded to win votes from some median voters, KMT lost the 2000 Presidential Election. Therefore, after the presidential election, the right way for KMT to solidify its basic voters was to expel Lee from KMT and readjust its prescriptive discourse back to the framework of one China. KMT in 2016 did not face this problem, therefore, it did not need to modify its prescriptive discourse.

On the other side, because Ma Ying-jeou could not find a substitute for the 92 Consensus, given that Washington still wanted a stable cross-strait relationship, at least during his last term,²⁶⁷ it was sensible for him to sustain the 92 Consensus. As argued before, adherence to the 92 Consensus is in exchange for Beijing's reward to KMT, which affords KMT leverage to compete with DPP during a campaigning period. For example, Gambia renounced its diplomatic relationship with ROC in November 2013, but Beijing did not re-establish a diplomatic relationship with Gambia until March 2016. This was explained by Bonnie Glaser as that Beijing wanted to dissuade other Taipei's allies from severing their diplomatic relationship with Taipei for the sake of KMT's dignity.²⁶⁸ It is also argued that Beijing established the diplomatic relationship with Gambia in 2016 in order to demoralize president-elect Tsai Ing-wen.²⁶⁹ This argument is grounded. One reason why KMT is willing to defer to Beijing is that Beijing can decide Taiwan's international space. If Beijing does not use this power to reward KMT or punish DPP, why should KMT defer to Beijing?

When the danger of being incorporated by China via economic integration loomed after the Sunflower Movement, stable cross-strait relations and economic liberalization becomes less attractive to Taiwanese people. On the other side, although China and America still want a peaceful Taiwan Strait, the strategic significance of Taiwan increased for both sides. How to cater to the two strong powers becomes a conundrum for KMT under such a context.

²⁶⁶ Yu-shan Wu, "The Evolution of the KMT's stance on the One China Principle: National Identity in Flux," in *Taiwanese Identity In the Twenty-first Century: Domestic, Regional, and Global Perspectives*, ed. Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm, (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2011), 60-65.

²⁶⁷ Steven M. Goldstein, "Post-Election Cross-Strait Relations: High Hopes and Low Expectations," in *Cross-Taiwan Strait Relations in an Era of Technological Change: Security, Economic and Cultural Dimensions*, ed. Paul Irwin Crookes and Jan Knoerich (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 18-24.

²⁶⁸ Bonnie S. Glaser, *Taiwan's Quest for Greater Participation in the International Community* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2013), 11-12.

²⁶⁹ Mingpao, "Dalu Yu Gangbiya Fujiao Tai Biao Buman Fenxi: Beijing Jinggao Cai Yingwen Jiuzhi Yanshuo Guanjian [Chinese Mainland Re-established Diplomatic Relationship with Gambia Taiwan Expressed Discontent Analysis: Beijing Cautioned Tsai Ing-wen Key Points of Tsai Ing-wen's Inaugural Address] 大陸與岡比亞復交 台表不滿 分析: 北京警告蔡英文 就職演說關鍵," March, 18, 2016.

Beijing only awarded KMT the ticket to a party-to-party negotiation and did not give DPP the same consideration as it gave to KMT.²⁷⁰ This kind of preferential treatment continued to enable KMT to manage the cross-Straits relationship. In the 2018 local elections, because KMT had the ability to call for Beijing to make economic offers to Taiwan, KMT won 15 cities and counties, including DPP's camp Kaohsiung City. This victory swept out the cloud over KMT since 2016. Perhaps because Beijing's rewards were not bad and KMT could not find a better alternative, KMT had no incentives to modify its discourse on the cross-Straits relations.

However, the condition changed in 2019. In the speech at the meeting marking the 40th anniversary of the *Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan*. President Xi Jinping proposed the formula of "one country, two systems" to solve the Taiwan Issue, which connected the 92 Consensus with the "one country, two systems." Because Hong Kong is the showcase of the "one country, two systems," after Beijing failed to manage the Umbrella Movement in 2014 and the Anti-Extradition Movement in 2019, "one country, two systems" became notorious in Taiwan. Mainland Affairs Council released a public opinion survey on January 17, 2019 that 75.4% of respondents did not accept the "one country, two systems" formula and that 74.3% of respondents did not accept the 92 Consensus explained by the Chinese mainland as indicating the "one country, two systems" formula.²⁷¹

Undoubtedly, KMT lost the 2020 presidential election. According to Shelley Rigger, "through the 2020 elections, the KMT's top leadership remained convinced that engagement with the PRC was the right strategy to preserve Taiwan's autonomy externally and attract popular support at home."²⁷² This belief may not be a misperception. The gravity of China's economic power is generally irresistible. For example, the DPP president Tsai Ing-wen promised her supporters that after she became the president, she would terminate the ECFA. But after she really ascend to the presidency, she continued the ECFA. Lowell Dittmer argues that since KMT could not resist the rise of China and the subsequent economic gravity, it is wise to maximize Taiwan's economic benefits in this context.²⁷³ Although Taiwan faces the risk of being incorporated into China, it is problematic to neglect economic development for the sake of security. During the Cold War, the international system led by the US could secure Taiwan in terms of global commerce or national security. But with the rise of China, the growing cross-Straits interaction, and Taiwan's declining economic interdependency with the US, reliance on the US could not secure Taiwan. Nor can isolation ensure Taiwan's autonomy.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ Goldstein, "Post-Election Cross-Straits Relations: High Hopes and Low Expectations," 30-32.

²⁷¹ Mainland Affairs Council, "Taiwan Zhuliu Minyi Fandui Zhonggong 'Yiguo Liangzhi' He 'Jiuer Gongshi' Zhuzhang [Mainstream Taiwanese Public Opinion Disagrees with CPC's 'one country, two systems' and '1992 Consensus' Claims 臺灣主流民意反對中共「一國兩制」和「九二共識」主張," January 17, 2019.

²⁷² Shelley Rigger, "Kuomintang Agonistes: Party Politics in the Wake of Taiwan's 2016 and 2020 Elections," in *Taiwan in the Era of Tsai Ing-wen: Changes and Challenges*, ed. J.T. Dreyer and J. deLisle (New York: Routledge, 2021), 42.

²⁷³ Dittmer, "Analyzing the Taiwan Strait Tangle," 10.

²⁷⁴ Tse-kang Leng, "Guojia, Quanqiuhua, Yu Liangan Guanxi 國家, 全球化, 與兩岸關係 [State, Globalization, and the Cross-Straits Relations]," in *Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論 [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Straits Relations]*, second edition, ed. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 143-166.

Nevertheless, Rigger's argument that "through the 2020 elections... [KMT leaders] believed that the '92 Consensus' was the right formula for enabling [the] engagement [with China]"²⁷⁵ does not align with the reality. One example is that after President Xi's speech in early 2019, KMT presidential candidate Han Kuo-yu's running mate Chang San-cheng demurred.²⁷⁶ Chang did not negate the necessity of engaging with China or ROC's constitutional sovereignty over the two sides, but he suggested to use the ROC constitution to replace the 92 Consensus. In other words, he agreed with KMT's Mainland policy and the prescriptive discourse over the cross-Strait relations, but he was doubtful whether the 92 Consensus could decorate the two issues after it was discredited. His suspicion of the 92 Consensus continued until January 3, 2020, one week before the election. When he was interviewed by *Deutsche Welle*, he reiterated KMT's interpretation of the 92 Consensus, i.e., "one China with two interpretations," while expressing concerns about how to make the 92 Consensus credible again.²⁷⁷

Different from his running mate, the presidential candidate Han Kuo-yu took a schizophrenic stance on the cross-Strait relations. When Chang expressed his doubt about the 92 Consensus, Han declared to the public that Chang's stance was his own.²⁷⁸ In this respect, he distanced himself from a pro-Beijing image, but sometimes he appeared to be pro-Beijing. He was the first KMT presidential candidate who did not visit Washington but went to Hong Kong during the campaign activity. Furthermore, during his Hong Kong visit, he met with the director of the Taiwan Affairs Office and stressed that *xiwutiao* (习五条, the five points President Xi Jinping proposed when he marked the 40th anniversary of the *Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan*) oriented a progressive road for the cross-Strait relations.²⁷⁹

Han was schizophrenic in many scenarios. He attempted to convince the public that the economic offers given by Beijing would not sacrifice Taiwan's security and autonomy.²⁸⁰ He told his supporters that, "Taiwanese can never accept ['one country, two systems'] unless it is over my dead body."²⁸¹ According to Han and Chang's speeches, it is highly possible that KMT had found the weakness of the 92 Consensus. Han knew that being too close to China would harm the election and "tried a populist strategy." He told the public Taiwan needed to rely on China economically but can have a friendly relationship without subscribing to the 92

²⁷⁵ Rigger, "Kuomintang Agonistes: Party Politics in the Wake of Taiwan's 2016 and 2020 Elections," 42.

²⁷⁶ Weizhi Luo, "Ti Xianfa Yizhong Qudai Jiuer Gongshi Zhang Shanzheng Pao 'Taiwan Youxian Wushi Zhuyi [Proposing to Replace the 1992 Consensus with a Constitutional One China Zhang Shanzheng Offered 'Taiwan First Pragmatism' 提憲法一中取代九二共識 張善政拋「台灣優先務實主義」," *Yahoo News*, January 7, 2019.

²⁷⁷ Zonghan Zou, "Zhuanfang: Xi Jinping Yu Minjindang Wumie 'Jiuer Gongshi' 专访: 习近平与民进党污蔑 '九二共识' [Exclusive Interview: Xi Jinping and DPP are Discrediting the '1992 Consensus']," *Deutsche Welle*, January 3, 2020.

²⁷⁸ UDN News, "Han Guoyu Zhichi De Jiuer Gongshi Shifou Yi Zou Dao Jintou? 韓國瑜支持的九二共識是否已走到盡頭? [Has the 1992 Consensus Supported by Han Kuo-yu Walked to Its End?]," July 31, 2019.

²⁷⁹ Qian Zhang and Guoqiang Qiu, "Han Guoyu Hui Liu Jieyi Cheng Jiuer Gongshi Shi Liangan Dinghai Shenzhen 韓國瑜會劉結一 稱九二共識是兩岸定海神針 [Han Kuo-Yu Met Liu Jieyi Claimed that the 1992 Consensus was the Mainstay for the Cross-Strait Relations]," *CNA News*, March 23, 2019.

²⁸⁰ Shangrong Dai and Keting Chen, "Han Guoyu Xianchang Shengqi 'Taiwan Anquan, Renmin Youqian' Minzhong Fenfen Daka 韓國瑜現場升起「台灣安全、人民有錢」民眾紛紛打卡 [The Banner of 'Security to Taiwan, Money to People' was Risen in Han Kuo-yu's Live Speech People Came to Take Photos]," *China Times*, September 7, 2019.

²⁸¹ Taipei Time, "Han Repeats Stance on 'Two Systems'," June 17, 2019.

Consensus.²⁸² However, the ability to manage the cross-strait relations and economic growth is an asset for KMT in campaigns, therefore, KMT could not afford to offend Beijing. Especially, Han Kuo-yu's election manifesto was centered on economic development relying on the Chinese mainland.

KMT lost the 2020 presidential election. The failure reflects the difficulty of manipulating issues to request support from Beijing while convincing the Taiwanese people that the 92 Consensus can bring back Taiwan both security and money. It also indicates Taiwanese people's opposition to the engagement with the Chinese mainland during 2020. The anti-Chinese atmosphere in Washington also squeezed the space in expressing the 92 Consensus. Wang Shusheng argues that China hawks of the Trump administration did not allow KMT to cotton up to both Beijing and Washington. Dismissal by Washington and the anti-China atmosphere in Taiwan sent KMT into despair. This condition was improved only after Biden came to power.²⁸³

Washington and the Taiwanese public did not want the 92 Consensus during that period, but why was KMT mysteriously enchanted by the 92 Consensus? Beijing could provide some rewards for KMT's adherence and KMT could not afford to offend Beijing might be the reasons, but these reasons are too weak to explain KMT's mysterious behavior. Moreover, after Hung Hsiu-chu resigned her chairpersonship, KMT had a tendency of eschewing the 92 Consensus, which undermined the accountability of the argument that KMT adhered to the 92 Consensus to cater to Beijing. In this thesis, I provide two explanations for this mystery: KMT needs to cater to its basic voters, and KMT adheres to the 92 Consensus because of Taiwan's identity politics.

Afraid to Displease Basic Voters

One reason why KMT adheres to the 92 Consensus is that KMT is afraid to displease its basic voters. We have mentioned before that according to Wu Yu-shan, after elections, Taiwanese parties need to stress their party platform to solidify the support of their basic voters. In this section, I push forward this argument from the perspective of KMT supporters' generation and career structure.

According to a survey released by the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation in July 2020 (see Figure 4),²⁸⁴ about 44.8% of KMT supporters were 55 years old and above. The then-chairperson Johnny Chiang disclosed in September 2021 that more than 70% of KMT members were older than 60 years.²⁸⁵ These special age structures disincentivize KMT from giving up the 92 Consensus.

Age Distribution of KMT Supporters (2020)	
20-24 (years old)	0.0%
25-34 (years old)	6.8%

²⁸² Schubert, Lin, and Tseng, "Liang'an vs. Kua'an," 75.

²⁸³ Wang, "The Biden Administration's Policy Towards Taiwan and Its Impact on Cross-Strait Relations," 91-92.

²⁸⁴ Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation, "2020 Nian 6 Yue Quanguoxing Minyi Diaocha 2020年6月全国性民意调查 [Survey on the National Public Opinion in June 2020]," June, 2020, print page 49.

²⁸⁵ Chien-hao Huang, "Guomindang Jiegou You Duo Lao Jiang Qichen Bao: 60 Sui Yishang Zhan 7 Cheng 國民黨結構有多老 江啟臣曝：60歲以上占7成 [How Old Kuomintang's Membership Structure is Johnny Chiang's Exposure: 70% is Older than 60 Years Old]," *New Talk*, September 7, 2021.

35-44 (years old)	19.4%
45-54 (years old)	15.8%
55-64 (years old)	23.0%
65 and above (years old)	21.8%

Figure 4: Age Distribution of KMT Supporters²⁸⁶

Lu-hui Chen and Shu Keng divide Taiwanese voters into three generations: (a) the generation born before 1942 who had a staunch stance on the reunification/ independence issues because of their educational backgrounds; (b) the generation born between 1943 and 1965 who were conservative on the reunification/ independence issue because they witnessed the turbulent 1970s; and (c) the generation born after 1966 who were more open to the reunification/ independence issues.²⁸⁷

In light of Chen and Keng’s observation, about 44.8% of KMT supporters and more than 70% of KMT members take a conservative stance on the cross-Strait relations. And a portion of them would be eager for the reunification. On the other hand, the reason why the generation born between 1943 and 1956 is conservative, according to Chen and Keng, is that they need to earn money to feed their families, so they want a stable socio-economic environment.²⁸⁸ This explanation considered, those who are between 35 and 54 ages may also prefer the 92 Consensus. In conclusion, about 80% of KMT supporters have a positive opinion of the 92 Consensus.

The intra-party pressure to be conservative in the cross-Strait relations is higher than the one from supporters. According to Johnny Chiang, less than 3% of KMT members are younger than 40 ages.²⁸⁹ That is, from the perspective of age distribution, a majority of KMT members were advocators of the 92 Consensus. Especially, most of these members, who are veterans belonging to KMT’s *Huang Fu Xing Party Branch* (黄复兴党部), have more incentives to come out to cast their votes rather than staying at home. In the 2020 chairman election, about 24% of voters came from the *Huang Fu Xing Party Branch*.²⁹⁰ This means those who want to first win the party nomination should conform to *Huang Fu Xing*’s pro-unification ideology.

However, the previous pro-American chairman Johnny Chiang said those veterans cared more about KMT’s returning to power rather than the stance on cross-strait relations.²⁹¹ What he said might be credible because the *Huang Fu Xing Party Branch* was split into three parts during the

²⁸⁶ I compile this figure using the statistics from *ibid*.

²⁸⁷ Lu-hui Chen and Shu Keng, “Taiwan Minzhong Tongdu Lichang De Chixu Yu Bianqian 台灣民衆統獨立場的持續與變遷 [Continuation and Transition of Taiwanese People’s Reunification-Independence Stances],” in *Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論 [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Strait Relations]*, second edition, ed. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 174-75.

²⁸⁸ Chen and Keng, “Continuation and Transition of Taiwanese People’s Reunification-Independence Stances,” 174-75.

²⁸⁹ Huang, “How Old Kuomintang’s Membership Structure is Johnny Chiang’s Exposure: 70% is Older than 60 Years Old.”

²⁹⁰ Politics Center, “Tujie 34 Wan Guomin Dangyuan 图解 34 万国民党党员 [Diagrams on the 340 Thousand Kuomintang Members],” *ETToday*, March 7, 2020.

²⁹¹ Huang, “How Old Kuomintang’s Membership Structure is Johnny Chiang’s Exposure: 70% is Older than 60 Years Old.”

2021 election that even the pro-American Chiang won some support from them.²⁹² It remains unclear to what extent can the existence of the *Huang Fu Xing Party Branch* explain KMT’s adherence to the 92 Consensus, but it is predictable that in the future the *Huang Fu Xing Party Branch* would lose its influence because of the decline of veterans.

Some past lessons from elections further caution KMT leaders to be careful about modifying the 92 Consensus. There have been several times that KMT supporters did not concentrate their votes on KMT candidates, including the Mayor of Taipei City Election in 1994, the Presidential Election in 2000 and 2016 (regarding the votes, see Figure 5). Specifically, in 1994, about half of KMT supporters came to vote New Party’s Jaw Shaw-kong, who escalate the mayor-level election into an “election of defending ROC” in order to win support from pro-reunification voters. In 2000, the mainland Chinese politician James Soong who split with Lee Teng-hui got more votes than the KMT candidate Lien Chan who was Lee’s lieutenant. In 2016, after KMT replaced the pro-reunification radical candidate Hung Hsiu-chu, pro-reunification KMT supporters revenged KMT by voting James Soong, which helped James Soong get 1.2 million more votes.

1994 Taipei Mayor Election			2000 Presidential Election			2016 Presidential Election		
Candidate	Party	Votes	Candidate	Party	Votes	Candidate	Party	Votes
Jaw Shaw-kong	NP	424,905	James Soong	None	4,664,972	Eric Chu	KMT	3,813,365
Chen Shui-bian	DPP	615,090	Chen Shui-bian	DPP	4,977,697	Tsai Ing-wen	DPP	6,894,744
Huang Ta-chou	KMT	364,618	Lien Chan	KMT	2,925,513	James Soong	PFP	1,576,861

Figure 5: Votes of the 1994 Taipei Mayor Election, 2000 Presidential Election, and 2016 Presidential Election²⁹³

From 1992 to 2022, the base of KMT supporters had shrunk from 34.4% to 14%. While the base of DPP supporters increased from 3.3% to 31.1%.²⁹⁴ There are only about 55% voters for the two parties to strive for. In order for victories, KMT had to modify its prescriptive discourse to solicit more median votes. Yet, the voter turnout rate for presidential elections is around 80%,²⁹⁵ which makes it more important to get support from supporters: for one thing, the people who identify themselves as voters of a specific party are more willing to come to cast their votes; for another, if KMT could not retain the majority of its basic supporters, it is still difficult for it to win.

Moreover, KMT faces the risk of being marginalized. Taiwan People’s Party (TPP), the third largest party in Legislative Yuan since 2020, has the potential in exceeding KMT for three

²⁹² Yanmei Liu, “Huang Fu Xing Dangbu Zhuwei Zhichi Jiang Qichen: Nianqing Danguyuan Zengjia 1 Wan Ren, Guomintang Gaige Huo Kending 黄复兴党部主委支持江启臣: 年轻党员增加 1 万人, 国民党改革获肯定 [Director of the Huang Fu Xing Party Branch Supported Johnny Chiang: the Young Membership Has Increased 10 Thousands, Kuomintang’s Reform Was Approved],” *Taihainet*, September 3, 2021.

²⁹³ I compile the figure using data from Central Election Commission, ROC.

²⁹⁴ Election Study Center, National Cheng Chi University, “Changes in the Party Identification of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU (1992-2022.06).”

²⁹⁵ This number is a result of the calculation of turnout rates from 1996 to 2020. The data is from Central Election Commission, ROC.

reasons. First, TPP has a non-negligible number of supporters. From the statistics of the Election Study Center of the National Cheng Chi University,²⁹⁶ in June 2022, 14% of respondents identify with KMT, but 7.8% of respondents identify with TPP. The data from Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation is more astonishing. In September 2022, 20.9% of respondents identify with TPP, but only 15.4% identify with KMT. According to Duverger's Law, in single-member districts, rational voters would vote to the major parties to avoid wasting their votes, and this psychology leads to the formation of a two-party system.²⁹⁷ If voters perceive that their votes to KMT are wasteful in the future, they will turn to vote TPP. Consequently, TPP may replace KMT to become one of the two major parties in the two-party system.

If KMT were defeated by DPP, it could still be one of the two major parties. However, if KMT were defeated by TPP, it would be replaced. Undoubtedly, survival is more important than victory. Therefore, KMT has to adhere to the 92 Consensus in avoidance of displeasing its basic voters.

IV. The Looming of Taiwanese Identities, Detrimental to the 92 Consensus and KMT?

In March 2014, KMT attempted to pass the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement in the Legislative Yuan in virtue of their legislative majority, without regard to the public suspicion that further economic integration with China in the field of the service industry, which accounted for about 70% of Taiwan's gross domestic product, would strengthen China's economic might of incorporating Taiwan.²⁹⁸ Then, furious protesters came to occupy the Legislative Yuan and urged KMT to rescind their decision. This protest was termed the Sunflower Movement.

Ketty Chen argues that the outbreak of the Sunflower Movement in 2014 witnessed an upsurge of Taiwanese nationalism against China.²⁹⁹ Lim Chuan-tiong seconds her that the young generation in the Movement, who claimed themselves as *tianrandu* (天然独, which translates literally as "born with the proclivity for treating Taiwan as an independent state") generation, learned from the protest that the only way for Taiwan to survive in the shadow of a rising China is to stand up against China. They depreciated the 92 Consensus by referring deference to China as a vain attempt to survive Taiwan.³⁰⁰ Moreover, Anson Au argues that the Movement "reveals...[the] contemporary constructions of anti-Sinoism" that may be comparable to the effects of de-sinicization of the 2/28 Incidents,³⁰¹ a historic event that has been widely deemed as the catalyst for the appearance of the Taiwanese consciousness.³⁰²

²⁹⁶ Election Study Center, National Cheng Chi University, "Changes in the Party Identification of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU (1992-2022.06)."

²⁹⁷ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity In the Modern State*. 3d ed. (London: Methuen, 1967).

²⁹⁸ Ian Rowen, "Inside Taiwan's Sunflower Movement: Twenty-Four Days in a Student-Occupied Parliament, and the Future of the Region," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 1 (2015): 5-9.

²⁹⁹ Ketty W. Chen, "Island Sunrise: The Sunflower Movement and Taiwan's Democracy in Transition," in *Taiwan In Dynamic Transition: Nation-building and Democratization*, ed. Ryan Dunch and Ashley Esarey (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020), 121-39.

³⁰⁰ Lim, *Who are Chinese*, 158.

³⁰¹ Anson Au, "The Sunflower Movement and the Taiwanese National Identity: Building an Anti-Sinoist Civic Nationalism," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 27 (2017).

³⁰² For example, see: Wakabayashi, *A Political History of Post-War Taiwan*, 58-9; Yang Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 99 (2016): 339-40, 345.

The discussion about the looming of Taiwanese identities³⁰³ after the Sunflower Movement is far more than the works listed below. As Lee Wei-chin words, “[t]he debate about the 1992 Consensus is a classical display of identity politics that implies an uneasy settling of the collective mindset in charting Taiwan’s political future.”³⁰⁴ Undoubtedly, Taiwanese identity is one factor determining Taiwan’s mainland policy. Therefore, it follows that Sunflower Movement is a milestone in the history of the cross-Strait relations, after which the cross-Strait relationship is heading toward dead water. Yet, in this part, I attempt to challenge this consensus reached by these scholars. I do not deny that there is a growing number of people on the island who become more hostile to the Chinese mainland, but I argue that this hostility does not necessarily lead to the end of the 92 Consensus. Conversely, the 92 Consensus may once again be marketable because of the looming Taiwanese identities.

1. Four Categories of Taiwanese Identities

Gunter Schubert argued in 2004 that when people study Taiwanese people’s identity, they must define this identity precisely.³⁰⁵ He defines Taiwanese national identity as Taiwanese people’s sense of belongingness with the island, the geographical entity.³⁰⁶ This definition has also been proposed and used by many scholars.³⁰⁷ These scholars unanimously suggest to use this definition alone to define Taiwanese national identity. Yet, when we discuss the political implications of Taiwanese national identity, this approach is too coarse.

Tianrandu generation and the old generation of Taiwan-independence seekers identify with the geographical entity of Taiwan, but they have different attitudes toward KMT, ROC on Taiwan regime, and mainland China. To an extent, the very difference between the two pro-independence groups bearing the same name of a Taiwanese identity makes a comparison between them too ironic. The old generation identifies ROC as a foreign regime colonizing Taiwan, but the *tianrandu* generation are born with intimacy with the political symbols of ROC including this constitutional name, national anthem, and national banner.³⁰⁸ In 2008 when the Ma administration removed ROC national banner forcedly with the avoidance of offending Chen Yunlin, the then-director of ARATS representing Beijing to visit Taiwan, however, *tianrandu* generation was infuriated and launched the Wild Strawberry Movement.³⁰⁹ From the perspective of *tianrandu* generation, ROC on Taiwan is their homeland. Their enemies are PRC and any extensions of PRC forces that want to reunify Taiwan, which may be a PRC-baiting KMT.

³⁰³ I use the plural word “identities” intentionally here because I argue in this part that there are four kinds of Taiwanese identities, therefore, when we discuss these identities, it is better to use “Taiwanese identities” as an umbrella term to avoid confusion.

³⁰⁴ Lee, “Consensus Found and Consensus Lost,” 145.

³⁰⁵ Gunter Schubert, “Taiwan’s Political Parties and National Identity: The Rise of an Overarching Consensus,” *Asian Survey* 44, no.4 (2004): 535.

³⁰⁶ Schubert, “Taiwan’s Political Parties and National Identity,” 534-54.

³⁰⁷ Cabestan, Jean-Pierre 2005. “Specificities and Limits of Taiwanese Nationalism,” *China Perspectives*, 62:32-43.

³⁰⁸ Lim, *When the “Rising China” Encounter “Sun Umbrella,”* 94-95.

³⁰⁹ Ian Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement: Twenty-Four Days in a Student-Occupied Parliament, and the Future of the Region,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 1 (2015): 10.

Different from them, the old generation hate ROC so much that they burn ROC national banner when they protest against the ROC regime.³¹⁰ Their hostility against KMT could trace back to two Chiangs' period when Taiwan was still the "anti-communist forefront." That is, whatever attitudes KMT adopt, these people's hatred against KMT would not change. They are different from the *tianrandu* generation who may support an anti-communist KMT.

The difference between the old generation and *tianrandu* generation, as well as their different respective implications for politics, have proved the necessity of re-categorizing Taiwanese identities. By revisiting previous scholarships, I think when we analyze identity as a factor in determining the cross-strait relations, there are four categories of Taiwanese identities that can produce different political implications: popular nationalism against KMT, civic nationalism, identification with the island, and pragmatism. The four categories can overlap, as we have seen from the *tianrandu* generation and the old generation of Taiwanese independence-seekers.

Identity as History and Phenomenon

In the *Introduction* part, I give a quick introduction about the cross-strait relations from 1992 to 1999. In this section, we can find that each time before Lee Teng-hui implemented a new mainland policy, he proposed a prescriptive discourse. For instance, before Beijing and Taipei started semi-official communications, NUC adopted a resolution on the meaning of "one China" to prescribe the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China. Although Lee was described as Taiwan-centric politician, his approach had an obvious traditional Chinese trait, i.e., the stress on name and status. Before Lee implemented his mainland policy, he constructed a normative discourse to prescribe the name and status of the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.³¹¹ If I concealed Lee's name, readers may think this person is a traditional KMT politician who is China-centric. On the other side, I also argue in the *Introduction* part that Lee was feigning willingness for reunification, which is more consistent with his public image as a Taiwan-centric politician.

Whatever identities Lee has, his identity is not the topic I want to discuss in this thesis. I aim at using the case of Lee Teng-hui to reveal one thing important for the following analysis: identity is a complicated thing and we cannot define it clearly. Another example regarding the complex Taiwanese national identity is, "if we were to use Confucian criteria related to ancestor worship to classify people as Han, Taiwanese would turn out to be more Han than people classified as Han in post-Cultural Revolution China."³¹²

Taiwanese people have constructed a label of Taiwanese identity for themselves, so they can call themselves Taiwanese. But under this label, there are still some contents that can reflect their

³¹⁰ Yuxiang Zhou, Jingyu Zhao, and Qiqun Zhang. "228 Shijian 70 Zhounian Dupai Shao Guoqi, Diu Jidan 228 事件 70 周年 獨派燒國旗、丟雞蛋 [The 70th Anniversary of the 228 Incident: Independence-seekers Burn the National Banner and Throw Eggs]." *China Times*, March 1, 2017.

³¹¹ Chi-hsiung Chang, "Liangan Guanxi Lilun Zhi Jiangou—"Mingfen Zhixu Lun" De Yanjiu Tujing 兩岸關係理論之建構—「名分秩序論」的研究途徑 [Theoretical Construction of the Cross-Strait Relations—A Research Way of "Name, Status, and Order Theory"]," in *Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論* [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Strait Relations], second edition, ed. Zong-he Bao and Yushan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 116-7.

³¹² Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 29.

Chinese cultural inheritance.³¹³ Identity as a label can change easily because the formation of an identity is socially negotiated: the identity formation is a process of negotiation among “those who claim the same identity” and “those who claim different identities.” It is a negotiation on how one classifies himself or herself “in terms of the broader classifications of people existing in a particular social and cultural context.”³¹⁴

Putting the classification of identities “in a particular social and cultural context” means to “unfold” “the constructed narratives of the past.”³¹⁵ It is a way of measuring and describing identities as a phenomenon and history. As Krishan Kumar cautions against defining the concept in a parsimonious way because a concept is a phenomenon with its own history, which makes it dangerous to define it.³¹⁶ What we should do when analyzing identities is to see whether the phenomenon falls on the range of the conceptual description.³¹⁷ Treating Taiwanese identity as a history is especially useful when we need to distinguish the Taiwanese identity from the Chinese identity.

In this part, I categorize Taiwanese identities into four categories. Note that the four categories are not exclusive, and a person can reflect more than one identity during his or her whole life. As Bucholtz and Hall argue, identity is only a phenomenon that exists temporarily.³¹⁸ No single identity can represent all Taiwanese people and there are no assumptions that identity is fixed. Furthermore, there are no supposed trends that the Taiwanese identity will develop toward a certain end because identities are not the future. The supposition that Taiwanese people will head toward a certain identity conflicts with the fact that identities are reflected through the narrative of their histories. By using the term “narratives of unfolding,” I admit the fact that even in empirical research, we have biased perspectives and imperfect understanding of history.³¹⁹

Popular Nationalism against KMT

I coin the term “popular nationalism,” an antonym of the term “official nationalism” created by Benedict Anderson, to refer to the old-generation seekers of Taiwanese independence. Anderson does not define “official nationalism” clearly. Rather, he uses the example of Czarist Russia to explain this term.

According to Anderson,³²⁰ after Czarist Russia accumulated “the huge polyglot domains...since the Middle Ages,” to rule the “heterogeneous population of the Czar’s subjects,” Czar imposed “Russification” on the “heterogeneous population.” During the process of “Russification,”

³¹³ Melissa Brown give one more example about the Chinese-ness within Taiwanese people’s identity. Taiwanese people distance themselves from Chinese national identity by arguing that Taiwanese national identity is an amalgamation of Han, aborigine, Japanese and American culture, which is from a Confucian cultural logic. See: Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 27.

³¹⁴ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 14-15.

³¹⁵ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 5-7.

³¹⁶ Krishan Kumar, *Empires: A Historical and Political Sociology* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2021), 1-2.

³¹⁷ Kumar, *Empires*, 3.

³¹⁸ Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, “Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach,” *Discourse Studies* 7, no. 4–5 (October 2005): 591-2.

³¹⁹ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 5-7.

³²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 85-89.

nationalism of the Czarist dynasty was instilled into the subjects in brutal ways. As a result, this cruel nationalism was severely revolutionized against by the “heterogeneous population.”

In other words, when the official nationalism representative of heterogeneous political elites could not reflect the identities of the public, but the political elites use brutal means to instill such an ideology, the public will be inspired by their own “popular nationalism” representative of their identities to counterattack the official nationalism.

In this section, I explain why I think the nationalism against KMT held by the old generation of independence-seekers is popular nationalism. Although identity as a phenomenon is hard to define, if I had to define the “popular nationalism against KMT,” I think it refers to the Taiwanese nationalism against the China-centric nationalism imposed by KMT during two Chiangs’ period.

In the following sentences, I unfold the “constructed narratives of [Taiwanese nationalism]”³²¹ through the lens of popular nationalism to exhibit the process through which Taiwanese people gradually develop a hostile and nationalist sentiment towards their heterogeneous and homogeneous “compatriots” from the Chinese mainland. The similarity between tsarist Russification and the nationalist government’s Sinicization after 1945 convinces me that the usage of Benedict Anderson’s “official nationalism” and its antonym “popular nationalism” coined by me is helpful here in understanding why Taiwanese people who were subjects of China (since Ming dynasty to Qing dynasty) for centuries gradually grew hostility against China and attempted to alienate themselves from the Chinese nation.

Now, let us trace back to the origin of the Taiwanese popular nationalism. When Taiwan was administrated by the Koxinga Kingdom and the Qing court, there was no “native Taiwanese sentiment” or “Taiwan independent movement.” People living in the island at that time regarded themselves as Han Chinese.³²² The Qing court lost the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, ceding Taiwan to Japan according to the “unequal” Treaty of Shimonoseki. However, under the Japanese colonial rule, most Taiwanese people still regard themselves as Chinese, despite that a small part of the elites “received Japanese imperial education and greatly admired Japan’s modernity.”³²³

If we follow the logic that the formation of identity is an interaction between “self” and “other” under cultural, social and other contexts, how the Japanese colonial government understood Taiwanese people’s identities help us better understand why Taiwanese people still had a Chinese identity under the Japanese colonial rule:³²⁴

The national sentiment of being Taiwanese... stemmed from their identity of being a Chinese (Han) nation and having a 5,000-year cultural heritage...The

³²¹ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 5-7.

³²² Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 46.

³²³ Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 46-7.

³²⁴ Police Department. *Police History of Governor’s Office of Taiwan, Volume 11, Security Situation since Occupation—A History of Social Movement*. (Taiwan: Governor’s Office of Taiwan, 1939): 1-2. Recited from: Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 46.

sentiment of Taiwanese regarding China as their motherland is an undeniable fact...

The “shallowness of Japan’s nation-building [project]” was also suggested by Taiwanese people’s welcoming ROC to recover Taiwan in 1945.³²⁵ On October 16th 1945, when Taiwanese people heard a rumor that the ROC troops would arrive at Keelung Harbor, they scrambled to welcome the ROC troops. The ROC troops did not come on 16th, but many of them still waited and slept at the harbor overnight. When ships of the ROC troops entered Keelung Harbor, Taiwanese people greeted them energetically. Furthermore, when the ROC troops arrived in Taipei, more than 300,000 people lined the street, singing to welcome them.³²⁶

However, Chiang Kai-shek was preoccupied with the civil war at that time, paying less attention to Taiwan’s internal dynamics. As discussed before, when the central government on the Chinese mainland is preoccupied with other domestic issues that could destabilize domestic politics, they only spare very limited resources to Taiwan. Because KMT was haunted by CPC at that time, the nationalist government sent only a group of incompetent civilian officials and soldiers to administer Taiwan. To make the already-bad condition worse, KMT transferred resources from Taiwan to the Chinese mainland to prepare KMT for the civil war. The deteriorating social-economic condition in Taiwan ignited disputes between mainland Chinese and Hoklo.

The most disastrous thing is that Chiang appointed Chen Yi as a governor to rule Taiwan who enjoyed even more powerful than previous Japanese governors. Chen Yi and his subordinates thought that Taiwanese people living under the Japanese colonial rule betrayed China and took their Mandarin illiteracy as a pretext to postpone elections in Taiwan.³²⁷ On February 28th 1947, a conflict happened between the new government and a Hoklo woman, and escalated into a cross-island rebellion against the new government. The incident was called the 228 Incident (二二八事件), which shaped Hoklo’s hatred of the mainland Chinese people and “underdog complex (悲情意识).” The “underdog complex” “grows out of the belief that the people of Taiwan have never been the master of their own land, as the island has been alternately occupied by Portugal, Spain, Holland, Japan and the [mainland] Chinese.”³²⁸

Let us encapsulate the history of popular nationalism by concluding that popular nationalism is the cradle of a Taiwanese consciousness that is targeted against the ROC regime and KMT. Several Taiwanese elites who were supporters of a Chinese sovereign recovery over China changed their minds after the 228 Incident. Some of them became staunch supporters of DPP and committed their lives to seek the independence of Taiwan.

The popular nationalism inspires Taiwanese people to struggle for self-determination, but it may not be liberal in character, which distinguishes popular nationalism from civic nationalism. A

³²⁵ Dafydd Fell, *Government and Politics In Taiwan* (London: Routledge, 2012), 12.

³²⁶ Bingnan Zhang, *Taiwan Shihua 台湾史话* [Taiwan History], Taichung: The Association for The Research of Taiwan Historical Relics, 1975, 337-8. Recited from: Rong Zhang, *Taiwan Difang Paixi Yu Guomintang Guanxi De Yanbian 台湾地方派系与国民党关系的演变* [The Evolution of the Relationship between Taiwanese Local Factions and Kuomintang] (Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2014).

³²⁷ Copper, *Taiwan*, 43-44.

³²⁸ Su, “Driving Forces Behind Taiwan’s Mainland Policy,” 58-9.

pro-independence scholar Mau-Kuei Michael Chang explores the relationship between democratic values and Taiwanese nationalism in the early 2000s through an empirical study. He finds that Taiwanese nationalism stemming from the 228 Incident may decrease these nationalists' tolerance of their opponents' political participation.³²⁹ In other words, the old generation hate KMT so much that they are willing to eliminate KMT by any undemocratic means. This belief is shared with John Copper. When he studies the 2001 Legislator Election, he found that although Chen Shui-bian played the "ethnic card" to polarize Taiwanese politics, DPP supporters were satisfied with Chen's immoral approach to win the election. Many DPP voters just wanted DPP to win while not caring about how to win.³³⁰

Popular nationalists resist KMT not because KMT was authoritarian and is now an extension of imperialist China. Rather, they hate KMT because of the "ethnic" difference between Hoklo and mainland Chinese in Taiwan. The popular nationalism has been squeezing KMT from Taiwan and resisting reunifying forces from Beijing, but their influence is in decline because the younger generation is thinking the cross-Strait relations from more diverse perspectives than the ethnic one.

Identification with the Island: Making Mainland China the "Other"

Identification or belongingness with Taiwan has been the habitue of scholarship regarding identity studies.³³¹ Jiang Yi-huah believes this measurement of identities is better than measuring Taiwanese people's identities by "Chinese/ Taiwanese identities" or "reunification/independence stance." The previous measurement is problematic because it is hard to distinguish a cultural Chinese identity (the Chinese nation or Chinese ethnicity) from a political Chinese identity (a citizen of the PRC).³³² Alastair Iain Johnston and George Yin express a similar concern that this method of bisection treats identities in a "zero-sum" approach, which contradicts the fact that most Taiwanese people are culturally in Chinese character. According to Johnston and Yin, because the Taiwanese people have a stronger sense of their Taiwanese identity rather than their Chinese identity, when they had to choose between Chinese or Taiwanese identities in a survey, they had to choose the Taiwanese identity. Therefore, these surveys underestimate their Chinese cultural inheritance. Surveying people's attitudes toward reunification or independence does not work too, because the choice of unification/independence can be influenced by "external political circumstances." A person with a Taiwanese identity may not seek independence because of a possible war or economic loss.³³³

Defining Taiwanese identity as an identification with the island seems to be a panacea for the still-hotly debate over the definition of a Taiwanese identity. When we discuss the identity politics in Taiwan, however, this term is problematic. The *tianrandu* generation and their

³²⁹ Mau-Kuei Michael Chang, "Taiwanese Nationalism and Democratic Values," in *Asian New Democracies: The Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan Compared* ed. Hsin-Huang Hsiao, (Taipei: Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, 2006), 232-54.

³³⁰ Copper, *Taiwan's 2001 Legislative, Magistrates and Mayors Election*, 68-69.

³³¹ Gunter Schubert, "A New Rising Nation? The Discourse on National Identity in Contemporary Taiwan," *China Perspectives* 23 (1999): 55; Cabestan, "Specificities and Limits of Taiwanese Nationalism," 32-43; Yi-huah Jiang, "Taiwan's National Identity and Cross-Strait Relations," in *Taiwan and China: Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (University of California Press, 2017), 28-9.

³³² Jiang, "Taiwan's National Identity and Cross-Strait Relations," 23.

³³³ Jiang, "Taiwan's National Identity and Cross-Strait Relations," 24-5.

predecessor who were motivated by popular nationalism to resist KMT regime undoubtedly identify with Taiwan, but why and how they identify with Taiwan are different. Therefore, I am convinced that it is still reasonable to treat the process of how people living in Taiwan identify with the island as a history. In this process, Taiwanese people are making mainland China the “other” vis-à-vis Taiwan.

Taiwanese people’s identification with the island could date back to 1895 when they resisted against Japanese colonial for their liberty. But this identification did not transform into a strong Chinese national identity because the Japanese colonial government soon devoted a lot in improving infrastructure in Taiwan.³³⁴ The unique experience of living under the Japanese colonial rule made them gradually feel estranged from mainland China.

Since the Qing court ceded Taiwan to Japan, mainland Chinese and Taiwanese people were not allowed to visit each other freely for half a century. From 1945 when the Chinese nationalist government recovered Taiwan to 1949 when the nationalist government relocated to Taiwan, there was a temporary period when the people from each side could visit each other. The one-century-long isolation made the two sides unfamiliar with each other. At that time, mainland Chinese were regarded the “other,” regardless of their residence status.

Although Taiwanese people continued to regard mainland Chinese as the “other” from 1940s to 1950s, the thing changed in 1958 when CPC decided to bombard Jinmen. The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958 was for the first time, mainland Chinese and Taiwanese people fought together against mainland China. The sense of sharing the same destiny dissolved the difference between them.³³⁵

During two Chiangs’ authoritarian period, the cross-Strait isolation created an opportunity for KMT to infuse anti-communist ideologies into Taiwanese people, strengthening their negative impression of mainland China.³³⁶ This education alienated PRC as the “other” that threatened Taiwan’s survival,³³⁷ meanwhile, it strengthened Taiwanese people’s identification with the island where the “free China” resided in. On the other side, the civic nationalism synchronous with the struggle for democratization played the same role in shaping their identification with the island as have been discussed in the *Civic Nationalism* section. Yan Jiann-fa, a DPP politician and a scholar, believes that after democratization, ROC was turned into “a government of, for and by the people of Taiwan.” Because mainland China had no stance in endorsing this development, it was alienated from the Taiwanese people.³³⁸

³³⁴ Yung-ming Hsu, Chia-hung Tsai, and Hsiu-tin Huang, “Referendum: A New Way of Identifying National Identity,” in *Asian New Democracies: The Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan Compared*, ed. Hsin-Huang Hsiao (Taipei: Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, 2006), 272-3.

³³⁵ Guoxian Lin, “Liangci Taihai Weiji De Zhanzheng Xuanchuan Buzhi (1954-1958) 两次台海危机的战争宣传布置 (1954-1958) [The War Propaganda Arrangement of Two Taiwan Strait Crisis],” in *Jinmen: Neizhan Yu Lengzhan 金门: 内战与冷战* [Kinmen: Civil War and the Cold War], ed. Zhihua Shen (Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2010), 86-7.

³³⁶ Wang, *China and the Taiwan Issue: Impending War At Taiwan Strait*, 25-8; Myers and Zhang, *The Struggle Across the Taiwan Strait*, 52.

³³⁷ Lin, *Taiwan's China Dilemma*, 24.

³³⁸ Yan, “Taiwan’s Bottom Line,” 103-4.

The isolation had caused dichotomies between the people living across the Taiwan Strait, but the increasingly-hot interactions between them did not improve their relationship. According to Intergroup Contact Theory,³³⁹ a friendly intergroup contact with the Chinese mainland can leave Taiwanese people with a higher expectation. Yet, when the Chinese mainland finds a “zero-sum” relationship between their grand strategy and Taiwan’s autonomy, the Chinese mainland would not compromise on the “one China principle”, which transformed Taiwanese people’s high expectation into deep depression. Like the 228 Incident disillusioned Taiwanese people’s high expectation about their fatherland and transformed many sinophilia into independence-seekers, the increasing interactions disillusioned Taiwanese people. They no longer believe that Chinese economic development would cause political liberalization.

The Intergroup Contact Theory explains why after 2008, those who exclusively identify themselves as Chinese or have a dual identity decline sharply. “One national group’s favorable feelings toward another national group do not mean the merge of national identity between the two groups. However, unfavorable feelings toward another group often strengthen one’s national identity.”³⁴⁰ Isolation between two sides from 1890s to 1980s made Taiwanese people identify with their island, while alienating the Chinese mainland as the “other.” This alienation had transformed the people living in two sides into two groups. Their difference is hard to dissolve, and when the two groups interact with each other, their difference made each other feel more alienated from the other. This psyche also explains why Taiwanese people do not identify themselves as Chinese “because China as a concept has been successfully monopolized by the mainland... [and Taiwanese people] do not want to be mistaken for mainland Chinese, or citizens of the PRC.”³⁴¹

Identification with the island is different from civic nationalism and popular nationalism because in the process of identifying with the island, Taiwanese people did accumulate hatred against PRC. These people who alienate the Chinese mainland as the “other” do not want to be reunified because they are disappointed with Chinese people. Being said, it remains unclear whether these people would change their minds in the future. In the past, the process of “othering” China happened peacefully, and China at that time was not powerful to attack Taiwan. Now that China has been powerful and exhibited an ambition of reunifying Taiwan, will the Taiwanese people who have not accumulated hatred against PRC submit to China?

Identification with the island means that some of them identify with the ROC regime associated with the island and some of them do not want any wars to destroy their cherished island, though they do not accept the “one country, two systems” that would ruin the lives on the island. This paradoxical psyche leaves a room for KMT to manage their prescriptive discourse and mainland policy. Because Taiwanese people have reached consensus on their identification with the island and the ROC regime, KMT can maintain an ambiguous prescriptive discourse by claiming to

³³⁹ Sensen Li, Changquan Long, Qingfei Chen, and Hong Li, “Qunji Jiechu Lilun—Yi Zhong Gaishan Qunji Guanxi De Lilun 群际接触理论——一种改善群际关系的理论 [Intergroup Contact Theory: Theory of Refining Intergroup Relationship],” *Advances in Psychological Science* 18, no.5 (2010): 831-39.

³⁴⁰ Zhong, “Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan,” 347.

³⁴¹ Yu-Shan Wu, “Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Implications: Testing the Worst-Case Scenario,” *Asian Survey* 44, no. 4 (2004): 618-9.

adhere to the ROC constitution, which does not specify the relationship between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

Civic Nationalism

The embryo civic nationalism may stem from the “Western World” in “the age of nationalism” where the nationalism was conducive to egalitarianism and secular education.³⁴² Although nationalism is usually exploited by politicians for authoritarian purposes, it is argued that sometimes nationalism can be liberal and civic in character because it can inspire a cross-class coalition struggling for collective goods.³⁴³

We have discussed before that in the Wild Strawberries Movement in 2008, the restrictions of removing ROC national banner imposed by the Ma administration to prevent Taiwanese people from infuriating Chen Yunlin violated Taiwanese people’s democratic values. This undemocratic action directly invites Taiwanese people’s civic nationalism against China.

Ma’s quasi-authoritarian approaches to stifle Taiwanese public opinion invited Taiwanese people’s civic nationalism, for the reason that these approaches violated their cherished shared democratic values.³⁴⁴ One slogan the protesters in the Sunflower Movement chanted is that “Ma Ying-jeou is renewing the martial law (马英九恢复戒严).” The “martial law (戒严)” here refers to the authoritarianism imposed by two Chiangs. By comparing Ma to the authoritarian two Chiangs, these protesters put themselves in the position of civil rights leaders during two Chiangs’ period.³⁴⁵

Specifically, “the representational power of language” functions here.³⁴⁶ Protesters “describe[d] a particular version of [civil rights fighters during the two Chiangs’ periods]; then [they] act in accordance with this represented version.”³⁴⁷ By doing so, they transformed themselves from “mobster” attacking the parliament into civil rights fighters who protect the democracy against the authoritarian KMT and its “boss-behind-the-screen” CPC.

In addition to Ma’s undemocratic action, I think the anti-communist education implemented by two Chiangs played a role in bolstering the civic nationalism. The worry about Beijing’s increasing influence over Taiwan during Ma Ying-jeou period reminded them the Cold-War story of an invasion from “communist China” that can destroy the democracy in a “non-Communist China.”³⁴⁸ It is this memory that encouraged them to protest at the expense of a possible economic offer.

³⁴² Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 329-34. According to Hans Kohn, the “western world” includes the United States and the western Europe but excludes Germany.

³⁴³ Yael Tamir, *Why Nationalism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019).

³⁴⁴ Lin, *Taiwan's China Dilemma*, 31.

³⁴⁵ According to Masahiro Wakabayashi, protests against two Chiangs’ authoritarianism inspired nationalism among the Taiwanese people. Judging from the definition of civic nationalism, I think this nationalism is also a kind of nationalism. See: Wakabayashi, *A Political History of Post-War Taiwan*, 175-8.

³⁴⁶ Stanton Wortham, *Narratives in Action: A Strategy for Research and Analysis* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 8.

³⁴⁷ Wortham, *Narratives in Action: A Strategy for Research and Analysis*, 8.

³⁴⁸ Lin, *Taiwan's China Dilemma*, 24.

Finally, because Taiwan's relationship with mainland China is akin to Hong Kong, some scholars argue that the oppressive policy in Hong Kong (Umbrella Movement and National Security Law) makes the Taiwanese people more unwilling to show deference to Beijing.³⁴⁹ These scholarships bear an undertone that even if Beijing makes more compromises to Taiwanese people, they do not accept the reunification. The *tianrandu* generation claim in different occasions that they want to protect their democracy and make it intact, which is non-negotiable.

Taiwanese people achieve democracy through decades-long struggle and have enjoyed civil rights endowed by democracy for about thirty years. Despite of their cultural inheritance from China, it is natural that they do not want to be incorporated into China because it is hard for them to identify with an authoritarian regime. After the democratization has been consolidated and the values shared with the US become entrenched, those who with civic nationalism in Taiwan becomes less willingness to reunify with the Chinese mainland.³⁵⁰

Arguably, civic nationalism is incompatible with the 92 Consensus because the 92 Consensus requires Taiwan to interact smoothly and friendly with the Chinese mainland, which is unacceptable to the people inspired by civic nationalism. However, since the Sunflower Movement in 2014, the number of people with a dual identity and the people who prefer reunification increases slightly and reaches a peak in 2018. This paradox points out to another phenomenon of Taiwanese people's identity—pragmatism.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism means Taiwanese people may show deference to China in exchange for economic benefits and peace. This identity presupposes Taiwanese people to be “economic animals” who are influenced little by emotional factors like nationalism.

Actually, pragmatists are ubiquitous throughout the history of Taiwan. The ancestors of Hoklo came to Taiwan Island from the Chinese mainland during the Ming and Qing dynasty for a better life. As mentioned before, the Taiwanese consciousness first emerged when Taiwanese people resisted the Japanese colonial forces. But after falling into the Japanese colonial rule, Taiwanese people once again learned to be pragmatists. The same situation happened again when the nationalist government recovered its sovereignty over Taiwan and imposed martial law on the Taiwanese people.

From the previous three sections, we have known that the time Taiwan came back to its Chinese fatherland was followed by Taiwanese people's deviation from their Chinese identities. Entering the 21st century, however, Taiwanese people shift from ideological consideration to pragmatic consideration: “Taiwan needed the Chinese market, and investment in China was inevitable.”³⁵¹ The economic attractiveness from China counterbalances Chen Shui-bian's efforts in the

³⁴⁹ Justin P. Kwan, “The Rise of Civic Nationalism: Shifting Identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* 2, no.2 (2016): 941-73; Lim, *Who are Chinese*, 158.

³⁵⁰ Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, 245; Tsang, “War or Peace Across the Taiwan Strait,” 5-6.

³⁵¹ Lin, *Taiwan's China Dilemma*, 16, 111-3.

Taiwanese nation-building project. The prosperous economy in China helped foster social ties between people from the two sides. Also, it dawned on “better-informed citizens” that Lee and Chen’s radicalized policies “had done little to advance Taiwan’s national security and international standing.”³⁵² Ma’s electoral victory told people that Taiwanese people perceive independence as unrealistic and “[a] lofty political agenda should give way to more urgent issues, such as cracking-down on corruption, rejuvenating the economy, enhancing the social safety net for the weak and needy, and preparation the country for an aging population.”³⁵³

After Ma came to power, “[the] Taiwanese nationalism... lost momentum, as the DPP now appears ready to accept that Taiwan cannot do without China economically.”³⁵⁴ After entering the “high-income trap,” Taiwan is faced with “structural problems that include an aging population, wage stagnation, rising welfare entitlements, inflated housing costs, over-regulated markets.”³⁵⁵ The rapid economic growth in China surprised many young Taiwanese people who visit the Chinese mainland, encouraging them to accommodate the rise of China and a growing economic interdependency between the two sides.³⁵⁶

Arguably, the economic benefits brought by KMT’s acceptance of the 92 Consensus may be helpful for KMT in shaping Taiwanese people’s identities. Especially, during the early 2010s, as a result of the 2008 Financial Crisis and Chen Shui-bian administration’s poor economic performance, “anxiety over job losses and inequality” was popular in Taiwan. Yet it is paradoxical that the young people worried about the economic stagnation but launched the Sunflower Movement.³⁵⁷

There are three explanations for this paradox. In the first place, Beijing’s economic united fronts can attract more Taiwanese people to go to mainland China for opportunities but economic factors cannot make them identify with China. Rather, economic development can make Taiwanese people feel more hostile toward China. For example, Taiwanese people scapegoat China by attributing Taiwan’s “high-income trap... as excessive dependence on China.”³⁵⁸ It has been argued that Ma’s approach widened the income gap between different groups.³⁵⁹ Perhaps the young people protested because they suffered from this unequal income distribution.

In the second place, China is gradually losing its economic might of reunifying Taiwan. First, since China started to upgrade its industries, followed by the cancellation of preferential policies originally targeted toward *taishang*, the labor-intensive Taiwanese industries had to relocate to

³⁵² Chu, “Navigating between China and the United States: Taiwan’s Politics of Identity,” 139-46.

³⁵³ Chu, “Navigating between China and the United States: Taiwan’s Politics of Identity,” 149.

³⁵⁴ Gunter Schubert and Stefan Braig, “How to Face an Embracing China? The DPP’s Identity Politics and Cross-Strait Relations during and after the Chen Shui-Bian Era,” in *Taiwanese Identity In the Twenty-first Century: Domestic, Regional, and Global Perspectives*, ed. Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2011), 87.

³⁵⁵ Syaru Shirley Lin, “Taiwan in the High-income Trap and its Implications for Cross-Strait Relations,” in *Taiwan’s Economic and Diplomatic Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Mariah Thornton, Robert Ash, and Dafydd Fell (New York: Routledge, 2021), 50.

³⁵⁶ Kongl Chen, “Cong ‘Taiwanren Rentong’ Dao Shuangchong Rentong 从 ‘台湾人认同’ 到双重认同 [From the ‘Taiwanese Identity’ to the Double Identity],” *Taiwan Research Journal*, no. 4 (2012): 3.

³⁵⁷ Rigger, “Taiwanese Business in Mainland China: From Domination to Marginalization?,” 70.

³⁵⁸ Lin, “Taiwan in the High-income Trap and its Implications for Cross-Strait Relations,” 50.

³⁵⁹ Bush, *Uncharted Strait: The Future of China-Taiwan Relations*, 53-60.

other countries with cheap labors.³⁶⁰ Especially, the turbulence caused by the US-China trade war fueled their relocation.³⁶¹ Second, China is now faced with its internal problems and cannot spend more on the united front work. As the Chinese economy approaches the middle-income trap, its economic growth starts to slow down and cannot serve as an economic engine to lead the Taiwanese economic growth, which makes reunification less prospective.³⁶² The deteriorating socio-economic condition has made Chinese people more nationalist.³⁶³ They resent the preferential status of Taiwanese people and criticize these united front works.³⁶⁴

The harmonious relationship between the mainland Chinese and Taiwanese people has ended. Without domestic support, it becomes more difficult for Beijing to conduct united front works. Since President Xi started his second term, there is an increasing appeal for Beijing to punish Taiwanese people who benefit from China but supported independence.³⁶⁵ Indeed, different from his predecessors who turned their deaf ears to these people, President Xi is more hardline. During his presidency, Beijing has established the *List of Stubborn Elements Who Support Taiwan Independence* (台独顽固分子清单) and claimed to sanction the people in this list, prohibiting any people or organizations in the PRC from financing them. Moreover, in 2021, the PRC imposed a fine of 48 million Chinese Yuan on the Far Eastern Group, a corporate group supporting DPP, on the pretext of the Far Eastern Group's illegal acts.³⁶⁶

The logic of CPC's united front work on pragmatists is to use both carrots and sticks: if Taiwanese people choose reunification, they can enjoy many benefits offered by Beijing; otherwise, Taiwanese people should be prepared for wars. Nevertheless, when Beijing squeezes Taiwan's international space, Taiwanese people's dignity would be harmed; when Beijing cuts down Taiwan's economic ties with other countries, the condition of Taiwanese people

³⁶⁰ Chung-min Tsai, "The Nature and Trend of Taiwanese Investment in China (1991-2014): Business Orientation, Profit Seeking, and Depoliticization," in *Taiwan and China: Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (University of California Press, 2017), 139-43.

³⁶¹ Li, "An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Sino-US Trade Friction on the Business Performance and Investment Layout of Taiwanese Enterprises," 24-7.

³⁶² Lin, "Taiwan in the High-income Trap and its Implications for Cross-Strait Relations," 53-4.

³⁶³ Rou-lan Chen, "Chinese Youth Nationalism in a Pressure Cooker," in *Taiwan and China: Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (University of California Press, 2017), 93-114.

³⁶⁴ In February 2023 when Chinese Ministry of Education announced to waive tests for Taiwanese applicants to enter Chinese universities, among which include the notable ones like Peking University, a lot of Chinese people were infuriated. They complained about wasting their scarce educational resources on Taiwanese people and satirized Beijing's united front works. See: "Taiwan Xuesheng Ke Mianshi Shenqing Beida Qinghua Weibo Pinglun Da Fanche 台湾学生可免试申请北大清华 微博评论大翻车 [Taiwanese Students Are Waived Tests for Their Applications to Peking and Tsinghua Universities Public Opinions Reached a Tipping Point in Weibo]," *Creaders.net*, March 1, 2023.

³⁶⁵ For example, Li Yihu, a professor of Peking University and a representative of the National People's congress, appealed to punish "two-faced Taiwan entrepreneurs." See: Minnie Chan and Lawrence Chung, "Beijing Should 'Punish Two-faced Taiwan Entrepreneurs' Who Profit from Business on Chinese Mainland while Supporting Independence," *South China Morning Post*, March 10, 2016.

³⁶⁶ It is highly possible that the Far Eastern Group is sanctioned because of political factors. When the speaker of Taiwan Affairs Office was interviewed about this matter, she commented that we would not permit Taiwan independence-seekers to make money on the Chinese mainland. See: "Zhong Zhongfa Yuandong Guotaiban: Ju Ting Taiduzhe Lai Ci Zhuanqian 中重罰遠東 國台辦:拒挺台獨者來此賺錢 [China Sanctioned the Far Eastern Group Fiercely Taiwan Affairs Office: We Refuse to Support Taiwan Independence-seekers to Make Money Here]," *Chinese Television System*, November 22, 2021.

deteriorates.³⁶⁷ For example, when Beijing sanctions the Far Eastern Group, they may succeed in deterring the Far Eastern Group from supporting DPP, but this estranges Taiwanese people and makes *taishang* more cautious about investing in China. The carrots and sticks cannot be used concurrently, but using only one approach may not be persuasive enough to convince the Taiwanese people to accept reunification.

Judging from China's fading capacity in the united front works and Taiwanese people's unwillingness of accepting reunification in exchange for wealth, we may conclude that Beijing cannot reunify Taiwan because of Taiwanese people's pragmatism. This viewpoint seems more convincing after the Sunflower Movement, but pragmatists consider more than economies. They also want peace, that is, pragmatists may accept being reunified should if a war happens to Taiwan.

According to a survey published by *Global Views Monthly* in December 2021, more than half of respondents did not want to go to the battlefield, and for respondents under 30 years old, the number increased to more than 70%.³⁶⁸ A survey conducted by the Duke University in 2022 provides almost the same number: if China went to war with Taiwan, less than 30% of people are willing to defend Taiwan.³⁶⁹ What may dissatisfy the independence-seekers is that about 28% of people can accept the "one country, two systems" formula for the sake of peace.³⁷⁰ Different from these surveys, a survey conducted by the Election Study Center, NCCU but under the authorization of Taiwan Foundation for Democracy exhibits a totally different picture: if China attacked Taiwan in order to reunify Taiwan, 71.9% of people are willing to defend Taiwan.³⁷¹

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy is affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC, therefore, the survey published by it may be biased toward the argument preferred by the ruling party DPP. Therefore, I am encouraged to believe in the other two surveys. Being said that, the data proved by the two surveys cannot help us draw a conjecture about the future. There are 23 million people in Taiwan and 30% of the population amount to 6 million people. In the foreseeable future, the PLA cannot develop their power to an extent that can neglect the geographical restraints of the Taiwan Strait,³⁷² therefore, even with half of such a great amount of people willing to defend Taiwan, it is very difficult for PLA to occupy Taiwan. Even if such an occupation is achievable, the implication is too horrible to imagine.

³⁶⁷ Bush, "China's Marginalisation of Taiwan," 170.

³⁶⁸ Shaoen Feng, "2022 Nian Zuixin Minxin Dongxiang Diaocha: 44% Minzhong Dui Jingji You Xinxin, Yuban Minzhong Wuyi Shang Zhanchang 2022 年最新民心動向調查: 44% 民眾對經濟有信心, 逾半民眾無意上戰場 [The Latest Survey on the Public Opinion in 2022: 44% of the People Have Confidence in the Economy, And More Than Half of the People Have No Intention of Going to War]," *Global Views Monthly*, December 28, 2021.

³⁶⁹ Duke University provides the statistics in <https://sites.duke.edu/tNSS/>. The information is from a file named 2022 *TNSS-survey methods and frequency tables* in the printed page 22.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, printed page 16.

³⁷¹ Quoted from: "Taiwan Minzhu Jijinhui Mindiao: Yu 7 Cheng Minzhong Yuan Wei Kang Zhongwutong Er Zhan Taiwan 民主基金會民調: 逾 7 成民眾願為抗中武統而戰 [Taiwan Foundation for Democracy Public Opinion Survey: More Than Seventy Percent of People Are Willing to Fight Against the Chinese Military Reunification]," *UDN News*, December 30, 2022.

³⁷² Patrick Porter, "The Tyrannies of Distance: Maritime Asia and the Barriers to Conquest," in *US Grand Strategy in the 21ST Century: The Case for Restraint*, ed. A. Trevorthrall and Benjamin H. Friedman (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2018), 108-30.

The future is not optimistic for PLA's opponent either. There are about 70% of people unwilling to defend Taiwan, and about 28% of them can accept the "one country, two systems." These people add more uncertainty to their calculations. Will these people aid PLA, or will they behave negatively after being enlisted?

The existence of nationalism cannot rule out the possibility that a group of Taiwanese people can abandon their national identity and democratic values for the sake of peace and benefits. Furthermore, identities are interchangeable: in different scenarios, people can have different identities. Those who have planned to defend Taiwan may choose capitulation should if the war happens, and vice versa. However, the mechanism behind nationalism and pragmatism is unclear, it remains unknown how would the confluence of nationalism and pragmatism influence the cross-Strait relations. It is uncertain what the Taiwanese people will do when PLA came to "liberate" Taiwan. To an extent, I think this uncertainty cautions CPC and DPP from changing the status quo. It also makes strategic ambiguity a thorny issue for Washington, because when Washington calculates the pros and cons of strategic ambiguity, this unmeasurable but important factor must be considered.

2. Legitimacy: An Explanation for KMT's Adherence to the 92 Consensus?

Although the presence of the pragmatists provides some incentives for KMT to adhere to the 92 Consensus, the existence of the other three identities strongly disincentivizes KMT to do so. Therefore, a deeper consideration of why KMT adheres to the 92 Consensus is deserved. I think KMT adheres to the 92 Consensus because since they are unable to abandon the 92 Consensus, they want to take advantage of it to shape an identity that is pro-KMT and can convert some DPP supporters. DPP has made very efforts to cultivate the Taiwan-centric identities so as to squeeze KMT from Taiwan, so it is necessary for KMT to stop such a trend.

Before Sunflower Movement, DPP "opted for an article-by-article review of CSSTA rather than an outright rejection... [but] once the congress was occupied, the DPP decided to back the students' demand to scrap the current CSSTA version."³⁷³ Anson Au explains that DPP used its support to "[garner] legitimation [for DPP]" and "escalate ethnic conflict." He remarks that:³⁷⁴

In doing so, Taiwan's colonial past was brought to the fore, evoking parallels with the Chinese Communists. What it meant to be Taiwanese soon crystallized as being a native resident of the nation, and the alien "other" became the mainland Chinese, associated with colonizing, oppressive Communists whose imperialism continues. That the DPP are an extension of the anti-Sinoist Taiwanese public transforms the meanings underlying the CSSTA, going beyond trade to represent a cultural conflict between the Taiwanese and the mainlanders and consolidating the distinction between "us" and "them".

³⁷³ Ming-sho Ho, "The Resurgence of Social Movements Under the Ma Ying-jeou Government: A Political Opportunity Structure Perspective," in *Political Changes in Taiwan under Ma Ying-jeou: Partisan Conflict, Policy Choices, External Constraints and Security Challenges*, ed. Jean-Pierre Cabestan and Jacques deLisle (New York: Routledge, 2014), 100-19.

³⁷⁴ Au, "The Sunflower Movement and the Taiwanese National Identity."

Originally, the Sunflower Movement was associated with civic nationalism. The main body of the Sunflower Movement is *tianrandu* generation who accept ROC as their homeland. In other words, it had little to do with ethnic conflicts. Why was DPP trying to change an issue inspired by civic nationalism into popular nationalism? I argue that DPP aimed at extruding KMT from Taiwanese politics by labeling KMT as the “other” targeted by the popular nationalism.

The electoral politics in Taiwan is highly influenced by identities.³⁷⁵ Politicians have infused the Taiwanese people with a belief that a person should vote to the candidate who shares the same identity regardless of their statecrafts or conducts.³⁷⁶ Chen Shui-bian is a very good point in case for this phenomenon. Chen was sentenced to life imprisonment for his bribery, but since he had represented himself as “the son of Taiwanese people” and “born in an impoverished family,” which reminds Hoklo of their underdog complex, a group of popular nationalists still support him. They did not believe that Chen Shui-bian was guilty. They urged Tsai Ing-wen to grant Chen Shui-bian amnesty, if not, they would not vote Tsai in her presidential election.³⁷⁷

Therefore, to compete with KMT or even extrude KMT from Taiwan, DPP has to infuse more people with popular nationalism and civic nationalism.³⁷⁸ Especially after Tsai Ing-wen came to power, DPP focuses on de-sinicization to destroy KMT’s legitimacy to rule Taiwan.³⁷⁹ Because DPP self-claims themselves as “an extension” of the two nationalisms, the “us” for the Taiwanese people, alienating KMT as the “them,” this strategy can transform KMT voters into DPP voters.

It follows that KMT must modify their mainland policy to cater to Taiwanese people. Otherwise, they must mold Taiwanese people’s identity to accommodate their mainland policy. My previous discussion has made it clear that increasingly tempestuous US-China relationship has made it impossible for China to compromise on the interpretation of the 92 Consensus.

KMT politicians has appealed to Beijing for many times that Beijing must leave KMT more space to interpret the 92 Consensus so that KMT can regain power and continue a benign cross-strait relations. But even Hung Hsiu-chu, who has been received by Chinese president Xi Jinping several times, was neglected in this respect.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁵ Lee, “Consensus Found and Consensus Lost,” 145.

³⁷⁶ Fell, *Government and Politics In Taiwan*, 134; Stevan Harrell, “Introduction,” in *Negotiating Ethnicities In China and Taiwan*, ed. Melissa J. Brown (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, Center for Chinese Studies, 1996), 5.

³⁷⁷ SETN, “Dupai: Teshe Abian Fouze Tou Buxia Cai Yingwen 獨派：特赦阿扁否則投不下蔡英文！ [Independence-seekers: Amnesty for Ah Bian or We Would Not Vote for Tsai Ing-wen!],” Yahoo News, February 19, 2019.

³⁷⁸ Xiaodong Deng and Huiping Shen, “Shixi Taiwan Qingnian De ‘Tianrandu’ Xinli 试析台湾青年的‘天然独’心理 [An Analysis of the ‘Natural Independence’ Psychology of Taiwan Youth];” *Taiwan Research Journal*, no. 2 (2017): 14-21; Long Li, “Gangtai Qingnian Zhongguo Rentong Queshi Wenti Zhi Bijiao Fenxi 港台青年中国认同缺失问题之比较分析 [A Comparative Analysis of Hong Kong and Taiwan Youth’s Lack of Chinese Identity],” *China Youth Study*, no. 7 (2015): 82-87.

³⁷⁹ Jiayan Liu, “Cai Yingwen Zhuzheng Xia De Liangan Guanxi Xianzhuang Yu Fazhan Qushi 蔡英文主政下的两岸关系现状与发展趋势 [Current Situation and Development Trend of Cross-strait Relations Under the Cai Yingwen’s Administration],” *Journal of United Front Science*, no.4 (2018): 16-17.

³⁸⁰ Zhu, Minjie. “Hong Xiuzhu Xieren Qian Zaiti ‘Yizhong Tongbiao’ Yao Dalu Jieshou Fenzhi Bu Fenlie Zhuzhang? 洪秀柱卸任前再提“一中同表”要大陆接受分治不分裂主张? [Hung Hsiu-chu Proposes ‘One China

Beijing cannot make compromise on the Taiwan issue, therefore, with PRC's continuing to monopolize the identity of China and hardline approach toward Taiwan, the sinophobic (which means a hostility against PRC and mainland Chinese in this respect) Taiwanese people will deviate far away from their Chinese identity. It seems that KMT has the only option of molding Taiwanese people's identity.

Re-sinicization is not impossible. Lowell Dittmer argues that strong leaders could reshape Taiwanese people's identity.³⁸¹ A decline of Chinese identity, especially a temporary phenomenon, does not mean that KMT should give up the 92 Consensus. As mentioned before, after the Sunflower Movement, the number of people with a dual identity and prefer reunification increases and reaches a peak in 2018. Because Han Kuo-yu, a popular KMT politician with strong charisma, contributed to this phenomenon, Dittmer's prophecy sounds fulfillable.

Re-sinicization is grounded rather than a political rhetoric. On the other side, KMT politicians are believed to harbor such a plan. Ma Ying-jeou's enchantment with the 92 Consensus has been suspected by many scholars of attempting to reshaping Taiwanese people's identity. Lim Chuan-tiong believes so because he is convinced that Ma is loyal to ROC.³⁸² Dafydd Fell seconds that Ma has a proclivity of bringing Taiwan back to the "[t]wo Chiang's Era" when Chinese nationalism was used to justify ROC's legitimacy over Taiwan.³⁸³ Dean Chen provides one more supposition that Ma hoped to use the 92 Consensus to "bring back the ROC's 'one-China' legitimacy over Taiwan in order to reconstitute people's national consciousness and weaken the DPP's pro-independence advocacy."³⁸⁴

Lim Chuan-tiong, Dafydd Fell, and Dean Chen interpret Ma's efforts as a defensive way to protect KMT's bases in electoral politics. On the other side, Christopher Hughes argues that Ma used an offensive approach to deal with DPP and the rising of nationalism in Taiwan. According to Hughes, Ma portrayed DPP's pro-independence discourse as "chauvinistic" to stigmatize its de-Sinicization policy so that KMT's discourse can replace DPP's and bring ROC to the centrality of Taiwan.³⁸⁵

According to the Election Study Center, NCCU, the number of people who identify themselves as Taiwanese exclusively increases obviously during Ma's presidency, from 43.7% to 58.2%, while the number of dual identities and exclusive Chinese identity shrinks sharply (see the Figure 6 below).

with the Same Interpretation' Again before She Leaves Office, Asking the Mainland to Accept the Idea of Partition and Non-separation?]." *Guancha Web*, June 22, 2017.

³⁸¹ Dittmer, "Analyzing the Taiwan Strait Tangle," 6.

³⁸² Lim, *When the "Rising China" Encounter "Sun Umbrella,"* 158-9.

³⁸³ Fell, *Government and Politics In Taiwan*, 134.

³⁸⁴ Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy*, 111.

³⁸⁵ Hughes, "Revisiting Identity Politics under Ma Ying-jeou," 123-36.

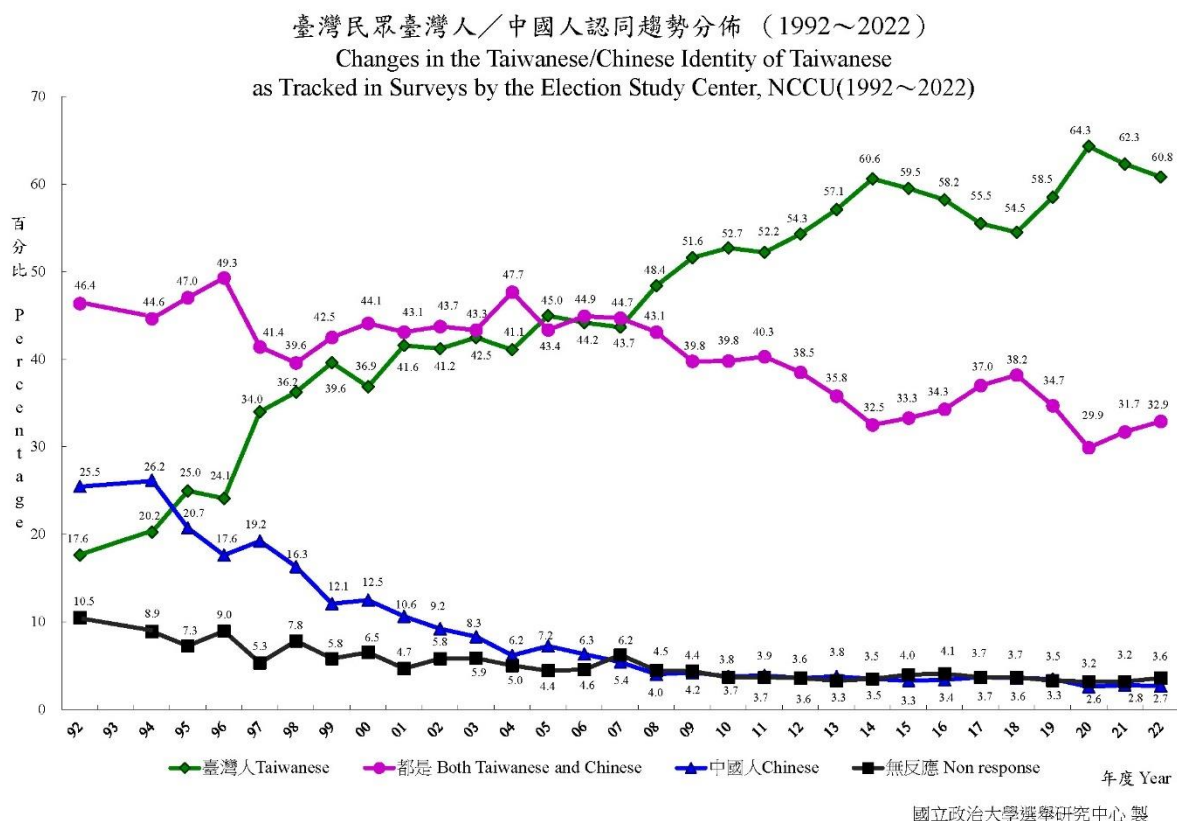


Figure 6: Changes in the Taiwanese/ Chinese Identities of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU (1992-2022)³⁸⁶

It follows that Ma’s approach to reshape Taiwanese people’s identity does not work well. However, imagine that if KMT did not attempt to reshape Taiwanese people’s identity, what would happen? The situation might be worse should if KMT gave up in this efforts. Ma’s approach may work well to entrench Taiwanese people’s Chinese identity. Being said that, we still lack the empirical evidence to test this assumption. Because the effects of KMT’s attempts to mold identities remain unclear, whether or not KMT should adhere to the 92 Consensus to reshape Taiwanese people’s identity is still open to debate. But generally, adherence to the 92 Consensus is not a bad strategy, especially when KMT has no better alternatives.

V. Further Discussion and the Future for the 92 Consensus

Washington is Making Taiwan the Next Ukraine?

Ming Chu-cheng argues that the international system is shaped by interactions among the US, China, European Union, Russia and Japan. The US as the sole hegemon can shape any bilateral relations across the world.³⁸⁷ By surveying scholarships of notable scholars from the US and

³⁸⁶ Election Study Center, National Cheng Chi University, “Changes in the Taiwanese/ Chinese Identities of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU (1992-2022).”

³⁸⁷ Chu-cheng Ming, “Guoji Tixi Cengci Lilun Yu Liangan Guanxi: Jianshi Yu Huigu 國際體系層次理論與兩岸關係：檢視與回顧 [International System Level Theories and the Cross-Strait Relations: Inspect and Review],” in

China, he concludes that both sides have realized the rise of China but the US does not accept the rise and thinks the US-China relations from Offensive Realism and Theory of Hegemony.³⁸⁸ In other words, the US does not accommodate China's rise, which rules out the possibility that the US would acquiesce in China's incorporation of Taiwan.

My previous discussion is in line with the realism, especially offensive realism that the US cares more about security rather than ideology in the Taiwan issue and would not allow China to challenge the status quo. According to John Mearsheimer, when a revisionist state challenges the hegemon, it pushes the hegemon in an offensive position. For the sake of security, this hegemon may balance against the revisionist state or pass the buck.³⁸⁹ After the Russia-Ukraine War in 2022, it is advocated by White House and a group of scholars that Russia is allying with China to balance against NATO led by the US.³⁹⁰ Given Biden administration's continuing stress on multilateralism, it is reasonable to believe that Washington may rely on alliance to balance against China.

However, some recent developments and debates may undermine the credibility of this argument. There is no evidence that China will form an alliance with Russia. Chinese modernization benefits from the engagement with the west and China is still trying to resort to the existing international institutions to become a strong power. On the other side, China is becoming more fragile after the COVID-19, which means China will be constrained more by domestic fragility. The risk of allying with Russia increases accordingly after China becomes more fragile. Therefore, there are very few incentives for China to ally with Russia.

European Union and Japan may not ally with the US to balance against China as well. They need the existence of the US to protect their security but they also need China in the interests of economy. Moreover, Washington is circumspect in alliance. The US has its own domestic problems and with these constraints, Washington does not want a war with China. I do not think alliance as a way to balance against China is an advised approach since the Russia-Ukraine War has pushed Russia in favor of China, if China is cornered by an alliance led by the US, the "new Cold War" rhetoric may become a self-filling prophecy.

A more possible scenario is that the US passes the buck to Taiwan. Although the strategic ambiguity policy is interpreted to deter both Taiwan and China from changing the status quo, it may have more functions for the US. Especially, I think it frees the US from an obligation to

Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論 [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Strait Relations], second edition, ed. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 335.

³⁸⁸ Chu-cheng Ming, "Guoji Tixi Cengei Lilun Yu Liangan Guanxi: Jianshi Yu Huigu 國際體系層次理論與兩岸關係: 檢視與回顧 [International System Level Theories and the Cross-Strait Relations: Inspect and Review]," in *Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun* 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論 [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Strait Relations], second edition, ed. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 331-2.

³⁸⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

³⁹⁰ White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2022), 23-5; Andrew Scobell and Niklas Swanström, *The China-Russia 'Alliance': Double the Danger or Limited Partnership?* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2022); Matthew Kroenig, "Washington Must Prepare for War With Both Russia and China," *Foreign Policy*, February 18, 2022.

protect Taiwan. After the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War, Ukraine helps the US consume Russia's power, while NATO members have not chosen to bandwagon Russia. The Russia-Ukraine War has proven back-passing to be fruitful, which might add more incentives for Washington to pass the buck to Taiwan. Moreover, since TSMC and other Taiwanese high-tech industries have been or are on the way to being relocated to the US, the cost of going to wars with China has been decreasing.

Because my analysis is based on the argument that Washington concerns more about security than ideology, I am encouraged to believe that Washington is making Taiwan the next Ukraine, they want Taiwan to militarize itself and will not defend Taiwan should PLA attacked Taiwan. If PLA attack Taiwan, the best scenario for Washington is that Taiwan can consume China's military power and economy so that they can ensure the US security.

A Further Discussion on Beijing's Taiwan Policy

In the previous discussion, I argue that the "two profound changes" have added urgency to reunify Taiwan, but I admit that however urgent it is, Taiwan reunification seems to be a tricky issue impossible to be solved within a few years. In this section, I want to add more reasons why President Xi has the incentives to reunify Taiwan during his presidency. I also want to give a conjecture about how Beijing would administer Taiwan after reunification.

Legitimacy may be one reason why President Xi is ambitious for reunification, but President Xi's achievement in stabilizing Hong Kong, equal economic distribution, environmental protection, and anti-corruption activities have legitimized his third term.

President Xi's expertise in Taiwan gives him the incentive. He has worked in Fujian province and accumulated enough knowledge about Taiwan. It is said that when he was the vice mayor of Xiamen City, he once consulted a Taiwanese scholar Yao Li-ming in the disguise of a pseudonym Bai Yu (白羽) to learn more about Taiwan's domestic dynamics. Yao Li-ming even praised President Xi for his rich knowledge of Taiwanese politics.³⁹¹ Because attention is a limited resource, and Beijing's attention is more expensive than Taipei's attention in the sense that Beijing has more important issues to worry including the US and domestic stability, while the most urgent thing for Taipei is China.³⁹² When President Xi considers his statecrafts to make China survive the "two profound changes," it is natural for him to spend his attention on issues he feels the most confident and familiar because he needs "a quick closure... to free [his] attention for more important matters."³⁹³

The legacy of his education is another reason. In 1958, CPC launched the propaganda about liberating Taiwan and infused this idea with people entering school since then. Before the reform and opening, such patriotism was infused within Chinese education. The idea of liberating Taiwan has branded people born during this period for lives. President Xi and his generation

³⁹¹ Politics Center, "Xi Jinping Ceng Huaming 'Bai Yu' Tan Taiwan Zhengqing? Yao Liming Zhengshi 習近平曾化名「白羽」探台灣政情? 姚立明證實 [Xi Jinping Probed into Taiwanese Politics? Yao Li-ming Attested]," ETtoday, November 5, 2012.

³⁹² Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 49-50.

³⁹³ Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 50.

grew up under this atmosphere have the “chauvinistic passions” toward reunifying Taiwan.³⁹⁴ His family education matters as well. His father is a patriot and meritorious in the process of Hong Kong’s return. Some Chinese scholars like Zhang Yu, Liu Zhenjiang, and Qiu Ran, therefore, argue that President Xi’s passion for reunifying Taiwan and preference for using the united fronts are influenced by his father’s education.³⁹⁵ His engagement with *taishang* in his early career may further strengthen the credibility of this argument because the cross-strait relationship is not a mayor’s discretion.

President Xi has many reasons for reunifying Taiwan within a few years. Given the appearance of the Taiwanese consciousness, it has been more urgent to reunify Taiwan to reshape Taiwanese people’s Chinese identity, but the Taiwanese identities also increase the cost for Beijing to administer Taiwan after the reunification. Some political developments in recent years allude to a solution to this conundrum. In recent years, in order to stabilize domestic conditions, Beijing has ordered police to oppress protests in Hong Kong, built re-education camp in Xinjiang to convert Uyghurs, and adopted lockdown policies to deal with the spread of COVID-19. The three hardline strategies are costly but Beijing is resolute in doing so.

The “two profound changes” discussed before can partly explain them—Beijing needs a stable domestic environment to compete with the US. My speculation is that Beijing is doing simulations to prepare for control over Taiwan. One interesting thing that deserves mentioning is that China ambassador to France Lu Shaye once spoke in an interview that after reunification, Taiwanese people would be sent to the re-education camp like their Uyghur counterparts.³⁹⁶ There are three possible explanations for his inflammatory speech: first, he accidentally disclose some secrets; second, he was catering for the top echelon who share the same idea; third, he tested Taiwanese people’s bottom lines and reaction for China’s hardline policy. Whatever the scenario is, it seems likely that Beijing is planning to use the re-education camp to administer Taiwan. The success in stabilizing conditions in Hong Kong and Xinjiang increases the possibility of a similar scenario in Taiwan.

Whataboutism—A Negative Countermeasure

Taiwan is sandwiched by the US and China, so what does the escalation of the US-China competition mean to Taiwan? Wu Yu-shan argues that in a bilateral relationship, the stronger side wants to coerce the weaker sides into submission, while the weaker can choose bandwagon, balance, and hedging.³⁹⁷ In the case of Taiwan, however, balancing is not a choice. Taiwan is too

³⁹⁴ Friedman, “America’s Pivots to Asia and the Taiwan Strait Crises,” 68.

³⁹⁵ Ran Qiu, Shan Huang, and Si Chen, “‘Xi Jinping Tongzhi Shi Tongzhan Gongzuo De Dianfan’ – Ci Jinping Zai Fujian (Shiyi) ‘近平同志是统战工作的典范’ ——习近平在福建（十一） [‘Comrade Jinping is a Model of United Front Work’ - Xi Jinping in Fujian (XI)],” *Study Times*, June 17, 2020; Yu Zhang and Zhenjiang Liu, “Xi Jinping Jiating Lunli Sixiang Jiqi Xianshi Yiyi Chutan 习近平家庭伦理思想及其现实意义初探 [A Preliminary Study on Xi Jinping’s Thought on Family Ethics and its Relevance],” *Journal of Hunan University of Science and Engineering* 38, no. 01 (2017): 74-76.

³⁹⁶ Finbarr Bermingham, “Chinese Envoy to France Lu Shaye Doubles down on Taiwan ‘Re-education’ Aims,” *South China Morning Post*, August 8, 2022.

³⁹⁷ Yu-shan Wu, “Quanli Buduicheng Yu Liangan Guanxi Yanjiu 權力不對稱與兩岸關係研究 [Research on the Asymmetry of Power and the Cross-Strait Relations],” in *Chongxin Jianshi Zhengbian Zhong De Liangan Guanxi Lirun 重新檢視爭辯中的兩岸關係理論* [Revisiting Theories on Cross-Strait Relations], second edition, ed. Zonghe Bao and Yu-shan Wu (Taipei: Wunan Publishing, 2012), 39-41.

weak compared to China or the US, therefore, it cannot balance against either side internally. Taiwan cannot side with China to balance against the US because this poses the small island in the forefront of the US-China conflicts.

Taiwan cannot side with the US as well. The US-Taiwan alliance gives pro-independence politicians more leverage in issue manipulation and these radicals may drag the US into a war with China, which Washington definitely wants to avoid. China would not allow Taiwan to do so either. The US-Taiwan alliance means the loss of Taiwan from the Chinese orbit and it reminds Chinese people of Taiwan's role in the Cold War. It is arguably that China will attack Taiwan should Taiwan form an alliance with the US. The same logics apply to the option of bandwagoning because when Taiwan bandwagons one side, it is balancing against the other side.

Hedging may be the only option for Taiwan, but Taiwan's hedging method should be different from the one of other countries. Most countries like Japan choose to hedge against economic loss by showing deference to China while seek survival by allying with the US. Yet, when it comes to the cross-Strait relations, China is gradually losing its economic power, though the military power is in rise. Taiwan's hedging method is to hedge against military reunification by showing deference to China while protect its autonomy by claiming political and military supports from Washington.

Implementing a hedging method has been difficult for Taiwan, but when it comes to KMT, the problem becomes more thorny. The structure of supporters dissuades KMT politicians from being too close to the US. On the other side, the development since 2000 in Taiwan has labeled KMT as a party "selling Taiwan to China." Each time KMT shows deference to Beijing, it incurs far more criticism than DPP. The international system shaped by the US-China competition restrains KMT from changing its mainland policy, while the domestic pressure warns KMT against its accommodationist mainland policy. Sandwiched by the two forces, it seems like KMT is doomed to disappear from Taiwan's political stage. Fortunately, KMT has gradually learned to focus on domestic issues that it can comparatively manipulate. KMT has learned to use whataboutism to attack DPP.

Yet, not all domestic issues can be manipulated by KMT. Su Chi argues that there are three levels of debates in Taiwanese democracy: the highest level is "of boundary and identity of a state," the second level is "over the political system," and the third level is about public policies. Taiwan "is experiencing heated debated at all three levels *simultaneously* (italicized by Su Chi)," which "fuel[s] fierce partisanship among the general public."³⁹⁸ KMT and DPP are unable to satisfy the majority of Taiwanese people in the issue of Taiwan's boundary or political system because any changes of the boundary or political system need to be finalized by a constitutional referendum, but the threshold is too high. Moreover, the change in Taiwan's boundary or political system is deemed a symbol of Taiwan's de jure independence, which incurs Beijing's strong opposition. The only level the two parties can compete is public policies. Ironically, their debate regarding public policies is not to prove their capabilities but to discredit their opponent's capabilities. John Franklin Copper once remarked on DPP's adeptness at scapegoating KMT in the 2001 Legislator Election.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ Su, "Driving Forces Behind Taiwan's Mainland Policy," 53-4.

³⁹⁹ Copper, *Taiwan's 2001 Legislative, Magistrates and Mayors Election*, 70.

President Chen and DPP campaign strategists were also very adept in blaming the KMT and the world economic situation for Taiwan’s bad economy...[they] were likewise effective in separating relations with China from the economic recession issue even though they were obviously linked.

Learning from DPP’s tactics, “in [their] bid to bring the KMT back to power,” KMT manipulated the issue of Chen Shui-bian’s bribery in 2008.⁴⁰⁰ In 2008, their campaign advertisements “revolved around the simple equation that DPP misrule had led to Taiwan’s economic recession and serious political corruption.”⁴⁰¹ The public’s anger against Chen Shui-bian faded after Chen went to jails. In 2014, when Ma Ying-jeou was resolute in passing a cross-Strait trade services agreement, DPP seized the opportunity to restore its fame by accusing KMT of “selling Taiwan to China,” which according to the then premier Jiang Yi-huah, impacted the failure of KMT in the 2014 local election and 2016 presidential election.⁴⁰² In 2016, several KMT politicians were involved in scandals of bribery including Lin Yi-shih, the Executive Yuan Secretary General, which DPP took advantage of to further damage Ma Ying-jeou’s popularity.⁴⁰³

According to Ching-hsin Yu and T. Y. Wang (see Figure 7), from 2012 to 2016, voters’ perception of KMT’s competence in several issues (managing cross-Strait relations, promoting economic development, and advancing Social Welfare) declined. Because these competencies were perceived by voters rather than some objective factors, and from the last paragraph we know that DPP tried a lot to discredit KMT, we may conclude that issue manipulations play a key role in Taiwan’s elections. KMT lost the 2016 election because DPP succeeded to manipulate a series of issues to convince the voters that KMT was incompetent.

	2012(%)	2016(%)
Party’s Competence in...		
Managing Cross-Strait Relations		
KMT	1121 (61.4)	714 (42.2)
DPP	212 (11.6)	366 (21.7)
Others	493 (27.0)	610 (36.1)
Promoting Economic Development		
KMT	935 (51.2)	363 (21.4)
DPP	266 (14.5)	543 (32.1)
Others	625 (34.3)	785 (46.4)
Advancing Social Welfare		
KMT	514 (28.1)	257 (15.2)
DPP	452 (24.7)	678 (40.1)
Others	860 (47.1)	755 (44.7)

⁴⁰⁰ Fell, *Government and Politics In Taiwan*, 241-2.

⁴⁰¹ Dafydd Fell, “More or Less Space for Identity in Taiwan’s Party Politics?,” in *Taiwanese Identity In the Twenty-first Century: Domestic, Regional, and Global Perspectives*, ed. Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England]: Routledge, 2011), 95-112.

⁴⁰² Jiang, “Taiwan’s National Identity and Cross-Strait Relations,” 19-20.

⁴⁰³ Fell, *Government and Politics In Taiwan*, 241-2.

Defending Taiwan's Sovereignty		
KMT		301 (17.8)
DPP		775 (45.9)
Others		613 (36.3)
N	1826	1690

Figure 7: “[V]oters’ [P]erception of [D]ifferent [P]arties’ [I]ssue [H]andling [D]ifferentials”⁴⁰⁴

The referendum is becoming a tool for Taiwanese opposition parties to attack the ruling party. Especially, because the referendum was synchronous with the 2018 election, when KMT as an opposition party used the referendum to exert pressure and overthrow the ruling party’s policies like nuclear energy and same-sex marriage, they succeeded in winning support from the populists and caused the public to be suspicious of the ruling party.⁴⁰⁵ KMT won the 2018 election by a landslide, sweeping away the dark cloud of the failure in 2016.

Taiwan is far less powerful than China and the US, but entangled too deeply in the fierce US-China conflict. When national reunification is becoming more urgent for China while the US is incentivized to pass the buck to Taiwan, Taiwanese people are torn between peace and the willingness for protecting their Taiwanese identities. No political party in Taiwan can find a solution to this conundrum. Therefore, to struggle for power, these political parties turn to blurring agendas, stigmatization, and populism.

An international derivative of the Taiwanese party’s whataboutism is “Doubtful America Theory (疑美论),” a belief that the US is exploiting Taiwan to contain China and that the US will abandon Taiwan when China attacks Taiwan. “Doubtful America Theory” is popular in Taiwan in recent years. According to the Election Studies Center, in 2018, the number of people who want reunification increased. Xu Qing believes that it was a result of the popular “Doubtful America Theory.”⁴⁰⁶ The traditional approach of using economic offers to do united fronts work cannot be continued because of China’s declining economy. China’s soft power, the attractiveness to Taiwanese people, has been counterbalanced by Beijing’s hardline stance at home and abroad. Therefore, because Beijing cannot convince Taiwanese people that reunification is beneficial, they have to convince Taiwanese people that an alliance with the US is dangerous.

Because peace is one of the two reasons that can be used to persuade Taiwanese people to give up their Taiwanese identities, manipulating the “Doubtful America Theory” to cause resonance

⁴⁰⁴ Yu and Wang, “Party’s Issue Competence and Electoral Decisions in Taiwan’s 2012 and 2016 Presidential Elections,” 103. In their book, the digits for Other’s Competence in Advancing Social Welfare is 8619, which should be a typo. I correct into the right digits “860” in the Figure 5.

⁴⁰⁵ Yu-fang Hsu and Tzu-Chiao Su, “Legalising Same-Sex Marriage in Taiwan,” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 22, (2023): 27-52; Gillan Chi-Lun Huang, Rung-Yi Chen, and Byung-Bae Park, “Democratic Innovations as a Party Tool: A Comparative Analysis of Nuclear Energy Public Participation in Taiwan and South Korea,” *Energy Policy* 153, (2021): 1-17.

⁴⁰⁶ Qing Xu, “Dui Dangqian Daonei Minzhong Guojia Tongyi Rentong Zhuangkuang Yanxi 对当前岛内民众国家统一认同状况研析 [Analysis on Current Condition Towards National Unification of People from Taiwan],” *Taiwan Research Journal*, no.5 (2018): 29-37.

with peace looms as a countermeasure for Beijing and KMT to weaken Taiwanese people's pro-US stance. However, this approach is dangerous for the two parties' long-term strategy. The US as the leader of liberal democracies cannot intervene in Taiwanese domestic politics openly, therefore Washington usually keeps silent in the 92 Consensus. The concerns revolving around security are also making the US ambiguous about its stance. Yet, if KMT and Beijing continue to exploit this ambiguity to manipulate the "Doubtful America Theory," Washington may turn to be clear about its stance, smashing up the 92 Consensus.

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